For the study of Liberal, SDP and Liberal Democrat history

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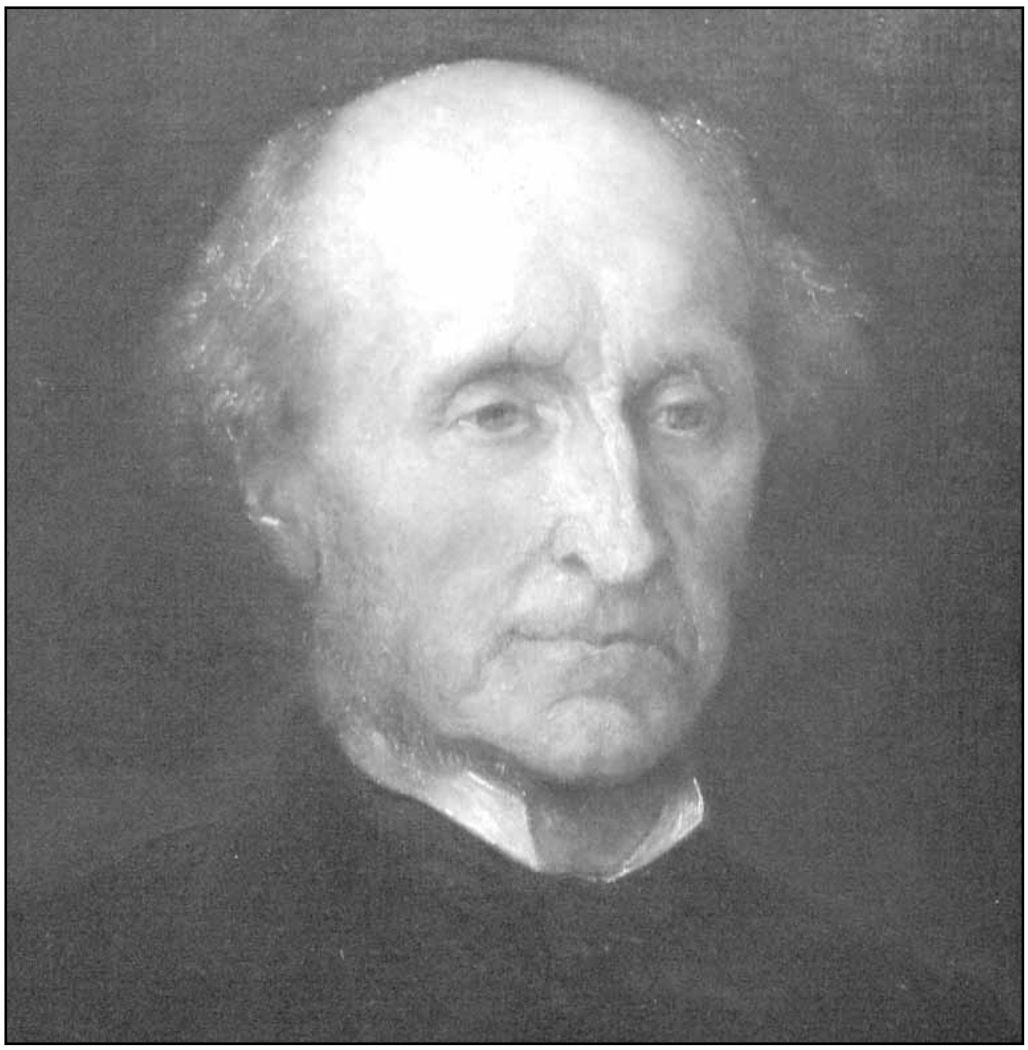
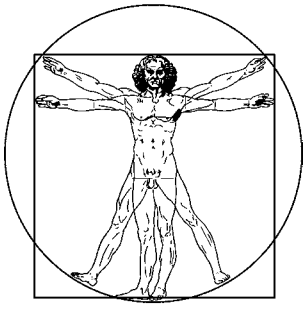


Mill and the Liberals



Liberal Democrat History Group

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS SPRING 2011

Liberal History News is a regular feature in the *Journal* (except in special themed issues), reporting news of meetings, conferences, commemorations, dinners or any other events, together with anything else of contemporary interest to our readers. Contributions are very welcome; please keep them concise, and accompany them, if possible, with photos. Email to the Editor on journal@liberalhistory.org.uk

Lloyd George Society weekend school, 2011

The annual weekend school of the Lloyd George Society took place on 18–20 February at the Hotel Commodore in Llandrindod Wells, where members of the Society enjoyed talks and presentations on politics, economics and history. **Graham Lippiatt** reports.

This year's programme featured two contributions which touched directly on the life and times of David Lloyd George, as well as a review of Welsh Liberal history by Professor Russell Deacon whose book, *The Welsh Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties in Wales* is to be published later this year by Welsh Academic Press.

Andrew Green, the Librarian and Chief Executive of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, gave a presentation about the history and work of the National Library that included details of the collections in the Welsh Political Archive containing many papers relating to David Lloyd George and his family.

The National Library is also the repository for the Welsh Film and Television Archive and Andrew Green showed some fascinating film of Lloyd George and his family at Criccieth as well as footage of LG, accompanied by his daughter Megan and his son Gwilym, on his controversial visit to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden in 1936. The home movie style film was shot by LG's long-time private secretary, A J Sylvester. Equally important, Andrew Green showed a clip from the famous silent film completed in the last months of the First World War, *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*. The film, which was suddenly and mysteriously withdrawn before its first screening, was believed to have been lost forever but was rediscovered in 1994 among material belonging to Viscount Tenby, LG's grandson.

The National Library represents a wonderful resource to students of Welsh political history with many materials available online and a number of digitisation projects, such as one of many Welsh local newspapers, being completed – visit www.llgc.org.uk to find out more.

In the afternoon session of the School, members were treated to a talk about, and later a showing of, the award-winning documentary, *Dwy Wraig Lloyd George* (The Two Wives of Lloyd George) by Catrin Evans, the film's producer. The revealing documentary, a Tinopolis production for S4C, was the culmination of years of research by Ffion Hague for her book, *The Pain and Privilege: The Women in Lloyd George's Life*, published in 2008. Among the highlights wass the first television interview ever with Frances Stevenson's daughter, Jennifer Longford, now a Vice-President of the Lloyd George Society.

More information about the Lloyd George Society can be found at its website, www.lloydgeorgesociety.org.uk.

Records in Essex

The records of the North-East Essex Euro-Constituency Association for the 1984 Euro election have been deposited with the Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6YT. (Tel: 01245 244606, www.essex.gov.uk/ero). Report by **Stewart Rayment**.

They have been given Accession Number A12987 – catalogue reference D/Z 575. This comprises minutes, letters (the seat was contested by the SDP, whose prospective candidates were asked about 'open joint selection') and the like. Certain (membership) records may only be viewed with the consent of the depositor.

ERO has a fair amount of Liberal and Lib Dem material in its archive, including minute books and newspaper cuttings from the nineteenth century in relation to some Liberal Associations and Colchester Liberal Club, microfilm of election scrapbooks from 1900, 1906 and 1910 and some documents going back as far as the 1840s.

There is also a significant amount of more contemporary material, particularly *Focus* leaflets from Southend's Chalkwell Ward (Southend was an early exponent of this kind of campaigning) and also the press cuttings book of Maldon Young Liberal Association from 1968 to 1977 on microfilm – which is just as well, for they are probably otherwise lost. (It is good practice to deposit such materials with County Record Offices for that very reason.)

Details of what papers relating to the Liberal Party and Liberal Democrats are in the archive can be accessed at the link: http://seax.essexcc.gov.uk/all_results.asp?intSearchType=12.

Identity cards and Harry Willcock

The reference in your website 'On this day' (21 February) to the abolition of UK identity cards in 1952 prompts one to recall the case of Harry Willcock (1896-1952) who was the last person to be prosecuted for refusing to produce his identity card. By **Sandy Waugh**.

While driving in London on 7 December 1950, Willcock was stopped by a police constable and instructed to present his identity card at a police station within 48 hours. He refused, saying: 'I am a Liberal and I am against this sort of thing'. He was then prosecuted under the 1939 National Registration Act, convicted and fined ten shillings (the equivalent of about £13 today).

Although he lost his appeal, Lord Chief Justice Goddard spoke out against the continued use of compulsory identity cards. Thereafter, Willcock led a campaign against identity cards and when they were abolished, in response to the Lord Chief Justice's comments and the campaign, hundreds of cards were posted to him to auction for charity.

A former councillor and magistrate in Leeds and a Liberal candidate (1945 and 1950) in Barking, he died on 12 December 1952 (less than ten months after identity cards were abolished) while debating at a meeting in the National Liberal Club in London. His last word before his death was reported to have been 'freedom'.

Journal of Liberal History 17 (winter 1997–98) contained an article about Willcock and the abolition of identity cards; this issue is freely available on the History Group's website at www.liberalhistory.org.uk.

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Editor: **Duncan Brack**
Deputy Editor: **Tom Kiehl**
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Contributing Editors: **Graham Lippiatt, Tony Little, York Membery**

Editorial/Correspondence

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Duncan Brack (Editor)
54 Midmoor Road, London SW12 0EN
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Patrick Mitchell
6 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PA;
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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.

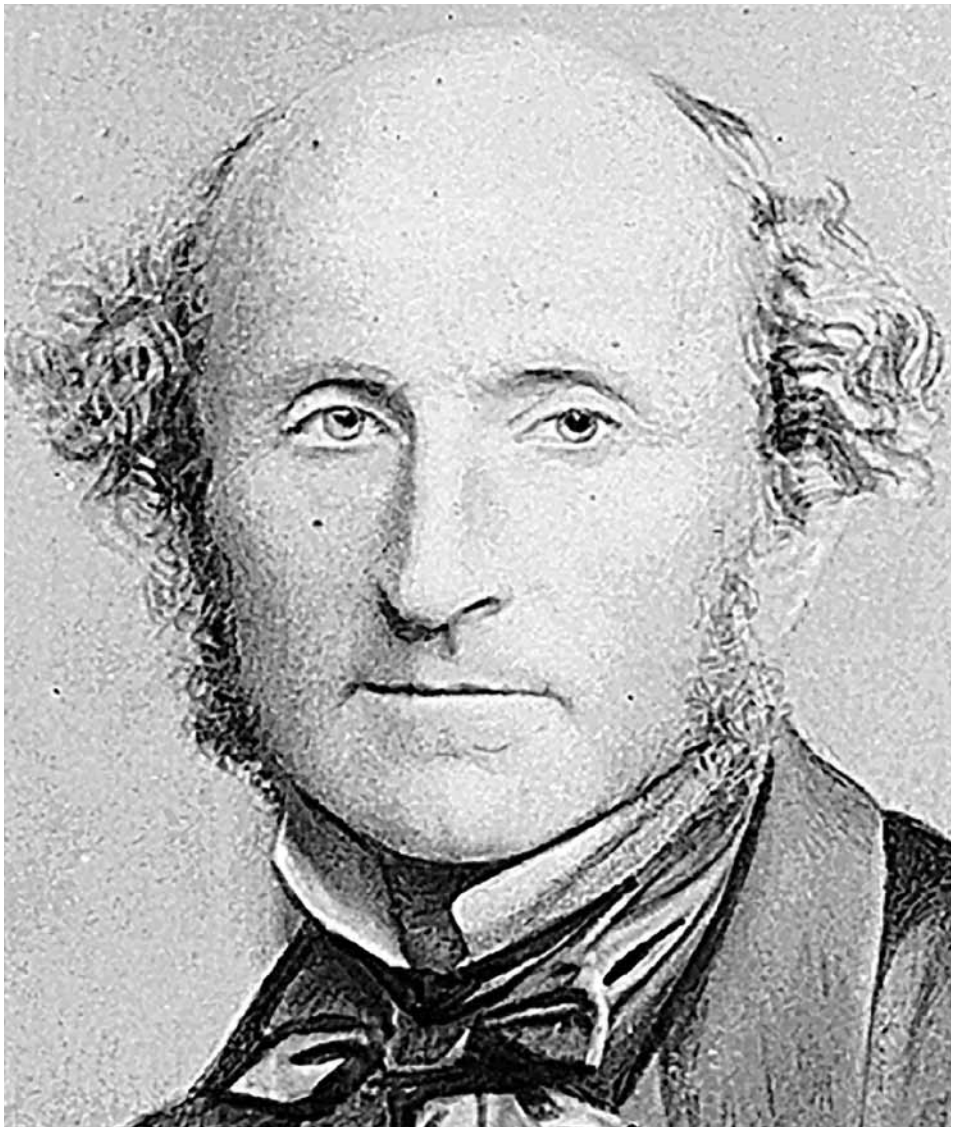
For more information, including historical commentaries, details of publications, back issues of the *Journal*, and archive and other research sources, see our website at: **www.liberalhistory.org.uk**.

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

JOHN STU
AND THE LIB

When Gladstone described Mill as 'the Saint of Rationalism', he could also have added 'and of Liberalism'. By the time he died, in 1873, the Victorian philosopher had acquired an almost unique status and authority, which transcended the confessional and cultural divides between 'rationalists' (or secularists) and the larger number of churchmen and Nonconformists, who provided the backbone of the party.

By **Professor Eugenio Biagini**.



JART MILL
BERAL PARTY

Take, for example, his celebrated essay *On Liberty*: although it was ultimately a consistent expression of the author's religious agnosticism, the book could equally well be read as a reassertion of attitudes and convictions which were deeply rooted in the country's Puritan tradition, particularly through its emphasis on the moral sovereignty of the individual conscience and on dissent as something intrinsically good.[1]

He was such a great Victorian that it is surprising that his appeal has remained strong – and perhaps grown even stronger – with the passing of time. As the late Conrad Russell noted, Mill's continuing relevance to British Liberalism was publicly acknowledged in 1988, when *On Liberty* was adopted as the party's 'book of office' (replacing John Milton's *Areopagitica*).[2] Twenty years later, in the winter 2007–08, Mill was voted 'the greatest Liberal' by the readers of this journal. How can we explain such extraordinary and long-lasting success? In the present article I shall try to answer this question by focusing on the last part of the philosopher's career, examining first his impact on the party from 1859 and then those aspects of his thought which offered a particularly significant contribution to the later Liberal tradition.

An unusual backbencher

The connection between Mill and the Victorian Liberal party has not escaped historians' attention. To mention but a few, John Vincent, Stefan Collini, Bruce Kinzer and that redoubtable academic couple, Ann and John Robson – the editors of Mill's *Collected Works* – have all written extensively on this topic.

As an MP for Westminster (1865–68), Mill was a loyal backbencher and, although a Radical, in the run up to 1868 he drew closer to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, W. E. Gladstone. On the one hand, this is surprising, given the significant differences in religious outlook and political background. Indeed, in 1873 Gladstone was deeply embarrassed to discover that Mill, as a young man, had publicly advocated birth control and the use of contraceptives. On the other hand, the Grand Old Man was a reader and admirer of Mill's economic writings, and his first government implemented legislation which reflected Mill's influence, including votes for women in local elections (from 1869), proportional representation for school board elections, and the Married Women's Property Act, 1870. By the same token, as Collini, Kinzer and the Robsons have argued, Mill felt a sort of 'elective affinity' for Gladstone, based on the shared conviction that Liberal politics ought to be guided by moral energy and express itself through fervent campaigning.[3] Like Gladstone, Mill believed that he had a 'call' to politics – that his mission was to radicalise the Liberal Party, which at the time meant moving the party to the left of the political spectrum. Thus Mill was very active in the struggle for parliamentary reform, in the hope that, once the electoral system was purified from corrupt practices and democratised, 'progressive' candidates and labour leaders would stand a better chance of being returned, and their presence in the House of Commons would in turn provide the impetus for further reform.

John Stuart Mill (1806–73)

A further area of convergence between Mill and Gladstone was in their sensitivity to minorities within multinational empires. Indeed Mill's support for the cause of Jamaicans in the 1860s presents affinities with Gladstone's later stance over Bulgaria, Zululand and Armenia between 1876 and 1896. Moreover, both men consistently adopted a 'European' perspective to international problems, detesting unilateralism as a dangerous superstition. Not surprisingly, in 1865–70 Mill saw in Gladstone the leader who would further the cause of 'advanced liberalism'. Although by 1873 he was to an extent disillusioned, his assessment of the GOM

was basically accurate, and would be vindicated in due course. It is significant that one of Gladstone's most enthusiastic collaborators and his greatest biographer was John Morley, who was so closely associated with the legacy of the great philosopher that he earned the sobriquet of 'Mr Mill's representative on earth'.

Active citizenship and the Liberal party organisation

One area in which Mill informed practical Liberal politics was in his concept of participatory citizenship and, indirectly, in his attitudes to the early ideas about the role and function of the party's 'mass' organisation. The latter became an issue from 1877, with the foundation of the National Liberal Federation (NLF) by another of Mill's admirers – Joseph Chamberlain. By contrast with the intellectual debate later generated by the NLF, there was little theoretical preparation for its establishment: no blueprint had been drawn up by any of those many intellectuals and journalists which Harvie has described as 'the lights of liberalism'.[4] Mill in particular had little to say about mass party organisation.[5] This omission is somewhat surprising when we consider that during his lifetime there flourished well-organised pressure groups similar to parties, including the National Education League, with which he was well acquainted, and the Land Tenure Reform Association, of which he was a leading member. The NLF, launched only four years after Mill's death, drew heavily on the experience of such leagues and associations, some of which it tried to coordinate. It has sometimes been suggested that, for all his intellectual prestige, Mill was actually unable to understand either the reality or the needs of 'party'. This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that even in his last major works on representative government he gave no account of the role of parties. Yet, he was not in principle hostile to them, and, as we have seen, in 1865–8, as a parliamentarian, he generally behaved like a disciplined and loyal party man.

In my view, the situation was actually more complicated and interesting. It was not that Mill was *unable* to grasp the reality of party democracy and the need for an electoral and canvassing 'machine'. It was rather that he championed a *different and distinctively Liberal* understanding of what such an organisation ought to comprise. The first thing to observe is that Mill's ideal of democracy was inspired more by *classical* than by modern models. He waxed lyrical about Athens in the days of Pericles, a time which he regarded almost as a sort of Liberal paradise, where each citizen was continually appointed to some form of public magistracy, and participation and debate arose spontaneously from the awareness of common interests rooted in the feeling of belonging to a socio-cultural entity to which one felt a positive emotional commitment.[6]

It is significant that one of Gladstone's most enthusiastic collaborators and his greatest biographer was John Morley, who was so closely associated with the legacy of the great philosopher that he earned the sobriquet of 'Mr Mill's representative on earth'.

Moreover, and crucially, such a perpetually deliberating *demos* allowed 'public moralists' to emerge as the guides of public opinion because '[t]he multitude have often a true instinct for distinguishing an able man, when he has the means for displaying his ability in a fair field before them.'[7] Hence the apparent paradox that ancient direct democracy was the cradle of philosopher-statesmen of the calibre of Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles and Demosthenes, leaders and not followers of popular opinion, who acted in a pedagogic rather than a demagogic way. Thus, the two dimensions which were so important for Mill – namely, meritocratic elitism and participatory democracy – converged in the context of the *polis*.[8] What linked them together was charismatic rhetoric – which in a free society provided 'able men' with 'the means for displaying their ability' before 'the multitude'.

At the time, these views were not unusual in Liberal and Radical circles. A good example is provided by Joseph Cowen, himself the embodiment of many of the values championed by Mill, including civic pride, social activism and an elitist resolve to provide guidance and leadership for a local democracy. On one occasion he told his constituents that that '[t]here is nothing incongruous in the union of [classical] democratic doctrines with representative institutions. Ancient order and modern progress are not incompatible.'[9]

However, how could the practice of direct democracy be reconciled with the needs of large-scale modern democracies? There were two main strategies: first, local government and decentralisation, to empower local political life; and second, strong, representative party organisations, which would mediate local aspirations and national aims by means of public debate. Thus the party 'mass' organisation, sometimes dismissively described as 'the caucus', was to act as a link between local and national democracy. As the *Fortnightly Review* put it, '[the caucus] appears to be a necessary outcome of democracy. In a small community, such as the Canton of Uri, all the freemen may meet in a meadow to pass laws. In larger societies direct government by the people gives place to representative government; and when constituencies consist of thousands, associations which aid the birth of popular opinion and give it strength, stability and homogeneity seem indispensable.'[10]

'Giving strength and stability to popular opinion' was, however, more easily said than done, but the apparent anarchy and intractable internal conflicts which plagued the NLF from the start make more sense once we bear in mind the context in which it operated: it was not supposed to be a caucus in the American sense of the word, but the *ekklesia* (general assembly) of the Liberal *demos*, or 'a Liberal parliament outside the Imperial Parliament'.[11] Its avowed aim was not primarily to become a canvassing organisation and win elections, but rather to provide a forum, a deliberating agora, within which ideas could be thrashed out, programmes formed 'from below' and opinion so 'rationally' informed eventually coordinated in electoral campaigns.

'A fruitful relation between thought and politics'

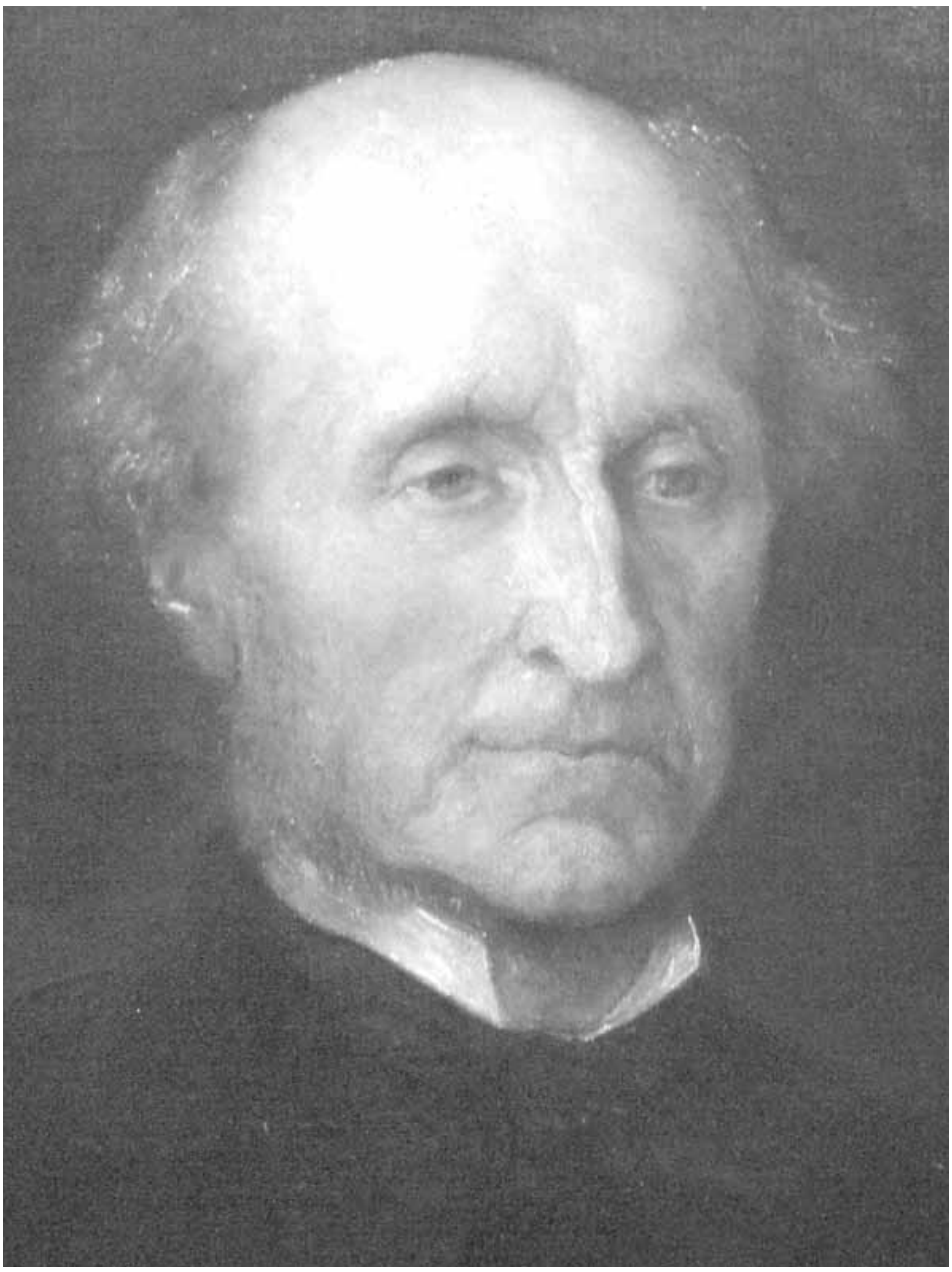
Both Vincent and Collini have seen Mill as the quintessential 'public moralist' of late-Victorian liberalism, the man who spoke as the movement's moral, intellectual and philosophical conscience. For Vincent, Mill came to play such a leading role because he lived and wrote at a key stage in the development of Liberalism: in the 1850s

'the educated classes received a new education [through the reformed, meritocratic public schools], the middle classes a new Press [thanks to the repeal of the stamp and paper duties, which made newspapers much cheaper, boosting their circulation;] and the working classes new institutions [with the growth of the cooperative movements and the 'new model' trade unions]'. And '[f]rom Mill the "thinking men" of all classes could learn a liberalism far more agreeable to their feelings than that taught by men of property in the Great Towns. Mill made it possible for young Oxford and for the labour aristocracy to be liberal without injury to their class feelings, and indeed with some flattery to them'.[12]

However, rather inconsistently, Vincent goes on to criticise what he describes as 'the failure of the Liberal intellectuals to make a fruitful relation between thought and politics'.[13] What he means by this is not clear, but it is difficult to see how such an assessment could be applicable at all to J. S. Mill, who was the most eminent and influential of such intellectuals. On the contrary, his work established an intimate relation between thought and politics. For example, the rule of personal freedom presented in *On Liberty* was a recurrent concern with legislators, from the framing of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 (which sought to prevent violence and intimidation during strikes) to the debate about the Contagious Diseases Acts (which allowed for compulsory medical tests for women suspected of being prostitutes). In fact, it took until 1886 for a Liberal government to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts. But this was in itself partly a reflection of Mill's influence, for he had been struggling with the aims and implications of such legislation when it was introduced, between 1864 and 1869: as Jeremy Waldron has shown, the Victorian philosopher saw a Liberal case *for* the Acts (prevention of harm to the families of the prostitutes' clients), although he opposed them 'on principle'.[14]

Let us now consider Mill's influence as an economist. The late H. C. G. Matthew once observed that the *Principles of Political Economy* (first published in 1848, and subsequently revised many times until 1873) became 'the bible' of mid-Victorian Liberals in all matters pertaining to commerce, industry and social reform. There was in particular Mill's constructive and original approach to the notion of laissez faire, which he conceived as a general 'rule' of good government, but one requiring many 'exceptions'. He listed some of these in the *Principles* and examined others in later writings, for example the essay about land reform in Ireland (1868). In particular, he thought that natural monopolies (such as water supplies and potentially land) should be publicly owned. Likewise, the state or local authorities had a duty to create those infrastructures which private enterprise would not develop because they were too expensive, or because the prospect of any return from the necessary investments was remote. Further

Cartoon mocking Mill's attempt to replace the term 'man' with 'person' in the second Reform Bill of 1867. (*Punch*, 30 March 1867.)



Portrait of Mill by G F Watts

examples were the provision of medical care and education – which Mill thought should be universal and compulsory, although best provided by competing public and private structures, between which citizens could choose.

A further area in which Mill's ideas left their mark on Liberalism was on attitudes to industrial relations. Traditionally, political economists had been very dismissive of trade unions, as organisations whose attempts to influence wages and conditions of employment were at best vain and ineffective and at worst bordering on the criminal. In the earlier part of his career Mill shared such views, but then made a complete U-turn and adopted a decidedly pro-trade union line in 1862. The change came in response to a debate initiated by T. J. Dunning, a trade union leader, with his essay *Trades' Unions and Strikes* (1860), in which he argued that trade unions were a necessary component of a really free labour market. Mill promptly adopted his ideas, and in the 1862 edition of the *Principles* he abandoned the notion that the market was a self-acting mechanism which would operate most perfectly if not interfered with. Instead he argued that

> demand and supply are not physical agencies, which thrust a fixed amount of wages into a labourer's hand without the participation of his own will and actions. The market rate is not fixed for him by some self-acting instrument, but is the result of bargaining between human beings – of what Adam Smith calls 'the higgling of the market'; and those who do not 'higgle' will long continue to pay more than the market prices for the purchases. Still more might poor labourers, who have to do with rich employers, remain long without the amount of wages which the demand for their labour would justify, unless, in vernacular phrase, they stood out for it: and how can they stand out for terms without organised concert? What chance would any labourer have, who struck singly for an advance of wages? How could he even know whether the state of the market admitted of a rise, except by consultation with his fellows, naturally leading to concerted action? I do not hesitate to say that associations of labourers, of a nature similar to trade unions, far from being a hindrance to a free market of labour, are the necessary instrumentality of that free market; the indispensable means of enabling the sellers of labour to take due care of their own interests under a system of competition.[15]

Pace Vincent, this provides a further example of a Liberal intellectual establishing 'a fruitful relation between thought and politics', or at least laying the groundwork for later political developments. In fact, the trade union legislation of 1871–5 (both Liberal and Conservative) was based on Mill's new understanding of a positive and indeed necessary role for the unions. Furthermore, this illustrated a new approach to the development of ideas and concepts which Mill had adopted in the 1850s, or perhaps as early as 1848–9. The change was one of method: as Janice Carlisle has noted, in the 1820s Mill used to '[denounce] so-called "practical men" [such as Dunning] as the most "unsafe" and "bigoted", the "most obstinate and presumptuous of all theorists" because they erect their principles on the "small number of facts which come within the narrow circle of their immediate observation"'.[16] On the contrary, by 1859 he

was operating on a radically different set of assumptions and regarded the relationship between 'men of action' and 'men of thought' as one which ought to be complementary, based on empirical analysis not abstract dogma, and defined by concrete political aims, not abstract intellectual agendas.

In practice this meant an alliance between the professional elites – with their ethic of public service and competence, so different from the entrepreneurial mindset of the industrial middle class – and organised labour. In this way, as Vincent has noted, 'Mill … removed, for those who were willing to listen, any intellectual difficulties that might exist about the merits of State interference in social arrangements. He thought a government might compel universal insurance, though he doubted its expediency. He spoke in favour of State aid to the sea fisheries in Ireland, explaining this was entirely justifiable on general grounds … above all he looked to the cities as the next area for the extension of State action', especially with reference to sanitary conditions and working-class housing.[17]

In an important and as yet unpublished doctoral thesis, Helen McCabe has gone beyond this social-democratic reading of Mill and has persuasively argued that by the time he suddenly died in 1873 he was working on a model of industrial development which would finally bypass the market and its possessive imperatives by focusing on cooperation and industrial democracy.[18] In her view the political thought of the mature Mill represented a form of 'liberal socialism'. As another scholar, Richard Reeves, has recently argued, '[it] was Mill's liberalism that shaped his response to socialism … He was vehemently opposed to centralised state control of the economy, but was a strong supporter of socialism in the form of collective ownership of individual enterprises, competing in a market economy.'[19] These are radical conclusions about a radical thinker, and would require a more detailed scrutiny than I can offer in this article. However, much less controversial – and yet not much less radical – is Vincent's conclusion that '[Mill] was confident that poverty, in any sense implying suffering, might be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society'.[20] It was a vision which fired the imagination and ambitions of the next generations of Liberal economists, including Alfred Marshall (a college lecturer at Cambridge in 1873), J. A. Hobson and John Maynard Keynes, and sustained the Liberal Party well into the second half of the twentieth century.

'[Mill] was confident that poverty, in any sense implying suffering, might be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society'. It was a vision which fired the imagination and ambitions of the next generations of Liberal economists … and sustained the Liberal Party well into the second half of the twentieth century.

Eugenio Biagini is Reader in Modern History at Cambridge and a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. He has published extensively on the history of Liberalism in Britain, Ireland and Italy. His latest book is British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876–1906 *(Cambridge, 2011), which is a study of the way in which the Home Rule crisis affected the debate on democracy and human rights among popular liberals and democrats in the two countries. This paper is a version of one first given at the History Group / LSE / BLPSG seminar on John Stuart Mill in November 2009.*

1 M. St John Packe, *The Life of John Stuart Mill* (London, 1954), p. 400.

2 C. Russell, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Liberalism* (London, 1999), p. 83.

3 S. Collini, *Public Moralists. Political thought and intellectual life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.157–8; Bruce L. Kinzer, Ann P. Robson, John M. Robson *A Moralist in and out of Parliament: John Stuart Mill at Westminster, 1865–1868* (Toronto, 1992), pp.12–3, 21, 88–9.

4 C. Harvie, *The Lights Of Liberalism: University liberals and the challenge of democracy 1860–86* (1976).

5 With the exception of a few remarks in connection with his discussion of Thomas Hare's proportional representation scheme. Most of his criticism focused on the 'first-past-the-post' system. The American caucus did not attract his attention, but he wrote that 'in America electors vote for the party ticket because the election goes by a simple majority' (*The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* [henceforward cited CW], vol. XIX, Toronto and London, 1977, p. 464): again, the problem was with the first-past-the-post system, not with parties. However, in his *Considerations on Representative Government* he indicted the British party system of the time on the ground that candidates were selected by small cliques – 'the attorney, the parliamentary agent, or the half-dozen party leaders', or even worse 'three or four tradesmen or attorneys.' (CW, vol. XIX, pp. 362 and 456 respectively; see also CW, vol. XXVIII, p. 12). Of course, this was precisely one of the problems which Chamberlain boasted of having solved with his broadly representative Liberal association.

6 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, CW, vol. XIX (Toronto and London, 1977), p. 324.

7 Mill, *Considerations*, p. 458.

8 For Mill's elitism see R. J. Halliday, *John Stuart Mill* (London, 1976).

9 'Political address by Mr. Cowen, M.P.', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 February 1885, pp. 2–3.

10 J. Macdonnell, 'Is the caucus a necessity?', *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 44 o.s., vol. 38 n.s. (Dec. 1885), p. 790.

11 Cf. E. F. Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy. John Stuart Mill and the Model of Ancient Athens', in Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community. Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996); Biagini, *Liberty*, pp. 313–5; J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870–1914* (London, 1994), p. 248; and M. Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan. The politics of taxation in Britain 1799–1914* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 256–301.

12 J. Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857–68* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 184.

13 Vincent, *Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 188.

14 J. Waldron, 'Mill on Liberty and the Contagious Diseases Act', in N. Urbinati and A. Zakaras, *J. S. Mill's Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 11–42.

15 J. S. Mill, *The Principles of Political Economy*, in CW, Vol. III (London and Toronto, 1965), p. 932. On the question see E. F. Biagini, 'Trade unions and popular political economy, 1860–1880', *The Historical Journal* 30, 4 (1987), pp. 811–40.

16 J. Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character* (London, 1991), p. 45.

17 Vincent, *Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 191.

18 H. McCabe '"Under the general designation of socialist": the many-sided radicalism of John Stuart Mill', Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 2010.

19 Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill, Victorian Firebrand* (London, 2007), p. 7.

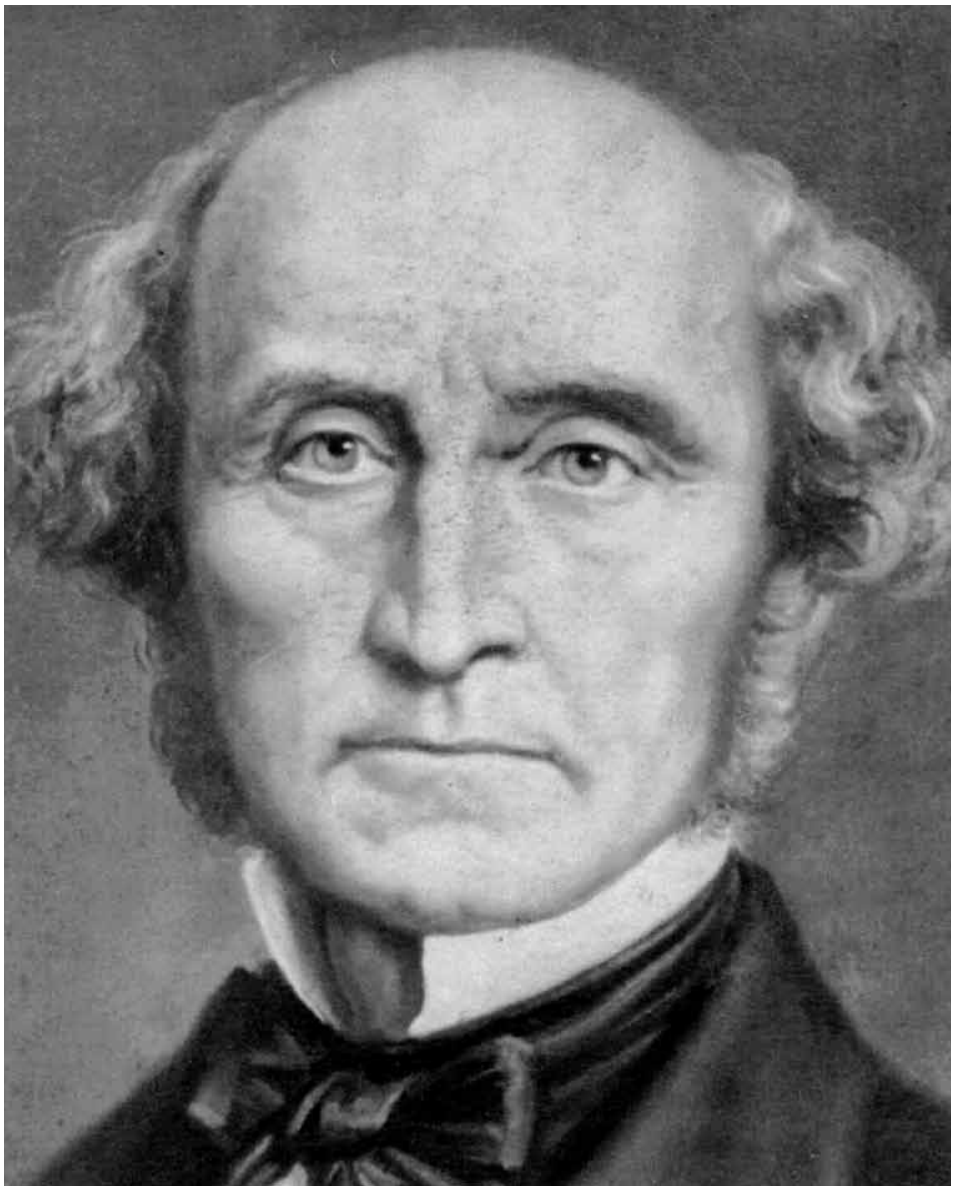
20 Vincent, *Formation of the Liberal Party*, p. 191.

JOHN ST
AS PO

Alan Butt Philip adopts a revisionist approach for this assessment of John Stuart Mill as a politician.

For most of his life Mill was a civil servant in India House, which managed government interests in India, just like his father before him. His long-standing engagement with political debate, economics and political philosophy was undertaken in his spare time.

His published works, some of which are now iconic, were usually the product of discussion among friends, especially with his wife Harriet Taylor, over a period lasting many years. Thus Mill, who used his pen so effectively as his method of shaping politics, came to the real rough and tumble of political campaigning, face to face with the voters and the people, inexperienced and rather late in life.[1]



TUART MILL
LITICIAN

Mill was elected one of two Liberal MPs to sit for the Westminster constituency in 1865 at the age of fifty-nine. His wife had died six years earlier; he had retired from India House; he already had a high public profile in London; and he had time on his hands. The traditional view – and one encouraged by Mill himself – has it that John Stuart Mill was a failure as politician and elected representative. After just three years in the House of Commons he was voted out by the electors of Westminster, just when his party was being swept to power under the leadership of William Gladstone. I will argue that, as a backbench MP, Mill achieved more in his first three years in the Commons than almost any other MP in history – with the possible exception of David Steel.[2]

In any assessment of Mill as a politician, it is necessary to understand the context of politics in the mid-nineteenth century. These were the days of constituencies with small electorates comprised of men with property and income, primarily the educated middle class. While those without votes did play a part in elections, those with votes were prepared to accept a more philosophical and principled approach to politics than would be acceptable today. Mill had been approached to stand as a Liberal candidate for an Irish county seat in the 1850s, but had refused the offer. Even in 1865 he was a reluctant candidate, swayed to stand primarily by the enthusiasm of a number of Westminster electors who petitioned him. But at heart he did not think the voters would want to be represented by someone with his advanced Liberal and radical opinion.[3]

So what kind of a career move was Mill's candidacy and his election as an MP? His reluctance to make this move is clear. He was already a considerable public figure, as a result of his journalistic activities; he had authority, but not charisma. He was not seeking ministerial office, and when Gladstone invited Mill to dine with him shortly after he was elected, Mill turned the invitation down – not exactly the way to win friends and influence those in high places. Gladstone was, in fact, a great admirer of Mill's writings, and his own personally annotated copy of *On Liberty* still exists.[4] Mill saw his role in the House of Commons as being primarily to influence other MPs, shoring up the position of the more advanced Liberals, among whom Mill was happy to be assigned. Mill became known for taking up particular causes, some of which were far from popular, such as his advocacy of female suffrage and his attacks on the policy of coercion against Irish insurgents.

Even in 1865 he was a reluctant candidate … at heart he did not think the voters would want to be represented by someone with his advanced Liberal and radical opinion.

So why was Mill defeated in the 1868 general election? It seems that he had annoyed the Tories in his constituency in describing the Conservative party as, 'by law of its composition, the stupidest party'.[5] Although he was well known for his views on democracy throughout the 1860s, it appears that Mill's endorsement of plural voting (based on level of education) had endeared him to some Tory voters who were later disabused of their sympathy for Mill when he campaigned for the full enfranchisement of working-class men and equal votes for women. But probably the most damaging incident to Mill's chances of re-election was his decision to contribute to the election expenses of the radical atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, who was contesting Northampton for the Liberals. This action scandalised 'polite society' at the time and drew attention to Mill's own atheism, which he well knew did not chime well with the electorate.[6] When offered candidatures in alternative seats to secure re-election to the Commons, Mill turned them down, preferring to enjoy 'a great and fresh … feeling of freedom'.[7]

What, then, did Mill achieve as an MP for a meagre three years? There is no legislation to his name and he held no ministerial office. He was not a particularly strong speaker in the House, preferring to deploy reason rather than rhetoric.

He preferred to be more influential behind the scenes, bringing his arguments to bear on small groups of like-minded MPs or in one-to-one encounters. In today's parlance, the lobby journalists would have branded him a member of the advanced Liberal awkward squad. But his tactics may well have suited the politics of the time. The whips had nowhere near the power and influence they have today. Nor should we forget that the Whig section of the Liberal Party in parliament was still substantial – Mill's own fellow Liberal MP for Westminster, Lord Robert Grosvenor, being an example and a scion of one of the wealthiest landowning families in Britain, owning half of London's West End and most of fashionable Belgravia. Nevertheless, Mill certainly made his mark on several issues. Some of the most striking examples occur in his interventions on the Reform Bill, which sought to widen the franchise and improve the administration of elections. Mill was a firm advocate of full adult suffrage, but did not favour the secret ballot.[8] On the other hand, he did argue strongly that the public purse, rather than the candidates themselves, should bear the costs of organising the ballot in the constituencies. Mill was also one of the earliest advocates of changing the traditional 'first past the post' electoral system to one of proportional representation.[9]

He was also most effective on one or two issues that happened to arise while he was an MP. He was particularly exercised at the possibility that the Royal Parks in London might be declared out of bounds for public demonstrations.[10] Without Mill's timely intervention in 1868, the finale to the one-million-person demonstration against British military intervention in Iraq in 2003 might not have been held in Hyde Park. An even more unpopular cause which Mill took up concerned the extradition of asylum seekers which Disraeli's government proposed in 1866. Mill argued that a civilised society should accept that all human beings had certain rights, including the right to due process and for the courts to examine whether the basis of the proposed extradition was in fact political, in which case it should be refused. The government was shamed into withdrawing its proposals.[11] On other issues, Mill was to take some very farsighted stands. He condemned the excessive violence used by Governor Eyre in Jamaica in trying to suppress a revolt there, and used the British courts to bring out the atrocities done in the name of the Crown. He argued strongly that London, as the national capital, should have its own tier of government. Mill also made himself something of an expert on Irish Land issues and spoke frequently in Irish debates.[12] Unsurprisingly he also spoke out on Indian affairs given his long experience at India House; and he made clear his support for Indian self-government.

But Mill's most lasting achievement was to be the first MP to argue for votes for women on an equal basis to men. The Reform Bill offered him the opportunity to propose amendments to this effect and, although the proposal was very unpopular and soundly defeated, Mill and his friends were delighted to find that they had the support of over eighty MPs in a recorded vote.[13] What Mill cannot have anticipated was that this parliamentary campaign was then to stimulate the setting up of the female suffragist movement outside Westminster, whose struggle was to come to fruition fifty years later. An illuminating side issue is worth highlighting at this point. The major public campaign movement in favour of franchise reform was the Reform League. It was their great demonstration in Hyde Park that Mill had sought to safeguard (see above) and for which he had acted as intermediary to broker a compromise location for the demonstration acceptable to the Metropolitan Police. But Mill always refused to join the Reform League. Why? Because the Reform League, which championed universal suffrage, would not argue for universal suffrage for men *and* women. This tells us something about Mill's stands on principle. He could make compromises on small matters (for example, where to hold a demonstration) but on major matters of principle he was uncompromising.

Accounts of Mill's candidature for the Westminster constituency are full of revealing anecdotes about his behaviour. I take the view that, if John Stuart Mill had applied for approval as a parliamentary candidate for the Liberal Democrats in 2009, his application would have been turned down; first, because he had so little campaigning experience generally; second, because he refused to canvass for votes; and third, because he had never been a local councillor or stood for election previously. Mill was not prepared to tailor his views to the whims of his audience or his electors. When challenged at one public meeting to defend a remark he had made that the working class were liars, he admitted this was his view and explained why he thought that, despite good intentions, the working class often could not avoid telling lies. Mill's questioner said in reply that here was an honest man who deserved his vote.[14] Mill's idiosyncracy as a candidate (in twenty-first-century terms) did not stop there. He always made it clear that he would not canvass the electors for their vote. He took the view that his views were generally well known, as a result of his extensive journalism, and that it was enough for him to address a few public meetings. Moreover he also made it clear that he would not pursue his constituents' private interests, such as seeking positions in the civil service. Nor would he respond to constituent's correspondence unless there were matters of national political or general philosophical significance at stake – in which case he might well correspond at length. Eventually Mill felt compelled to restrict even these activities, as correspondence was taking so much of his time.[15] It was remarked at the time that, with Mill's approach to campaigning, even the Almighty himself would have failed to be elected! To compound matters, Mill also thought it was corrupt to personally contribute funds for his own election. He had no objection to contributing to other candidates' election campaign funds, as in Bradlaugh's case, but he would not seek to bribe his own way into the House of Commons.[16] As noted earlier, Mill was one of two Liberal MPs elected for the Westminster constituency; his fellow MP being on the Whig side of the party, the Liberal ticket was well constructed. By all accounts they appeared to run separate campaigns, raise separate election funds and to have little or nothing to do with each other. When Mill was defeated in 1868 his 'colleague' was elected, but the poll was topped

Mill's most lasting achievement was to be the first MP to argue for votes for women on an equal basis to men.

by the one Tory candidate, W. H. Smith, founder of the chain of high street stationery shops. Smith was to be the subject of an election petition on the grounds that he had grossly overspent on the election, but this petition was ultimately unsuccessful even though the substance of the petition appeared to be justified.[17]

One possible bone of contention between Mill and his electors was the fact that for much of each year he was resident in France, near Avignon, to be as close as possible to the grave of his wife. During the parliamentary sessions, which were shorter than they are now, Mill was in London; outside of these sessions, Mill preferred to go to Avignon if it was worth making the journey. Of course Mill's journalism and other writings could be undertaken from anywhere, but he was clearly not the omnipresent MP attending every conceivable constituency function and networking locally every hour of the day or night.

A more fundamental problem was Mill's lack of religion in an era of high-Victorian morality and a largely middle-class electorate. Mill's approach was not to raise the subject himself and, for the most part, certainly at the 1865 election, his lack of religion was not much of an issue. Mill was clearly a very moral man, even if he was not a Christian, but his atheism did come into play at the 1868 election, even if only by proxy as a result of helping to finance the election campaign of a fellow atheist, Charles Bradlaugh. A more streetwise politician might have refrained from making a public donation to Bradlaugh's campaign, but Mill would not have wished to conceal his support. Bradlaugh, in his view, deserved to be elected an MP. Mill wanted to help financially to achieve this, and thought it was his public duty to do so whatever the political or personal consequences for himself.[18]

In essence, Mill was very much a campaigning parliamentarian whose impact was felt, either at the time or subsequently, on an impressive list of issues. He ensured that the cost of elections fell on the public purse and launched the movement to get votes for women. His legal challenge to Governor Eyre's actions in Jamaica ensured that British colonial administrators were more circumspect before resorting to the violent suppression of demonstrators. His challenge to the government kept the Royal Parks free for use as sites for demonstrations. He launched the parliamentary campaign for proportional representation – still unfulfilled in part. He argued against the suspension of habeus corpus in Ireland as counterproductive in dealing with the violence of the Fenians. He defended the civil rights of minorities, including asylum seekers, when few others would.

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Mill's influence continues to this day – both as a writer and as a parliamentarian. He was and he remains an iconic and uncompromising figure. He has achievements to his credit as a philosopher, as a politician and as a human being. He is renowned for his championship of the application of reason to politics and his ability to apply this to his own political intercourse; and his works still appear on the reading lists of sixth forms and universities. He provided the platform upon which a social liberal political philosophy was developed, much of which underpinned the actions of the great reforming Liberal government of 1906–15. On a personal level, his transparent relationship with Harriet Taylor and the equality he sought between them makes him a thoroughly modern man. I doubt that he was ever to be found doing the washing-up in their kitchen, but by all accounts you would be unlikely to find Harriet doing so either. Mill mourned her early death enormously and paid this tribute to her influence on *On Liberty* in his autobiography:

> The Liberty was more directly and literally our joint production than anything else which bears my name, for there was not a sentence which was not several times gone through by us together … [19]

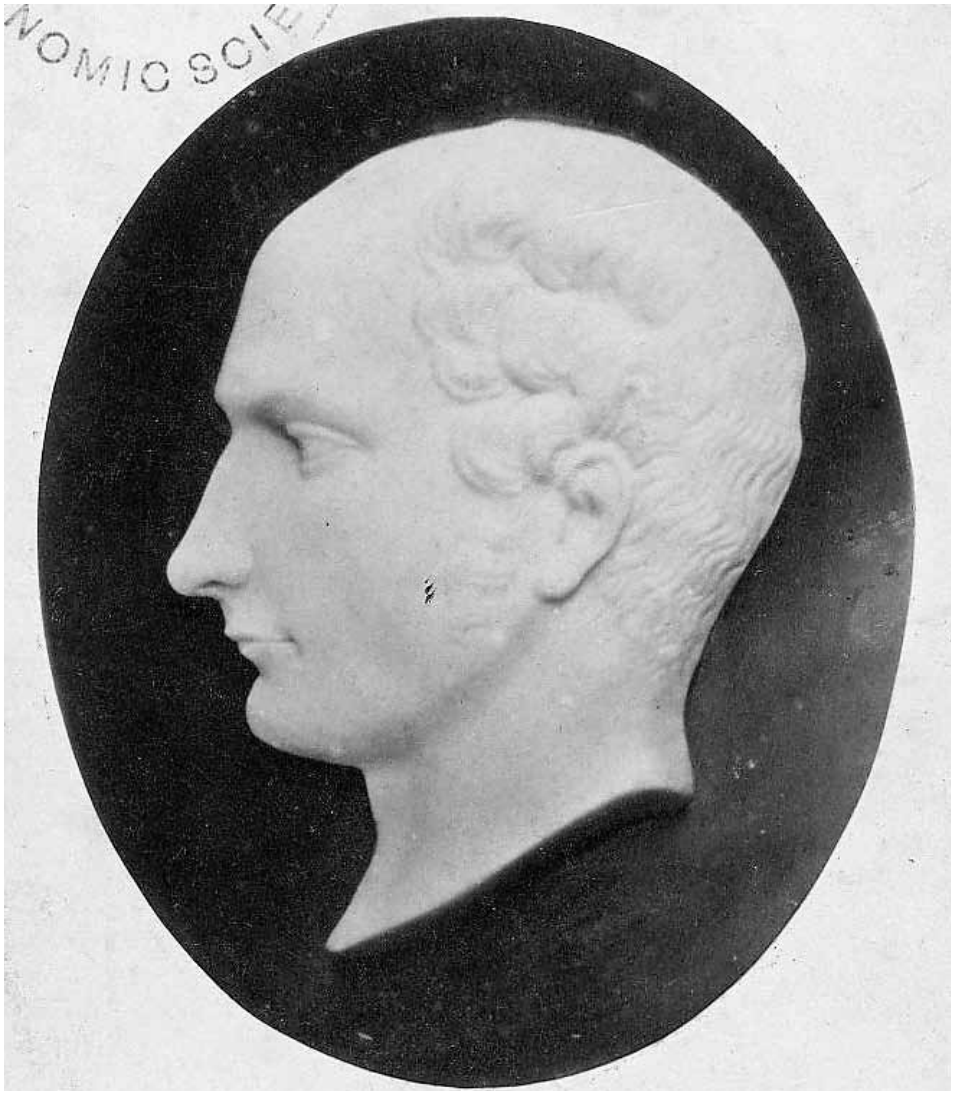
In short, Mill was and is a major influence on British politics and liberalism more generally. He was a man of enormous political courage and of daunting integrity. He was a man of principle who sometimes could compromise on matters of minor importance. When the House of Commons did eventually vote in 1928 to give women the vote on equal terms with men, one of the leaders of the suffragist movement, Millicent Fawcett, insisted to her supporters outside parliament that they must walk immediately to the nearby Embankment so as to pay tribute, at his statue there, to the man who had started their public campaign – John Stuart Mill.[20] I suggest you do not pay heed to Mill's own modesty in discussing his failings as an MP. The record speaks for itself, and I rest my 'revisionist' case.

Alan Butt Philip is Jean Monnet Reader in European Integration at the university of Bath, and has been a Liberal and Lib Dem parliamentary and European candidate on several occasions. *This paper was first given at the History Group / LSE / BLPSG seminar on John Stuart Mill in November 2009.*

1 In preparing this paper I have drawn primarily upon two important sources of information about J. S. Mill. First, Mill's own *Autobiography* is a short but invaluable guide, first published in 1870. Much more recently Richard Reeves's *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (2007) has thrown a great deal of light upon the man and his times.
2 David Steel, later leader of the Liberal Party from 1976–1987, was elected Liberal MP for Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles at a 1965 by-election. In 1967 he drew first place in the ballot of all MPs for parliamentary time to promote new legislation. He chose to sponsor what was to become the Abortion Act 1968 which legalised abortions for the first time, but with certain limits. This was a famous parliamentary battle which continued over many months in both Houses of Parliament and Steel made a national reputation as a new and young MP on the back of this campaign.
3 J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 160.
4 Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand*, p. 377.
5 Mill, op. cit., p. 165.
6 Reeves, op. cit., p. 405 ff.
7 Reeves, op. cit., p. 408.
8 Alan Butt Philip, *John Start Mill and Modern Liberalism*, p. 9.
9 See J. S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861).
10 Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 167.
11 Ibid., p. 171.
12 J. S. Mill, *Chapters and Speeches on the Irish Land Question* (1870).
13 Mill, op. cit., pp. 73–74.
14 Mill, op. cit., pp. 162–3.
15 Mill, op. cit., pp. 174–9.
16 Mill, op. cit., pp. 160–1.
17 Reeves, op. cit., pp. 407–8.
18 Ibid., p. 405.
19 Mill, op. cit., pp. 144–5.
20 Reeves, op. cit., p. 448.

AN ARCHIVIST
THE PAPERS OF JO

The Mill-Taylor Collection at LSE takes up a mere five shelves of volumes and boxes. It seems a small space for such a major figure – particularly when compared with the fourteen shelves of Passfield papers left by Beatrice and Sidney Webb and the even more extensive fifty-five shelves which make up William Beveridge's voluminous papers. The size of the archive is a reflection of the vicissitudes of the archives in the 136 years since Mill's death. By **Sue Donnelly**.



'S NIGHTMARE
OHN STUART MILL

John Stuart Mill died in Avignon in 1873 of erysipelas, a skin condition endemic to the region, and although there were calls for his body to be interred in Westminster Abbey, he was buried in Avignon in the tomb he had had built for his beloved wife, Harriet Taylor Mill. Following his death his stepdaughter, Helen Taylor, continued to live in Avignon, retaining her stepfather's papers and for thirty years after his death refusing all requests to publish his letters:

> I have all my dear step father's letters preserved, looked through from time to time by myself, arranged in order by myself, and left by him in my hands with directions, verbal and written, to deal with them according to my judgement. When the more pressing task of the publication of the mss is completed, I shall, if I live, occupy myself with his correspondence, if I do not live it will be for my literary executors to decide what to do with it.[1]

However, as Helen Taylor grew old and frail, her niece, Mary Taylor, the daughter of Harriet Taylor Mill's second son, Algernon, persuaded her aunt to return to England. Early in 1905 one of Mary's friends, Mary Ann Trimble, who had visited Avignon with Mary Taylor, travelled to France accompanied by a married couple to do:

> … the work of three months in three weeks. Half a ton of letters to be sorted, all manner of rubbish to be separated from useful things, books to be dusted and selected from, arrangements to be made for sale, and 18 boxes to be packed.[2]

Cameo of John Stuart Mill as a young man. (LSE archives, GB97/Mill-Taylor/Box4/57)

On 21–28 May 1905 a book sale was held at Avignon. Some of the books and manuscripts were bought by a local bookseller, Romanille, who sold a volume of manuscripts of minor works to Professor George Herbert Palmer of Harvard. The volume is now MS Eng 1105 in the Houghton Library at Harvard. The dispersal of the Mill-Taylor archive had begun and, although later scholars might strive to bring the papers back together and to create full published editions, the archive used and created by John Stuart Mill was destroyed, never again to be recreated.

After Helen Taylor's death in 1907, the letters were inherited by her niece Mary Taylor. The letters were lent to Hugh S. R. Elliot, with the intention of preparing them for publication. Elliot was the grandson of the 3rd Earl of Minto. He had studied at Cambridge but left before getting a degree, in order to fight in the Boer War. He left the army in 1902, taking up scientific and philosophical studies and later writing on both Herbert Spencer and Henry Bergson. In 1910 a two-volume edition of the letters appeared, published by Longman with an introduction by Elliot and a note on Mill's life by Mary Taylor.[3] Elliott wrote to Lord Courtney, the Liberal peer, in 1910 indicating that the experience had not been an entirely happy one. First of all there were restrictions on which letters could be included:

> As to the private letters of Mill to his wife & daughter, we hesitated for a very long time about them; but Miss Taylor, who is a lady of very peculiar ideas and habits, did not wish them to be published. She has it in her mind to bring out another volume in a few years time, consisting exclusively of Mill's letters to his wife, daughter, and sisters; but wants to delay this until the last of Mill's sisters is dead. Whether it will ever be done, I cannot say. She guards the letters very jealously; and it was only after much

> pressure and persuasion that I was allowed to see them at all.'[4]

It was also clear that Elliot and Mary Taylor had disagreed violently over the role of Harriet Taylor Mill and Helen Taylor in Mill's life, which had led to Mary Taylor adding her own account of Mill's personal life to the volume, as Elliot described in a letter to Leonard Courteney:

> As to her published introduction, following mine in the book, it was entirely an afterthought. In the study of the private letters, I formed a very unfavourable opinion both of Mrs Mill and of Miss Helen Taylor. It appeared to me that they were both selfish and somewhat conceited women, and that Mill (who must have been a very poor judge of character) was largely deceived with regard to them. Of course I could not state my views openly in a book which is published by Miss Taylor at her own expense. But in my original introduction, I found it impossible to allude to the women without unconsciously conveying into my language some suggestion of what I thought. To this Miss Mary Taylor took the strongest possible exception. I reconsidered the whole matter, but found myself unable to speak any more favourably of them than I had done. For some days Miss Taylor declined even to see me, and we were completely at a deadlock, but at last it was agreed that I should omit all mention of Mill's private life and that Miss Taylor should herself write a second introduction (for which I took no responsibility) and say what she liked. I did not greatly care for her contribution, but it was a necessary compromise.[5]

The letter also mentions a proposed new edition of the *Autobiography* but there were problems in obtaining access to the manuscript from Mary Taylor. The next edition appeared in 1924 after the first sale of manuscripts.

Mary Taylor appears to have worked on a volume of family letters helped by Elizabeth Lee, sister of Sir Sidney Lee who had written an article on Helen Taylor in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. By

'As to the private letters of Mill to his wife & daughter, we hesitated for a very long time about them; but Miss Taylor, who is a lady of very peculiar ideas and habits, did not wish them to be published.'

1918, it seems there was a typescript and Mary Taylor was in negotiation with Longmans, Green & Company through a literary agent, A. P. Watts. But the reasons for the failure to publish were lost with the destruction of the archives of the publishers, agents and Mary Taylor's solicitors in the London blitz. Hayek, in his introduction to the *Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill*, reports that Mary Taylor suffered a nervous breakdown, accompanied by insomnia and illusions. She was sectioned and committed to an institution, Northumberland House, in March 1918. She died in the November.

With the death of Mary Taylor, the family papers passed into the hands of her executors, the National Provincial Bank, who, on the report of Mr P. W. Sergeant, decided to sell most of the material at auction, although the more personal material was felt inappropriate for public sale. The first sale took place on 29 March 1922 with the papers being split into lots. The total return from the sale was £276 17*s*. – £200 of which was raised by the purchase of a set of seventy-seven letters from Thomas Carlyle to Mill by the Trustees of Carlyle House. Most of the lots were bought by various London booksellers, and many of the manuscripts now in US libraries derive from this sale. A further fourteen lots were sold on 27 June 1927 (the gap between the sales is unexplained), mainly consisting of letters to Mill. The purchasers included Yale University Library and the economist John Maynard Keynes.

The archive was no more; it was scattered around the globe, some items to be preserved and others to be lost forever. Harold Laski bought manuscripts of Mill's early speeches for two guineas, then sold two of the manuscripts to recoup the money, published others, and gave many away to friends and institutions without keeping any record of distribution. Josiah Stamp bought Mill's letters to Theodore Gomperz, the Austrian philosopher. After Stamp was killed in an air raid in 1941, the letters were thought lost until they turned up in Japan in 1989.

The LSE bought its first batch of Mill Taylor papers in 1926 from the London bookseller Ridgill Trout for £25. The purchase included letters, notebooks, diaries, and texts of articles and speeches. Most of the correspondence belonged to Helen Taylor, including letters relating to her role as Mill's literary executor. The papers were seen as a collection and Geoffrey Allen, in an article on the Manuscript Collections in the British Library of Political and Economic Science published in 1960, described them as having 'no archival unity'.[6]

From 1926 onwards the Library bought Mill-related materials either singly or in groups as they came on the market, although the Library's acquisitions register only begins to indicate regular purchases and gifts from 1943 onwards. Professor Hayek advertised widely for information about Mill letters in the hopes of publishing an edition which finally became *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: their correspondence and subsequent marriage*.[7] Sadly, by its publication in 1951, Hayek had left LSE and the letters he had collected were given to Francis Mineka at Cornell University.

In 1943 the National Provincial Bank presented the Library with seventy items relating to the family, probably the items deemed inappropriate for public sale in 1922. In the same year, Philippa Fawcett donated forty-two letters between Mill and her father, Henry Fawcett. Presumably concerns about war damage were leading owners to consider the future of their collections. After the war, King's College Cambridge donated the letters bought at the 1927 auction by Lord Keynes, which had passed to King's College on his death in 1946. Lord Keynes had intended to pass the letters to LSE, and King's College generously followed his wishes. The 271 letters included correspondence between Harriet and Helen Taylor and between Mill and Helen Taylor, and letters from the actress Fanny Stirling to Harriet Mill and Helen Taylor.

By 1999 the Library had recorded forty-one separate deposits of Mill papers and correspondence. The late 1940s and 1950s were a particularly active time, with papers being bought from dealers in London and North America. Prices varied enormously. The smallest sum paid was 8*s*. 6*d*. for James McCosh's letters concerning his *An Examination of Mr J. S. Mill's Philosophy*, bought from

Eric Malden of Southwold, and the most expensive was £41 paid for thirteen autograph letters in 1949. Although later, in 1969, the Library paid £55 for a letter to Mill from Frederic Hill, the prison inspector and social reformer, included in the purchase of some Kropotkin letters.

The Library's last purchase was in 1999, when it bought seven letters from John Stuart Mill to William Molesworth relating to the London Review. The letters were purchased for £11,000 from the Pencarrow Collection, which was sold at Sotheby's. The bidding on that occasion was slightly lower than expected, perhaps because the Mill items were overshadowed by a newly discovered Beethoven quartet movement and a previously unknown letter by Charlotte Bronte. The purchase was supported generously by the Friends of the National Libraries and V& A Purchase Grant Fund.

Despite its lack of staff devoted solely to working with manuscripts, the Library began work on its first deposits very swiftly. In June 1925, the Library and Research Committee minutes note that work had begun on sorting the '100s of letters and manuscript notes by Mill and Helen Taylor'.[8] The correspondence included names such as G. O.Trevelyan, Henry Hyndman, George Holyoake and Sir Edwin Chadwick. There were also photographs of Mill, his passport and several university diplomas.

In 1934 the Library's Annual Report announced the completion of the project: the material had been arranged and indexed and the catalogue and index of names was now available to researchers. At the same time, the individual items had been mounted on guard strips and then bound into volumes. Known as guarding and filing, this was a method of ensuring security and was very popular into the 1970s and 1980s; sadly it makes it extremely difficult to copy or scan the collection, and today we have to use a microfilm edition of the archive if readers want to make any copies.

This work remains the core of the current catalogue and access to the collections. By the 1990s, however, it was becoming apparent that, although the catalogue provided a very detailed guide to individual items, it was not very helpful in providing an overview of the collection. This was rectified in 2000, as part of the AIM25 programme to improve access to archives and manuscripts within university archives in London, with the writing of a detailed collection description giving researchers the background to the collection and an overview of its contents. The full catalogue and its index was published online as part of the online Archives Catalogue in 2008 allowing full searching of people, places, dates and enabling researchers to trace connections between the Mill-Taylor Collection and other archives held at LSE and elsewhere.

During the war the Library was concerned about the possibility of bomb damage to its collections and the depredations of the Air Ministry, who had taken over the LSE building on Houghton Street (apparently all the maps and foreign language dictionaries disappeared). So it arranged for the Mill material to be evacuated to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. In 1943 Professor Hayek, then working on his volume of correspondence between Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, realised that he needed to see some of the volumes which had been sent away. The Rockefeller Foundation was funding the project and encouraged the employment of refugee scholars from Europe. Hayek's research assistant, Ruth Borchardt, was just such a refugee scholar and Hayek was keen to continue the work and make the most of the opportunity. The Library knew that the Mill items were held within cases V and XI, but unfortunately the volumes had been wrapped – unlabelled – in bitumen paper and air sealed. The Library Committee agreed that it was too much to ask the National Library of Wales to go through the crates, so a member of staff was despatched to Aberystwyth to bring them all back.[9]

So why did the LSE become a prime location for Mill papers? The development of the collection has often been linked to the Hayek's involvement with the archive at LSE between 1932 and 1950. Hayek was certainly a member of the Library and Research Committee during the 1930s, but Sam Brittain, in his biography of Hayek in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, indicates that it was only during the LSE's evacuation to Cambridge that Hayek became seriously interested in the Mill correspondence.

In fact the first acquisition of Mill papers, made six year prior to Hayek's arrival at LSE, was probably inspired more by the then current interest in Mill's role in the development of socialism. The chair of the Library and Research Committee in 1926 was Sidney Webb, who had first had the vision of creating a library for the social sciences in 1896. Over thirty years earlier, in *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889), Webb had claimed that:

> The publication of John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy* in 1848 marks conveniently the boundary of the old individualistic economics. Every edition of Mill's book became more and more socialistic …

And that

> This is the programme to which a century of industrial revolution has brought the Radical working man. Like John Stuart Mill, though less explicitly, he has turned from mere political Democracy to a complete, though unconscious, Socialism.[10]

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Also on the committee was LSE Governor, the publisher, Thomas Fisher Unwin, whose was also chair of the political and economic committee of the National Liberal Club, and Treasurer of the Cobden Club, and a likely supporter of the purchase of Mill's papers for the Library. And of course there was Harold Laski, who had joined LSE in 1920 as a lecturer in government and who was an active member of Library Committee during the 1920s. Laski believed there was much to learn from Mill, particularly with regard to the balance between the power of the state and the rights of the individual. The *Grammar of Politics*,[11] the first edition of which was published in 1926 by Allen and Unwin, expressed Laski's belief that socialism was the best defence for the individual against the state and when *Liberty in the Modern State*[12] was published in 1930 the *Times* reviewer called it the greatest defence of liberty since John Stuart Mill.

Beyond the Library and Research Committee, others at LSE also valued the work of Mill. The sociologist, Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, who had been appointed to the first chair of Sociology at the London School of Economics in 1907, wrote in his 1906 *Liberalism and Other Writings*[13] that:

> In middle life voluntary cooperation appeared to [Mill] the best … but towards the close he recognized that his change of views was such as, on the whole to rank him with the socialists, and the brief exposition of the Socialist ideal given in his Autobiography remains perhaps the best summary statement of Liberal Socialism that we possess.

Although just how far Mill was actually committed to some form of socialism is clearly open to debate, for the purposes of this article it is clear that in the inter-war years many linked him to the development of socialism, making him an interesting subject to those working at the School.

Nevertheless, the later gifts and purchases of Mill-related correspondence and papers made between 1943 and 1950 were most likely influenced by Hayek's interest in Mill, and by the time Hayek moved on to Chicago in 1950 the collection was of a size to generate its own dynamic for growth, although over the years the opportunities for adding to the archive have diminished. Today the Mill-Taylor Collection comprises fifty-nine volumes and fifteen boxes of material. The title of the collection reflects its composition, in that the correspondence of John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor Mill and Helen Taylor are all well represented. There are notebooks, drafts of articles, speeches and press cuttings.

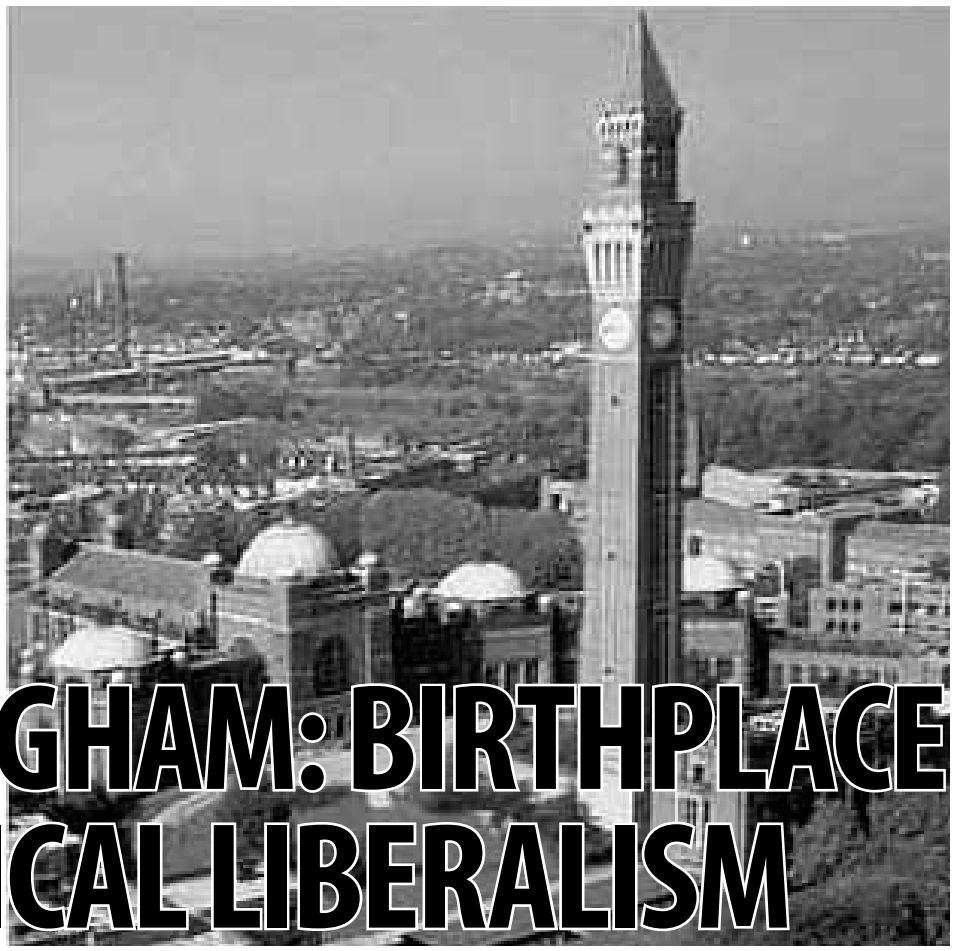
So, today, who uses the letters and papers in the Archive's Reading Room? Despite the availability of the immense and encyclopaedic *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* edited by J. M. Robson and the microfilm edition of the papers held at LSE, the papers are regularly requested by researchers in the Archive's Reading Room. The last major piece of work based on the papers was focused on Harriet Taylor Mill, and one of the most poplar subjects is the development of nineteenth-century feminism, with requests to see Harriet Taylor's writings and to read Helen Taylor's correspondence. Other enquiries refer to James Mill, links with America and Ireland, political representation and, perhaps most bizarrely, the history of passports.

An archivist's nightmare: papers scattered across the globe, bound in unwieldy volumes and gathered together in a piecemeal way. However, even those who are working happily from the printed editions would do well to spend an afternoon in the Archive – to see the handwriting, touch the pages and feel the connection.

Sue Donnelly is Archivist at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The Archive holds significant Liberal-related materials including the archives of the Liberal Party and the papers of William Beveridge. This paper was first given at the History Group / LSE / BLPSG seminar on John Stuart Mill in November 2009.

1 GB97/Mill-Taylor/53 item 58, Note by Helen Taylor, after death of John Stuart Mill, expressing her wishes with regard to the publication of his correspondence.
2 GB97/Mill-Taylor/58 item 4, Mary Taylor's diary.
3 *Letters of John Stuart Mill* (London, 1910), edited by H. S. R. Elliot.
4 GB97/Letter Collection/3/ff 120–123, Letter from Hugh S. R. Elliot to Leonard Courtney, 1st Baron Penwith.
5 GB97/Letter Collection/3/ff 123, Letter from Hugh S. R. Elliot to Leonard Courtney, 1st Baron Penwith.
6 Geoffrey Allen, 'Manuscript Collections in the British Library of Political and Economic Science', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 2, no. 2, October 1960.
7 Friedrich A. Hayek, *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: their correspondence and subsequent marriage* (London, 1951).
8 GB97/LSE/10/8 Library and Research Committee minutes, 29 June 1926.
9 GB97/LSE/10/10 Library Committee, April 1940.
10 Sidney Webb, *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (London, 1889).
11 Harold Laski, *Grammar of Politics* (London, 1926).
12 Harold Laski, *Liberty in the Modern State* (London, 1930).
13 L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism and Other Writings* (London, 1906).

Cllr Paul Tilsley continues the *Journal*'s series in which well-known Liberal Democrats take a look at the Liberal heritage of their home town.



BIRMINGHAM: BIRTHPLACE OF RADICAL LIBERALISM

Birmingham has a long and distinguished history of Liberalism – from the municipal pioneer and national statesman Joseph Chamberlain, to the formation of the National Liberal Federation and historic events such as David Lloyd George fleeing the town hall dressed as a police constable. Indeed, in my view, Birmingham has a good claim to be considered the birthplace of community politics, and now, for the first time in generations, Liberal Democrats are part of the Progressive Partnership which currently controls the city council. Birmingham therefore can be seen to have a Liberal tradition that runs from the 1832 Reform Act, which gave it separate representation in the House of Commons, to the current day.

Chamberlain

Many famous Liberals hailed from Birmingham, or represented the city in Parliament, or both; they include John Bright, whose biography is included in this issue of the *Journal*. An even more recognisable Birmingham Liberal is Joseph Chamberlain, who was first elected to the City Council for St Paul's Ward in 1869 and was the town's mayor between 1873 and 1876. He entered parliament in June 1876 and was an innovative political thinker and organiser who gave the Liberal Party a radical agenda of constitutional and social reforms.

Chamberlain's greatest achievement in the town was undoubtedly the municipalisation of essential public services which, without question, improved the living conditions and life chances of Birmingham's people. The city's water supply was considered a danger to public health – half the population was dependent on well water, much of which was polluted by sewage. Recognising the rising death rate from contagious diseases in the city, in 1876 Chamberlain forcibly purchased Birmingham's waterworks for £1,350,000 and created the Birmingham Corporation Water Department, explaining to a House of Commons Committee that the intention was to improve the health of Birmingham people, not to make a profit. Chamberlain also established a municipal gas supply company, which made a profit of £34,000 in its first year of operation. He promoted the development of libraries, swimming pools and schools, and a number of new parks were opened to cater for the recreational needs of the city's inhabitants. In short, he was a radical and great Liberal who made Birmingham 'the best governed city in the world'.

The Joseph Chamberlain Memorial Clock Tower, University of Birmingham

However, Chamberlain believed strongly in the Union of Great Britain and Ireland and did not support Gladstone's policy of Irish home rule. In 1886, Chamberlain formed the Liberal Unionists, who entered into alliance with and then merged with the Conservatives (hence the term Conservative and Unionist). The Liberal Unionist defection broke the Liberal party, which later led to much antagonism between David Lloyd George and the Chamberlain family.

Left: Highbury Hall, home of Joseph Chamberlain. below: cartoon of Lloyd George dressed as a policeman, escaping from Birmingham Town Hall.

Chamberlain's first home in Edgbaston was known as the 'smokery and talkery'. His second home, Highbury Hall in Moseley, was refurbished in the 1980s following its use as a home for the elderly. The refurbished Highbury Hall is open to the public on certain days. The building is well worth a visit (if open) when visiting Birmingham, as his library/study is still in its original state. For more information see www.birmingham.gov.uk/highbury.

Creation of the National Liberal Federation

The Liberal Party as a democratic body was created in Birmingham in 1877 at the inaugural conference of the National Liberal Federation at Bingley Hall. The objective of the new federation was to promote Liberalism by encouraging the formation of new associations and the strengthening and democratising of existing local Liberal parties. The conference was chaired by Joseph Chamberlain and addressed by William Gladstone, who had resigned as Liberal Party leader two years earlier, but who was to return as prime minister in 1880 and lead the party for a further fourteen years.

The federation was a representative body of local Liberal associations, providing a forum for democratic debate and policy making. Before this the Liberal party existed primarily as a parliamentary body and a series of local organisations. The federation's creation was part of the development of political organisation following the 1867 Reform Act. It could occasionally be a thorn in the side of the party leadership, who did not consider its decisions binding on them. Bingley Hall therefore can be considered the first home of Liberal Assemblies. It was demolished in the 1980s and replaced by the International Conference Centre, where Liberal Democrat conferences are, once again, now held.

PC Lloyd George

One of the most notorious political events to take place in Birmingham was at the Town Hall in 1901 when David Lloyd George came to make a speech against the Boer War. The mood of the crowd outside was ugly, and the audience would not let him speak. Violence erupted and Lloyd George had to be smuggled out of the Town Hall dressed as a policeman. It was Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists who were responsible for organising the hostile crowd.

The Library of Birmingham in Centenary Square has copies of the front page of the *Birmingham Dispatch* of 19 December 1901, which reports on the aftermath of the near riot. They also have a postcard which was produced depicting Lloyd George dressed as PC 87. This card is in perfect condition, unlike the one on display at the Lloyd George museum in Llanystumdwy. I understand that these are available to view at the Library, provided that advance arrangements are made.

An 85-year wait for a Liberal MP and a 30-year wait for a Liberal councillor

Unfortunately, Liberals in Birmingham have only secured two MPs in recent history – Wallace Lawler in 1969 and John Hemming in 2005. You have to go back to 1885 to find the last previous Liberal MP, Thomas Cook, who was elected to serve as the member for the Birmingham East constituency.

Wallace Lawler was a pioneer of community politics who won the Ladywood by-election of 1969 but lost the seat in the 1970 general election to his Labour rival from the by-election, Doris Fisher. He was first elected as a city councillor in 1962 for the Newtown Ward and was initially the only Liberal councillor on the city council – the last

10 May 1962: Cllr Wallace Lawler being congratulated by Sidney Caro (President, Birmingham Liberals) on his election to Birmingham City Council, the first Liberal councillor for twenty-five years

previous Liberal to be elected to the Birmingham council had been in 1939. His local council success was followed by Liberals gaining council seats in the adjoining wards of Aston and Dudeston during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Lawler gained his council and parliamentary seat by tackling community problems and issues. He also championed the underprivileged and took up their concerns over housing, homelessness, and social upheaval. His campaigns included an 80,000-signature petition to the prime minister complaining about the increase in electricity prices. He also arranged a protest demonstration of Birmingham pensioners, who travelled to London to hand in letters at 10 Downing Street. Wallace Lawler not only recognised that community campaigning was important but saw that it was an excellent way to engage people and secure the election of additional Liberal councillors.

In 1970 the Liberal Party assembly adopted community politics as an electoral approach and I contend that the art of community politics was developed and first practiced in Birmingham by Wallace. Twenty years after Wallace Lawler's election to the council, I can recall David Penhaligon at a Liberal Assembly urging would-be councillors to use Wallace's campaigning techniques with the following advice: 'if you've got something to say put it on a piece of paper and push it thorough someone's letterbox'. Wallace Lawler's approach paid great dividends not only in Birmingham but throughout the country.

The seventies and beyond

Although they continued to hold council seats in Aston, Newtown & Duddeston, Liberals only gained two further wards in the 1960s and '70s: All Saints and Rotton Park. These five wards were all within the inner city. With the redrawing of ward boundaries in the early 1980s, Liberals lost their former inner-city strongholds. This brought a change of emphasis, with a move to campaigning in the outer wards of the city.

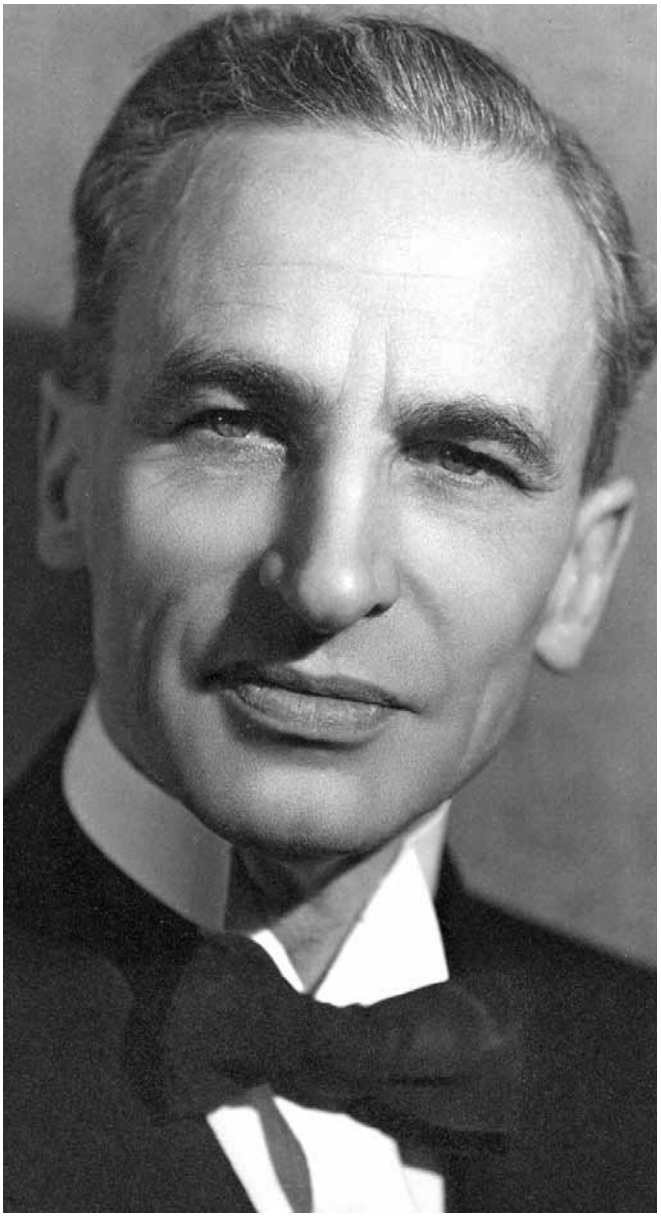
One of the former inner-city Liberal councillors, Bill Doyle – who was an young activist during the Lawler years – was selected to fight the Yardley ward, which he won at the first attempt in 1984. Liberals, by then standing under the Alliance banner and then as Liberal Democrats, started to develop a power base in Yardley. Lib Dems won the three Yardley seats, followed by the three seats in Sheldon and Acocks Green; eventually, as a result of this community campaigning, the parliamentary seat fell to John Hemming in 2005.

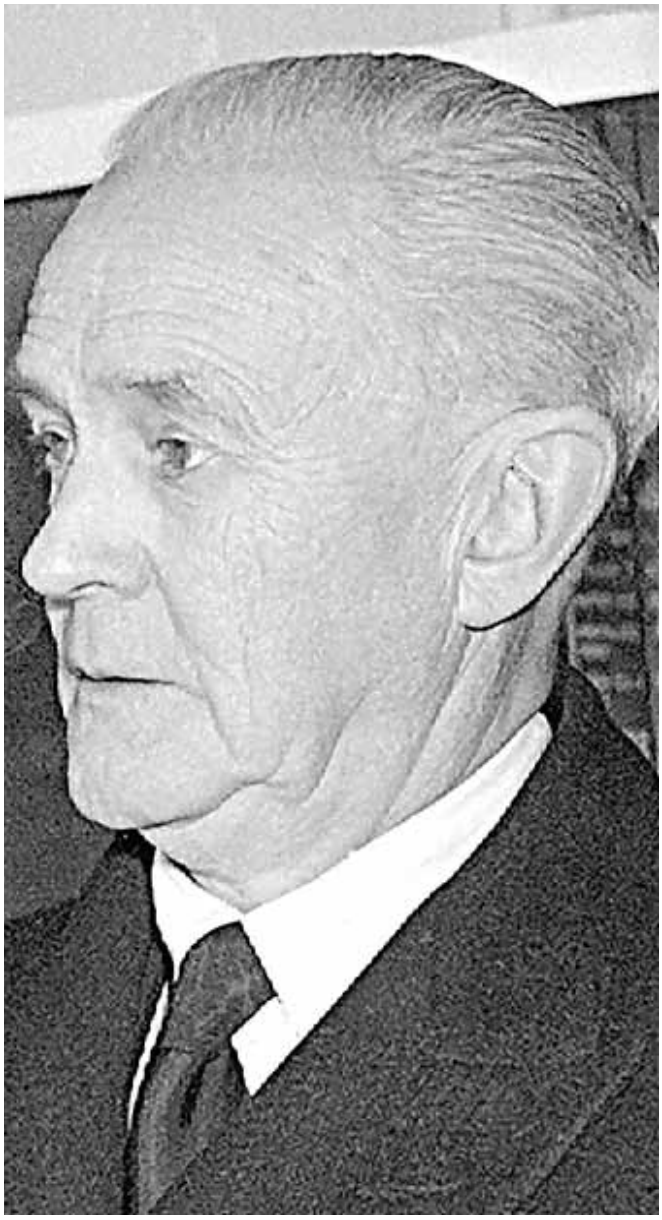
Citywide, Liberal Democrats have controlled the council in a progressive partnership with the Conservatives since 2004, and currently the Liberal Democrat group has thirty-one members. We have come a long way since 1962, and I am still here having first been elected in 1968 during the Wallace Lawler era.

Paul Tilsley is leader of the Liberal Democrat group on Birmingham City Council and deputy leader of the council.

ARCHIE A

Dr J. Graham Jones examines the political and personal relationship between Clement Davies, leader of the Liberal Party, 1945–56, and his predecessor Sir Archibald Sinclair, later Viscount Thurso, who led the party from 1935 until 1945.





ND CLEM

Archibald Henry Macdonald Sinclair was born in London on 22 October 1890, the son of a lieutenant in the Scots Guards, and was educated at Eton College and Sandhurst before entering the army in 1910 in the 2nd Life Guards. The death of his paternal grandfather in 1912 saw his succession to the baronetcy and inheritance of a large estate exceeding 100,000 acres at the northernmost tip of Scotland. Throughout the World War I he served with some distinction, forming a close bond of friendship with Winston Churchill, with whom he served in the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers in 1916. After the hostilities were over, Sinclair served as Churchill's military secretary at the War Office from 1919 to 1921, and subsequently at the Colonial Office until 1922. While at the War Office he played an important role in the British attempts to nip the Bolshevik revolution in the bud.

In 1922 Sinclair was elected to parliament as the 'National Liberal' (pro-Lloyd George) MP for Caithness and Sutherland, which he continued to represent until his shock defeat in the general election of July 1945. Also in 1922 his old ally and mentor Churchill was defeated at Dundee. Sinclair soon became a prominent, highly regarded backbench MP, lending support and advice on policy revision – especially in relation to land and agricultural policy formulation – to Lloyd George when he returned to lead the party following Asquith's final retirement in October 1926. He also spared no effort to urge LG to continue dipping into the infamous Lloyd George Fund to sustain their impoverished party.[1] In November 1930, a period of deep-rooted division and acrimony in the ranks of the Parliamentary Liberal Party, Sinclair rather reluctantly succeeded Sir Robert Hutchison as the party's chief whip in the House of Commons. He pleaded with Liberal MPs henceforth to behave less erratically and to attempt to act in greater unison, advice which was totally ignored by his parliamentary colleagues. His party had indeed by this time almost totally collapsed as a political force capable of acting unitedly. The PLP had become little more than a disorganised rabble. A dejected Sinclair spelled out the nub of the dilemma which faced him daily: 'I am all for the party being independent and having a mind of its own, but if individual members claim the same right, it is impossible for us to work effectively in the House of Commons'.[2] In March 1931, in a vote on a motion introduced by the Labour government to abolish all the university constituencies, official Liberal policy was to support the motion. But only nineteen Liberal MPs did so: ten voted against, and there was also a large number of Liberal abstentions.[3] Consequently the motion was narrowly defeated in the House by just four votes, too bitter a pill for Sinclair to swallow. The chief whip promptly resigned. Some Liberal MPs rejoiced at the sudden departure of their chief whip whose approach they had considered to be rather heavy-handed. One of these was E. Clement Davies, the rather politically low-profile Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, who was later to condemn what he had regarded as 'the lash of Sinclair'.[4]

Sir Archibald Sinclair (1890–1970) and Clement Davies (1884–1962)

At the time of the financial and constitutional crisis of August 1931, Sinclair took the view of the Samuelite Liberal MPs that the so-called national government should be supported as a temporary expedient but that the long-term independence of the Liberal Party should be protected at all costs. As a committed Scottish home ruler, he accepted the position of Secretary of State for Scotland, initially outside the Cabinet, one of several Liberal ministerial appointments at this point, including Herbert Samuel as Home Secretary and the Marquis of Reading (formerly Rufus Isaacs) as Foreign Secretary. In the further Cabinet reshuffle which followed the October general election, Sinclair's position was promoted to Cabinet rank, now one of twenty such ministers. The following January, Sinclair was one of four free trade ministers who could not agree to the need to accept a policy

of protective tariffs; however their widely expected resignation from the government was prevented by the adoption of the so-called 'agreement to differ'.[5] By this time, Sinclair was widely viewed, together with Samuel, as constituting the Liberal 'high command'. Sinclair had undoubtedly savoured his first taste of ministerial office, but agreed totally with Samuel that the independence of their party and the ultimate restoration of free trade should be their top priorities. Both men were also painfully conscious that their party's future development was ever likely to be jeopardised by its chronic financial problems, now exacerbated still further by the drying up of handouts from the Lloyd George Fund which had hitherto provided resources to pay for some two-thirds of the recurrent annual running costs of the party's parliamentary organisation. Following the inevitable severe financial strain of the recent general election, Sinclair warned Samuel, 'Unless certain steps are taken immediately we shall be unable to maintain the present structure of the Party – apart from any question of enlarging or strengthening it'.[6]

During the high summer of 1932, Sinclair's Caithness home was the venue for a protracted series of deliberations which ultimately led to the resignation from the government of the Samuelite Liberals in September – as a protest against the conclusion of the so-called Ottawa agreements. This grand gesture, however, still left them in an extremely anomalous position. They were no longer part of the national government, and yet they still continued to occupy the government benches in the House of Commons. In the country at large, the party's rank-and-file supporters grew ever more restive and unhappy. Herbert Samuel feared the loss of further Liberal MPs to the other political parties, while Sinclair grew ever more concerned at their manifestly ill-defined identity, warning his leader, 'The longer we remain in our present position, the more inglorious, embarrassing and insignificant it becomes. Our speeches of criticism of the government and manifestos of Liberal policy will make no impression so long as it lasts; and while it is true that it would be disastrous to go into opposition at a time and manner that commanded no public interest or support, I doubt if we can remain where we are for long without witnessing the complete disintegration of the party'.[7] Samuel could only – reluctantly – concur with Sinclair's pessimistic assessment. He conceded that, if the current state of affairs continued, 'The party would fade away'.[8] On 16 November, Samuel made a broadcast speech which was a broad attack on the National Government's policies and recent conduct, and announced his followers' intention belatedly to cross the floor of the House of Commons. But, inevitably, not all of them followed him to the opposition benches.[9]

The party projected an increasingly conservative image, being identified with free trade and an outdated economic outlook – in such striking contrast to the Liberal summer school movement of the 1920s and the dramatic (if ultimately abortive) revival led so flamboyantly by Lloyd George in 1927–29.

Herbert Samuel had walked a political tightrope with great skill and diplomacy, but in the general election of November 1935 he went down to defeat at Darwen. In his Caithness and Sutherland constituency, where the Labour Party resolved not to put up a candidate against him, Sir Archibald Sinclair easily defeated his sole opponent William Bruce, a Liberal National, by 12,071 votes to 4,621. His was evidently one of the safest Liberal seats in the whole of the country. Following the general election, Lloyd George (still heading his tiny parliamentary grouping of just four MPs – all of them members of his own family – and consequently somewhat estranged from the mainstream Liberal Party) was persuaded to preside over the first meeting of the newly elected Liberal MPs – although he still adamantly refused to stand for the chairmanship of the Parliamentary Liberal Party. On LG's proposal, Sinclair was elected the new Liberal Party leader in succession to Samuel on 26 November 1935. Again rather reluctantly, he accepted, as the natural successor. Still aged only forty-five, he had sat in parliament continuously since 1922 and had already served in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Scotland and as his party's chief whip. The new party chief whip, Sir Percy Harris, who generally respected Sinclair, wrote in his reminiscences, 'On service subjects and foreign affairs he [Sinclair] speaks effectively, but he is not so strong on social problems in which he lacks experience'.[10]

The new leader undoubtedly faced a tough, uphill task. The Liberal Party was profoundly demoralised, it had lost several seats in by-elections since 1931, and in November 1935 just twenty-one mainstream Liberal MPs were returned. The party projected an increasingly conservative image, being identified with free trade and an outdated economic outlook – in such striking contrast to the Liberal summer school movement of the 1920s and the dramatic (if ultimately abortive) revival led so flamboyantly by Lloyd George in 1927–29. The radical initiative was not totally forgotten. It was expressed in Ramsay Muir's *The Liberal Way* published in 1934 and again in Lloyd George's quasi-sensational 'New Deal' proposals (modelled on those of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the USA) which were unveiled to his Bangor constituents in January 1935. But such worthy initiatives were by now very much on the periphery of the Liberal Party; they did not occupy the centre ground. Sinclair, an astute, experienced politician, was fully sensitive to the array of interrelated difficulties powerfully undermining his party's well-being. In the wake of the announcement of Lloyd George's 'New Deal' proposals in January, he had repeatedly warned Samuel, 'There is real danger that the Liberal Party may cease to be regarded as an effective political force'. The ongoing chronic lack of financial resources and deficiency of personnel together had rendered it nigh on impossible to 'maintain … activities at a high level of intensity over a prolonged period'. Consequently he considered it imperative that the party 'make a big effort to arrest public attention and to arouse the fighting spirit of Liberals in the country by dramatic announcements and skilful publicity'.[11] Problems at the centre had been compounded by a poor showing by the Liberal Party in successive local government elections. There was obviously to be no quick fix for the new party leader of November 1935. Bravely, he set up a Liberal Organisation Commission under Lord Weston to examine ways of re-establishing the ailing party, while the new Liberal Chief Whip Sir Percy Harris won the battle that the independent Liberals (rather than Simon's National Liberals) should be granted use of

the Whip's Office at the House of Commons – a modest symbolic triumph. The ultimate goal of a Liberal government had been restored.

British political life from the middle of the decade was dominated by the situation in Europe. Sinclair and most of the party lent support to a policy of collective security via the League of Nations while pressing for a strong air force and secure defences. They were generally opposed to appeasement. This genuine middle way was also reflected in Churchill's campaign for 'arms and the covenant'. Indeed, the rapport between Sinclair and Churchill continued as they both roundly condemned the Munich agreement of 1938. Sinclair faced a great deal of abuse during the late 1930s both inside and outside the House of Commons and was frequently accused of being a 'warmonger'. At the beginning of the war he refused the offer of office from Neville Chamberlain – as indeed did the Labour leader Clement Attlee, both men voicing their lack of confidence in Chamberlain's continued leadership. The prime minister had informed Sinclair that it was his intention to form a small inner War Cabinet (as had happened back in December 1916), but that he [Sinclair] was not to be one of this inner group. Most of the senior Liberals were adamant that their leader must refuse the offer, convinced that its acceptance would mean that the Liberals would thus be excluded from major policy decisions. They were indeed convinced that the party 'could best support the vigorous prosecution of the war from an independent basis'.[12] The proposal that Herbert Samuel might enter the government as an individual (mainly because he had supported Neville Chamberlain over Munich), without implicating the Liberal Party, soon came to nothing. In the event, of the Liberals, only Gwilym Lloyd-George went in, accepting a junior position in the government as parliamentary secretary to the Board of Trade.

During the famous Norway debate of 7–8 May 1940, Sir Archibald Sinclair readily joined in the vehement attacks on the beleaguered Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Once his old ally Churchill, having formed a coalition government between the Liberals and the Labour Party, had kissed hands at Buckingham Palace, he appointed Sinclair to be the Secretary of State for Air, where he remained until the war ended and the dissolution of the coalition government in May 1945. (He was later requested to serve as the British Ambassador to Washington in 1941 and as Viceroy of India in 1942, but his preference was to remain steadfastly at the heart of the allied war effort.) Although Sinclair was one of the first ministers whom Churchill consulted on 10 May 1940, his role throughout the war was to be somewhat peripheral as (like the other service ministers) he was generally one step removed from military decision-making (although he occasionally attended Cabinet meetings and was thus able to voice his opinions. Sinclair had, however, participated in the crucial War Cabinet discussions of May 1940 about whether Britain should continue the war after the fall of France.). He had no personal power base and his party was small and relatively insignificant, while the key role of aircraft production had become the responsibility of a new creation, an independent Ministry of Aircraft Production under Lord Beaverbrook, who predictably became ever anxious to expand the ambit of his authority. Sinclair's main strength was his close personal bond of friendship with Winston Churchill. On the very day following his appointment, 11 May 1940, he wasted no time in pressing the claims for junior ministerial office on behalf of some of his Liberal colleagues like Samuel, Sir Percy Harris and Dingle Foot. Interestingly, he went on, 'Perhaps I ought also to mention to you the name of Mr Clement Davies, KC, because, since he withdrew his support from the last government, he has accepted our whip. He has played an active part in recent events, and I think it only fair to suggest that his claims might be considered'.[13]

Sinclair's nomination of Clement Davies at this point is rather remarkable (although he had, of course, contributed to the downfall of Neville Chamberlain). First elected as the Liberal MP for his native Montgomeryshire on 30 May 1929, and initially viewed as an ardent Lloyd George devotee, Davies had quickly grown disenchanted with political life, reflected in his contentious decision in August 1930 to accept an immensely lucrative position as legal director to Lever Brothers, part of the international company known as Unilever. Yet conjecture that his complete retirement from political life was imminent proved premature. Against the odds, Davies had joined the Liberal National grouping (known as the Simonites) in August 1931 and was returned unopposed to parliament in the general elections of October 1931 and November 1935. From the outbreak of hostilities he had become one of the most vocal and unrelenting of critics of the Chamberlain administration which he helped to bring down the following May.[14] Although Davies had certainly helped to bring Churchill to power, the new prime minister conspicuously chose not to reward him with the offer of ministerial office, partly because he was widely viewed as a somewhat erratic political maverick whose loyalties were at best uncertain, partly because he was loathed by Chamberlain and his followers who simply would not serve alongside him. Davies's support for the Munich agreement in October 1938 had also not been forgotten. All that ensued was the half-hearted offer of a viscountcy which Clem Davies promptly rejected. Generally it was widely felt and deeply resented in Liberal circles that the party had been largely ignored in May 1940. Even Sir Percy Harris, the party chief whip, knew nothing of the new ministerial appointments until he consulted the morning newspapers.[15]

Although Davies had certainly helped to bring Churchill to power, the new prime minister conspicuously chose not to reward him with the offer of ministerial office, partly because he was widely viewed as a somewhat erratic political maverick whose loyalties were at best uncertain, partly because he was loathed by Chamberlain and his followers who simply would not serve alongside him.

In 1941 Clem Davies became a leading member of the Radical Action group which campaigned forcefully for the implementation of radical, progressive policies when peace came and was opposed to the wartime parliamentary truce. He also became a close advocate of Sir William Beveridge, the well-known academic and governmental adviser whose famous report *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, published on 1 December 1942 (to be followed by a second, highly influential report *Full Employment in a Free Society* [1944]), was later to become a radical blueprint for post-war reconstruction. By this time Davies had resigned his position with Unilever, and in August 1942 he formally rejoined the mainstream Liberal Party led

by Sinclair. His return to mainstream political life saw Davies deliver dozens of public speeches both within his constituency and throughout the realm.

As the war drew to an end in the spring of 1945, election speculation was inevitably in the air, as in 1918. At his party's assembly in February, Sinclair called for an early contest – 'A democracy in which the people were never consulted on concrete and specific issues of policy would be a sham'. The Liberal Party, he insisted, still offered a distinctive alternative to 'the two evils of Tory stagnation and the Socialist strait-jacket of control'.[16] Talk of a national Liberal revival proved to be wholly misplaced. As Clem Attlee's Labour Party romped to an unexpected landslide victory at the polls, the Liberals were humiliatingly decimated, returning just twelve MPs to Westminster. In Caithness and Sutherland, Sinclair faced a closely fought three-cornered contest. Here the Labour aspirant Robert MacInnes repeated the well-worn argument that, 'The once great Liberal Party has sunk to a position of insignificance and impotence in the State'.[17] It was widely expected that Sinclair's majority would be considerably reduced.[18] He had been much criticised locally for allegedly neglecting his constituency because of his responsibilities as a party leader for almost the last ten years and as a minister of the crown from May 1940. It was readily alleged by his detractors that Sinclair had focused his attentions exclusively on the Air Ministry and on winning the war at the expense of attending to his constituency where his reputation accordingly suffered considerably. Difficulties were intensified by the extremely remote location of his constituency in the far north of Scotland, and as the largest parliamentary division in the whole of the United Kingdom. The war years had seen Sinclair ever more cut off from his constituents, and in July 1945 they had their revenge in a remarkable poll which saw just sixty-one votes separating the three candidates. While the Conservative E. L. Gandar Dower headed the poll, just six votes ahead of MacInnes, Sinclair was at the bottom. Liberal Party organisers were also partly to blame. Convinced that their leader's seat was relatively safe, they had deployed him widely elsewhere with the result that Sinclair did not arrive in the constituency until 22 June, reluctantly abandoning his nationwide tour as a result of ominous pessimistic reports from Caithness and Sutherland.

The Liberal debacle went far beyond the worst fears of the party faithful. Not a single seat was held in any of the large towns. Not a single Liberal MP was returned in the whole of Scotland. Of the twelve Liberal MPs returned, no fewer than seven represented Welsh constituencies, including the rather spurious University of Wales division whose days were by now certainly numbered. Nor was Sir Archibald Sinclair the only senior Liberal to suffer defeat in July 1945. Other Liberal casualties included Sir Percy Harris, the committed deputy leader and chief whip, at Bethnal Green South West, Dingle Foot at Dundee, and James de Rothschild in the Isle of Ely. Even in Wales all was not rosy. Major Goronwy Owen, veteran of 1922 and a member of Lloyd George's family, was defeated by the Labour Party in the Liberal citadel of Caernarfonshire, while even LG's old seat of the Caernarfon Boroughs, retained by the Liberals in a by-election in March, now symbolically fell to the Tories, again by the agonisingly slim margin of just 336 votes. Other prominent Liberal candidates who had realistic, if sometimes inflated, hopes of election to parliament were all unsuccessful. These included Sir William Beveridge, Roy Harrod, Isaac Foot (himself a former Liberal MP) and Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, daughter of Asquith, together with her adored son Mark Bonham-Carter. Lady Violet, utterly dejected by the outcome, wrote in her diary, 'I didn't care about myself – but the thought of Mark's victory had buoyed me up. It was my great *personal* stake in this Election – & his whole future hinges on it. Meanwhile the astounding election results came rushing in … & then the astounding news that not only Dingle [Foot] & Beveridge (which I feared) but *Archie* also had lost his seat. This last seemed to me to be incredible. He was bottom of the poll at Thurso of all places. Like the monarchy falling'.[19] The Liberals had put up a total of 307 candidates; more than 200 had ended up at the foot of the poll. Following a meeting at London of the Liberal Party Election Committee at the end of the month, the following public statement was issued:

> The Liberal Party has suffered a reverse as overwhelming as it was unexpected. Reports from the constituencies showed almost without exception a keener and far more widespread interest in the Liberal programme than for many years past. But it is clear that the majority of the electors were mainly concerned to defeat the Conservative Party and all those associated with it. They were naturally and justifiably resentful of the Conservative record before the war, and deeply suspicious of their lukewarm attitude towards projects of reconstruction. This was undoubtedly the principal reason why they elected a Labour Government. Liberal candidates were rejected, not because the electors disapproved of their policy or outlook, but simply because they appeared to offer a less effective alternative to an Administration which the majority were determined to bring to an end.[20]

'But it is clear that the majority of the electors were mainly concerned to defeat the Conservative Party and all those associated with it. They were naturally and justifiably resentful of the Conservative record before the war, and deeply suspicious of their lukewarm attitude towards projects of reconstruction.'

One of the most pressing immediate tasks to face the severely depleted and demoralised Parliamentary Liberal Party was the selection of a new party leader as successor to Sinclair. Few of the Liberal MPs elected in 1945 were truly national figures, with a proven aptitude for leadership. The most well known and popular was probably Lady Megan Lloyd George (Anglesey), certainly a charismatic and eternally youthful, effervescent individual, and also possessing the great advantage of a famous name. But she had always been viewed as firmly on the left wing of the party from the early 1930s, and she had little aptitude for organisation and administration. Her elder brother Major Gwilym (Pembrokeshire) was obviously already making tracks for the Conservative Party. Yet he was still approached by Sinclair and Harris in connection with the vacant leadership, but he at once refused even to consider the vacancy on the pretext that 'he could not afford the incidental expenses which the office would entail'. Bizarrely, an approach was also made to

him at this time in relation to the National Liberal group, the former Simonites. Again his reply was firmly negative.[21] Gwilym was in any event ill suited to lead the party given the circumstances of 1945 and his obvious inclination 'to go to the right'. In 1946 the Liberal Party whip was to be withdrawn from him, as he had consistently voted with the Conservatives in the lobbies of the House of Commons. Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris (Carmarthenshire) had only recently returned to political life following thirteen years engaged in other occupations. Again, he had no ambition or passion to lead his party. Eventually, the twelve Liberal MPs elected in 1945 adopted the bizarre expedient of requesting each of their parliamentary colleagues to leave the room while the others candidly discussed his leadership potential. Sir R. H. Morris at once refused to allow his name to be considered in this way. Their choice was to fall on E. Clement Davies, by this time aged sixty-one (and thus the oldest Liberal leader since Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman back in 1899), now proclaimed as 'Chairman of the Liberal Parliamentary Party' at the beginning of August. It was emphasised that he had been elected to 'hold the office for the session' only.[22] The left-winger Tom Horabin (North Cornwall), a close personal friend to Clem Davies, was also chosen as the party's new chief whip as successor to Sir Percy Harris.

At this time Clem Davies was widely depicted as a stopgap, short-term party leader pending Sinclair's imminent re-election to the Commons in a by-election. After all, Sinclair was generally viewed as the natural Liberal Party leader who had been defeated in most unfortunate circumstances and by the slenderest of margins in July 1945, surely just a temporary setback. Indeed, some Liberals had even pressed Sinclair to continue in the leadership although he was no longer a MP. Moreover, the Tory victor at Caithness and Sutherland in 1945, Gandar Dower, had foolishly promised to resign his seat and cause a by-election following victory against Japan. Sinclair might soon be returned to Westminster after all. In the meantime he gave his cautious blessing to Clem Davies as his successor. Although Sinclair readily appreciated that Clem Davies had previously pursued 'a very independent – indeed, it has seemed to many Liberals an erratic – course in politics', he was now convinced that his successor had 'undertaken big and serious responsibilities', impressing everyone with 'his determination to make a success of his job. … We must all help him and do our utmost to build up his position in the Party'. His one heartfelt fear was that Clem Davies, in associating himself so closely with the policies and aspirations of the incoming Attlee administration, might well adopt the potentially 'dangerous tactics of trying to outflank the Labour Party from the left – tactics which would … give the public an impression of insincerity'.[23] Sinclair's concern was understandable; during the 1945 general election campaign Clement Davies had warmly endorsed extensive land reform and some nationalisation of British industry. Ironically, within two years Davies was to be accused by some of his left-wing parliamentary colleagues of initiating 'a drift to the right' within their party and even 'veering towards the Tories'. But throughout Clem Davies never wavered from his belief that a future Liberal revival would eventually occur.

'There is a new spirit and with it comes confidence. At last they are expressing their pride in the Liberal faith and not putting on, as they have been doing, a sort of half-apologetic look and assuming a hangdog attitude.'

Sinclair, who had clearly never anticipated his electoral defeat in 1945 and his succession by Clement Davies as party leader, was still anxious to encourage and support his successor. Although Sinclair was in reality Davies's junior by six years, Davies still appeared to consider him as some kind of elder statesman. Should Sinclair return to the House of Commons, Clem Davies's position would change dramatically at once. But conjecture that Gandar Dower might cause a by-election by resigning his seat, as he had indicated, predictably came to nothing.[24] Local Liberals were sorely disappointed, but began to pin their hopes on the next general election. There were some who still pressed Sinclair to mount a challenge to Clement Davies's leadership, while Lady Violet Bonham-Carter repeatedly urged him to join the influential Liberal Party Committee. But, as he pointed out to her, he had neither the means nor the least inclination to travel regularly to London: 'I belong here and my roots are here, except when my friends and neighbours send me to parliament and, unless and until that happens, I cannot be half in and half out of national politics'. Lady Violet still persisted, 'Honestly we need you badly to help us in our very uphill task'. Generally, Sinclair had no wish to be involved in national politics, desiring to remain within his constituency. In November 1946, his old associate Winston Churchill urged him to become part of a cross-party 'handling group' to press for a United Europe, but Sinclair was adamant – 'I am with you in spirit, but cannot be with you in action unless and until I return to Parliament. Samson without his hair was not more disabled than I am from participating in national politics without my seat in Parliament'.[25]

While he frequently dangled before his supporters the prospect of his return to the Commons in a by-election or the next general election, Sinclair continued to lend constant encouragement to Clement Davies. In 1949 he made something of a political comeback with a speaking tour of the major cities. Following a national radio broadcast by Davies in February of that year, Sinclair enthusiastically described it as 'splendid! We heard every word as clear as a bell. Grand stuff too. I only wish you could do it more often'.[26] Davies was truly delighted:

> Thank you so much. I do appreciate a pat on the back from you more than from anybody. No one knows better than you what a hard struggle it is. However, I am convinced that we are on the up grade. It is quite amazing to see the response at these rallies and many of them are making financial sacrifices which I am sure are greater than they can really afford. There is a new spirit and with it comes confidence. At last they are expressing their pride in the Liberal faith and not putting on, as they have been doing, a sort of half-apologetic look and assuming a hangdog attitude. Of course, I have no end of trouble here, as you can well understand. I believe if we can have real unity from now till the Election and a true loyalty, rising above mere personal idiosyncrasies, we shall be able to give a very good account

> of ourselves when the Election comes.[27]

Clem Davies's respect and admiration for his predecessor clearly grew. As it became apparent that the ageing Lord Samuel's days as Liberal Party leader in the House of Lords were now numbered, Davies came to believe that Sinclair would make the ideal successor – although at this point he was not a peer, and still had real hopes of re-election to the Commons at the next general election which was now certain to come during the first half of 1950. In December 1949 Davies invited Sinclair to join the highly influential Liberal Party Committee. Anxious not to appear to neglect the Caithness and Sutherland constituency, and looking askance at the inevitably lengthy train journeys from Thurso via Edinburgh to London, Sinclair turned him down, but curiously several national newspapers then carried reports of his alleged acceptance. Two days into the new year – 1950 – Sinclair wrote to Davies:

> I was, indeed, surprised to see my name in the newspapers as a member of the Liberal Committee the day after I had written to you to decline with regret and reluctance the honour of your invitation to serve on it. I can quite understand how it happened in the pre-Christmas rush but I am afraid that, for the reasons which I have already given to you, I must adhere to my decision. I feel that I should be open to serious criticism if in the critical time immediately preceeding [sic] the General Election I failed to attend the meetings of the committee, which must be generally regarded as the most important and influential committee of the Party. Yet regular attendance will quite clearly be impossible for me.[28]

He proceeded to discuss at length the voting intentions of Liberal sympathisers in constituencies where there was no party candidate. Both men were convinced that a general election was likely during the first months of 1950.

On 6 January Clement Davies poured out to Sinclair his profound sense of heartfelt pessimism and dejection in relation to the impending trial of strength, 'I do not know whether I shall be back here. Last time I had a straight fight with a Tory. This time Labour are in the field, and possibly a Welsh Nationalist. Even if I do pull it off, it will be "a damned near thing". If I did not come back, then of course naturally I [shall] at once resign from the Committee, as I am only on it as happening to be the Chairman of the Parliamentary Party. Each of us in Wales will have a very tough fight'. Lady Megan's position in Anglesey he felt was especially 'difficult' in the face of an impending three-cornered contest, likewise Emrys Roberts in Merioneth, but there was a crumb of comfort to de derived from the calibre of the Liberal candidates in Wales: 'Fortunately our Welsh candidates are good. They are young, vigorous, and good speakers, both in Welsh and English, and each one of them has had a good University career, and where old enough a good war record as well. The three in South Wales that have just come forward are really good. Gwilym [Lloyd-George] of course has caused us a tremendous lot of worry, and now the Welsh Party have publicly declared that he is not a candidate that the Party can support'.[29] Sinclair proved supportive and sympathetic:

> It would be a terrible blow to the Party if you don't hold your seat; but I feel sure you will. I should imagine that the Welsh Nationalist will take away at least as many votes from the Labour Candidate as from you and that all the Liberal and radical elements in the constituency will see you as the only real alternative to the Tory. Moreover, you probably have a reserve, which will rally to you in a four-cornered contest, in a number of Liberals who did not turn out to vote at the last election feeling confident that you would easily beat the Tory in a straight fight. I have no doubt at all that, if everybody here had voted in the last election, I should have won quite easily. There was a general feeling that I was sure to get in and some people have confessed that they even voted for Gandar Dower in order to express their gratitude and admiration for Winston in the hope and belief that I was quite safe!! I trust that you too have a certain number of people who voted Tory at the last election merely in order to make certain that Winston finished up the War with Japan and will rally to you at the next election. Clearly, however, you will have a tough fight and I hope you won't travel about too much but concentrate on holding your seat.[30]

It was impossible for the party even to pretend to be running for government, while Sir Archibald Sinclair was the only one of the 475 Liberal candidates ever to have held governmental office.

Clem Davies spent the next week on a whirlwind tour of some of the Welsh rural constituencies: 'My meetings were full and enthusiastic, but I am not relying very much on that. I know I have a very tough passage, so it will be "a very damned near thing" one way or another'. While the sole meeting convened in Merioneth had left the Liberal leader 'disappointed' because of the 'poor attendance', a similar gathering at Wrexham proved to be 'the biggest any Party has had for thirty years'.[31] The two men corresponded extensively on policy formulation and on the perpetually thorny issue of an electoral pact with the Conservatives, a possibility being strongly pressed in some sections of the party. Another pressing issue was how Liberal sympathisers should vote in constituencies where the party had no candidate of its own. In an election broadcast a week before polling day Clem Davies told his listeners, 'If you fear Socialism and dislike the Labour Government, do not rush into the arms of the Tories'.[32] Speaking at Denbigh two days later Sir Henry Morris-Jones, the National Liberal and Conservative MP for Denbigh (who had represented the division since 1929, initially as a Liberal), told his audience, 'If I were a betting man, I would bet that at the very most there will be no more than twenty Independent Liberals in the next House of Commons'. To Morris-Jones, Wales was 'the cradle of Liberalism', but, in his opinion, by 1950 not one of the Liberal-held seats was really safe. It was impossible for the party even to pretend to be running for government, while Sir Archibald Sinclair was the only one of the 475 Liberal candidates ever to have held governmental office.[33] The sentiments which Morris-Jones expressed so cogently in public Clem Davies also felt in his heart and voiced privately

to senior figures in the party like Sinclair. Now aged sixty-six, he led his party's national campaign while also fighting to save his skin in Montgomeryshire, a large, sprawling, largely rural division. Many of his Liberal colleagues had been returned in 1945 by the narrowest of margins. Sinclair and Jo Grimond, again standing at Orkney and Shetland (where, unexpectedly, he had come within 200 votes of victory in 1945) were considered the most likely potential Liberal gains. Elsewhere the prospect of success was very remote.

To some extent Sinclair and Jo Grimond campaigned as a team during January and February 1950. It was avidly reported in the Scottish press that the former party leader had won 'tumultuous applause by packed halls'.[34] Sinclair was certainly at his vintage best – charismatic, even heroic, lucidly expounding Liberal policies and ruthlessly laying bare the shortcomings of the Attlee administration. Its successes, he insisted, were manifestly a continuation of the policies initiated by the wartime coalition government to which the Liberals had contributed a great deal. The Liberal policy commitment to a Scottish parliament was also strongly underlined in Sinclair's campaign speeches. The optimism and enthusiasm generated by Sinclair and Grimond north of the border contrasted starkly with the sense of malaise and pessimism projected by the party generally in England and Wales. In a rare display of realism, the Liberal Party, tortured by self-doubt, had even taken the extremely unusual step of insuring itself with Lloyds against the loss of between 50 and 250 deposits.

The reality was even worse than anticipated – 319 Liberal deposits were lost, and only nine seats were won. But again Sinclair was defeated by the slimmest of margins – just 269 votes behind the Tory Sir David Robertson. The outcome at Caithness and Sutherland was truly astonishing and a terrible shock to Sinclair himself who had felt that his numerous campaign meetings had 'varied from good to excellent'. He concluded that he had failed to restore the faith of the local electorate in the Liberal Party and that Robertson's lavish pledges to establish light industries throughout the constituency had won him large numbers of votes.[35] To Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, who had travelled to Scotland to address a number of public meetings, he wrote, 'My meetings seemed to get better and David Robertson's to get less good – the contrast being most marked on the eve of the poll at Thurso & Wick, when both my opponents had poor & noisy meetings, while ours were terrifically successful – ending up with a packed audience largely standing in the biggest hall in Wick singing "Auld Lang Syne"! But that silent Tory vote – a phrase from your letter which we have often repeated to ourselves – frightened anti-Socialists, & mutts who fell for Sir David's promises, won the day'.[36]

Liberal successes were indeed few, but, against the odds, all the Welsh Liberal MPs were re-elected, and Jo Grimond also won Orkney and Shetland, immediately catapulted into the position of Liberal Party chief whip to succeed Frank Byers (defeated at Dorset North by ninety-seven votes). Nor was there any reason for Clem Davies to fear the outcome in Montgomeryshire where he positively romped to victory with a majority of no fewer than 6,780 votes in an intensely fought three-cornered contest. No one was more surprised at this ringing endorsement than Davies himself. Towards the end of March he wrote self-effacingly to Sinclair, 'I am frankly surprised at my return and especially at the support that was ultimately forthcoming in Montgomeryshire'.[37] He had already communicated with Attlee in relation to a measure of electoral reform, somewhat heartened by the tiny overall majority of just five seats which the re-elected Labour government now had and the resultant potential clout enjoyed by the small band of Liberal MPs: 'I think that that is to our advantage and I am in real hope that we can get some measure of reform'.[38] His position as party leader was now also rather more secure at long last. Sinclair's defeat at Caithness and Sutherland in February 1950, and the unlikelihood of his ever standing again for parliament, meant that no one would now challenge Davies for the party leadership.

Yet, for a man in his mid-sixties battling health problems, depression and an addiction to alcohol (all serious problems which had beset him over many years), the 1950 general election campaign had proved very exhausting. Before the end of March national newspapers carried reports that Davies's doctor had ordered him to take 'a complete rest'. Sinclair wrote at once:

> You have been under a severe strain for a long time – the leadership of the Parliamentary Party, the conduct of the General Election campaign, your own hard but triumphant fight, your wife's recent illness, and the perplexities of the present situation, must all have thrown an almost insupportable burden on you. Do *not* scamp your rest. It is by far the most important thing you have to do now. Health is the only thing that matters now – not only to you and your wife but to all to whom you feel responsibility. There is no conflict between your duty to yourself and your family and your public duty. You can only discharge the latter effectively when you are well and strong – so stay away till your doctors are perfectly happy about letting you resume work.[39]

In a rare display of realism, the Liberal Party, tortured by self-doubt, had even taken the extremely unusual step of insuring itself with Lloyds against the loss of between 50 and 250 deposits.

'There was nothing organically wrong', responded Davies, 'but the ancient machine at last was refusing to function. Sleep had gone and there was almost continuous pain. Thereupon, these doctors became judicially serious and, in legal language, said I had embarked upon a criminal career of serious neglect. … I was ordered quickly away. I have been very well protected. No letters or messages were sent and I had a complete rest. I now feel 100 per cent fit. I do think I must cut down engagements, but you know how difficult that is. To-morrow comes the Budget and I feel that much will turn upon that so I suppose I shall have to deliver such thoughts as are in me on Wednesday or Thursday'. [40] His health was clearly at best uncertain – as was that of his wife Jano who was two years his senior. The combined effect of excessively long hours of hard work, leading a fractious, feud-wracked political party and serving as a constituency MP, had certainly taken their toll, as had heavy smoking and occasional excessive drinking bouts. Once restored to reasonable health,

Davies was most anxious to meet up with Sinclair at London to discuss in depth the future development of the Liberal Party. Detecting a close similarity in the programmes and outlooks of the three major political parties, Davies believed that it was now essential for the Liberal Party to spell out 'that which is distinctive in our policy so that we can say our belief in that is fundamental and without it what is not Liberal'.[41] In response, Sinclair asserted that in a measure of electoral reform lay 'the means of preserving the life, and securing the independence, of the Liberal Party', possibly the adoption of an 'alternative vote' system as a prelude to proportional representation. He was inclined to believe that such reforms would be more likely to be introduced by a future Conservative administration rather than by the Attlee government.[42]

But, while Clem Davies, at sixty-six years old, was certainly feeling his age, Lord Samuel, now fully eighty years of age, was naturally very anxious to stand down as the Liberal Party leader in the House of Lords. To Davies, Sinclair appeared the ideal successor to Herbert Samuel, feeling convinced that they could work together harmoniously as a team. Moreover, removal of Sinclair to the upper house would mean that he would never again contest a parliamentary election and would thus much strengthen Davies's position as party leader. By September the proposal was well advanced that Sinclair should be granted a peerage with a view to his later succeeding Samuel as party leader in the Lords. Initially approached by Philip Rea, the Liberal chief whip in the House of Lords, Sinclair had demurred 'on the grounds among others that I was disinclined to abandon hope of re-entering the [House of] Commons, that I knew the job as back-bencher in the Commons but gravely doubted my fitness for the high responsibilities of leading the Party in the strange surroundings of the Lords and that I was deeply reluctant to relinquish my present name and status for that of a Peer of the Realm'. Pressed by Rea and Clem Davies to reconsider, and assured that Attlee fully supported such a move, Sinclair flew to London for extended talks with Samuel, Rea and other 'intimate friends' in the metropolis. Efforts to contact Davies proved frustratingly abortive, probably because he was at his constituency home at Meifod. Subjected to persuasive pressure and flattery from Samuel, who even offered to continue in office (as Liberal leader in the Lords) for several more months, Sinclair allowed his natural reluctance to be overcome, turning to Clem Davies for reassurance – 'I hope I have made it quite clear to you that the last thing I want is a Peerage as a form of honourable retirement. In no circumstances would I contemplate going to the Lords, except if there is an important job of work to be done there. It is on this point, in particular, that I require your advice'.[43]

Clement Davies, having discussed the matter at length with Attlee and Lord (Christopher) Addison (himself a former Liberal minister, now the Labour leader in the Lords), tended to take the same line as Lord Rea. Consequently Sinclair, although still entertaining 'grave misgivings' about his 'fitness for the role', was highly 'impressed by the unanimity of [his] friends' advice.[44] Sinclair, it seemed, was at last destined to go to the House of Lords – in the midst of repeated talk about electoral reform and future electoral deals with Churchill and the Tories. But the envisaged peerage did not appear overnight, and the issue was clouded somewhat by the ever-increasing likelihood of yet another general election at some point during 1951. As late as September of that year there was renewed conjecture that Sinclair might well be inclined to stand yet again at Caithness and Sutherland. There was even speculation that, as he was unhappy at the failure of the local Liberal Party to reorganise itself, he might well stand as a Liberal candidate elsewhere. It was even suggested that Churchill was prepared to allow him a free run in his chosen constituency and, if elected there, would promptly reward him with ministerial office. There was further conjecture that an earldom was his for the asking from the Conservative leader.[45] In the event, Sinclair stood nowhere in November 1951, simply speaking on a few Liberal platforms. As the further trial of strength had come so quickly, the impoverished Liberal Party could muster only 109 candidates. They won just 2.5 per cent of the popular vote and only six seats in parliament. Bolton West was the party's only gain. Clem Davies was now the only one of the six Liberal MPs to have sat in the Commons representing the same constituency since before 1945. (Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, elected in Carmarthenshire in 1945, had represented Cardiganshire from 1923 until 1932.)

His own side of the story remains untold with the inevitable result that Sinclair's important role and contribution have tended to be overlooked.

Sinclair was determined never again to stand for parliament and claimed to wish to return to farming. At long last, the envisaged peerage materialised with Churchill as prime minister. Sinclair was to become Viscount Thurso of Ulbster in the county of Caithness.[46] As the ailing Liberal Party now enjoyed a greater numerical presence and thus potential clout in the Lords, the long-awaited move appeared auspicious for the party's future. Sinclair would feel very much at home amongst the more elderly Liberals in the upper house, it was felt, and would soon become their leader. Illness, however, cruelly intervened when, early in 1952, Viscount Thurso suffered a severe stroke which meant that he was unable to take his seat in the Lords until July 1954. Poor Viscount Samuel again reluctantly agreed to postpone his retirement plans as Liberal Party leader in the House of Lords. Clem Davies, probably failing to realise the seriousness of Thurso's condition, sympathised with him but expressed the hope that he might soon serve on the Liberal Party Committee.[47]

Samuel finally retired as Liberal leader in the Lords in June 1955. The idea that Thurso might succeed him, a prospect which certainly appealed to him personally, was at once vetoed by his doctor and his wife Marigold. The position then went to Lord Rea, who had five years' experience as Liberal chief whip there.[48] Further minor strokes then prevented Viscount Thurso from playing an active part in the proceedings of the upper house as he had originally hoped. Sadly, when Clement Davies finally stood down as party leader at the Folkestone national assembly in the autumn of 1956, his indifferent health prevented Thurso (who had recently returned from a holiday in Switzerland) from attending his farewell dinner at the National Liberal Club.[49] A further even more severe stroke in 1959 left Thurso a

bed-ridden, only partly conscious invalid. In this pathetic condition he was to survive for another eleven years. His condition meant that, very sadly (unlike most of his contemporaries), Thurso never had the opportunity to pen his reminiscences or publish a volume of war memoirs. His own side of the story remains untold with the inevitable result that Sinclair's important role and contribution have tended to be overlooked.

Dr J. Graham Jones is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

1 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Lloyd George Papers G/18/4/4, Sinclair to Lloyd George, 30 January 1927; ibid., Samuel Papers A/84, f. 10, Sinclair to Samuel, 3 November 1931.
2 Churchill College, Cambridge, Thurso Papers I/17/4, Sinclair to V. Finney, 19 March 1931 (copy).
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4 Cited in Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies: Liberal Leader* (London: Politicos, 2003), p. 46.
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6 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Samuel Papers A/84, f. 10, Sinclair to Samuel, 3 November 1931.
7 Churchill College, Cambridge, Thurso Papers III/1/3, Sinclair to Samuel, 14 October 1933 (copy).
8 Ibid. II/1934/37, Samuel to Sinclair, 30 October 1933.
9 See the report in *The Times*, 17 December 1933.
10 Sir Percy Harris, *Forty Years in and out of Parliament* (London and New York: A. Melrose, 1949), p. 126.
11 Sinclair to Samuel, 21 January 1935, cited in Gerard de Groot, *Liberal Crusader: the Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London: Hurst & Co., 1993), p. 105.
12 Cited in Roy Douglas, *Liberals: a History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (London: Hambledon, 2005), p. 204.
13 The National Archives, Kew, PREM 5/209, Sinclair to Churchill, 11 May 1940.
14 J. Graham Jones, 'Clement Davies and Montgomeryshire politics during the Second World War', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, Vol. 95 (2007), pp. 111–143; David M. Roberts, 'Clement Davies and the fall of Neville Chamberlain', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 8 (1976–77), pp. 188–215.
15 Harris, op. cit., pp. 150–51.
16 *The Times*, 5 February 1945.
17 Election address of Robert MacInnes, July 1945.
18 *The Scotsman*, 22 June 1945.
19 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham-Carter Papers, diary entry for 26–28 July 1945.
20 *The Times*, 1 August 1945.
21 Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), p. 249.
22 *The Times*, 3 August 1945; *Manchester Guardian*, 3 August 1945. Davies's position remained somewhat insecure. Even in November 1946 it was pointedly reported that he had been re-elected as 'chairman' 'for the present session' only, (*The Times*, 26 November 1946), and even at the end of 1950 (after five and a half years in the position) he voiced his heartfelt exasperation to Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, frustratingly referring to 'this so-called *leadership*'. (National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW), Clement Davies Papers J3/45, Davies to VB-C, 15 November 1950 [copy]).
23 Cited in de Groot, op. cit., p. 229.
24 *The Times*, 15 and 26 February 1946, 31 January 1947.
25 Sinclair to Bonham-Carter, 1 October 1946; VB-C to Sinclair, 26 September and 10 October 1946, cited in de Groot, op. cit., p. 232; Sinclair to Churchill, 18 November 1946, cited in Ian Hunter (ed.), *Winston and Archie: the Letters of Sir Archibald Sinclair and Winston S. Churchill, 1915–1960* (London: Politico's, 2005), p. 430.
26 NLW, Clement Davies papers J3/2, Sinclair to Davies, 14 February 1949.
27 Ibid. J3/3, Davies to Sinclair, 16 February 1949 (copy).
28 Ibid. J3/9, Sinclair to Davies, 2 January 1950.
29 Ibid. J3/10, Davies to Sinclair, 6 January 1949 [recte 1950] (copy).
30 Ibid. J3/11i, Sinclair to Davies, 17 January 1950.
31 Ibid. J3/12, Davies to Sinclair, 17 January 1950 (copy).
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33 Ibid., 20 February 1950.
34 *Orkney Herald*, 1 November 1949.
35 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Samuel Papers A/155 (xiii), Sinclair to Samuel, 28 February 1950.
36 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham-Carter Papers, Sinclair to VB-C, 26 February 1950.
37 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/14, Davies to Sinclair, 22 March 1950 (copy).
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid. J3/15, Sinclair to Davies, 28 March 1950.
40 Ibid. J3/16, Davies to Sinclair, 17 April 1950 (copy).
41 Ibid. J3/22, Davies to Sinclair, 25 April 1950 (copy).
42 Ibid. J3/23, Sinclair to Davies, 3 May 1950.
43 Ibid. J3/37, Sinclair to Davies, 5 September 1950 ('Personal and Secret').
44 Ibid. J3/38, Sinclair to Davies, 14 September 1950.
45 de Groot, op. cit., pp. 235–36.
46 *The Times*, 1 January and 16 April 1952.
47 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/72, Davies to Sinclair, 11 January 1952 (copy).
48 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Samuel Papers A/144 (i), Samuel to Rea, 7 June 1955 (copy); ibid., A/144 (v), Thurso to Samuel, 13 June 1955.
49 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/85, Thurso to Coss Billson, 31 October 1956 (copy).

JOHN B

GREAT POLITICAL CAMPAIG

In his time – an age of political giants – John Bright was seen as an extraordinary man and his achievements deserve to be better known. Yet he did not feature in the Liberal Democrat History Group's contest to find the greatest Liberal (see *Journal of Liberal History* 55 (summer 2007)), for he was not a great politician or statesman, nor did he write any lasting books. **Antony Wood** reassesses the record, and asks: was Bright simply a great political campaigner, or something more?

BRIGHT

NER OR SOMETHING MORE?

John Bright was a great campaigner, an outstanding orator and a man of high integrity who had a strong impact on national life for over forty years. Nevertheless, there are issues such as female suffrage, home rule for Ireland and proposals for factory reform where his stance appears to sit uneasily with his strongly held Quaker beliefs, and these need to be examined if we want to come to a balanced view.

Although Bright's career and achievements have been well documented by historians, it may be that his special contribution to Victorian public life and the growth of Liberalism has been overshadowed by his inability to hold high office or to work comfortably with the inevitable compromises of political life. The interesting question this raises is therefore: how did Bright become such a powerful influence in his day?

Finding the right balance about Bright and his work is made harder by the fact that it is not the written word which defines him but the spoken. Bright's greatest talent lay in his ability to address large crowds or packed assemblies, which nowadays is almost a lost art. He was a master orator and, given the generally ephemeral nature of the spoken word, this may not have helped his legacy. In his book *Victorian People*, Professor Asa Briggs describes John Bright as the 'the most important figure of mid Victorian radicalism.'[1] Similarly, A. J. P. Taylor claims that Bright's speeches were 'perhaps the greatest ever delivered in a Parliamentary Assembly.'[2] In his heyday, Bright would address thousands of people at a time[3] and, although he died in 1889 his speeches were reprinted twice between 1900 and 1914.[4]

Born in 1811 to a Northern mill owner, Bright managed the family firm for most of his life, alongside being an MP. He first rose to local attention in Rochdale in the 1830s by opposing the introduction of compulsory church rates,[5] and this local success led on to his involvement with the Anti Corn Law League, when he was only twenty-nine (in 1840). Although young, he nevertheless became a leading figure in a campaign of national importance, and it is wrong to think he had just a bit part in Corn Law repeal. At a time when the campaign had been going for some years and was faltering his arrival introduced vigour and direction as well as optimism. Bright always believed, even against the odds, that the League would succeed because of the justice of its cause.[6]

On the back of this success he then campaigned for the Parliamentary seat of Durham on the twin issues of repeal of the Corn Laws and himself as an independent champion of the common people. During the campaign in Durham he said, 'I am a working man as much as you. I have no interest in seeking appointments under any government. I have nothing to gain by being the tool of any party and I come before you as the firm defender of your rights.'[7] He won the seat in 1843 and, having become an MP, Bright remained one for the rest of his life. His next seat was Manchester (1847–1857), where there is still a fine statue of him in the city centre. After a temporary setback caused by his opposition to the Crimean War (to be discussed later), he went on almost immediately to be elected MP for Birmingham (1857). His long tenure there lasted until 1885 and was rounded off by a short period as MP for Birmingham Central until his death in 1889, aged 77.

John Bright (1811–89)

Not surprisingly, given the influence and experience he gained in such a long career, Bright was offered high office, albeit not until he was in his late fifties. However, he had a dislike of the minutiae of administration and the compromises of power, so neither of his two stints in Cabinet lasted very long. He was President of the

Board of Trade for two years until he resigned in 1868, ostensibly on health grounds, and he held the sinecure of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster twice. The latter post he left in protest at the bombardment of Alexandria (1882) and it is typical of Bright that he should both be careless of the trappings of office and that he should resign on a matter of principle. But it is also symptomatic of his personality that he found being in the Cabinet difficult. As an orator he was at his best where he could outline the scope, seriousness and possibilities of problems rather than having to implement the solution.[8]

Having briefly reviewed Bright's career it is now time to examine his legacy more closely. His stature rests on his ability to oppose Government by arguing for what he felt was right, as opposed to what was popular, pragmatic or expedient. Evidence of this can be seen in Bright's stance on four emblematic topics of the day, namely: the Corn Laws; the Crimean War (1854–1856); the American Civil War (1861–1865); and, later, electoral reform.

As a background to these specific campaigns we should note three continuing themes. First is his distrust of war as a sensible act of policy. He did not feel 'it is our duty to meddle everywhere'.[9] Secondly, he was suspicious of Britain's 'accidental' Empire': '[It] may lead to a seeming glory to the Crown and may give scope for patronage and promotion, … but to you, the people, it brings expenditure of blood and treasure, increased debt and taxes and the added risks of war in every quarter of the globe.'[10] Finally, for much of his life, he had a mistrust of the ruling elite which he linked to a genuine compassion for the poor. 'You may have an historical monarchy decked out in the dazzling splendour of Royalty; you may have an ancient nobility settled in grand mansions and on great estates but, notwithstanding all of this, the fabric may be rotten and doomed ultimately to fall, if the great mass of people on who it is supported is poor and suffering and degraded.'[11]

To understand the importance of the repeal of the Corn Laws we need to consider 'the condition of England' – to use Carlyle's phrase. The Corn Law of 1815 (and subsequent amendments) was designed to protect the profits of landowners by prohibiting imports of foreign corn below a certain price. This threshold price was set punitively high, in effect leaving the nation reliant on the home harvest and unable to balance out any shortages with cheap imports from abroad.[12] As a result, if the British harvest was bad, rents rose and the poor literally starved.[13] At this time wealthier families generally ate meat, whilst the middle classes could mostly afford bread as their staple diet. However meat and bread was too expensive for the poor, which left many people surviving on a diet of potatoes, turnips and other poor foodstuffs – a practice known as 'clemming.' In 1842 the number of paupers in Britain was estimated at 1.4 million or 10 per cent of the population, and such people faced malnutrition or starvation on a regular basis.[14] However, Cobden and Bright campaigned throughout the country, using every method of raising support (the press, public opinion and populist meetings etc.) and the Anti-Corn Law League became, perhaps, the first modern pressure group.[15] These techniques brought them success in 1846, when the Corn Laws were repealed, and indeed presaged the form that political campaigning would take in the years ahead.

During this campaign Bright showed himself to be more than just an outstanding orator, capable of rousing crowds. He displayed vision and a sound tactical sense by emphasising that free trade, when it came, would raise wages and shorten hours. Twenty years later, he was able to substantiate these claims, which his opponents had contested, for it was estimated that over the period nearly £500 million worth of food which the old Corn Laws would have prohibited had entered the country. Trade in general had expanded beyond expectation and also average wages in most parts of the country had risen between 30 and 40 per cent.[16] In his own lifetime, this most eloquent of the League's two leaders saw his vision of the political and social benefits of repeal come to fruition.[17]

As might be expected, both Bright and Cobden enjoyed great popular acclaim for some years after the Corn Laws were repealed. But all this was to change and they became virtual outcasts on account of their opposition to the Crimean War, which started in 1854.[18] They attacked the war as immoral, unnecessary and expensive (it cost £500 million) and this stance made them very unpopular.[19] However, as Asa Briggs has noted, 'It is a sign of John Bright's greatness that he never trimmed his sails on this issue', and during the course of the conflict he made two of his greatest speeches.[20] On 23 February 1855, speaking of the excessive casualties he said, 'The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear his wings.'[21] Then, in a speech about a year into the war, he ended with this peroration: 'Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war and of this incapable and guilty Administration. Even if I were alone … I have … the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country's treasure or the spilling of a single drop of my country's blood.'[22] In only two and a half years the war had led to about 40,000 deaths (Bright's figure), and a commission of enquiry into the competence of the military was set up.[23] However, especially in the early stages, the conflict had touched a strong, even jingoistic, streak within the British, which Palmerston, as prime minister, cleverly manipulated and those who opposed the war, like Bright, were vilified as unpatriotic.

After one piece of compelling oratory about the war, Disraeli complimented him saying, 'I would give all that I ever had to have made that speech.' Bright's reply was typically severe: 'Well, you might have made it if you had been honest!'[24] Initially, however, the war was very popular and, as has been said, Bright's uncompromising anti-war stance took its toll. During 1856 and 1857 he had what we would now call a nervous breakdown and it took some time for him to regain his original vigour.[25] When he did recover, he once again became involved with two other campaigns with clear moral implications – the American Civil War and electoral reform.

1861 saw the start of the American Civil War, and, in common with much of public opinion, the British government was minded to support the South. Had this become official policy it could well have led to a worldwide revival of slavery, let alone severe damage to the good name of Britain internationally.[26] From a modern standpoint this may seem surprising, but at the time there was a feeling amongst the middle classes in Britain that the Southerners were brave, well-mannered gentlemen 'who were being bullied by the Yankees.'[27] Also the North was seen as having started the war against the 'gallant little South,' which believed in free trade and which, tellingly, had become home to many British former cotton workers.

Of course, set against such issues as human rights and freedom these feelings were quite lightweight. Nonetheless, it took the best efforts of various individuals, including Prince Albert, the Duke of Argyll, Mill, Cobden and Bright, to reverse such views.[28] Nor should we think this was some arcane international issue. The blockade of Southern ports caused a shortage of cotton, which then threw operatives in the British mills out of work, including those in Bright's own factory. However, despite these pressures, British workers refused to fall in line with the government's wish to support the slave owners and speed the war's end.[29] It is interesting to note that, during the war, Bright, despite his pacifist background, wrote to President Lincoln to say that the fighting should not end until slavery had been abolished.[30]

So, despite having opposed the Crimean War (together with a possible of war against France), Bright took the courageous view that the American Civil War was different, since it was really about freedom – and the defence of freedom was a greater cause than being anti-war. Certainly, the Americans appreciated his contribution. After 1865 and the war's end, Bright was often told that he was the most popular man in America: '… if he came we would scatter flowers before him all the way to the sea.'[31] President Lincoln had his picture in his office, and fifty years later Trevelyan summed up Bright's contribution during this period with the comment: 'When the wise were blind he made half England see.'[32]

In the latter part of his career Bright championed the cause of electoral reform. Even though he changed his style he was still very effective and he tempered his oratory so as not to offend either the church or the aristocracy. Also, he mollified his stance with colleagues so that his influence became more of a unifying force. Rather than splitting those elements which eventually came together in 1859 (and the ensuing years) to form the new Liberal party, he worked hard to maintain unity.[33] Thus another of Bright's achievements was to be an important member of that group of Whigs, Radicals and Peelites who came together to plan the defeat of Lord Derby's Tory administration at a meeting in Willis's Tea Rooms in 1859. This meeting is generally considered to have consolidated the expansion of the Liberal Party. A year before this, in 1858, Bright had started his campaign for electoral reform with another famous speech, saying, 'Let us have a real (reform) Bill or no Bill at all.'[34] He now thought that, rather than trying to change the system of franchise, it was tactically better to concentrate on seeking fairer representation (i.e. the right balance of electors to MPs) and to introduce secret ballots.[35] Although the current electoral rules prevented five out of six men from voting, Bright realised that sorting out the franchise system, grossly unfair though it was, would have to wait. Strategically the time was not right.

In fact, during the years leading up to the introduction by Disraeli of the secret ballot (1872), steady progress was made on electoral reform, even though a complex process was further complicated by regular changes of government (six in fifteen years) and by the various leaders playing musical chairs. It's true Bright was not a supporter either of universal male suffrage or of women having the vote, nonetheless by the mid 1860s he was, in effect both an advisor and an activist for the reform movement, constantly warning, exhorting and advising.[36] In particular, he alerted the nation to the need for land reform and, at a time when the cities were very much in limelight, he brought the issue of rural poverty to the fore.[37] Once again, campaigning meant an arduous programme of speeches, but these helped to increase the pressure on the government.[38] However, being the head of the campaign meant he also took the full brunt of the aggressive opposition to reform.[39] Eventually all the passion and hard work paid off and in 1867 a Tory instigated Reform Act was passed, which Bright thought more or less mirrored his own proposals of 1859.[40]

'The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear his wings.'

Unfortunately, in an article of this length there is not space to cover all the areas of Bright's political involvement, such as India etc., nor is that the intention. A change in perspective is the aim, and others will need to carry out a more extensive evaluation. However, before taking stock of a man who was famous and influential in his time, there are three issues on which he has been severely criticised. First, Bright was a mill owner who from time to time opposed efforts to improve the lot of workers, for example Wilberforce's Ten Hour Act. In fact, all the evidence is that he treated his own workers well but objected to the proposed method of reform, via legislation. He thought this was the state interfering improperly between contracting parties, who should, he felt, agree necessary changes amongst themselves.[41] Secondly, with regard to Ireland – another area for which he is criticised – Bright opposed Irish home rule becoming, in effect, a Liberal Unionist and fell out with Gladstone. He disliked and distrusted the 'rebel' Irish politicians and felt that what Ireland needed was proper protection for the Protestant minority, plus a period of consolidation for the land system.[42] Finally, there is the question of Bright's objection to female suffrage, a stance for which he

came under regular attack, not least from his sister. At one point he had theoretically been open to the idea, even supporting a John Stuart Mill proposal to extend the franchise to women. However he was opposed in general to the idea of women MPs, and in 1871 he wrote, 'I do not think the bestowal of the Suffrage on Women will be of any advantage to them and I fear, at present, and perhaps always, it will tend to strengthen the Party which hitherto has opposed every good measure passed during the past thirty years.'[43]

In summing up this paradoxical man it is easy to see why he upset people such as the aristocracy and Church leaders. Also, it is tempting to try and assess him for what he wasn't – an intellectual, a great writer or a towering politician.[44] It is also true that he was not good at legislative form, such as statistical analysis and the special demands of Cabinet Office for, as we have seen, Bright was more a man of the platform than the council chamber.[45] However, set against these criticisms are some truly major campaigning achievements, and it is these that underpin John Bright's legacy.

Together Bright and Cobden helped saved thousands of lives through their successful efforts to repeal the Corn Laws and many, particularly those in the poorer classes, never forgot what he had done for them.[46] Almost single-handedly Bright opposed the Crimean War, especially at the start. Between 1861 and 1865 he led the successful movement to support not the South but the North in the American Civil War. Bright then successfully headed the campaign for electoral reform which resulted in improved representation, a fairer franchise and, eventually, in the ballot becoming secret in 1872. As much as anyone he created the conditions for the formation and survival of the Liberal Party. Whilst working towards this latter goal he altered his style, so that the aggressive, trenchant Bright became more tolerant of both colleagues and opponents. He moderated his language, but not his values, for the greater good.[47]

His legacy in terms of the survival and growth of Liberalism should not be understated. He left Gladstone his supporters and his method and made Liberalism more than just a creed.[48] Despite being a Northern mill owner and of relatively humble origins, he provided the Nonconformist movement with political leadership and gave a voice to the grievances of many poor people. To do all this took a very special person for on many issues he had the exceptional gift of being able to connect politics with emotion and use 'poetry' to invest old feelings with confidence and clarity.[49] It is a measure of the man that, in 1883, on the anniversary of his forty years in parliament, half a million of his constituents lined the streets of Birmingham. The old radical had been accepted.[50]

On this record John Bright stands comparison with many other great Liberals, and his story deserves to be more widely known.

On this record John Bright stands comparison with many other great Liberals, and his story deserves to be more widely known. Bright – the first Quaker in Cabinet; champion of free trade; scourge of a complacent establishment; pillar of electoral reform; key founder of the Liberal party; anti-war leader; enemy of over-interference by the State and man of principle in the murky world of politics – perhaps deserves better than he has got so far. Add to this his power as an orator and successes as a campaigner and you have a man to outlast the years. Of very few people was it ever said, 'MPs would rush into the House if they heard he was to be called,'[51] and this oratory still resonates today:

> [For we] are bound by the sacred duty to examine why it is, with all this trade, all this industry and all this personal freedom, there is still so much that is unsound at the base of our social fabric.[52]

Antony Wood is a Liberal Democrat councillor in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Before that he served in the army and then worked in business.

1 Asa Briggs, *Victorian People* (University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 205. On p. 206 he also makes the point that Bright's politics were concerned not with expediency but moral principles.
2 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers* (Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 62.
3 G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (Constable, 1913), pp. 80 and 88.
4 Keith Robbins, *John Bright* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. xvi.
5 Duncan Brack (ed.) *Dictionary of Liberal Biography* (Politico's, 1998), p. 55. See also a good summary of Bright's career in Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government* (Yale University Press, 1993), p. 320.
6 Miles Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online* (Oxford University Press, 2004–10), p. 3 of the entry on Bright.
7 G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (Constable, 1913), p. 113.
8 John Vincent, *Formation of the British Liberal Party* (Constable, 1966 and Harper and Row, 1976), p. 171.
9 Duncan Brack and Tony Little (eds.), *Great Liberal Speeches* (Politico's, 2001), p. 139.
10 Duncan Brack and Robert Ingham (eds.), *Dictionary of Liberal Quotations* (Politico's, 1999), p. 29.
11 Ibid, p. 28.
12 G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (Constable, 1913), p. 53.
13 Ibid., p. 49.
14 Ibid., p. 59.
15 Brack and Little, op. cit., p. xix.
16 Trevelyan, op, cit., p. 83. Bright speaking in his home town of Rochdale and quoting Parliamentary figures for imports.
17 Briggs, op. cit., p. 214.
18 Ibid., p. 221.
19 Olive Anderson, *A Liberal State at War* (St Martin's Press, 1967), pp. 163 and 207. During the war, Sir Arthur Elton published sixty-seven penny tracts saying that, since the original casus belli had been removed, then the war was simply interventionist and opportunist. It is reckoned that in one year the war cost 92 per cent of the value of British exports.
20 Briggs, op. cit., p. 221.
21 Brack and Ingham, op. cit., p. 28.
22 Brack and Little, op. cit., p. 121.
23 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 248. It is almost impossible to find accurate figures for the total number of dead over the two and half years of the war. However in a speech in Birmingham on 28 October 1858 Bright talks about '40,000 men sent to perish … in the Crimea,' whilst on p. 251 Trevelyan quotes Bright's letter to Charles Villiers: 'the Russian War spent about £500 millions.'
24 Ibid., p 245.
25 Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online*, p. 7 of the entry on Bright.
26 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 297.
27 Ibid., p. 301. However, to get the sense of why so many people initially supported the South and how this view was changed, with the consequent effect of improving England's

reputation in the victorious North, it is worth reading the whole chapter – pp. 296–327. In fact Lincoln personally invited him to visit the US – p. 327 – and had Bright's picture in his office; Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 296. See also Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online*, p. 9 of the entry on Bright.

28 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 296.
29 Ibid., p. 308.
30 Ibid., p. 318.
31 Ibid., p. 327. As told to Mr E. J. Broadfield whilst on a trip to America in 1880.
32 Ibid., p. 297.
33 John Vincent, *Formation of the British Liberal Party* (Constable, 1966 and Harper & Row, 1976), p. 184.
34 Brack and Little, op. cit., p. 123. In this speech Bright also compared the English electoral arrangements unfavourably with the American system (pp. 133 and 134). By this time the US had secret ballots and 'an equal allotment of Members to electors.' No doubt Bright was correct in what he said but this view was unlikely to make him new friends.
35 Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, Party and the Art of Politics in Britain, 1855–59* (Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 158 et seq. to 162.
36 Brack and Little, op. cit., p. 127: Bright speaking in Birmingham on 27 October 1858, where, in the previous year, he had been elected MP. This speech was the start of a sustained campaign on electoral reform which lasted a number of years.
37 Vincent, op. cit., p. 193.
38 Ibid., p. 177.
39 Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online*, p. 9 of the entry on Bright.
40 Ibid., p. 10.
41 Trevelyan, op. cit., pp. 154–60.
42 Ibid., pp. 444–47.
43 Ibid., p. 380.
44 Vincent, op. cit., p. 186.
45 Hawkins, op. cit., p. 158 et seq. to 161.
46 Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online*, p. 4 of the entry on Bright. On 8 July 1846, 12,000 people in Rochdale paraded a loaf with 'Cobden' and 'Bright' inscribed on its sides, and that same year a bookcase worth £5,000 and containing 1,200 books was presented to him.
47 Hawkins, op. cit., p. 162.
48 Vincent, op. cit., p. 162.
49 Ibid., p. 168. See also Taylor, *Dictionary of National Biography online*, p. 12 of the entry on Bright.
50 Ibid. p. 11.
51 Briggs, op. cit., p. 225.
52 Brack and Little, op. cit., p. 145.

LETTERS

Young Liberals

The report on the Young Liberals in the 1960s in *Journal of Liberal History* 68 (autumn 2010), and Dr Peter Hatton's comment (*Journal* 69) suggests the following reflections, based on my recollections supported by my diary entries and documents I hold.

I joined the Oxford University Liberal Club in 1959 and was president in the summer of 1961. The Club's main activity was to run weekly meetings. We were fortunate that leading Liberals and other eminent people readily accepted our invitations to speak, so in my four years at Oxford I heard all the then Liberal MPs and leading Liberal peers. Mr Grimond came twice. Aspiring parliamentarians like Mark Bonham Carter, Desmond Banks and Manuela Sykes, Liberal academics like Lord Beveridge and party organisers such as Pratap Chitnis gave us their time. The first Liberal I heard was Jeremy Thorpe, who addressed a packed and triumphant meeting at the Union two weeks after his North Devon victory in October 1959.

Club membership was on a termly basis and it was approaching 1,000 in the autumn, falling to around 500 by the following summer. I believe that the Conservative and Labour clubs were rather larger. I don't agree with Dr Hatton that they were 'social members'. They were politically interested students with general Liberal sympathies. Club officers were, I think, committed Liberals. The Liberal Party Group which met on Sunday afternoons was for committed Liberals. We discussed policy issues, usually with an expert speaker from the University or elsewhere. There were also Study Groups developing policy and reporting to the Club or LPG, but I can't remember what these achieved, and I can find nothing relevant in my files!

Relations between the Oxford Club and the National Union of Liberal Students were acrimonious. I think this was because some Oxford students had staged a sort of coup d'état at the 1959 ULS conference, but these new ULS officers abandoned the Oxford Club and refused to attend our meetings. They then launched a termly tabloid newspaper, allegedly jointly with the ULS, with a national circulation. It was a financially disastrous fiasco, and they then came to us with the bills, which we had to pay – an unhappy story!

On the other hand, we had excellent relations with Party Headquarters in London. I met Tommy Nudds at 58 Victoria Street to discuss possible parliamentary candidates and how we could help party organisations. We helped at by-elections and at Oxford City elections (I was a candidate in May 1964) and there were canvassing tours in the summer vacations – North Devon in 1959, Newbury in 1960.

Talks on party policy were interesting but I was more impressed by Ivor Davies, PPC for Oxford, who spoke to LPG in October 1959. He said however splendid our policies they were no good if we couldn't implement them. The party needed local organisation and local campaigns to fight and win local elections so we could do something and not just talk. I was impressed!

In the summer of 1961 we canvassed in Penrith & the Border for a remarkable lady named Nancy Powell who was one of the tiny handful of full-time Liberal agents. We had a great time and in general chat I argued that the party needed better organisation – a good agent was far more important than a good candidate. Six months later Nancy wrote to ask me if I really meant it and would I like a job for a year as agent for Carlisle Liberals!

So I deferred teacher training for a year and worked for the party in Carlisle and then Penrith & the Border from June 1962 to September 1963, and then June to September 1964. It was a fascinating experience and it also led me to a teaching post in Carlisle and, rather reluctantly, to becoming parliamentary candidate for Penrith & the Border 1966–69. It was in this role that I observed the reaction of local Liberals to the Young Liberal agitation and their attacks on the Party leadership discussed in *Journal* 68.

Locally, Jeremy Thorpe was liked; while lacking Grimond's gravitas he had a flair for publicity, quick wit and repartee, and he seemed better than Grimond at 'meeting the people'. We thought that he, and we, had quite enough to do in fighting Tories and Labour – we didn't need YL troublemakers as well!

I was personally surprised by George Kiloh's emergence (at least in press reports) as a wild radical, for I'd known him in the OU Liberal Club and couldn't recall him ever saying anything revolutionary. In an effort to attract younger members we invited Terry Lacey to visit the constituency. His reputation provoked some qualms on my executive, but what he actually said was entirely moderate and sensible. There were two radical features of his talk: instead of using a lectern, he sat on a desk and chatted to the audience, and instead of dark suit, collar and tie, he wore a sweater and jeans …

Overall I think we decided that the Young Liberals were probably rather naive young people, being encouraged and exploited by our opponents in the Tory press to damage Liberal credibility. Rumours of intrigues and rows on party policy far away in London or at party conferences did not really concern us. They were no more than a minor annoyance for us, and I don't suppose they had any effect at all on the voters.

John Howe

REPORTS

The Great Reform Act of 1832: its legacy and influence on the Coalition's reform agenda

Evening meeting, 24 January 2011, with Dr Philip Salmon and dr Mark Pack; Chair: William Wallace.
Report by **Neil Stockley**

Soon after he became deputy prime minister in May 2010, Nick Clegg promised that the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition would enact 'the most significant programme of reform by a British government since the nineteenth century … the biggest shake-up of our democracy since 1832'.[1]

At first, Nick Clegg's assertion seemed overblown, a classic case of political hyperbole. After all, liberal-minded historians have long seen the 1832 Act, in widening the franchise and redistributing representation, as a foundation of modern democracy. Dr Philip Salmon of the History of Parliament Trust, the first speaker at the meeting, claimed that the 1832 Act occupies 'a central place in the constitutional development of the British political system'. He said that the legislation forced politicians to engage with the electorate and restored public faith in a political system that had been discredited.

But Dr Salmon also questioned some of the enduring myths and, in particular, the extent to which the 1832 Act accelerated the enfranchisement of the English people. He explained that the growth in the size of the English electorate after 1832 was, in fact, very modest: from 435,000 before the Act was passed, to 614,000 afterwards, an increase of just 14 per cent, a figure comparable to the expansion that took place in the decade leading up to 1832. The proportion of adult men who could vote rose after 1832 from 13.5 per cent to 18 per cent. Some of the growth could be attributed to the natural expansion in the size of the franchise, as a result of population and economic growth during the previous decade.

Moreover, after 1832, thousands of men lost the franchise, as a result of the new requirements on electors to register to vote and to keep up to date with paying their rates in order to do so. Dr Salmon cited the examples of Lancaster, where 3,000 non-resident freemen lost their voting rights, and also Preston, where the new requirements for registration and paying rates disadvantaged thousands of low-paid workers. Dr Salmon estimated that for every eleven men who gained the vote as a result of the new household franchise, five lost their right to vote because of the ratepayer requirement. He added that those who lost out came disproportionately from the 'lower orders'.

Dr Salmon also reminded the meeting that, after the 1832 Act was passed, very little really changed in British politics. The same sorts of elites still ran the country, pocket boroughs still existed and electoral violence and bribery remained endemic. The bar for political reform seemed to have been lowered, leaving Nick Clegg's claims to radicalism seeming less absurd.

Liberal-minded historians have long seen the 1832 Act, in widening the franchise and redistributing representation, as a foundation of modern democracy.

But then Dr Salmon asked why we persist in painting the 1832 Act as such a great landmark in this country's political history. He provided two explanations, the first of which concerned the impact of the legislation and the campaign for reform on the relationship between the people and parliament.

Dr Salmon showed how parliamentary reform had been on the agenda of radical politicians and activists since the 1770s. He traced the political cause back to decades-old concerns about the dominance of the executive and its ideological roots back to the French revolution and the works of Thomas Paine. He explained that, by the 1820s, campaigners for a diverse range of causes, including banking reform, free trade, lower taxation, religious freedoms and the rights of local communities, had coalesced around the cause of parliamentary reform. Political unions were vital in rallying middle-class support, especially in Manchester. The cause was framed as a 'restoration' of a constitution that had been usurped by the ruling classes and the reforging of a – largely mythical – bond between the Commons and the nation.

Dr Salmon was at his most interesting and insightful when he discussed the ways in which the bill captured the public imagination. The passage of the 1832 Act marked the culmination of eighteen months of debate. The final form of the legislation was shaped in important ways by public interventions and community action, with the original bill changed substantially as a result of appeals, petitions to the Commons (which carried much more weight than they do now) and representations to ministers. During this process, freemen protested against attacks on their voting rights, and the government made important concessions. A provision in the original bill to reduce the number of MPs by 10 per cent was abandoned, for example, and the number of new constituencies under the legislation was doubled.

The wide public dialogue and consultation conferred a powerful sense of legitimacy on the reforms. When it was finally passed, the 1832 Act was greeted by public celebrations on a scale usually reserved

for triumphs on the battlefield. Dr Salmon suggested that this experience carried valuable lessons for today's politicians and activists about how to re-engage with the public and legitimise major political reforms. But perhaps the most significant insight of the evening was Dr Salmon's contention that the manner in which political reform was carried out had a powerful impact on how the public accepted and used their new rights.

By contrast, in 2011 the coalition's reforms have not, in themselves, been the subject of huge public debate and they have not attracted a great deal of enthusiasm. They stem largely from the coalition parties' own agendas, which overlap in some areas (such as the recall of MPs and reducing the size of the Commons) but not in others. The AV referendum, to be the subject of the first UK-wide referendum since 1975, represents a compromise between the Conservative Party, strong supporters of first past the post, and the Liberal Democrats, who have long called for proportional representation for all Westminster elections. At the time of writing, however, the referendum on replacing the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system for the Commons with alternative voting (AV) has still not been held. The campaign has hardly begun. As a result, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about the process for change or the extent of its public legitimacy.

The second reason that led Dr Salmon to see the 1832 Act as a historical landmark that 'spoke to the modern age' concerned its political and constitutional legacy. He believed that the development of political parties that were established nationally and organised locally was a consequence of the cumbersome and adversarial new process for registering voters. There were also legal and financial restrictions on registration. These factors encouraged voter indifference and laziness and left the parties and political clubs with little choice but to organise themselves effectively, including at local level, to ensure that their supporters were on the electoral register. Moreover, he argued, the redistribution of Commons seats, particularly in favour of counties, produced a representative system that was more stable and durable. Dr Salmond concluded – though he could have said more on this point – that the new political consensus provided the basis of Victorian democracy.

Perhaps the most significant insight of the evening was Dr Salmon's contention that the manner in which political reform was carried out had a powerful impact on how the public accepted and used their new rights.

Dr Mark Pack, formerly the head of innovations at Liberal Democrat party HQ, seemed to defend Nick Clegg's claim to radicalism when he argued that the coalition's planned constitutional and political reforms are as radical as any since 1832. Dr Pack reminded the meeting of the sheer scale of the coalition's plans. In addition to the AV referendum they include: five-yearly reviews of constituency boundaries; a 10 per cent reduction in the number of MPs; the introduction of fixed-term parliaments; the introduction of elections for the House of Lords; a new power for voters to 'recall' MPs who are found guilty of major misdemeanours; and an overhaul of the way in which political parties are funded.

Dr Pack contended that, of all the constitutional and political reforms since 1832, only those enacted by the Blair government after 1997 were comparable in their radicalism. He developed this theme by discussing the potential impacts of the coalition's planned reforms on the political system – although his suggestions were, inevitably, speculative because the changes are not yet in place and nobody can be sure what effect they will have on the unforeseeable political environments of the future.

On some points, Dr Pack was on strong ground. He contended that the move to fixed-term parliaments could alter the course of political history. As Dr Pack pointed out, in autumn 2007, Gordon Brown marched his troops up the hill, when he planned an early general election, only to have to march them back down again. His prime ministership never recovered from this act of cyncism and failure of political nerve. But Mr Brown could not have been tempted to 'go early' had the 2005 parliament been elected on a fixed term.

Dr Pack was surely correct when argued that quinquennial electoral boundary reviews will have a profound impact on individual political careers and even, I suggest, on the outcomes of some future general elections. Similarly, I agree that the election of the House of Lords, assuming that some form of multi-member constituencies or proportional representation is used, should produce a more diverse parliament.

But Dr Pack's assertions about the likely impacts of adopting the alternative vote, if it passes, were more open to argument. He suggested that AV would, in time, reduce the number of 'safe' seats in the Commons – that is, constituencies that seldom or never change their party allegiances. A comparison may be made with the Australian House of Representatives which is elected using AV, as are the 'lower houses' in all but one of that country's state legislatures. Over recent decades, the proportion of safe seats in Australia does not appear to be markedly smaller to that in the UK. Whatever its other merits, AV may not succeed in building new links between the people and their representatives or restore public faith in politics in the ways that are often suggested.

Dr Pack also suggested that AV would eventually give birth to a more respectful, more civilised form of politics, as parties had to reach out to their opponents' voters, to ask for their second, third and fourth preferences. On this basis, he compared a shift to AV to the introduction of electoral registers for its potential impact on Britain's political culture. But observers of Australian politics may not recognise Dr Pack's implied description of that country's political discourse.

Dr Pack was doubtful – correctly, in my view – that the current coalition's reform programme would bring about a great resurgence in the public's interest or confidence in politics. Even so, the precise changes in political culture that may flow from the coalition government's planned reforms are very hard to predict; even if all of the reforms eventuate, making any firm comparisons with the Great Reform Act of 1832 and its aftermath somewhat hazardous.

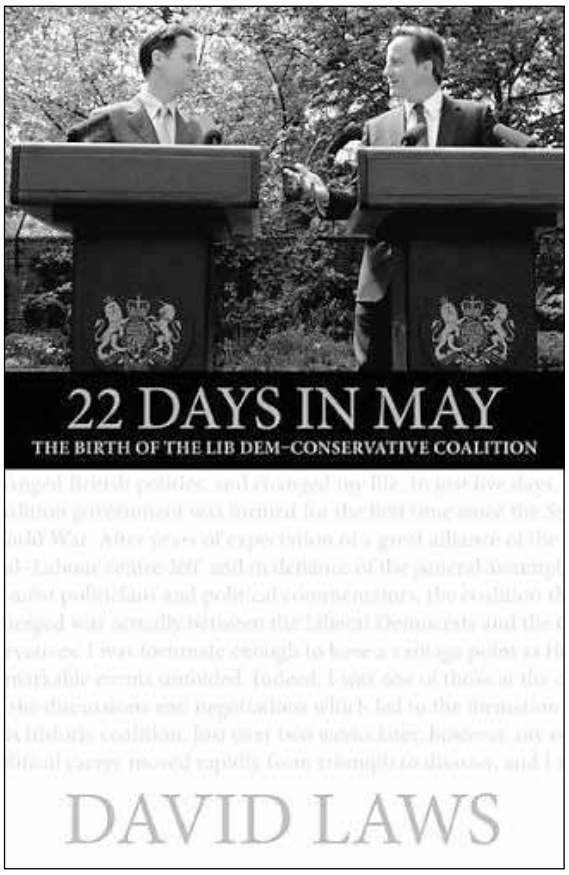
Neil Stockley is director of a public affairs company and a frequent contributor to the Journal of Liberal History.

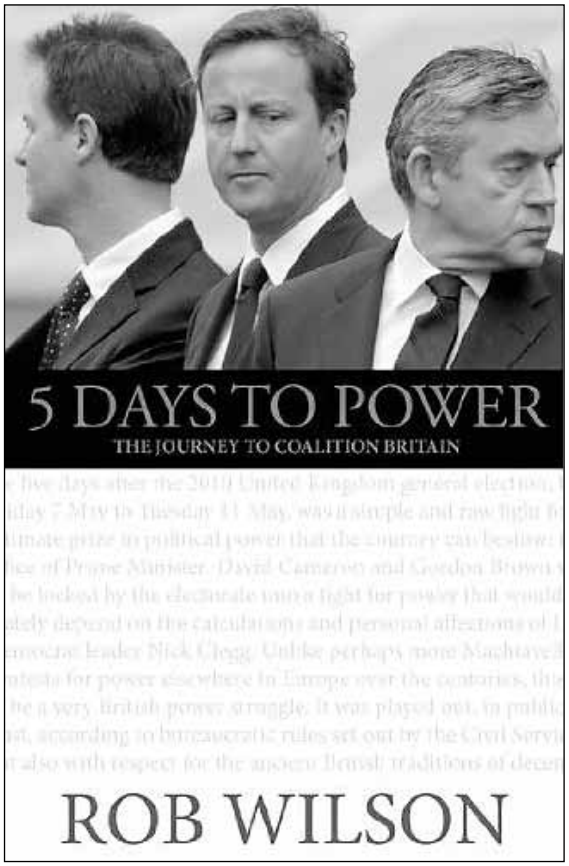
1 See http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/nick-clegg-speech-on-constitutional-reform for a full transcript.

REVIEWS

A coalition is born

David Laws, *22 Days in May* (Biteback, 2010); Rob Wilson, *5 Days to Power* (Biteback, 2010)
Reviewed by **David Howarth**





It remains to be seen whether the 2010 Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition is a one-off curiosity or a decisive break in the pattern of British politics, and whether it marks the dawn of a new era of Liberal influence or the party's final twilight. But when writing the coalition's history becomes possible, these two instant books about its genesis by practising politicians – one a Liberal Democrat negotiator, the other a Conservative backbencher – will provide valuable information. Although published in the midst of controversy about the events they depict – not so much products of the Owl of Minerva as of Vulcan's forge – what they lose through partisanship they more than make up in immediacy of recall and access to key players. David Laws, especially, was at the centre of events, and his account is considerably enhanced by his use of contemporaneous notes taken for the Lib Dem negotiating team by the estimable Alison Suttie, then head of Nick Clegg's office.

Sceptical future historians might ask whether either account is complete, but they will undoubtedly be grateful that Laws reproduces as appendices several crucial documents, including both Labour's and the Conservatives' opening bargaining positions.[1] Although he reveals no Liberal Democrat material from the post-election period, he provides enough for a decent understanding of the course of the negotiations even without commentary. Indeed, a good way to read these books is to look first at Laws' documents, then at Rob Wilson's weaving together of accounts by leading participants, before turning finally to Laws' first-person account.[2]

The documents establish, for example, that Labour was prepared to make early (that is, in 2010–11) cuts in public expenditure, even though Ed Balls has claimed that the Liberal Democrats' change of position on that issue demonstrates that they had intended to go with the Conservatives all along. Laws thinks that Balls might not have read his own party's position paper, which would be consistent with Wilson's account of the catastrophically chaotic nature of Labour's conduct of the talks; but whatever the explanation, the document itself is clear.[3]

More generally, the documents show that Labour's offer was roughly equivalent to that of the Conservatives, even after the Conservatives matched Labour on a referendum on the alternative vote (AV) system. On constitutional reform, both offered fixed-term parliaments,[4] recall of MPs, the Wright Committee reforms of the Commons, party funding reform along Hayden Phillips' lines, regulation of lobbyists, the Calman reforms for Scotland, a referendum on expanding the Welsh Assembly's powers and a proportionally elected Lords. There were differences: Labour, for example, offered a convention on moving to a written constitution and consideration of votes at the age of sixteen, whereas the Conservatives offered moving more quickly to individual voter registration. On balance Labour's constitutional reform offer was stronger, but on taxation the Conservative offer was stronger: guaranteed early moves towards a £10,000 personal allowance funded by increases in capital gains tax and a firm policy of prioritising further moves in the same direction. Labour offered only a review. The Conservatives also led on extra funding for schools to reflect numbers of low-income background pupils (the 'pupil premium'), but only because Labour insisted on telling schools what to spend the premium on. On green issues, the Conservatives produced a longer list of agreed policies but the crucial difference was that Labour offered a 40 per cent 'low-carbon' target for electricity production, whereas

the Conservatives would 'seek' to increase the target for 'renewable' energy. That is, Labour offered a specific target, but one that included nuclear power, whereas the Conservatives were vaguer on the target but more helpful on nuclear. The position on civil liberties and justice was similar to that on constitutional reform. The Labour and Conservative offers greatly overlapped (restoration of protest rights, the Scottish DNA retention rules, no biometrics from children without parental consent, CCTV regulation, extension of freedom of information), but neither mentioned protection of the Human Rights Act. The Labour proposal, however, offered some progress on criminal defendants' rights, a review of short prison sentences and an 'extensive roll-out' of restorative justice. The Conservatives offered nothing on criminal justice, but were committed to the complete repeal of the identity card legislation. Labour would only agree to freeze its national identity system for one parliament.

But there is much the documents do not explain, for which one must turn to the narratives. They explain neither why the Liberal Democrats changed their stance on deficit reduction nor why what looks like a close race for a deal resulted so quickly in a decisive Conservative victory.

The Liberal Democrat manifesto position was that net public expenditure should not fall in 2010–11 and thereafter the structural deficit should be eliminated over eight years, with half achieved within four. The eventual Con–Lib agreement proposed £6 billion in spending cuts in 2010–11, with some of the proceeds ploughed back into green jobs programmes, and a 'significantly accelerated reduction in the structural deficit over the course of a parliament'. Laws explains that during the campaign, the Liberal Democrat leadership decided that since the markets would be sceptical about a multi-party government's capacity to reduce the deficit, it would have to make noises about accelerated deficit reduction, but until the crisis in Greece, they still were thinking in terms of 2011–12, not 2010–11. The Greek crisis, however, convinced them that the markets could turn on the UK unless the new government made an immediate start on deficit reduction. They comforted themselves that the precise amount (£6 billion or 0.5 per cent of GDP) was too low seriously to affect aggregate demand, but they hoped it would work as a signal.

The puzzle is not that the party took one view or another, but that it did so on the fly without consulting specialists. Has the party of Keynes lost touch with economics as a discipline?

In favour of the Liberal Democrat policy shift, as Jacques Attali pointed out in a contemporaneous book, much read across the Channel but entirely ignored here,[5] sovereign debt crises depend more on confidence than on the numbers. Nevertheless the UK's numbers looked solid. The debt was overwhelmingly held domestically and in sterling, and the refinancing timetable was, by international standards, comfortable.[6] Moreover, the decision crucially depended on an imponderable issue of comparative irrationality, namely on whether financial markets are more easily moved by symbolic gestures than the real economy. As another contemporaneous economic analysis pointed out, in the real economy much turns on Keynes' 'animal spirits' – the confidence entrepreneurs need to make investments.[7] Expectations of public spending cuts would dampen those spirits.

To make a new judgment on the balance between raising confidence in the financial markets and lowering it in the real economy in the heat of an election campaign, and to put it into operation immediately thereafter is, to say the least, courageous. According to Wilson, the Liberal Democrat leadership took no external advice about the issue, or about the separate issue of accelerated deficit reduction. Both the Treasury and the Bank of England would have reinforced the acceleration view, given half a chance,[8] but that view is built into their nature. Others took very different positions on the optimal path, from the NIESR's moderate caution to David Blanchflower's jeremiads. The puzzle is not that the party took one view or another, but that it did so on the fly without consulting specialists. Has the party of Keynes lost touch with economics as a discipline?[9]

On the second question, how the Conservatives won the race so easily, the basic chronology is tolerably clear and agreed by Laws and Wilson. The Conservatives got in first, opening negotiations the day after the election with David Cameron's 'big, open and comprehensive offer', a move the Liberal Democrat team had anticipated. Nick Clegg, citing his commitment to talk first to the party with the better mandate, fended off an attempt by Gordon Brown to bulldoze his way into the process, although contacts with Labour started secretly. The Conservatives treated the Liberal Democrats with considerable respect ('as grown ups', Wilson reports), whereas Labour treated them as inferiors, tending to didacticism. Nevertheless, the Liberal Democrat–Conservative negotiations stalled on electoral reform, and the Conservatives moved to offer a confidence and supply arrangement instead of full coalition. Negotiations with Labour then intensified, but the stumbling block was the immensely unpopular Brown's personal position. The Liberal Democrats did not want, in Laws' (or rather Vergil's) words to be 'chained to a decaying corpse',[10] and put pressure on Brown, very much resented by some in Labour, to go. After much misunderstanding about his intentions, Brown eventually announced his resignation as Labour leader.

Just before Brown's announcement, the Liberal Democrat parliamentary party somewhat bizarrely decided that it preferred a coalition with either party to a confidence and supply agreement. Laws' explanation of that decision, which had fateful effects, was that the parliamentary party came to believe that confidence and supply agreements delivered less power than coalition but no escape from blame for unpopular government policies. If that was the real reason, it was extraordinary. Coalition does mean more influence to shape decisions than confidence and supply, but it is far worse in terms of blame. That is precisely why the choice is so difficult: it is a choice between policy and politics.

The parliamentary party might have been influenced by historical parallels with 1924, which ended very badly for the party, and the Lib–Lab pact of 1977–78. But 1924 did not see a confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and a minority Labour government or any sort of stability arrangement. The lesson of 1924 is that there are very great risks in taking the option

of doing nothing and treating each issue on its merits, especially the risk of an early election in which the party nearest to an overall majority (the Conservatives in 1924) has a strong argument that a majority would restore stability. The whole point of confidence and supply agreements is to avoid the 1924 situation by ensuring that the government does not fall over some random event. Confidence and supply agreements also reduce incentives for the opposition to act opportunistically (in the fashion of Labour's attempts to bring down the Major government by voting against the Maastricht Treaty) by confronting the opposition with the reality that the government will not fall whatever the opposition does.

Two documents printed by Laws, a pre-election Liberal Democrat draft confidence and supply template and the Conservative offer of a confidence and supply agreement of Monday 10 May, both recognise the importance of the creation of stability. They stipulate that they are to subsist for four years and that they are predicated on the introduction of fixed-term parliaments. (One might mention in passing, however, that both suffer from the defect of imposing no constraint on what the government counts as a vote of confidence, which was precisely the problem with the Campbell Case vote in 1924). Crucially, Laws informs us that the parliamentary party consciously considered the 1924 option of taking each issue as it comes as a distinct option – different from confidence and supply – and (probably sensibly) rejected it.

As for the Lib–Lab pact, there is an enormous difference between an agreement at the start of a parliament and an agreement halfway through, in which the junior partner effectively takes responsibility for the existing government's record in office. In any case, the pact was not the disaster many thought it was at the time. The Liberal Party's poll ratings before the pact were in the 10–12 per cent range. At the 1979 election, the party reached 14 per cent.

If the party was interested in the lessons of history it might also have considered the lessons to be drawn from the coalitions of 1918 and 1931. The first led to the catastrophe of 1922, when Labour gained second place. The second led to the wipe-out of 1935, from which the party was lucky to survive.

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Subsequent events surrounding tuition fees and control orders illustrate the point that there is a trade-off between influence and popularity, a trade-off in which coalition leans towards influence and confidence and supply towards popularity. A Conservative minority government would very probably have proposed policies much worse, in Liberal Democrat terms, than those proposed by the coalition, and would probably have made a deal with Labour to get them through parliament. Labour, after all, introduced tuition fees and commissioned the Browne Review to justify raising them, and its position on anti-terrorism legislation was by far the most authoritarian of the three parties. The Liberal Democrats would thus have escaped much of their current opprobrium, but only at the cost of seeing worse policies put into effect.

One suspects there were other reasons for the decision to reject confidence and supply, although Laws gives away little. One possibility is that those who favoured an alliance with Labour, believing the Conservatives could not offer an electoral reform referendum, purported to prefer full coalition to confidence and supply as a way of excluding the Conservatives from the game, whereas those who favoured the Conservative option believed that ruling out confidence and supply would put sufficient extra pressure on the Conservatives to make a credible offer on electoral reform. Tellingly, Laws reports that during the meeting, Nick Harvey sent him a note saying that the Conservative whips had been asking their backbenchers whether they might accept an AV referendum as the price of coalition, information Laws passed immediately to Nick Clegg. As Laws says, 'This was helpful confirmation … that the ice on the Conservative side was thawing.' It also improved the odds on going for broke.

Meanwhile, in circumstances that remain controversial among Conservative backbenchers, some of whom accuse David Cameron of misleading them that Labour was about to offer the Liberal Democrats AV without a referendum, a proposal only subsequently put to Labour by Chris Huhne and summarily rejected, the Conservatives leadership persuaded its parliamentary party to accept an AV referendum. The Liberal Democrats, having ruled out confidence and supply, then faced a straight choice between coalition with Labour and coalition with the Conservatives.

Most controversy surrounds what happened next. The Liberal Democrat negotiators met the Labour team for the first formally acknowledged time. As Laws reports it, the meeting was a disaster. Peter Mandelson, leading for Labour, was serious and engaged, but Laws 'detected an element of distance' in him. Laws concedes that another Labour negotiator, Andrew Adonis, was 'committed, professional and thoughtful', and clearly pushing for a deal. The problem was the other three Labour participants: Ed Miliband, Ed Balls and Harriet Harman. Miliband rubbished the Liberal Democrats' energy and climate change policy, stressed the indispensability of nuclear power and declared the Lib Dem target of 40 per cent renewables by 2020 'pie in the sky'. Balls complained that the Liberal Democrat £10,000 personal allowance policy was unaffordable (while admitting to an attempt at sharp practice by inserting into Labour's document a misleading promise to increase the personal allowance for pensioners to £10,000), contradicted Labour's own position paper on 2010–11 cuts and kept insisting that any economic issue had to be referred to Alistair Darling, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was not part of Labour's team. As Wilson reveals, Darling was an opponent of any deal. Balls also sabotaged discussion of constitutional issues by claiming that Labour's chief whip believed that inducing Labour MPs to vote for an AV referendum would be difficult, despite Labour's manifesto. Harriet Harman managed to throw into doubt Labour's commitment to another proposal in its own paper, the Wright Committee reforms of Commons procedures. The paper conceded reforms 'based on' Wright. When Chris Huhne asked whether that meant Wright 'in full', Harman replied, 'Well, we wouldn't want to throw everything into chaos.'

Naturally, Andrew Adonis took a different view: 'Your people must have been at a different meeting,' Wilson reports him telling Paddy Ashdown after accounts of the Liberal Democrat team's assessment of the encounter reached the media. Adonis, and, allegedly, Balls concluded at that point that the Liberal Democrats were not serious about Labour and had already decided to opt for the Conservatives, a conclusion that, whatever its accuracy, soured all further contacts between the parties. Laws claims that the Liberal Democrat team, though sceptical about whether the parliamentary numbers added up for the Labour option, genuinely tried to reach a deal and concluded only after the meeting that Labour was so divided, or so interested in leadership ambitions, that it lacked the party discipline necessary to make any agreement work, an impression confirmed the following day when Labour ministers and backbenchers queued up to tell the media that Labour should spurn the Liberal Democrats and go into opposition.

Laws' interest in laying the blame for the breakdown on Labour is obvious, but so is Adonis' in the opposite direction. A more charitable explanation is that thirteen years of being patronised and treated with contempt by Labour politicians had sensitised the Liberal Democrats to interpret Labour's characteristically caustic behaviour as deep hostility and lack of respect, whereas Adonis, more accustomed to Labour's aggressive style, concentrated on the positive text he had presented. Another factor might have been that Labour, believing that the Liberal Democrats much preferred a Labour alliance to a Conservative one, wrongly assumed that it needed to give very little to secure a deal.

More important, however, is that, whatever the Liberal Democrats' motives, authority in the Labour Party had, objectively, broken down in the wake of Brown's resignation. Brown was both the main barrier to the negotiations and the only source of authority capable of bringing them to a successful conclusion.

The rest is a forced endgame. Further talks between Labour and the Liberal Democrats were more positive in tone but doomed by each side's assumption that the other was not serious. The Liberal Democrats reverted to the somewhat surprised and relieved Conservatives and raced to complete the coalition agreement before Gordon Brown worked out that the game was up and made his last move – precipitate resignation as a way of making the new government look chaotic on its first day. The negotiating teams finished their work just as David Cameron left for Buckingham Palace. That night saw the dénouement: the Liberal Democrat parliamentary party and Federal Executive, with only a single dissenting vote, endorsed the deal, thus easily clearing the bar set by the so-called triple lock procedure, originally imposed by the party conference in 1998 to discourage Paddy Ashdown's attempts to forge a coalition with Blair's majority government.

Three themes arise from this tale. The first is the importance of pace. In the Lib Dem team, both Andrew Stunell, drawing on his local government experience, and Chris Huhne – an early advocate of full coalition and thus anxious to allow sufficient time to negotiate a complete programme for government – both favoured giving the negotiations time to develop. Laws, however, supported by Danny Alexander, favoured a rapid pace and an early conclusion, for two reasons. First, Laws was afraid of the media and thought that any attempt to refuse to feed them their favourite diet of constant activity and instant decision would damage not only the party but also the very idea of cooperation between parties. Laws even feared headlines that the Lib Dem team had gone to get some sleep, in consequence of which he himself seems to have taken very little rest. Secondly, Laws, and Nick Clegg, feared the markets. Clegg in particular believed that, in the absence of rapid agreement, 'the markets would go nuts'. From Wilson's account we learn that the Civil Service, in the form of the Cabinet Secretary, Gus O'Donnell, also expected meltdown in the markets failing an agreement by the Monday morning. The Laws view prevailed, with profound effects.

Wilson reveals that the Conservative leadership, too, wanted rapid progress, but largely because, having a much better grasp of political dynamics than the Liberal Democrats, their first priority was to lever Brown out of Number 10 as quickly as possible. They realised that as soon as Cameron was established in Downing Street, everything, including market sentiment, would change. The Conservatives were therefore determined to create a level of momentum Labour never matched. Labour's chaotic negotiating style was made to look even worse because Labour was so far behind. A bad start in a 1500m race is unimportant. In a 100m sprint, it is disastrous.

Fear of a second election is crucial to understanding Liberal Democrat behaviour. It probably played an important part, for example, in the fateful decision that coalition with anyone was better than confidence and supply. It is striking, therefore, that Wilson maintains that the Conservative leadership had no intention of calling a second election in the autumn of 2010.

The second theme is the difficulty negotiators find in revising their background assumptions. The Liberal Democrat negotiators seemed able to change only one of their assumptions at a time, when, in fact, large numbers of them proved unjustified. The Liberal Democrats held three central assumptions at the start of the negotiations: that, absent any agreement, the markets would 'go nuts' on the Monday morning; that the Conservatives would call a second election in the autumn if the parties agreed anything less than full coalition; and that the Conservatives would offer nothing substantial on electoral reform. All three were shown to be false by midnight on Monday 10 May, but only one of them, the third, had any effect on the party's position.

The dreaded markets barely flickered, although neither Laws nor Wilson notices. The bond markets changed very little even when uncertainty was at its highest – at most an upward interest movement of one-tenth of 1 per cent on some short-term gilts. Sterling remained rock steady against both dollar and euro. The FTSE 100 opened 81 points higher than its Friday close and then rose more than 140 points. Presumably traders had already anticipated all the risks. Even more striking, the average interest rate on UK treasury bills at the tender the day after the election was lower than at the first tender after the coalition agreement, the exact opposite of what the Liberal Democrats and the Cabinet Secretary expected.

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that coalition with anyone was better than confidence and supply. It is striking, therefore, that Wilson maintains that the Conservative leadership had no intention of calling a second election in the autumn of 2010. Wilson reports Patrick McLoughlin, the Conservative Chief Whip, telling backbenchers that the Conservatives would be unlikely to win such an election. The financial situation meant that the government had no choice but to embark on cuts in public expenditure. Especially after the Conservatives' campaign rhetoric about a possible sovereign debt crisis, anything else might prove ruinous. But a cuts programme would inevitably revive Labour.

Liberal Democrat MPs might be forgiven not reading the *Financial Times*, but some did suspect that the Conservatives would shun an early second election. Laws records thinking, during the first substantive negotiating session with the Conservatives, 'Nor could we assume that the Conservative leadership would relish the prospect of a second general election in just a few months, given their failure to secure an overall majority in circumstances which they must have considered to be unusually favourable.' There was no follow-up to that thought, perceptive though it was. In contrast, Liberal Democrat reaction to the Conservative concession of an AV referendum was immediate and positive.

Some might see here evidence of predetermination to choose the Conservative coalition option. Another explanation, however, is that the Liberal Democrats suffered from the common cognitive bias of 'focusing', namely the error of putting too much emphasis on a single characteristic of a situation, to the exclusion of other relevant characteristics, a bias the negotiations themselves set up when discussions between the parties focused heavily on voting reform.

The third theme is surprising: the extent to which the negotiations concentrated on policy to the exclusion of institutional questions. One might have expected more time spent on how the parties would sort out responses to unforeseen events and how they would fill gaps. Perhaps the inexperience of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats led them into the journalists' error that government is about 'initiatives' and 'announcements' rather than the grind of prioritisation. The real difference between confidence and supply and full coalition, for example, depends on institutional detail. Some versions of coalition give the junior party as little practical power as standard confidence and supply agreements.[11]

Lack of interest in institutional questions led to a misunderstanding of the practical position of a Labour–Liberal Democrat coalition. Some on the Liberal Democrat side, including the leader, seemed to think that such a government's lack of an overall majority would constantly frustrate spending decisions. But parliament authorises expenditure through bills that set only maximum amounts. Spending cuts require no parliamentary approval. Moreover, no one except ministers can propose increases in expenditure, so that no need would arise to make deals on votes to reverse cuts. The only exception – important but politically manageable with a Conservative opposition – is expenditure that arises out of individuals' statutory rights, such as benefits and pensions. Admittedly, the government needs a majority for votes on Appropriation Bills as a whole (they are in practice unamendable), but such votes are precisely the stuff of confidence and supply agreements with minor parties. The difficulty for a Labour–Liberal Democrat minority government would have come in steering through tax increases, not spending cuts. But the effect would have been to push policy in the direction of a more bond-market-friendly split between tax and spending. Gordon Brown seems to have grasped the point early on, although his appalling interpersonal skills meant that he failed to persuade Nick Clegg. Paddy Ashdown, after advice from Chris Rennard, seems to have grasped it a day later, which explains his sharp shift on coalition with Labour, but most Liberal Democrats remained in thrall to their initial assessment.

Lack of institutional imagination also seems to have contributed to what has proved so far the worst decision made during the negotiations, although lack of political will was probably more important: that Liberal Democrat MPs could abstain if they disagreed with the government's response to the Browne Report on higher education. As we now know, only five Lib Dem MPs abstained on the votes to increase fees to £6000–9000. Twenty-eight voted with the government and twenty-one voted in accordance with their individual pledges to the electorate to oppose any increase.[12] Student demonstrations raged outside parliament and the party's opinion poll ratings plunged to near Thorpe crisis levels. The decision was made during the final scramble. It failed to specify how the government was to come to its decision on how to respond to Browne, thus begging the only question that mattered. Labour's 10 May offer suffered from the same fault – it offered a 'national debate' on Browne's recommendation with no way of distilling that debate into a decision, but at least it omitted the abstention proposal. How that proposal was made remains unexplained in both Laws and Wilson. It certainly appears, however, that the abstention idea had already been used to finesse another difference between the parties, namely favourable treatment for marriage in the tax system, and it was used a third time later in the document to deal with nuclear power. The three cases are, however, fundamentally different: most Liberal Democrat candidates had not made public pledges to vote against marriage tax breaks or nuclear power national planning statements, and had not highlighted their positions in election literature.

One suspects that the leadership thought the negotiations provided an excellent opportunity to abandon a policy it never wanted, but underestimated, massively, its political importance.

Greater interest in institutional matters might have helped generate mechanisms better suited to the political circumstances (e.g. proposing public all-party talks on Browne before issuing a White Paper, to put Labour on the spot rather than the Lib Dems). But Laws admits that he opposed the Liberal Democrats' policy on fees, and Wilson quotes internal Liberal Democrat pre-election documents in which the negotiating team agrees not to die in a ditch for it. One suspects that the leadership thought the negotiations provided an excellent opportunity to abandon a policy it never wanted, but underestimated, massively, its political importance.

One might question how far these errors mattered in the end.

Even if Liberal Democrat negotiators had given themselves more time, properly discounted the risk of an early second election and taken care to compare the deals offered to them as a whole, the fundamental problem would have remained that, without a permanent leader, Labour fell apart to the extent that it was incapable of making any deal stick. It was not even clear how it would decide to accept or reject any deal. There is an important lesson here. Unless we can discover how to bind a leaderless party to a coalition deal, it is incompatible to call for a party leader to resign and still to expect the party to negotiate a coalition.

But that still leaves the choice between full coalition and confidence and supply with the Conservatives. More time, better estimation of the risks of a second election and careful consideration of a greater range of institutional arrangements could have produced a different outcome. It may be, however, that the Liberal Democrats would have chosen full coalition anyway, consciously sacrificing their poll ratings, and even their entire future as a party, in exchange for greater influence. But at least they would have made that choice with their eyes open.

David Howarth is a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge; University Reader in Private Law, University of Cambridge; Associate Fellow of the Centre for Science and Policy, University of Cambridge; Electoral Commissioner; former MP for Cambridge and Leader of Cambridge City Council, Liberal Democrat shadow cabinet member 2007–10; Federal Policy Committee member 1990–2000.

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1 They are: a pre-election Liberal Democrat draft 'confidence and supply' agreement for use with either other party, the Conservatives' and Labour's opening proposals from Saturday 8 May, the Conservatives' draft of a 'confidence and supply' agreement from the following Monday, their later written offer of a referendum on electoral reform, Labour's revised coalition offer of the same day and the final coalition agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats of the evening of Tuesday 11 May.

2 There is also a case for reading Laws' narrative before Wilson's, if only for the dramatic effect of learning how wrong certain people were at various points of the negotiations. The best example is Laws' account of Paddy Ashdown's desperate attempts to enlist a globetrotting Tony Blair to intervene with Gordon Brown to persuade him to facilitate Lib–Lab negotiations. Only when we turn to Wilson's account do we learn that Blair opposed any deal with the Liberal Democrats and told Brown so. Any parallels with 1997–98 are far from coincidental. As Conrad Russell once remarked about Paddy Ashdown's relationship with Blair, 'Love is blind.'

3 See Laws' Appendix 5, paragraph 1.4.3. 'Reallocate a proportion of any identified in year 2010-11 savings to the promotion of growth and jobs.' Notice only 'a proportion'.

4 Interestingly until the very last stage of the negotiations with the Conservatives all parties seem to have agreed to four-year fixed terms. The idea of a five-year fixed term appeared very late – possibly as a knock-on effect of agreeing a five-year deficit elimination timescale.

5 J. Attali, *Tous ruinés dans dix ans?* (Paris: Fayard, 2010) at pp. 127-130.

6 See UK Debt Management Office, *Annual Report 2009–10*.

7 G. Akerlof and R. Shiller, *Animal Spirits* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 2009)

8 The Liberal Democrat negotiating team declined opportunities offered by the Cabinet Secretary to be browbeaten by officials, but only because they were in no further need of persuasion.

9 One explanation is that many of leading Lib Dem MPs were themselves economists by background, with a bias to the City rather than the universities (Laws, Huhne, Cable, plus PPE graduate Alexander). Perhaps they felt that consultation with mere academia was unnecessary.

10 Aeneid Book VIII, lines 485-499. As Vergil says, this is 'tormenti genus'.

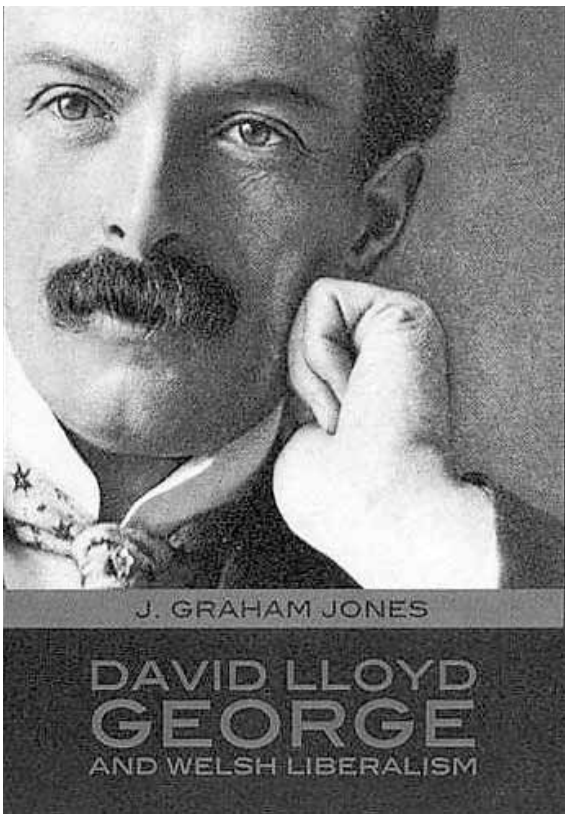
11 The two parties later negotiated a set of institutional arrangements whose main characteristic is that they place an immense burden on the leader of the Liberal Democrats, a burden that seems incompatible with his retaining substantive departmental responsibilities.

12 Three were absent: Martin Horwood, Chris Huhne and Sir Bob Smith.

Lloyd George and Wales

J. Graham Jones, *Lloyd George and Welsh Liberalism* (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2010)
Reviewed by **Kenneth O. Morgan**

As Voltaire might have said, if John Graham Jones did not exist he would have had to be invented. As head of the Welsh Political Archive established at the National Library of Wales in 1983, he has become an irreplaceable figure in the scholarly life of Wales. He has a unique knowledge of the rich collections under his care (many of them housed in Aberystwyth as a direct result of his own energy and initiative) and he has been a generous adviser to other scholars working on the archival riches deposited in that monumental Cymric Parthenon overlooking the tranquil waters of Cardigan Bay. Travelling to this Welsh copyright library is a lengthy business, demanding a large volume to while away the time on David Davies' Cambrian railway as it meanders through mid-Wales. But a meeting with the deeply learned, if deceptively modest, Dr Jones is always *vaut le détour*. For the first time, after selflessly helping other scholars for three decades, he has branched out with a major work of his own. It consists of twenty-eight chapters – all of them essays that have been previously published in local Welsh historical journals save for one that appeared in this journal. The focus is on Welsh politics between the late 1880s and the 1940s. In itself, this is a fascinating theme, on which previous scholars have written during the resurgence of modern Welsh history over the past half-century. But since the main emphasis is on episodes in the career of David Lloyd George, that ever-present magnet for legions of authors from Beriah Gwynfe Evans



to Roy Hattersley, the book has a particular appeal for historians of twentieth-century British politics, and especially of the fortunes of the Liberal Party and its renamed successors. Scholars will thus give Graham Jones' book a warm welcome.

The value of this book lies in the rich local political material that it contains. Dr Jones is a wonderful archivist, and his work pivots on the bulky manuscript collections under his custody, which he himself is often able to work on before other scholars may do so. In particular, his work is inspired by four recent major Lloyd George collections which he has collected and catalogued since 1990: the archive of L.G.'s younger brother, William, who selflessly kept the show on the road in Caernarfon Boroughs and ran the family solicitors; the papers of Lloyd George's second daughter, Lady Olwen; the large collection of papers of Lloyd George's ambitious private secretary, A. J. Sylvester; and a small residue of material retained by Lloyd George's secretary-mistress and eventual second wife, Frances Stevenson. But there are also many other collections which Dr Jones has been through, some long established in the National Library, such as those of Tom Ellis and D. R. Daniel, some of far more recent provenance and taking the story down to the 1979 devolution referendum and beyond.

The emphasis is overwhelmingly on elections and by-elections – indeed, excessively so – rather than on the social composition, economic interests or political ideology of Welsh Liberals. These Liberals, too, are overwhelmingly from rural, Nonconformist Welsh-speaking North and mid-Wales – Caernarfonshire, Anglesey, Denbighshire, Merioneth, Cardiganshire, Montgomeryshire, and also from Carmarthenshire in the south during the 1920s – significantly all of them counties which voted for the continued Sunday closure of pubs in the local referendum in 1961. This is all very fascinating, but it is only part of the reality of Welsh Liberalism. The cosmopolitan urban centres of the south – Newport, Cardiff, Barry and Swansea – seem an alien world, while we hear little of Merthyr or the mining valleys or indeed of the Labour movement in any respect. The maverick coalowner, D. A. Thomas, Lord Rhondda (who is mistakenly said to have been 'an uninterested observer' moored on the sidelines of Welsh politics after 1896) is a bit player, while the great mining Lib-Lab patriarchs like 'Mabon' and Brace, are absentees, as are the socialist ILP and the notorious Chief Constable of Glamorgan, Lionel Lindsay. This was the violent era of Taff Vale and Tonypandy, after all, yet no strike is discussed, not even the traumatic events in Thomas's own Cambrian Combine pits in 1910, nor the railwaymen shot down by troops at Llanelli in 1911. The South Wales Liberal Federation gets many mentions; the South Wales Miners' Federation, like the 225,000 workforce, does not feature in the index even once.

Most of the articles are solid and well constructed: about half a dozen, though, consist of the reprinting of documents of limited value almost for the sake of it, including some typically manic comments by Margot Asquith in the twenties. In short, this book covers some, though by no means all, key aspects of Welsh Liberalism from the late-Victorian period, but it does so through generous documentation set out by a uniquely expert guide. As a source book, therefore, it is of much value. Lloyd George's life odyssey is well depicted, and perhaps the two most interesting chapters are the first two. We read of the emergence of the young rural firebrand in the backwoods politics of Caernarfonshire and Merioneth in the late eighties, and of the affinities of Lloyd George and Tom Ellis with Michael Davitt, both as an Irish nationalist and even more as a land nationaliser.

Davitt, an agrarian socialist, was to make his last appearance in Wales speaking for Keir Hardie in Merthyr in 1906. A full account of the Caernarfon Boroughs general election contest in 1892 illustrates the various cross-tensions between the six boroughs in the constituency (there was a major gulf between the cathedral-bound world of Bangor and Calvinist Methodist Criccieth and Pwllheli), and the uncomradely sniping within the chapels at the free-thinking Campbellite Baptist who had captured the seat by eighteen votes in a dramatic by-election in 1890. Lloyd George's seat was a distinctly marginal one down to 1906 and this article graphically illustrates why. Later chapters offer material, of varying importance, bearing on some of Lloyd George's later activities in national British politics, including his pioneering work at the Board of Trade in 1905–8 (a formative period which still needs close examination), the People's Budget, the suffragettes (where many Welsh Liberals responded with a disgraceful exhibition of violent bigotry), the 1916 conscription crisis which divided the party so fatefully, the post-war coalition of 'hard-faced men', the Green Book and other campaigns in the twenties, the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction crusading for economic renewal in 1935, the Abdication crisis in the following year (Edward VIII's backers included, variously Lloyd George, Churchill and, remarkably, Aneurin Bevan) and the crisis of May 1940. It cannot be said that earlier interpretations are challenged on these issues, but we understand them in more detail after the material that Dr Jones has accumulated.

These articles reflect once again the vibrant culture that was late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Wales. It was truly an Antonine Age of political vitality,

economic enterprise, revivalist religion, cultural innovation and growing national awareness. From its All-Black-beating rugby team to the revival of the national eisteddfod, it was the Welsh Golden Age. Its monuments still dominate the nation today, one being the National Library at Aberystwyth itself, located there to balance the museum set up in faraway Cardiff.

Attention, however, was far from monopolised by Lloyd George, political colossus though he was. There are other dramatis personae, vivid and compelling. Thus we read of the public-spirited Herbert Lewis, who illustrates – as do C. P. Scott, Seebohm Rowntree or H. A. L. Fisher – the kind of honest, dedicated public figure who could work well with Lloyd George. Alan Taylor's dismissive judgement of Lloyd George – 'He had no friends and did not deserve any' – was, like other of my old mentor's epigrams, vividly compelling but deeply untrue. We are told of Sir Alfred Mond, deeply engulfed in Welsh politics for all his involvement with his metallurgical empire, a bold Lloyd Georgian reformer before the war, but a case of Liberalism lapsing into a crude anti-socialism after 1922. We encounter David Davies of Llandinam, a Welsh Andrew Carnegie, millionaire industrialist, but also a philanthropic idealist who spent millions on combating lung disease, endowing the national university and, finally, campaigning for the League of Nations and world peace. Dr Jones also tells us of Llewelyn Williams, the visionary Oxford-bred 'Young Wales' Liberal who broke with Lloyd George over conscription in 1916 and fought the Coalition despairingly in a historic by-election in Cardiganshire in February 1921. Unfortunately, Dr Jones's relentless emphasis on party politics and by-elections leads him to neglect Williams's wider role as a rare kind of Welsh Thomas Davis, a cultural nationalist, writer of charming children's stories and a scholarly historian of Tudor Wales with a revisionist view of the Act of Union. Welsh Liberalism could have done more like Llew.

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 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.*

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.*

Liberal policy towards Austria-Hungary, 1905–16

Andrew Gardner, 17 Upper Ramsey Walk, Canonbury, London N1 2RP; agardner@ssees.ac.uk.

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.*

Beyond Westminster: Grassroots Liberalism 1910–1929

A study of the Liberal Party at its grassroots during the period in which it went from being the party of government to the third party of politics. This research will use a wide range of sources, including surviving Liberal Party constituency minute books and local press to contextualise the national decline of the party with the reality of the situation on the ground. The thesis will focus on three geographic regions (Home Counties, Midlands and the North West) in order to explore the situation the Liberals found themselves in nationally. Research for University of Leicester. Supervisor: Dr Stuart Ball. *Gavin Freeman ; gjf6@le.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.*

'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.*

The political career of David Steel, Lord Steel of Aikwood

David Steel was one of the longest-serving leaders of the Liberal Party and an important figure in the realignment debate of the 1970s and '80s that led to the formation of the Liberal Democrats. Author would like to hear from anyone with pertinent or entertaining anecdotes relating to Steel's life and times, particularly his leadership, or who can point me towards any relevant source material. *David Torrance; davidtorrance@hotmail.com .*

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.*

A Liberal Democrat History Group evening meeting

FORGOTTEN HEROES FOR A GOVERNING PARTY

Some forgotten figures of Liberal history may deserve their obscurity, but most remain an unmined source of reference, quotation and inspiration for the contemporary Liberal Democrat – especially now, when the party is participating in national government for the first time in more than a generation.

At this year's Liberal Democrat History Group summer meeting, two senior party figures and two well-known academics will rescue their own forgotten heroes from the twlight of history and tell us how their champions' public lives can influence today's Liberal Democrats.

Speakers: **Lady Floella Benjamin; Lord Navnit Dholakia; Dr Matt Cole; Dr Mark Pack.**

The meeting will also mark the launch of Matt Cole's new biography, *Richard Wainwright, the Liberals and Liberal Democrats*; copies will be available for sale.

6.30pm, Monday 20 June
David Lloyd George Room, National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HE

The Lloyd George legacy in its different guises is shown in the later careers of Megan, a genuine radical who joined Labour, and Gwilym, who became a hyphenated Tory, and a Home Secretary who retained capital punishment. Truly their father's house contained many mansions.

What general conclusions can we reach about Welsh Liberalism in its era of greatness and glory? This book shows, of course, the centrality of popular Nonconformity in the public life of the nation, leading ultimately to the downfall and even discredit of the chapels as religious communities. Liberalism emerges as invincibly bourgeois, even with its populist grass roots, its shipowners and coalowners, preachers and teachers, journalists and the inevitable lawyers all increasingly out of touch with Labour, leading to a calamitous electoral collapse in the valleys after 1918. It was always sternly anti-socialist. Lloyd George's quasi land nationalisation manifested in the 'cultivating tenure' proposed in his Green Book in 1925 left Alfred Mond apoplectic. Significantly, the New Liberalism flourished in urban centres in England, notably L. T. Hobhouse's Manchester, not in Wales, where the prevailing tone was Old Liberalism – just as it was to be Old, not New, Labour eighty years on. Above all, there is significantly little here on ideas of home rule, even the most modest forms of devolution. It was not a major theme in Welsh history before Kilbrandon in 1973. Lloyd George's great defeat at Newport in 1896, when the quasi-nationalists of Cymru Fydd were shouted down, left a dark shadow over movements for devolution, still evident in the referendum of 1979 (and even in 1997 when the 'Yes' vote triumphed by only 0.5 per cent on a low poll). Wales was not Ireland, not even Scotland. It sought national equality within the United Kingdom not exclusion from it. Lloyd George, far from being the Parnell of Wales, became prime minister of Great Britain and a belligerent, even racialist, head of the Imperial War Cabinet. Even today, the Welsh Assembly lags well behind its counterpart in Edinburgh.

Finally, and of current relevance, coalition was always bad news for Liberalism. Lloyd George's 'couponed' peacetime coalition with the Tories after 1918 led to massive internal divisions, and left Coalition Liberalism in the valleys an open target for Labour. The so-called National government after 1931 was even more divisive, with only Lloyd George's family group of four left as a rump of independent Liberalism. But, at least in Lloyd George's day, almost all his fellow Liberals loyally backed up his People's Budget to promote social welfare and redistributive direct taxation, set up children's allowances, and invest in national development to generate employment. Today, after George Osborne's anti-working-class budget has taken precisely the opposite path on all these issues, Liberals in Wales and elsewhere are voting haplessly to undermine Lloyd George's legacy. It is a mournful comment on the glories of the Edwardian Liberal high noon that John Graham Jones's fascinating book so movingly describes.

Kenneth O. Morgan is Fellow of the British Academy, honorary fellow of The Queen's and Oriel Colleges, Oxford, and a Labour peer. He is the author of several books on modern history, most recently Ages of Reform: Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left *(I. B. Tauris, 2010).*