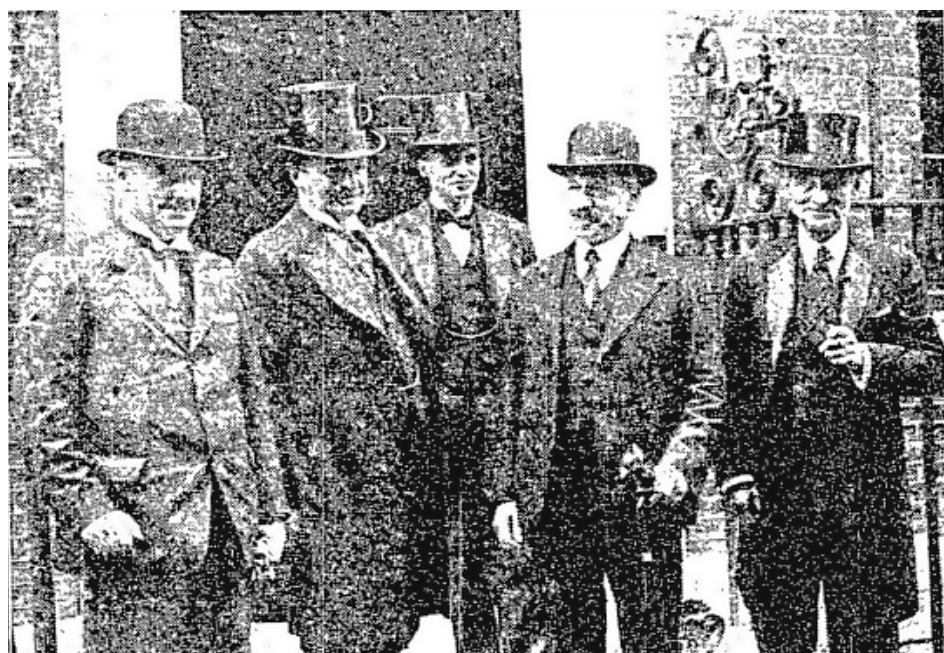


# LIBERALISM NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The National Government of 1931 was formed as a result of the collapse of the Labour administration in the face of economic crisis. Politicians of the three main parties came together in an atmosphere of fear: fear of a collapse in the value of the pound sterling; fear of a repetition in Britain of the hyperinflation that had wrecked the German economy in the early 1920s. The government so formed was to last until 1940. **Dr David Dutton** examines the impact of the National Government on the Liberal Party.



**C**OALITIONS IN the British system are most likely to be the product of one of two very different sorts of situation. A coalition can, as in 2010, be the result of arithmetical necessity. Only by two or more parties coming together can a parliamentary majority be assembled and the hazards and instability of minority administration be avoided. Sometimes such an arrangement falls some way short of full coalition as in the case of the Liberal Party's generally benevolent attitude towards the first Labour government in 1924 or

the Lib-Lab Pact of 1977-78.<sup>1</sup> The other type of situation is the coalition that grows out of a national emergency – the intrusion of external factors which compel parties to put their parochial differences aside and unite in the face of a common threat from beyond Westminster, usually war. The coalitions of 1915 and 1940 self-evidently fall into this category. But so too does the National Government of 1931-40.<sup>2</sup> The external threat may not in this case have been war, but the leading actors in the drama appear to have believed that the economic crisis of 1931 was the most serious challenge

# W AND THE MENT, 1931 – 1940

to have faced the country since the German spring offensive of 1918. Politicians of the three main parties came together in an atmosphere of fear: fear of a collapse in the value of the pound sterling; fear of a repetition in Britain of the hyper-inflation that had wrecked the German economy in the early 1920s.<sup>3</sup>

As Neville Chamberlain put it, 'the problem was to restore foreign confidence in British credit. This could only be done by announcing such a cut in national expenditure as would convince him [the foreigner] that we had sufficient courage to tackle the situation.'<sup>4</sup> And, as this task proved beyond the capacity of Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Cabinet, the three party leaders accepted the king's suggestion of a National Government.<sup>5</sup> For most of its existence, however, the National Government had a further, political, purpose – to keep the irresponsible Labour Party out of power. In some ways, therefore, it represented the belated triumph of the 1920s coalitionists, those who believed that only cooperation between Conservatives and Liberals could block Labour's seemingly remorseless rise – this, even though the two leading Conservative architects of the National Government, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, had both been in the anti-coalitionist camp in the Tory split of 1922.<sup>6</sup> Yet Labour was not the real loser of the era of National Government,

notwithstanding its dramatic electoral setback in 1931. Even in that year, despite dropping to just fifty-two MPs, Labour held on to 30.6 per cent of the popular vote, marginally higher than the percentage that had brought the party to government after the general election of 1923. Moreover, irrespective of the figures, the events of 1931 confirmed a Conservative–Labour duopoly as the only two serious contenders for power in the British polity after the brief experience of three-party politics in the 1920s. No, the real losers of this time were the Liberals, even though the economic crisis and the resulting formation of a National Government brought them back into government for the first time in almost a decade.

To understand the problems experienced by the Liberal Party in relation to the National Government, a word must be said about their experience of the previous decade. During the 1920s, the party, which had been the governing party of 1914, dropped rapidly to third place in the British political system, scarcely having had time to savour the status of being His Majesty's Opposition. In such a position, though Liberals could still talk optimistically of a future Liberal government, in their more sober moments they understood that their more realistic ambition was to hold the balance of power in a hung parliament.<sup>7</sup> This, of course,

was achieved after the general elections of 1923 and 1929, and, as has often been pointed out, the Liberal Party let itself down by failing to use this position to extract an agreed programme of Liberal goals from the minority Labour government that was formed on each occasion.<sup>8</sup> Their problem, however, was deeper and more fundamental. Liberals in the 1920s could not give a clear answer to the question of which of the two larger parties they would prefer to support in office. Indeed, not even individual Liberal politicians of this era gave consistent answers to this question. While Lloyd George moved from being the head of a Conservative–Liberal coalition in the early 1920s, to seeking an agreement to sustain Ramsay MacDonald's minority Labour administration at the end of the decade, other Liberal luminaries moved in the opposite direction. John Simon, who declared in 1922 that, when it came to practical business, the immediate objects he wanted to pursue were objects which Labour men and women also wanted to pursue,<sup>9</sup> had by 1930 become the leading opponent of Lloyd George's pro-Labour strategy and was opening secret negotiations for a parliamentary pact with the Conservatives.<sup>10</sup> Though the dilemma of 1931 and beyond was not occasioned by the same sort of parliamentary arithmetic as had existed in 1923 and 1929, the

Left: five Liberal ministers in Downing Street in October 1931, just before the calling of the general election. From left: Sir Donald Maclean, Lord Lothian, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Sir Herbert Samuel, Lord Reading (*Manchester Guardian*, 3 October 1931).

problem was fundamentally the same. Opposition to Labour as the party which had run away from the economic crisis was not sufficient to hold many Liberals within a Conservative-dominated administration. Indeed, by the time of the 1935 general election many Liberals, Lloyd George included, were back to seeing Labour as their partner of preference.<sup>11</sup>

As I have written elsewhere, the chief problem for the Liberals in their association with the National Government was the effect that it had on their unity.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the fragmentation of the Liberal Party was, from the outset, an objective of at least one leading Conservative. Neville Chamberlain was determined that the Liberal Party should be made 'to face up to the fiscal decision ... The decision will split it from top to bottom and ... will end it, the two sections going off in opposite directions, and bring us back nearly to the two party system.'<sup>13</sup> To begin with, of course, the entire Liberal Party gave its support to the National Government. Two places in the Emergency Cabinet of ten, Herbert Samuel at the Home Office and the Marquess of Reading a surprise appointment as Foreign Secretary, with additional senior posts for Donald Maclean, Lord Lothian, Archie Sinclair and the Marquess of Crewe, was a reasonable reward considering the respective parliamentary strengths of the components to the coalition. Austen Chamberlain paid tribute to Samuel's efforts to look after his party, contrasting them with what he regarded as Baldwin's failure to fight for his colleagues. But he did so with the anti-Semitic bias that was then more widespread than it is now comfortable to recall. 'Samuel', he wrote, 'like the Jew he is, grasps all he can.'<sup>14</sup>

Though the previous period of Labour government had served to re-open and in some cases to reconfigure the divisions that had plagued Liberalism since the crisis of 1916, the formation of the National Government seemed to offer hope that the party's internecine disputes could be relegated to the political long grass. A meeting of MPs, peers and candidates on 28 August revealed 'quite a remarkable demonstration of unity'.<sup>15</sup> All could take pleasure in the return of Liberal ministers to governmental

office, while the Labour government – which had caused such divisions in the Liberals' ranks – was now consigned to history. But this internal harmony did not last long, as the purpose and function of the National Government quickly changed. At its formation in August, noted Austen Chamberlain, the idea was for 'a national govt to deal with the present financial emergency. Not a coalition but cooperation. Dissolved as soon as its immediate task is accomplished and the following general election to be fought by the three Parties independently.'<sup>16</sup> Within weeks, however, the Tories, supported by those Liberals who looked to Simon for leadership, were pressing for a general election fought by the National Government on the issue of tariffs. Around this proposition three separate Liberal factions began to coalesce.

The Conservative Business Committee, the Shadow Cabinet of the day, meeting on 24 September, were 'all agreed as to the great importance of pitching our tariff demands high enough to make sure of getting rid of Samuel and, if possible, Reading'.<sup>17</sup> At the same time Leslie Hore-Belisha took the lead in organising a memorial to the prime minister, MacDonald, promising unqualified support for any measures necessary in the interests of the country. By 23 September this had been signed by twenty-nine Liberal MPs. The group invited Simon to become their leader, an invitation which he readily accepted. At the last moment the rupture which the general election was expected, and in some minds designed, to precipitate was avoided. The Cabinet decided on 5 October to seek authority from the electorate for whatever policies were needed to restore the national finances, the so-called 'Doctor's Mandate'. The parties would be free to make their separate and, in the case of the Samuelite Liberals, different appeals to the country beneath the umbrella of a general statement from MacDonald to which all ministers would subscribe.<sup>18</sup>

By the time of the general election on 27 October, the divisions within the Liberal ranks were becoming somewhat clearer; but confusion remained, not least in the minds of the electorate. Many newspapers described the vast

**Though the previous period of Labour government had served to re-open and in some cases to reconfigure the divisions that had plagued Liberalism since the crisis of 1916, the formation of the National Government seemed to offer hope that the party's internecine disputes could be relegated to the political long grass.**

majority of Liberal candidates as National Liberals to indicate that they were supportive of the National Government, a categorisation which included almost all, even if with varying degrees of enthusiasm, apart from the small, largely family, group surrounding Lloyd George, who unequivocally opposed the holding of an election. For this minority the designation of 'Liberal' or 'independent Liberal' was reserved. Samuel himself used the description 'Liberal and National candidate' in his address to the electors of Darwen in Lancashire.<sup>19</sup> Lists did exist to differentiate the Samuelite and Simonite camps, but even these were not definitive and a few names appeared on both. Samuelites were far more likely to be opposed by Conservatives than were Simonites, but again this was not a hard and fast rule and there were exceptions. Some MPs were remarkably successful in misleading their electorates as to their true affiliation. Right down to 1935, Huddersfield's MP, William Mabane, managed to present himself as a Samuelite in the constituency while behaving as a Simonite at Westminster.<sup>20</sup> In Dumfriesshire Dr Joseph Hunter said little about his precise allegiance before suddenly announcing in 1934 that he had accepted appointment as National Organiser for England and Wales for Simon's Liberal Nationals.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, when these two MPs succeeded in taking their local associations with them into the Liberal National camp, neither association found it necessary to change name, remaining the Huddersfield Liberal Association and the Dumfriesshire Liberal Association respectively.

In the year following the general election, however, the relationship between the two main wings of Liberalism and the relationship of both to the National Government was clarified. Meanwhile, the tiny Lloyd George group drifted off into near irrelevance. The divisions within Liberalism were confirmed and the possibility of a Liberal Party of some seventy MPs giving some credence to the claim of Walter Rea, the mainstream party's new chief whip, that the Liberals were 'now once more the second largest' party in the land, rapidly evaporated.<sup>22</sup> With the election out of the way, the Samuelites took the lead

in trying to bring about reconciliation with their Simonite colleagues. Speaking in Scarborough on 11 November, Ramsay Muir insisted that the Simonites were ‘genuine Liberals’ and claimed that the split in the party was not ‘really as serious as it appears to be’.<sup>23</sup> But rather than responding positively to these overtures, the Liberal Nationals began to take steps which emphasised their separateness and independence – declining the Samuelite whip, setting up committees to consider a range of policy areas and taking the decision to create a Liberal National infrastructure outside parliament. Several leading Simonites spoke privately, and often with considerable apprehension, of ‘crossing the Rubicon’, recognising that the reunion of the old party was now unlikely to be achieved and that their own destiny lay firmly in close parliamentary and electoral partnership with the Conservatives.<sup>24</sup>

As is well known, divisions over the historic Liberal gospel of free trade quickly confirmed what was happening. Lord Hailsham’s famous ‘agreement to differ’, anticipating by eighty years the leeway given to Nick Clegg’s MPs over raising university tuition fees, averted a split over the Import Duties Bill early in 1932.<sup>25</sup> But the Ottawa Agreements concluded later that summer proved too large a protectionist pill to for the gullets of most orthodox Liberals. The Samuelites, already under much pressure from disgruntled Liberal associations up and down the country, resigned from the National Government at the end of September 1932 and, after a year of fence-sitting which did nothing to enhance their credibility, crossed to the opposition benches in the autumn of the following year.

With the benefit of hindsight we now know that, although Lloyd George and his band of followers returned to the mainstream party in 1935, the Samuelite–Simonite split proved permanent. It was an outcome that the Samuelites seemed reluctant to accept. Though many unkind words were now exchanged, at heart Liberals continued to view Liberal Nationals as errant children who were bound one day to return to the family fold and for whose return the fatted calf was waiting. Liberal Nationals such as Simon and Runciman retained honorary positions within Liberal

**Divisions over the historic Liberal gospel of free trade quickly confirmed what was happening. Lord Hailsham’s famous ‘agreement to differ’, anticipating by eighty years the leeway given to Nick Clegg’s MPs over raising university tuition fees, averted a split over the Import Duties Bill early in 1932.**

organisations. Liberal National MPs continued to be listed in Liberal publications. And sitting Liberal National MPs were almost never challenged by Liberals at elections before 1945. The effect of all this was catastrophic for the orthodox party. At a stroke its parliamentary strength was reduced by 50 per cent. Just as importantly, in most constituencies represented by Liberal Nationals, the local organisation was taken over lock, stock and barrel by the new party. In many cases this led to the effective disappearance of organised Liberalism. Not until 1939 did the Liberals of Huddersfield begin to get their act together to counter Mabane’s takeover.<sup>26</sup> In Dumfriesshire the position was even more difficult. ‘This is a Liberal constituency’, the local newspaper repeatedly trumpeted.<sup>27</sup> But until the late 1950s there was little in the way of infrastructure to support this contention. In the country at large, a genuine battle took place between the two factions to establish which of them had the stronger claim to be the voice of traditional Liberalism, even if this battle was not fought at the polls. If Liberals had been more successful in the 1920s in establishing their own political identity, the outcome of this contest might have been easier to predict. As it was, much depended on propaganda and the power of the press. In Huddersfield the *Examiner* under Elliott Dodds held true to the mainstream party. But in Dumfries the *Standard*, whose editor, James Reid, also presided over the Dumfriesshire Liberal Association, was insistent that not only Hunter, but also his two Liberal National successors, Henry Fildes<sup>28</sup> and Niall Macpherson<sup>29</sup> were fully fledged Liberals. Coming from a newspaper whose radical credentials went back to its pro-Boer stance at the turn of the century and beyond, this must have been a difficult claim for many Liberals to challenge. Above all, the Liberal Nationals had a compelling argument that, with the mainstream party seemingly set on a path that would lead eventually to political extinction, the option of trying to influence a larger party from within made sound sense. The choice, suggested the *Dumfries Standard*, was clear. ‘On the one side there is the opportunity presented to Liberal statesmen of having a

hand in shaping policy; on the other side there is simply barren criticism in the face of overwhelming odds.’<sup>30</sup> It was, in practice, no choice at all.

What then of the relationship of the two Liberal factions to the National Government after 1932–3, one firmly within its ranks and the other outside? The position of the Liberal Nationals was at one and the same time both deceptively strong and appallingly weak. Their representation in the upper ranks of government was generous. Simon held the Foreign Secretaryship from 1931 to 1935. Thereafter he was successively Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer, becoming the acknowledged number two in Neville Chamberlain’s government from 1937 to 1940. Runciman was ensconced at the Board of Trade until May 1937 and was recalled to the Cabinet as Lord President following his unsuccessful mission to Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1938. After the resignation of the Liberal free traders in 1932, Godfrey Collins was appointed to the Scottish Office, bringing the Liberal National contingent in the Cabinet up to three, while several others such as Leslie Hore-Belisha and Leslie Burgin secured promotion within the junior ministerial ranks. The elevation of the Tory, Baldwin, to the premiership in June 1935 was balanced by the addition of an extra Liberal National, Ernest Brown, to the Cabinet as Minister of Labour. As late as September 1939 there were two Liberal Nationals in Neville Chamberlain’s War Cabinet of nine members. In the Commons, by contrast, the imbalance between the partners to the coalition was stark. Even after the 1935 general election, which saw some reduction of the massed Tory ranks, just thirty-two Liberal National MPs were set alongside almost 400 successful Conservatives. In the context of a hung parliament these thirty-two Liberal Nationals could have exercised a decisive impact; but the overwhelming Tory majority meant that, in the last resort, they were always dispensable. After its first weeks the National Government developed into a coalition of choice rather than of necessity. Yet, ironically, this was also a source of Liberal National strength. Baldwin and, after some misgivings, Chamberlain

too saw in the preservation of National Government the means of locating the dominant strand of Conservatism where they wanted it to be – on the centre-right of the political spectrum. When in 1936 Robert Bernays, himself in the process of transferring his allegiance to the Liberal Nationals, expressed concern that a post-Baldwin Conservative Party might veer significantly to the right, *The Times* responded, reasonably enough, that the Conservative right had been effectively sidelined and was in no position to recover its former influence.<sup>31</sup> Rather than seeking a direct Liberal National influence over the politics and policies of the National Government, therefore, we should see in that government's doings a series of measures which the Conservative leadership could justify to its own right wing by reference to the need to keep the Tories' Liberal allies on board. Such a situation gave rise, as is perhaps an inevitable consequence of coalition government, to complaints from the rank and file of both parties. Liberal Nationals complained that they were given insufficient credit for delivering the not inconsiderable 'Liberal vote'. Right-wing Tories complained that the government was pursuing an emasculated and effete Conservatism for which there was no need in terms of parliamentary arithmetic. That both sides were dissatisfied suggests that, in some strange way, the coalition was working as it should. Certainly, at its heart the National Government did not operate in the manner of a normal party administration. At least until the middle of the decade and arguably beyond, there existed an informal group of six senior ministers, acting as a sort of inner Cabinet and drawn equally from the three component parts of the administration – the Conservatives, the Liberal Nationals and the tiny National Labour group.<sup>32</sup> But perhaps the greatest weakness of the Liberal Nationals was their lack of an exit strategy. The longer the National Government lasted, the more remote became the prospect of Liberal reunion, and the harder it was to justify the Liberal Nationals' separate existence and to say precisely what it was that gave them a distinct and definite identity. Any attempt to 'go it alone' would probably result in electoral suicide.

**Despite leaving the government over a concrete issue of policy, the Liberals struggled in the years that followed to establish their own distinct political identity.**

Few Liberal National MPs could face the prospect of Conservative opposition in their constituencies with any degree of confidence. As observers across the political spectrum increasingly predicted, their fate seemed destined to be the same as that which had overtaken the Liberal Unionists in the last years before the First World War – total absorption within the Conservative Party.<sup>33</sup> That fate was a long time in coming, delayed at least in terms of the preservation of a name and nominal party organisation until as late as 1968, but come it did.

What then of the relationship between the independent Liberals and the National Government? Despite leaving the government over a concrete issue of policy, the Liberals struggled in the years that followed to establish their own distinct political identity. Even the apparently clear dividing line between free trade and protection was misleading. For many Liberals who did *not* follow Simon into the Liberal National ranks, free trade was not the litmus test of true faith that it had been before 1914. The unrelated E. D. Simon, MP for Withington in Manchester, was among the first Liberals openly to question the prevailing orthodoxy. He was congratulated for doing so by the Liberal economist, Hubert Henderson, while even Keynes was ready by 1931 to explain that only tariffs offered the protection needed against a falling exchange rate and a collapse of business confidence.<sup>34</sup> By the middle of the decade Lloyd George himself was dabbling with protection. As one scholar has put it, 'the decline of Free Trade as a secular religion was well under way when the depression hit Britain and recovery after 1932 did not bring it back'.<sup>35</sup> More generally, Liberals such as Ramsay Muir might rail against the performance of the National Government,<sup>36</sup> but it was never as bad and certainly not as illiberal as they suggested. In fact, for much of the decade the Liberals experienced some difficulty in differentiating themselves from the government. The latter took over the traditional Liberal rallying cries of retrenchment and sound finance, but without appearing unduly reactionary. As Lloyd George's former press secretary put it, 'so long as Baldwin presses so far to the middle and is at war with his Diehards,

it is not clear where Samuel is going to crash in with a separate identity and policy'.<sup>37</sup> It might have been different if the Liberals themselves had come up with a progressive and imaginative range of policies, but the mini-intellectual renaissance of the 1920s was not sustained. Short of both money and ideas, the party tended to seek refuge in its successful recipes of an earlier age. 1939 found J. L. Hammond commending Lord Crewe for his adherence to 'Mr Gladstone's principles' without apparently understanding that this ongoing commitment to the Liberalism of a previous century was part of the party's problems.<sup>38</sup> Later in the decade, Liberal opposition to Chamberlain's foreign policy did place some clear yellow or orange water between the party and the government, but the picture was not straightforward even then.<sup>39</sup> Criticism of appeasement prompted further defections to the Liberal Nationals, including the MP Herbert Holdsworth, while not all of those who remained within the party rallied behind its new stance. Well-known figures such as the journalist J. A. Spender and even the former leader, Lord Samuel, openly supported the prime minister. Chamberlain even offered Samuel a seat in the Cabinet in his post-Munich reshuffle.<sup>40</sup>

By the end of the decade, then, Liberalism was in a bad way. If anything, the Liberal National contingent had more cause for optimism, although, as has been seen, they too had their problems. Outside the National Government the mainstream party had largely failed, as many of its members privately admitted,<sup>41</sup> to establish a viable non-socialist alternative to the Conservatives. Reduced by the 1935 general election to just twenty-one MPs, its local power bases crumbling away, devoid of funds and lacking charismatic leadership, only a combination of blind faith and irrational optimism could convince the dwindling band of Liberal adherents that better days would eventually return.

*David Dutton is the author of A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), a second edition of which, bringing the story up to the formation of the Cameron-Clegg Coalition, will be published in 2012.*

- 1 D. Dutton, 'Holding the Balance: the Liberal Party and Hung Parliaments', *Journal of Liberal History* 48 (2005), pp. 8–19.
- 2 There appears to have been a conscious effort to avoid describing the National Government as a coalition – by the Conservatives because of memories of the Lloyd George Coalition which had ended in 1922, and by the government's opponents because of their insistence that it was no more than a Conservative administration in disguise. But a coalition it was.
- 3 I am grateful to Professor Vernon Bogdanor for this observation.
- 4 University of Birmingham, Chamberlain MSS, NC2/22, diary 22 Aug. 1931.
- 5 For the circumstances surrounding the formation of the National Government, see P. Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire 1926–1932* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). For the disputed issue of the king's role, see V. Bogdanor, '1931 Revisited: The Constitutional Aspects', *Twentieth Century British History* 2/1 (1991), pp. 1–25 and P. Williamson, '1931 Revisited: The Political Realities', *Twentieth Century British History* 2/3 (1991), pp. 328–38.
- 6 S. Ball, 'The Legacy of Coalition: Fear and Loathing in Conservative Politics, 1922–1931', *Contemporary British History* 23/1 (2011), pp. 65–82.
- 7 For a debate on the pros and cons of holding the parliamentary balance, see R. Douglas and D. Brack, 'Holding the Balance', *Journal of Liberal History*, 64 (2009), pp. 28–31.
- 8 See, for example, C. Cook, *A Short History of the Liberal Party: The Road Back to Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 94–5, 111–12.
- 9 Speeches in Cleckheaton, reported in the *Cleckheaton Guardian*, 10 Nov. 1922 and the *Yorkshire Observer*, 14 Nov. 1922.
- 10 D. Dutton, *Simon: a Political Biography of Sir John Simon* (Aurum, 1992), p. 104.
- 11 A. J. Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George* (Macmillan, 1975), p. 134: 'He is moving heaven and earth to get electors to vote Labour where there is no Liberal.' (A. J. Sylvester diary, 13 Nov. 1935)
- 12 D. Dutton, '1932: A Neglected Date in the History of the Decline of the British Liberal Party', *Twentieth Century British History* 14/1 (2003), pp. 43–60.
- 13 Chamberlain to E. Grigg, 16 Sept. 1931, cited in R. Self (ed.), *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters* (Ashgate, 2002), vol. iii, p. 30.
- 14 A. Chamberlain to Ivy Chamberlain, 26 Aug. 1931, Chamberlain MSS, AC6/1/803.
- 15 R. Bassett, 1931: *Political Crisis* (Macmillan, 1958), p. 187.
- 16 A. Chamberlain to Ivy Chamberlain, 24 Aug. 1931, Chamberlain MSS, AC6/1/800.
- 17 J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds.), *The Empire at Bay: the Leo Amery Diaries 1929–1945* (Hutchinson, 1988), p. 204.
- 18 For the 1931 general election, see A. Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Clarendon Press, 1991).
- 19 R. Douglas, *Liberals: The History of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat Parties* (Hambledon & London, 2005), p. 228.
- 20 D. Dutton, 'William Mabane and Huddersfield Politics, 1931–1947: "By Any Other Name a Liberal"', *Northern History*, 43/1 (2006), pp. 137–53.
- 21 *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser*, 26 May 1934.
- 22 Williamson, *National Crisis*, p. 483.
- 23 *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 12 Nov. 1931.
- 24 See, for example, University of Newcastle, Runciman MSS 254, G. Shakespeare to Simon, 23 Sept. 1932, and Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge, Hore-Belisha MSS, HOBE 1/1, Hore-Belisha to N. Chamberlain, 23 Sept. 1932.
- 25 D. Wrench, 'The Needs of the Time: the National Government and the "Agreement to Differ", 1932', *Parliamentary History*, 23/2 (2004), pp. 249–64.
- 26 D. Dutton, 'Liberalism Reunited: The Huddersfield Experience, 1945–47', *Journal of Liberal History*, 52 (2006), pp. 32–37.
- 27 When he stepped down as chairman from what was, in all but name, the Dumfriesshire Liberal National Association in July 1947, James Reid insisted that his 'enthusiasm for Liberalism had not waned in the slightest degree'. 'The Liberal Party had glorious traditions in Dumfries and it was the desire and intention of the Association ... to see that tradition maintained.' (emphasis added), *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser*, 12 July 1947. Reid remained editor of the *Standard* until 1954.
- 28 Henry Fildes (1870–1948), Coalition Liberal MP for Stockport, 1920–23; Liberal National MP for Dumfriesshire, 1935–45.
- 29 Niall Macpherson (1908–87), Liberal National and (from 1950) National Liberal-Unionist MP for Dumfriesshire 1945–63. Created Baron Drumalbyn 1963. Junior ministerial posts 1955–63. Minister without Portfolio (Conservative) 1970–74.
- 30 *Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser*, 4 Nov. 1931.
- 31 *The Times*, 20 May 1936.
- 32 J. Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin 1902–1940* (Longman, 1978), p. 326.
- 33 See, for example, Baldwin quoted in the *Scotsman* 23 May 1936 and Samuel in the House of Lords, H of L Debs, vol. CLXIV, col. 254.
- 34 R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump* (Macmillan, 1967), p. 292.
- 35 F. Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 333.
- 36 R. Muir, *The Record of the National Government* (Allen & Unwin, 1936).
- 37 Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George MSS, G/19/7/6, notes on the political situation, 26 Nov. 1933.
- 38 Hammond to Crewe, 13 Jan. 1939, cited in M. Hart, 'The Decline of the Liberal Party in Parliament and in the Constituencies', Oxford D. Phil. (1982), p. 91.
- 39 R. Grayson, *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement* (Frank Cass, 2001).
- 40 Parliamentary Archives, Samuel MSS, A/111/1, memorandum by Samuel, 26 Oct. 1938.
- 41 See, for example, Lord Lothian quoted in T. Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935* (Collins, 1966), pp. 377–8.

## CELEBRATING JOHN BRIGHT

A study day to consider the life and achievements of John Bright MP (1811–1889)

Saturday 19 November 2011, 1000 – 1700, Birmingham City Art Gallery

John Bright was born on 16 November 1811, a Quaker son of a Rochdale mill-owner. He became the most famous orator and politician of his day, a champion of the rights of the ordinary man, a peacemaker and parliamentary reformer, who was not afraid to take the unpopular view, sometimes at great personal cost.

This study day seeks to bring together some of the writers and politicians who are most knowledgeable about John Bright's life and career and to assess his importance as a reformer, with particular reference to his time as Birmingham's MP. We shall be looking at his work as a peace protagonist and its relevance for today and asking the question 'How best can we build on his legacy?'

Speakers include Cllr Paul Tilsley, Bill Cash MP, Chris Upton, Howard Gregg, Antony Wood, Ian Cawood, Cllr Martin Mullaney and Rae Street.

### Booking

Venue: Gas Hall (AV room), Birmingham City Art Gallery (BMAG), Edmund St., Birmingham B3 3DH. The venue is within easy walking distance of New Street rail station.

The charge for the day is £10.00 per person, including refreshments mid-morning and afternoon. Lunch may be bought at the Edwardian Restaurant at BMAG or a number of cafes/restaurants nearby.

Please send your booking and payment to Mrs Janet King, 110 Linthurst Newtown, Blackwell, Bromsgrove, Worcs. B60 1BS (tel 0121 445 2802; email janet@kingfamily110.org.uk)

Closing date for applications is 19 October.