

salutary to note that three Labour governments have effectively been destroyed by slavishly following American priorities: those of Attlee, Blair and Wilson. The latter bought American backing for the currency after 1964 with a view to avoiding devaluation, thereby upsetting his entire economic strategy; Wilson antagonised his domestic support by backing the war in Vietnam but irritated the Americans by resisting pressure to send troops to fight there. Morgan shows that even in the 1960s American politicians had little genuine regard for Britain despite extravagant public displays of mutual admiration.

Finally, Morgan offers a persuasive revisionist view of the Wilson-Callaghan governments of 1974–79 which, indirectly, gives food for thought for Liberal Democrats. Although the party learnt some lessons from the abortive pact between David Steel and Jim Callaghan, its present leaders have hopelessly misjudged the wider implications of minority government. In May 2010 both the Lib Dem negotiators and the MPs generally seem to have assumed that they could not risk leaving the Conservatives to form a minority government because that would lead to a second general election and an inevitable government victory.

However, there is scant historical support for this view. Voters tend to resent being forced to the

polls twice in a short space of time. A second election in 1910 failed to improve the Asquith government's position. In 1951 Attlee risked his small 1950 majority at a second election and lost it. After the first election of 1974 Wilson's minority government successfully managed to lead the country out of the chaos of the miners' strike, the three-day week and raging inflation, though it suffered fifty-nine parliamentary defeats in 1974–76. Encouraged by the pollsters, Wilson opted for the expected autumn election – and failed to win the expected working majority. Would a minority Tory government, handicapped by economic austerity and internal divisions in 2010–11, really have been in a position to risk a second election? On the contrary, the ensuing post-election interval would have allowed Lib Dems to maintain their distinctiveness and leave the Conservatives to shoulder the blame for economic failure while giving Labour the opportunity to select a new leader, distance itself from Blairism and cooperate with the Lib Dems to oust the government.

*Martin Pugh was Professor of Modern British History at Newcastle University until 1999 and is now a freelance historian. His most recent book is *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (2010) and he is currently writing a book on the crisis of British national identity, which will be published in 2012.*

Policy and ideology

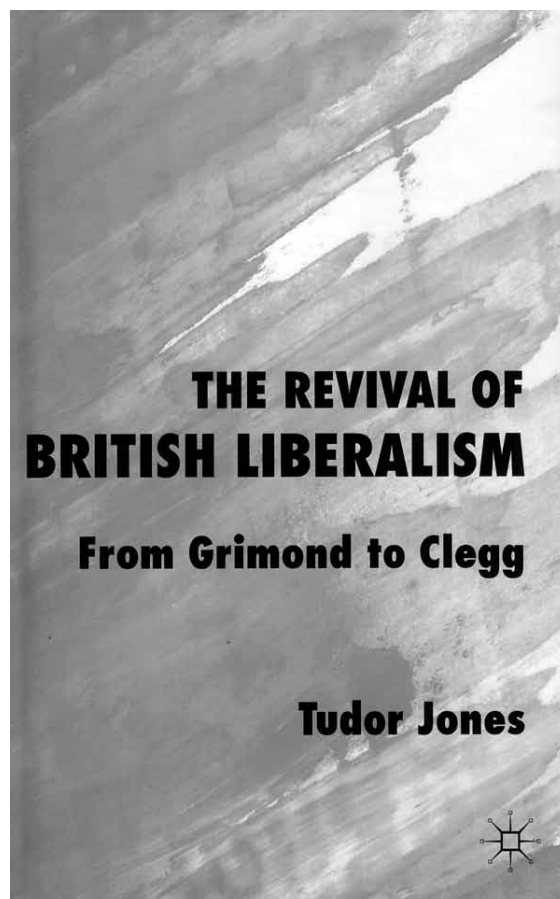
Tudor Jones, *The Revival of British Liberalism – From Grimond to Clegg* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Reviewed by Michael Meadowcroft

ANY LIBERAL wanting a single reference volume on the development of party policy from 1956 to the present, and its relevance to the political history of the Liberal and Liberal Democrat parties, will find this an admirable and reliable guide. Tudor Jones has applied his experience and academic skills to produce a companion volume to recent political histories of Liberalism. By spending four years reading the whole oeuvre of

Liberal writing over fifty-five years, by interviewing a wide range of contributors to the policy debate – including, I need to declare, myself – and by utilising his particular speciality of political thought, he has brought a remarkable sense of order to what would otherwise be regarded as an inchoate jumble.

Jones uses the advent of Jo Grimond to the Liberal leadership as the starting point of his study not least because Jo enjoyed and welcomed



ideas and debate. I recall, for instance, at my first Liberal Assembly in 1961, Jo attended a meeting at Edinburgh University. He sat on a table surrounded by a large attendance of maybe two hundred Young Liberals happily participating in a lively debate on current issues, without any sense of condescension or hierarchy on his part.

Grimond directly and indirectly sparked a whole raft of policy publications. By 1960 there was the beginnings of a formidable research department at headquarters headed by Harry Cowie, a very able but somewhat acerbic Scot in whom Grimond placed considerable trust. By the time of my arrival at headquarters in January 1962, there were also three research assistants, John Blake, Michael O'Hara and Ann Rodden, and between them they produced a high-quality monthly political bulletin *Current Topics* and staffed a series of *New Directions* policy booklets, plus a set of reports on key subjects by committees which included experts from beyond the party's formal membership, drawn in by Grimond's charismatic leadership.

Grimond tells in his memoirs of arriving in the Commons in 1950

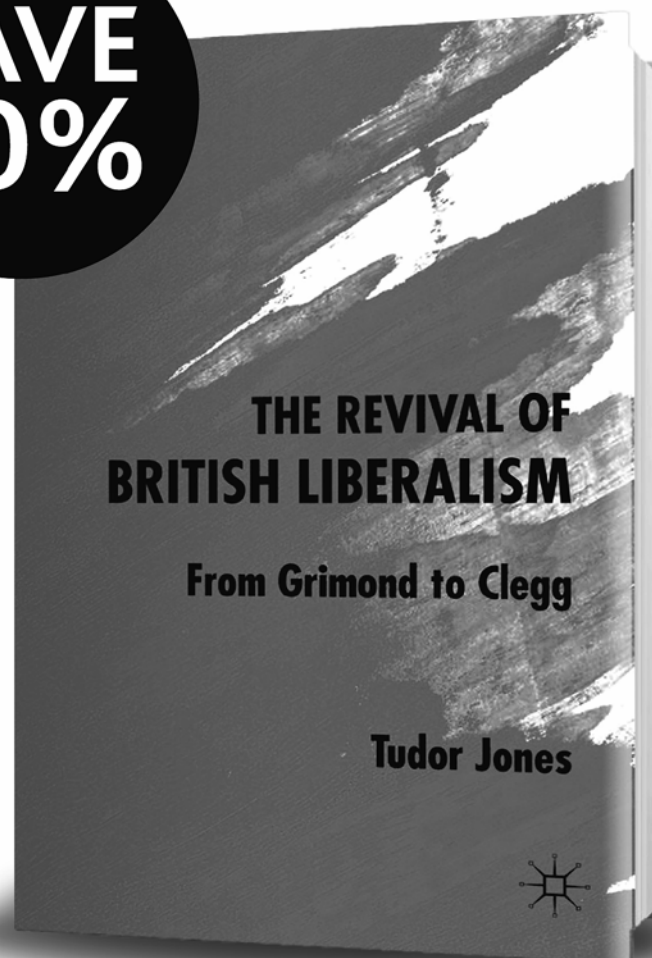
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The Revival of British Liberalism From Grimond to Clegg

By Tudor Jones

The Revival of British Liberalism: From Grimond to Clegg charts and explores the development of Liberal thought from the accession of Jo Grimond to the leadership of the Liberal Party in November 1956 through to the election of Nick Clegg as Leader of the Liberal Democrats in December 2007. The book is an ideological history of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats, examining Liberal ideas as they have been embodied both in the writings of Liberal politicians and thinkers and in the policies and strategies of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Democrats. The author also draws upon his interviews with some of the leading protagonists in the debates under scrutiny.

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and being thrust immediately into the uncongenial role of Chief Whip and of the disparate free spirits that made up his small team. I suspect that one underlying reason for his promotion of party policy initiatives was to find a unifying corpus of policy to shift the political focus away from parliament in which Liberal representation was capricious and largely dependent on local personalities and historical party arrangements.

As Jones points out, Grimond had already been part of the group that produced the book *The Unservile State*, edited by George Watson in 1957, the publication of which led to a series of pamphlets on separate topics, and had himself published his first book in 1959 in time for that year's general election. Other groups in the party sought to take part in the flurry of ideas. The Young Liberals and the Union of Liberal Students joined together in 1959 for what they originally called 'Operation Manifesto' until the party bosses convinced them that this would be confused with the party's official election manifesto. Between 1960 and 1968 it produced nineteen pamphlets. Finally the monthly publication *New Outlook* was launched at the 1961 party assembly as a semi-official publication in effect to fill the long gap caused by the demise of the *Liberal Magazine* in 1950.

Jones points out: 'These varied Liberal publications underlined the importance which Grimond attached to the formulation and communication of policy and ideas as an essential part of his attempt to restore the intellectual and political credibility of his party.' Further on in the book, Jones draws attention to the somewhat unpalatable fact that the later Grimond expressed support for the economic liberalism of the Institute of Economic Affairs. Grimond Liberals of the 1950s and 1960s vintages have preferred to hang on to his consistent support for community initiatives, co-ownership and a diminution of 'bureaucratic blight.'

Jones' great skill lies in allying the key events in the party's history to its policy development. He does this with great clarity but without apparent bias so that, for instance, his assessment of party leaders and their effectiveness enables the reader to make his or her

The book sets Liberal philosophy firmly into the party's political history and as such it is a valuable addition to the literature. I hope, probably in vain, that it will be widely read by the current *Focus*-obsessed generation of Liberal Democrat activists.

own judgements. It rightly makes those of us who have had a long involvement and, often, inside experience, take on board evidence that impinges on our prejudices! His methodology enables him, for instance, to place the community politics strategy within a broader framework of party activity and it enables him to coin the choice phrase 'Denting the Mould' for a later period. This method brings into focus the existence over the long term of a much more consistent broad body of policy than the short-term battles would have indicated at the time, provoked as they often were by internal strife – such as the problems that brought into being the Liberal Commission of 1969, chaired by Donald Wade, which produced the excellent report *Facing the Future*.

This approach is valuable, both to historians and to those activists who understand the key importance of rooting current thinking and strategy in the experience of the past and of linking consistency with innovation. Jones is exceptionally surefooted and brings a scrupulous honesty to his assessment of party writings. Speaking for myself, I would have welcomed a critic of this calibre. All too often efforts at exposition of Liberalism and at critiques of other political philosophies have seemed to attract only approbation from colleagues and otherwise to float into the ether untested. All of us benefit from debate and discussion and there is far too little of it today. And one does not have to agree with all Jones' conclusions to welcome his work.

Jones takes the party's election manifestos as his main points of

reference, rightly regarding them as the definitive expression of the party's political stance at that moment in time. He ties in with this approach the semi-official books that have accompanied the manifesto at every election since 1945, and he traces the freer expression of policy that is possible between elections. The book is an excellent compendium of Liberal publishing over half a century.

Given his thorough coverage of the Ashdown years and the subsequent twists and turns, Jones can be forgiven the long gestation period for his book. It ends tantalisingly with the election of Nick Clegg as leader and as a consequence it lacks a review of the past four crucial years of a leader who speaks always of Liberals and Liberalism and whose book *The Liberal Moment* (Demos, 2009) is as good a short statement of social liberalism as has appeared in recent years. One looks forward to a second, updated, paperback edition taking us up to the coalition, which might also be more within the affordable range of such books.

The book sets Liberal philosophy firmly into the party's political history and as such it is a valuable addition to the literature. I hope, probably in vain, that it will be widely read by the current *Focus*-obsessed generation of Liberal Democrat activists.

Michael Meadowcroft was a Leeds City Councillor, 1968–1983, and Liberal MP for Leeds West, 1983–87. He has held numerous local and national offices in the Liberal Party and is currently the Chair of the Leeds Liberal Democrats Campaign Development Group.

Secular intellectuals

William C. Lubenow, *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815–1914: Making Words Flesh* (Boydell Press, 2010)

Reviewed by Iain Sharpe

THE STARTING point for Professor Lubenow's book is that the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and the granting of Catholic emancipation the following year 'wrested

Britain from the patronage values of the confessional fiscal-military state' and 'opened political and social space by forging liberal values'. The author traces the intellectual life and social milieu