

and regarded them as insufferable - in the case of Harcourt he was probably right. He conducted the Foreign Office as a fiefdom and resented the intervention of any other minister. In any politician these are fatal weaknesses. Whatever rivalry exists within a party it can only be effective when its leaders can work together, can argue out their case without rancour and can reach the compromise that is good for the country and the party. It may be unfair to say that Rosebery sought the glory without the work - the palm without the sand - but he did want a ministerial career without the politics, a government that did not require teamwork.

Because Rosebery was a failure he has not been blessed by many good biographies. Because he was one of the protagonists of imperialism he seems a dated, forgotten man. But as Enoch Powell has said, every political career must end in failure, and often the reasons for failure are of much greater value than the recitation of long outdated successes. So we must be especially grateful for the paperback reissue of Robert Rhodes James' elegant work. As always he covers the life in a straightforward way, not bogged down in forgotten trivia but emphasising the key elements of the events and the personality. He outlines the development of Rosebery's Liberal imperialism - Rosebery may well have been the first to envisage the British Empire as a Commonwealth in the way that it subsequently developed. He does not forget the influence that Rosebery exerted over Grey, Haldane and Asquith who, as more practical men, were able to develop Rosebery's approach in the final flowering of Liberal government before the First World War. If Rhodes James cannot finally bring himself quite to agree with Churchill's judgement of Rosebery he cannot in all honesty differ much from it.

## Old Heroes for a New Party

*Conference Fringe Meeting Report  
Scarborough, March 1995  
by Patrick Mitchell*

Scarborough welcomed the return of the Liberal Democrats with a fine display of east coast weather conditions. A large audience took shelter from the cold and the wind for the second showing of 'Old Heroes for a New Party' in the comfortable, if somewhat gloomy, surroundings of the billiard room of the Royal Hotel, otherwise known as the Prince Regent Room.. The speakers managed to share the one reading lamp available.

The 'heroes' for our 1994 meeting had been Voltaire, Acton and Burke, not all of whom might occur to most of us as a first choice (which is one of the interesting things about the occasion). Our speakers this time had each chosen someone with special appeal to them.. Alan Beith, who spoke first, outlined the career of W.T. Stead (1849-1912), the Liberal journalist and activist, who had been a great innovator as editor of the *Northern Echo* in Darlington, and then of the *Pall Mall Gazette* after John Morley. He was an unorthodox man who articulated the religious radicalism which had supported Gladstone, and campaigned on the basis of a radical view of

Christianity. His great causes had been peace, temperance, and the rights of women. His determination to expose the vice of child prostitution led to his imprisonment for a short time. He died on the *Titanic*.

Sir William Goodhart, as a lawyer of American descent, introduced us to Judge Learned Hand (1872-1961), son and grandson of lawyers, who practised fairly unsuccessfully as a lawyer until 1909 when he became a Federal District Judge, later becoming an Appeals judge (though he never rose to the Supreme Court). His reputation was made both as a judge and as a political philosopher. In politics he was initially a Republican, but always a liberal, who became known from the 1920s onwards for his speeches on liberty.

It is less easy to see the particular appeal of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to Tony Greaves. Unfortunately we were unable to learn more, because Tony was unable to get to the meeting, so we will have to wait for a future occasion to discover what he would have had to say. In his absence Gordon Lishman, who chaired the meeting, treated us to an impromptu seminar in which members of the audience were asked to propose their own heroes. The discussion ranged widely, covering politicians from Oliver Cromwell to Helen Suzman, economists from Adam Smith to J.K. Galbraith, philosophers and novelists. No doubt some of them will feature in the next instalment of what seems sure to become a regular feature of our conference activities.

## What is Liberal Democracy? The Importance of History

*by James Lund*

This series of articles has been overtaken by the recent course of politics. When it began, John Smith led a Labour Party still committed to public ownership of the means of production. Given the emergence of Tony Blair and the prospect of New Labour, what occasioned these articles, the possibility of winning increased, sustained electoral support for Liberal Democracy at the national level, looks much more difficult to fulfil.

Continuing success in local elections, in which only a minority of the electorate vote; a growing part in local government, the powers of which have been substantially diminished; the repeated stimulus of often spectacular by-election victories: none of these, we know from hard experience, will bring the sort of support at General Elections that the party wants. Nor will single issues, important as education is; as if the party were a populist pressure group.

The foregoing articles have apparently indicated little to improve this prospect. Yet in truth there is everything to play for in the longer term.. Thatcherism has largely destroyed traditional conservatism. What New Labour is to be or could be, no one yet knows.

What the Liberal Democrats need is what has been called 'a hegemonic project', such as the Liberals had in 1906, Labour