

can be accomplished by a backbench MP determined to help make the world a more civilised place. It is one thing to become involved in peacemaking at the eleventh hour, or after the balloon has already gone up, but quite another to devote decades of one's life to that noble cause regardless of how unfashionable it might appear, and of the ridicule with which prominent peacemakers have to contend when jingoism is allowed full rein.

France was the first country formally to recognise Cremer. In 1890 he was honoured with the Cross of the Légion d'Honneur. After the award of the Nobel Peace Prize thirteen years later he was made a Commander of the Norwegian order of Saint Olav, and was persuaded to accept a British knighthood. On an earlier occasion he declined. His work was more important to him than any state decoration if acceptance involved any possible misunderstanding amongst those who formed the bedrock of his supporters. He was on record as saying that the one honour that gave him most satisfaction was that he had been elected five times as MP for Haggerston.

It is a matter for regret that the National Portrait Gallery contains no picture of Cremer in its extensive collection. By virtue of his Nobel prize, he is well deserving of inclusion. But even if his career had not been crowned with that honour he still warrants inclusion as a tribute to one of England's finest public figures. In four years' time there should be a spate of books on the Nobel prizes to mark the centenary of the first awards. Hopefully the spotlight will then be turned on many forgotten heroes of yesteryear, and Cremer will be one of those whose work will once again be appreciated by the thinking British public as well as by all who identify with the international peace movement.

Does New Labour leave room for New Liberals?

*Conference Fringe Meeting Report
Glasgow, September 1995
by Duncan Brack*

The reforming Liberal Governments of 1906-14 helped lay the foundations of the British welfare state; amongst other achievements, they introduced old age pensions, national insurance and the principle of graduated taxation. Underpinning these political achievements lay the school of thought known as the 'New Liberalism'. New Liberal writers such as Green, Hobhouse and Hobson advanced the philosophical underpinnings of the Liberal Party onwards from Gladstonian individualism, developing the concept of community and drawing attention to the need for positive action to redress social and economic inequalities.

Later in the century, John Maynard Keynes was the most

representative and distinguished bearer of New Liberal principles, but Labour politicians such as Ramsay Macdonald were also influenced by its thinking, and many New Liberals themselves ended up in the Labour Party. The History Group's most recent conference fringe meeting saw Martin Kettle, Assistant Editor of the *Guardian*, and John Curtice, of Strathclyde University's Department of Politics, debate the New Liberal inheritance and its relevance to the political debate today.

Martin Kettle highlighted the affinities between New Liberal and Labour politicians: both groups were interventionists, seeking to create a new harmony between capitalism, social reform and individual freedom. Although in the short run Fabian/Socialist principles may have played a bigger role in defining the Labour agenda, New Liberals such as Keynes and Beveridge provided many of the ideas which underpinned the success of the Attlee Governments, and New Liberal thinking clearly influenced the revisionist social democracy of Crosland, Gaitskell and Marquand.

Tony Blair, in his Fabian lecture marking the fiftieth anniversary of the postwar Labour Government, had explicitly accepted the contribution of Liberalism to the radical tradition - naming with approval Beveridge, Keynes and even Lloyd George - particularly in its sensitivity to the abuse of political as opposed to economic power. New Liberal concepts clearly have something to offer 'New Labour's' policy developments. In policy terms, the two parties were cousins.

John Curtice agreed with the judgement that while socialism won the first battles, New Liberalism had won the war. But would New Labour enjoy the spoils? The New Liberal approach was still identifiably a *liberal* and non-collectivist one, stressing the need for participative reformism, rather than seeking to impose reforms from above - in Peter Clarke's terms, the New Liberals were 'moral reformists' as opposed to Labour's 'mechanical reformists'. The difference can still be seen today, in the new Clause Four's emphasis on solidarity and reductions in inequality rather than on individual liberty.

And New Liberalism still has relevance to electoral strategy in the 1990s. Curtice pointed to psephological analyses indicating that 'centrist' voters have been moving away from the Alliance/Liberal Democrats towards both the other parties (more recently, of course, towards Labour) - but the party still exerts a strong appeal to voters favouring civil liberties, social reform and a strong welfare state (even at the cost of higher taxes). If the Liberal Democrats could emphasise their commitment to this agenda, stressing in particular the need for investment in education and health, the New Liberal emphasis on using the power of the state to enhance the role of the individual could prove as electorally popular in the 1990s as it had in the 1900s.

The History Group would like to apologise for the late despatch of this Newsletter, originally due just before Christmas. Normal service will be resumed with Newsletter 10, due out in early March.