

the readership of the new mass circulation papers and periodicals. Radicals such as Bright had demonstrated that the masses could be mobilised for positive political purpose, as opposed to mob violence, but Gladstone was a pioneer among the ministerial elite in harnessing this force and in utilising it to overcome opposition from the establishment in both Houses of Parliament. Biagini concludes that his true strength was not so much the individual reforms he accomplished but that 'he found the people who live in cottages hostile to political parties, and ... succeeded in uniting them with the rest of his countrymen'.⁴

Biagini has created a first-class introduction to one of the most successful and yet baffling of all premiers, with a fine judgment on the key controversies. The limitations of

the space within which he has been confined may even have been an advantage in cutting to the essentials of each issue. Any diligent reader will be well equipped to tackle one of the more complex biographies such as Matthew's or to dip into any number of the specialist topics derived from the multi-faceted life of the Liberal Party's greatest leader. Only the price, at nearly 10p a page, is a deterrent.

Tony Little is the Chair of the Liberal Democrat History Group.

- 1 E Biagini, *Gladstone* (Macmillan, 2000), pp 11, 13.
- 2 Joseph Butler (1692–1752) English moral philosopher and divine. Gladstone published a two-volume edition of his works in 1896.
- 3 Biagini, *Gladstone*, p. 13, citing D. W. Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith & Politics in Victorian Britain* (1993).
- 4 Biagini, *Gladstone*, p. 117, quoting *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* 7 August 1880.

Internationalism and interdependency

Richard S. Grayson: *Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement* (Frank Cass 2001; pp194)

Reviewed by Ian Hunter

This book proves the proverb that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. The cover is terrible. The book is very good, if, at only 156 pages, a little short for the money.¹

Richard Grayson's latest publication makes a significant contribution to the history of the British Liberal Party in the interwar period.² It furthers our understanding of the role that the Liberal Parliamentary Party and its associated interest groups had in developing a coherent opposition to the policy of appeasement. Its period of study is from 1919–1939 and, as such, is, ultimately, a study in failure. The Liberals were increasingly marginalised after the fall of the Lloyd George Coalition in 1922, as a result of the party's internal splits between Asquith and Lloyd George and then Samuel and

Simon. These divisions led to the Liberal Party being reduced to a rump of only seventeen MPs by the late 1930s. Even when the Liberals held the balance of power (during the two minority Labour Governments of 1924 and 1929–31) their ability to shape policy was very limited. Liberalism during this period shifted from being a coherent, credible political competitor for government to being almost the brand label for a fragmented pressure group of non-socialist radicals. It is a sad story of lost opportunities and overlooked warnings. But the Liberal Party can draw comfort from being broadly right when the majority in both the Conservatives and Labour Parties, certainly up until 1938, were decidedly wrong in their opposition to rearmament and support for appeasement.

Grayson maps out the development

of Liberal thought driven from the principle of international interdependency – where institutions such as the League of Nations were held up as the tools by which the greatest good for the greatest number could be achieved. Whether this was ultimately realisable is obviously a moot point. As J. M. Keynes made clear, the concept of interdependency could only hold good if a sense of mutual benefit, equity and ease of redress existed. None of these factors were found in abundance following the peace settlement of 1919. One of the most interesting sections of this book is its chapter on 'Liberal Thinkers'. In direct contrast to its electoral weakness during the inter-war years the broad church of the Liberal Party attracted some of the biggest intellectual heavyweights to its pews. Most notable were figures such as J. M. Keynes, Walter Layton, William Beveridge, Gilbert Murray, Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) and Ramsay Muir. These individuals made significant contributions to the development to Liberal policy, in particular in challenging the concept of a belief in national sovereignty as the basis of long-term security, and in developing the concept of interdependency. Keynes, Layton, Murray and Muir were also very active in the influential Liberal Summer Schools, often overlooked by historians, but which are covered in depth in this book and provide significant insights into the development of Liberal thinking up to 1939.

Grayson provides a particularly clear summary of the key role from 1935 that the Liberal Party under Sir Archibald's Sinclair leadership played in leading the opposition to Chamberlain's appeasement policy. It is often forgotten that appeasement was a popular policy with large sections of the British population. Sinclair risked unpopularity and accusations of war-mongering with his attacks on Chamberlain's foreign policy, but he built a national reputation for himself and he enabled the small parliamentary Liberal Party to punch considerably more than its parliamentary weight of seventeen MPs.

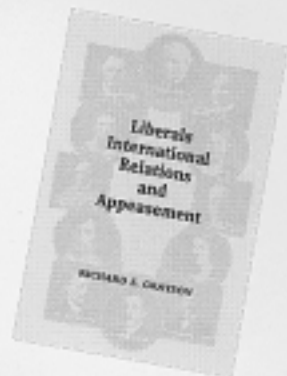
Grayson makes a critical assessment of the overall practicality of Liberal policies during the interwar period. He questions the party's approach to issues

☒ photos ☒ pioneering study ☒ written by Director of Policy of the Liberal Democrats

Liberals, International Relations and Appeasement

A Study of the Liberal Party, 1919–1939

Richard S. Grayson



During the 1920s and 1930s, Britain faced many challenges in the international arena, and alternative policies were hotly debated not only in Parliament but also in wider political circles. These two decades also constituted one of the few periods in British history when the country experienced three-party politics. However, as yet there has been no major study of the Liberal Party's central role in party-political debates on international policy. This volume fills that gap by documenting and assessing the party's views on foreign and imperial policy. It will be of great interest to students of British foreign policy and politics, and students of international relations in general.



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Political Communications

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such as the revision of the Versailles Treaty and dependency on the League of Nations for resolution of international conflicts during the 1920s. He is sceptical about the Liberal belief and advocacy of collective security as an answer to the aggression of Hitler's Germany. However, as Grayson argues, there was at least as much chance of the Liberals' policy of peace through collective security working as there was of appeasement containing Hitler. Ultimately, on the big issues concerning international relations during the 1930s the Liberal Party was more right than wrong, which is more than can be said for either the Tories or the Labour Party. On the ultimately crucial issue of

Hitler, Sinclair's opposition to appeasement was absolutely correct, and it is an appalling shame that the electoral facts of life prevented the Liberal policy of opposing German aggression from being put into practice prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939.

Ian Hunter is completing a part-time doctorate on the Liberal Party and the Churchill Coalition.

- 1 The book is 194 pages long including some very useful appendices on the Liberal Summer Schools, Liberal conferences and extracts from contemporary documents on Liberal policy.
- 2 Richard Grayson has previously published *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy, 1924–29* (Frank Cass, 1997).

Labour and Liverpool

Peter Kilfoyle: *Left Behind: Lessons from Labour's Heartland* (Politico's Publishing, 2000)

Reviewed by Chris Rennard

Peter Kilfoyle's fascinating account of Liverpool Labour politics has particular interest for me, as so much of his career parallels some of my own. His story is one of internecine warfare within the Liverpool Labour Party. His account is that of a Labour Party activist, official and then MP whose major battles were never as clearly focused on winning over the electorate as they were on winning internal party battles, most notably with the Militant Tendency.

I grew up in the part of Liverpool where *Focus* leaflets first began, in the first ward in the city to elect a Liberal councillor and in the only city in modern times to be governed by the Liberal Party. As a twelve-year-old activist I remember the sense of excitement on the streets during the 1973 city elections, when we won 48 of the 99 seats on the new council.

Peter Kilfoyle describes the opposite emotions about this election, although *Left Behind* also served to remind me of

the debilitating rows within my own party, as its probably too rapid accession to power meant that the first Liberal administration included more than a few members with dubious backgrounds. Of course, the author also recognises the sincerity and decency of many of the leading Liberals of the early '70s, including the late Cyril Carr (who recruited me to the party) and Mike Storey, who remains a very close friend and who is now proving to be the most formidable and effective leader that the city has ever seen.

Liverpool council politics were at their most notorious in the Militant era, when Labour unexpectedly gained overall control of the council in 1983, in what was probably a reaction against the Thatcher Government and the perceived closeness to it of the then Liberal Leader, Sir Trevor Jones. For the first part of this period, Peter Kilfoyle had emigrated to Australia. He missed some of the classic battles in the city's media and in the annual elections

between the Militants, relying on strong anti-Thatcher sentiments, and the Liberals, who sought to highlight the corruption of the Militant regime and the damage that they were doing to the city's reputation and finances.

A number of people who watched Alan Bleasdale's drama about these times (*GBH*) have suggested to me that things could not possibly have been as bad as it portrayed. They were far worse. The thuggery, intimidation and corruption were very real. It is hard to describe the damage done to the city when all 31,000 city council employees were declared redundant. My wife was a teacher, whose redundancy notice was in a package for all the staff thrown through the school kitchen window by one of the many taxi drivers hired to deliver them. Any possible promotion within the city's education system was clearly blocked as she was a known opponent of the regime and, in common with many professional people, she was amongst those effectively forced to leave the city.

I still feel resentment that Neil Kinnock's Labour Party only started to act against the Militants when their antics became too embarrassing and electorally damaging to the Labour Party elsewhere. Around the time I left Liverpool, Peter Kilfoyle returned and was put in charge of the Labour Party's organisation. His book describes the tough approach required as he attended up to four branch meetings per evening, trying to ensure that rules were upheld and not exploited by the Militants and their allies. But it was a battle that was won at least as much by the courage of the Liberals (and then Liberal Democrats), who continued to present the only electoral opposition to the Militants, and by the courts, who eventually disqualified forty-six members of the Labour group from membership of the council when they failed to set a legal rate.

Peter Kilfoyle considers his battle against the Militants was won when he was elected as Eric Heffer's successor in the 1991 Walton by-election. I think that he was actually a lucky man, who ironically owed his by-election win to the Militants. But for a totally false impression, in an ignorant media, that