

HONITON, DUMFRIES AND THE LLOYD

Dr J. Graham Jones uses correspondence in the Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales to examine the use of the infamous Lloyd George Fund to assist the Liberal candidates in the Honiton and Dumfriesshire parliamentary constituencies in the general election of 30 May 1929. He helps to show how, for nigh on forty years, the existence of the Lloyd George Fund caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

Lloyd George speaking at Caernarvon Castle in 1929



MFRIESSHIRE D GEORGE FUND

As soon as he became Prime Minister in December 1916, Lloyd George began building up a substantial 'political fund', soon obtaining large sums of money from wealthy individuals who considered that he alone was capable of winning the war effort or who looked to the new coalition government to counter the growing forces of 'bolshevism' and 'socialism'. More particularly, the money came from those who simply wanted honours, especially peerages, and soon discovered that they could now be instantly obtained from a simple cash transaction.¹ The money was subscribed to the Coalition Liberal Party in office just as it had been donated to the Conservative Party and to the Liberal Party before the war – it was the traditional means of financing political parties – but Lloyd George's 'sin' was that he pushed the system much further and much more blatantly than either his predecessors or his successors. Moreover, the Coalition Liberal Party of 1916–22 possessed only a skeletal organisation, a deficiency which enabled Lloyd George, via the trustees whom he

himself appointed and dismissed, to exercise close personal control over the use of this fund.

Thus, when Lloyd George fell from office in the autumn of 1922 (permanently as it so happened), he retained the near-ownership of a large political fund that he regarded as a resource which he might employ for any political cause he chose. It certainly amounted to several million pounds. In 1924 Viscount Gladstone, at the heart of the Liberal Party organisation, referred to Lloyd George as possessing 'power to raise a million in cash',² and it may well be that the total fund assets amounted to some £3 million. (This was the estimate of its size by Vivian Phillipps, a shrewd observer of political life and a future Liberal chief whip, in his volume of reminiscences entitled *My Days and Ways*.) Large sums of money had been invested very profitably in the *Daily Chronicle* which had much increased the size of the original fund and had also provided Lloyd George with a subservient newspaper. By this time a highly anomalous situation had developed. Lloyd George retained ownership of

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a large personal fund, although he was not at the time the leader of the Liberal Party; while the party itself, led by Asquith, was in abject poverty, dreading the inevitable trauma and expense of the next general election campaign.

Use of the Fund

The Fund had not, however, lain idle in the meantime. It had been used to help establish no fewer than 224 constituency Coalition Liberal associations in the country (and a group of regional councils), but few of these remained genuinely active and rooted in the localities.³ The highly precarious electoral base of the Coalition Liberals had been potently revealed in a string of crucial by-elections between 1919 and 1922, following which constant dreary reports were received of the weakness of Coalition Liberal organisation in the constituencies. A new journal, the *Lloyd George Liberal Magazine*, was also established. Shortly before the collapse of the coalition government in the autumn of 1922, Lloyd George, anxious to have control of the most influential

newspaper in the country during an expected period in opposition, had attempted to make further use of the Fund to purchase *The Times* newspaper, but this had eventually come to nothing. As a result of the Prime Minister's audacity, *The Times* was converted into a trust permanently safe from the intrigues of any single individual. The callous, cavalier amassing of the Lloyd George Fund had in itself seemed blatantly to debase the standards of public life and decency. After the general election campaigns of 1922 and 1923, the Independent Liberal organisation had been nigh on bankrupted, incapable of waging a further general election campaign on a broad front. Lloyd George was only too well aware of this fact; it gave him a trump card to play.

For Lloyd George, his Fund was the one material weapon which he could use against the Asquithian Liberal 'old gang'. He was certainly not prepared tamely to hand it over to prop up the authority and (in his view) outworn ideas of his political enemies. Far better to retain control of it until the Liberal Party was ready to accept him as its leader and then to make good use of it to formulate and implement his own new radical policy initiatives.

Eventually, when the first minority Labour government collapsed at the end of 1924, precipitating yet another general election campaign, Lloyd George made available the miserly sum of £50,000 from his Fund, which, together with some £40,000 in donations and £30,000 from its own severely depleted resources, enabled the Liberal Party to put up a total of only 343 candidates. The severe financial handicap was compounded at constituency level by a simple failure of nerve to fight, even in localities where the Liberals were within striking distance of victory. The frenzied exchanges and negotiations over the Lloyd George Fund which had preceded the election continued, unrelieved, after it.

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The New Liberalism

By this time, Lloyd George had found another, potentially more rewarding, use for his political fund. Ever since the spring of 1924 in fact, he had assumed responsibility for setting up and financing a number of autonomous investigative committees to examine the social and economic ills of the nation and evolve radical new policies for their remedy. Their successive reports duly appeared, among them *Coal and Power* (1924), *Towns and the Land* ('the Brown Book') (1925) and *The Land and the Nation* ('the Green Book') (1925). From these substantial tomes, and the later *Britain's Industrial Future* ('the Yellow Book'), which was published in February 1928, were evolved dramatic, far-reaching new policy initiatives on which the Liberal Party was eventually to fight the general election of 30 May 1929. Back in November 1925 Lloyd George had also set up an independent propaganda body under his own presidency called the Land and Nation League, equipped with a large fleet of publicity vans and charged to campaign up and down rural England and Wales to drum up support for the highly contentious 'Green Book' proposals. This campaign was reputedly given an up-front donation of £80,000 from the Lloyd George Fund and charged to hold no fewer than 5,000 public meetings before the occasion of the Liberal Land Convention in 1927. Many local Liberal Associations and Liberal candidates looked askance at these audacious moves inaugurated by Lloyd George in dictator-like fashion and financed by lavish handouts from the infamous Fund, while, conspicuously, a 'Liberal Million Pound Fund' appeal, launched by party headquarters in 1925 in a last-ditch attempt to put the party back on an even keel financially, languished miserably.

Among the Lloyd George Papers in the custody of the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords is a copy of an 'instrument' (Lloyd George Papers G/86/3)

which is devoted to the control of the Lloyd George Fund. Sir John Davies (better known as J. T. Davies) is appointed Chief Trustee of the Fund, and the other trustees are to be Sir William Edge, Henry Fildes, Major Gwilym Lloyd George (LG's son) and Charles McCurdy. (Edge, Gwilym LG and McCurdy were all former Liberal Party whips.) The Trustees declare that the Fund is to be 'held by us to be used under [Lloyd George's] direction for the furtherance of political action of the following causes ...'. A long list of political objectives follows: peace, the unity of the Empire, increased production, improved transport, land settlement, forestry, housing, education, improved levels of wages, etc. Should Lloyd George die, the trustees are to make use of the Fund for these purposes. Authority is vested in the Chief Trustee who is empowered, together with one of the other trustees, acting in unison, to disburse the assets of the Fund and to make transfers. Lloyd George personally was to be responsible for nominating three of the trustees. This document suggests that the Fund was then regarded as a trust rather than a Liberal Party chest.

Overall, it has been estimated that no less than £650,000 was taken from the replete coffers of the Lloyd George Fund to finance the policy committees; £240,000 was donated to run the Land and Nation League; £60,000 was used to assist the near-bankrupt Liberal Party headquarters; and some £300,000 was set aside to finance the next general election campaign.⁴ This embarrassingly lavish use of the fund during the second half of the 1920s led to pointed questions about its origins and control. Most blatantly, 'an embarrassed old fogey' in the shape of Lord Rosebery, Liberal Prime Minister way back in 1892–95, truly a voice from the long distant past, wrote a letter to *The Times* in February 1927 enquiring deftly, 'What is this sum, how was it obtained, and what was its source? On such a matter there should be no possibility of doubt.'

... An authoritative statement should be furnished as to the source of this Fund'.⁵ Rosebery, however, received no direct reply, and further probing was regularly sidestepped.

But the use of the Fund had at least enabled the Liberal Party to face the electorate in May 1929 with an impressive, original programme, and more than 500 candidates in the field, a substantial increase on the number which it had been able to put forward in 1924. The Lloyd George Fund was indeed poured into the pre-election and election campaigns and, in a sense, enabled the Liberal Party to offer for the last time a wholly credible alternative government, potentially far higher in calibre than either the Conservative or the Labour front benches. As Trevor Wilson justifiably wrote of the Liberal Party appeal in 1929, 'It is unlikely that the British electorate has ever been paid the compliment of a more far-sighted and responsible party programme.'⁶

As Michael Kinnear wrote in his impressive analysis of British general election campaigns, 'The chief feature of the 1924 election was the virtual elimination of the Liberals', now reduced to just forty MPs, a net loss of 119 seats.⁷ Four and a half years later, it was essential for the party to reverse this trend if it was to stand any prospect of remaining a major political party. In 1924 the Liberals had been demoralised, divided and lacking a programme. In 1929 they were ostensibly (if temporarily) united, in good heart and endowed with a highly imaginative, radical new programme. Their best prospect of winning seats was in agricultural areas, notably in the Celtic fringe – Wales, Scotland and the West Country of England. This article now focuses on two rural constituencies which were typical of those which the Liberals needed to capture if they were to stand any prospect of making a national comeback in 1929: Honiton in Devon and Dumfriesshire in south-west Scotland.



Honiton

Dr Henry Pelling calculated that the Honiton division of Devon (sometimes known as Devon East), with an average Conservative poll of 61.6 per cent in general elections from 1885 to December 1910, was the safest Conservative seat of the fourteen parliamentary divisions in Devon and Cornwall.⁸ Indeed, throughout the period of Dr Pelling's study, the division consistently returned a Conservative MP to Westminster, on three occasions (1886, 1895 and 1900) unopposed, on every other occasion by a substantial majority over a sole Liberal opponent.⁹ Situated on the eastern side of Devon and thus susceptible to church influence emanating from Exeter, the cathedral city of the diocese, it appeared solidly Conservative. Its Member of Parliament until 1910 was Sir John Kennaway, a country gentleman based at Ottery St Mary and the owner of an estate amounting to 4,045 acres.¹⁰ Towns such as Exmouth and Sidmouth were also thought to vote solidly Tory.

Liberal Party HQ in action during the 1929 campaign

In January 1910 Sir John was succeeded by A. C. Morrison-Bell who had represented the division ever since. The constituency had therefore experienced a marked continuity of personnel and representation. In 1918 Morrison-Bell was re-elected unopposed as a Coalition Conservative, but in subsequent elections the seat had begun to appear much more marginal. The Liberal candidate had polled 10,404 votes (44.5 per cent) in 1922, 12,177 (49.4 per cent) in 1923, and 12,025 (44.8 per cent) in 1924. Indeed, in its reunion year of 1923, the Liberal Party had come within 293 votes of capturing the seat. On each of these occasions the Liberal aspirant was J. George L. Halse, a native of the county who had spent his entire career as a local businessman, never living outside the borders of Devon. He was also well known locally as a long-serving member of the Devon County Council, the Honiton Board of Guardians and the Sidmouth UDC. In 1924, Halse had told the electors of Honiton, 'I shall hold myself free as an

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Independent Liberal to support any measures which I have advocated, no matter from what quarter of the House of Commons they are introduced.¹¹

Honiton was precisely the kind of constituency which the Liberals needed to capture if they were to make any real headway in 1929. A new element of uncertainty was provided in that election by the nomination of a Labour candidate for the first time ever in the history of the division – Alderman F. Rose Davies of far-distant Aberdare in the south Wales valleys, a person who had no previous connection whatever with Honiton. It is evident that the Liberal Party looked to Devon and Cornwall as the scene of an array of potential victories in May 1929.¹² It earmarked eight divisions in the counties as likely Liberal gains: Barnstaple, Honiton, South Molton, Tavistock, Bodmin, Camborne, North Cornwall, and Penrhyn and Falmouth. All had Conservative majorities of less than 2,800; all except Honiton had been held by the Liberals previously.¹³ Honiton contained a substantial agricultural vote: at the time of the 1921 census 35.2 per cent of its occupied male population was engaged in agriculture.¹⁴ Yet, at the end of the day, Sir Clive Morrison-Bell, the beneficiary of a substantial personal vote and a thoroughly overhauled county Conservative organisation, was re-elected with a majority of 1,558 votes (4.4 per cent). Labour ‘intervention’ had not determined the outcome of the poll, for Mrs Rose Davies polled only 915 votes (2.6 per cent) and easily forfeited her deposit.

The official Return of Election Expenses for 1929 revealed that Morrison-Bell had incurred total expenses of £1031, Halse £721 and Mrs Davies just £185.¹⁵ Halse’s expenditure was in addition to his expenses of £686 in 1922, £931 in 1923 and £980 in 1924. Small wonder, therefore, that at the height of the 1929 general election campaign he had appealed earnestly to Sir Herbert Samuel, as chairman of the Liberal

Organisation Committee, for a grant of £4,000 towards the considerable expenses of the election. An interview between Samuel and Lord St Davids, chairman of the trustees of the Lloyd George Fund, followed, but proved fruitless. Overwhelmed by a rash of insistent appeals and an array of begging letters, the St Davids Committee felt unable to accede to such requests.¹⁶

Some days later Halse, still the victim of substantial outgoings, now appealed for a *loan* of £2,000, offering to repay £1,000 within three months of the date of the election, and the remaining £1,000 within six months. He outlined his case in very reasonable, compelling terms:

As you are aware during the last three elections I have paid about £1300 / £1500 towards my election expenses & I need scarcely say that my campaigns have cost me directly & indirectly a very great deal besides this. This seat has never in its history returned a Liberal and the fact that it is now looked on as a seat that should be won at the forthcoming election will I think be agreed by everyone is almost entirely due to my personal efforts and sacrifices these last four years. I do hope therefore that you will be able to kindly arrange for the loan I have asked for.

He even offered to travel to London for a meeting with Sir John Davies, one of the trustees and administrators of the Fund, to make out his case, although he was naturally reluctant to do so – ‘I want to put in all the time I can in work in the constituency’.¹⁷

Colonel Tweed, on reflection, agreed to support Halse’s request for a loan:

I think Halse’s promise to repay can be relied upon – he is a very decent sort of person – and I understand that the reason for his financial stringency is due to the fact that he has a lot of bills owing to him by farmers (Halse is a Corn Merchant) in

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his constituency, and he does not wish to press for payment of his accounts during the Election. On the other hand his original request to Sir Herbert Samuel was for the sum of £4,000 so I fear his business is not in a very flourishing state.¹⁸

Reluctantly, Viscount St Davids approved a loan to Halse of £2,000 – ‘though I hate doing so’ – and a cheque was promptly despatched.¹⁹ ‘This means a very great relief to me’, responded a ‘very grateful’ Halse, ‘& I will repay it earlier than six months if I can conveniently do so. I am glad to say that in spite of the intervention of a Labour Candidate we have great hopes of winning this seat for Liberalism for the first time in the history of the Division.’²⁰

A whole year later, however, none of the debt had been repaid, and the administrators of the Lloyd George Fund pressed Halse to make repayment.²¹ It would seem that, as Halse had failed to capture Honiton for the Liberal Party in May 1929, the Fund’s trustees were unprepared to write off the loan. A somewhat embarrassed Halse – ‘during the last nine months the grain trade has been extremely depressed and this has made things very difficult for me’ – offered to commence repayments in instalments beginning in August.²² In August, he wrote again:

Unfortunately since you were kind enough to lend me the money the grain trade has been exceedingly depressed, in fact I suppose worse in many ways than for 30 years and as a consequence my previous losses have been added to. I am glad to say things are now beginning to turn round a little and I quite hope that the next few months will show a substantial improvement in my position, but I am afraid for a time things will be very difficult.

He offered to repay £250 every other month until £1,000 was

repaid and then to make every effort to repay quickly the second £1,000. This offer was accepted, and there are no other references to the matter in the Lloyd George Papers.²³ But it is clear that the trustees and administrators of the Lloyd George Fund continued to badger the beleaguered Halse to repay the loan a full fifteen months after the date of the election in spite of his straightened circumstances. 'We are very badly in need of funds at the moment', J.T. Davies had written to the unfortunate Halse (who was, in the event, to contest the Honiton division yet again in 1931) at the end of June.²⁴

Dumfriesshire

The Dumfriesshire constituency in the south-west of Scotland was usually held by the Liberals, but it also contained a substantial Conservative minority. It was won by Liberal Unionist candidates in 1886, 1892 and 1900 and a Coalition Conservative in 1918. It reverted to the Liberals in 1922 and 1923, but in the Conservative landslide of 1924 fell to the Tories by a majority of 4,246 votes (15.4 per cent). At the beginning of the twentieth century 25.2 per cent of its occupied male population was engaged in farming, and a further 16.4 per cent was employed as farm servants and shepherds.²⁵ By 1921, 31.1 per cent was still engaged in agriculture.²⁶ Like Honiton, it was precisely the kind of constituency which the Liberal Party desperately needed to recapture in the political circumstances of 1929. The party had held nine Scottish seats in the 1924–29 parliament, and set as its target a recapturing of nine further divisions, eight from the Conservatives and one (Stirling and Clackmannan) from Labour.²⁷ The defending Conservative MP at Dumfriesshire, Brigadier General John Charteris, had seen extensive service in India as a member of the Royal Engineers from 1896, had been head of the Intelligence Department during the Great War, and

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had acted as special correspondent to *The Times* in the 1912 Balkan War.

As its candidate in this key, highly marginal constituency and natural Liberal territory, the party had chosen Dr Joseph Hunter, a medical man who was exceptionally well known locally as the long-serving medical officer of health for Dumfries from 1902 until 1926 and as physician to the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary.²⁸ In 1927 he had taken up a new post as Director of the Liberal Campaign Department centrally, a pivotal position during the run-up to the 1929 general election campaign when he was one of the party's national organisers. His 1929 election address bore the bold slogan 'Vote for the Doctor, the Man you Know', and carried an endorsement from Sir Herbert Samuel who had spoken on Hunter's behalf at Dumfries on 29 April 1929:

There is no man who has done more to promote the complete & lasting reunion of the Liberal Party. Dr Hunter has made great financial & personal sacrifices to devote himself to political life. I hope the people of Dumfriesshire will recognise the value of these sacrifices & that devotion & will give him a full measure of support at the Election.²⁹

The official Return of Election Expenses for 1929 revealed that Dr Hunter had spent a total of £1106 (£5 in fact in excess of the prescribed legal limit), Charteris £1061 and W. H. Marwick, the Labour candidate, £415.³⁰ On this occasion, however, the outlay was justified as the Liberals comfortably recaptured Dumfriesshire by 3,190 votes (8.9 per cent), a spectacular achievement after a keenly contested three-cornered contest. Of the thirty-two new constituencies captured by the Liberals in May 1929 from one of the other parties, the majority at Dumfriesshire was the third most substantial.

The following August, when all the bills in connection with

the election campaign had come to hand and been evaluated, Dr Hunter wrote a lengthy letter to Sir John Davies. He explained the background to his selection as candidate and the pressure placed on him by Lloyd George to continue as candidate although at the time he was serving as Director of the party's Campaign Department:

When Mr Lloyd George asked me to become a member of his Political Staff, he expressed a desire that I should be the candidate here and although I found it difficult to combine the duties of Director of the Campaign Department with the responsibilities of a distant constituency, and asked that I might be relieved of the latter, he instructed me to persevere with the candidature as he was most anxious that the seat should be won. At the 1924 Election the Liberal vote had gone down to 8000 and only exceeded that of Labour by a comparatively small margin, while a Conservative member had been returned with a majority of more than 4000. The difficulties facing a Liberal candidate were thus very formidable and it was thought rightly or wrongly that I was the only Liberal who would have a chance of success in what was considered a key constituency. As you are aware the result exceeded all expectations. The Liberal Vote was doubled at the Election and the adverse majority of 4000 was turned into a majority in my favour of over 3,000.

Referring to the 'continued strenuous effort' which he had made in the constituency, he went on:

The constituency had become semi-derelict and you will remember that when Mr Lloyd George decided that I must go on with the fight, I explained the position to you and received your kind promise of financial help. I carried out a complete process of reorganisation in what is a very widely scattered area

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– formed committees in every parish – held a continuous series of meetings since 1928 and distributed literature to practically every home in addition to a complete application of the Survey Scheme. This necessitated the employment of a man and woman organiser and the use of a motor car every day. From the beginning of April till the Election day, I myself travelled 3000 miles and addressed 150 meetings. This all involved expense to an extent that I am unable to bear personally and the money has actually been paid up to date by my agents who are solicitors and members of a firm which has acted as political agents here since 1832. I shall be greatly obliged if you will ask Lord St Davids if he can give me a grant to cover the expenses. The Conservative organisation in Dumfriesshire is considered to be the best in Britain and without spending money it would have been impossible to counter it. I am satisfied after going over every account that the expenditure was justifiable.

Claiming that the cost of the campaign, inclusive of the cost of the use of a motor car, amounted to £1050, he appealed for financial assistance.³¹ A cheque for this amount was immediately despatched to Hunter, clearly as an outright donation, and was gratefully received.³² The fact that he had won the seat probably meant that, unlike the unfortunate Halse, he was not required to reimburse the Lloyd George Fund.

The Lloyd George Fund after 1929

After the 1929 general election, it was estimated in a letter from Lord St Davids to Sir Herbert Samuel, dated 9 July 1929, that the Fund then stood at just £765,000, together with some 279,000 ordinary shares in the *Daily Chronicle*. At that time, it yielded an annual income of about £30,000.³³ After the election was over, attempts were again made to persuade

Lloyd George to make his Fund available *in toto* to the Liberal Party, but these were, predictably, decisively repelled. ‘How can you get people to subscribe’, asked a frustrated Vivian Philipps, ‘when they think that L.G. has got all that money – and that it really belongs to the [Liberal] Party?’³⁴ But Lloyd George was resolutely determined that the Asquithians were not to get their hands on his personal treasure chest.

After the political and constitutional crisis of the summer of 1931, which brought about the formation of the National Government, Lloyd George went his own way, leading a tiny rump of just four independent Liberal MPs, all members of his own family circle, in the House of Commons. He consciously distanced himself from the mainstream group of Liberal MPs, now led by Herbert Samuel, and changed the official name of the Fund from ‘National Liberal Political Fund’ to ‘Lloyd George Political Fund’. He laid down that grants should henceforth be made from the Fund for ‘political purposes which would advance Liberalism in this country’.

Lloyd George was soon to devote his energies to launching his ‘New Deal’ proposals and his non-party Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction which he set up in 1934. Much of the Lloyd George Fund must have been given over to these initiatives. Much must have been used, too, to run his London office, with its extensive staff of (often about twenty) secretaries, researchers and assistants, and which cost him about £20,000 a year to maintain. This activity was organised by his Principal Private Secretary A. J. Sylvester. Considerable resources were expended during the long 1930s, too, on the researching and drafting of the mammoth *War Memoirs*, a formidable undertaking. In 1937, Lloyd George sought to appoint Dr Christopher Addison (an old ally, by now a member of the Labour Party) and his daughter Megan as additional trustees of the Fund,

but this move, apparently, came to nothing. In the following year, both Lord St Davids and Sir John Davies died within three days of one another, and the Fund then ran to about £470,000.³⁵

In 1939, reflecting on the sources of the income enjoyed by the other political parties, Lloyd George claimed that his Fund was ‘the only clean political fund existing today’,³⁶ on the grounds that it was not attached to a particular political party, but was rather devoted to certain political ends. By the time of Lloyd George’s death in the spring of 1945, the Fund had been severely depleted. The executors of his will requested details of the Fund, which then stood in the name of his second son Gwilym Lloyd George, but were refused details by the bank on the grounds that the Fund did not constitute part of Lloyd George’s estate. The Inland Revenue appears to have accepted without haggling that the Fund was not Lloyd George’s personal property, but a trust.

Thereafter the fate of the Fund is shrouded in some uncertainty. It certainly remained in existence after Lloyd George’s death, beyond the control or reach of the struggling post-war Liberal Party, but it was very depleted by this time. To some extent, rumours of its continued existence poisoned relations within the Liberal Party during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s – the party’s doldrums period – when it was often felt that it might be quarried to bail out the party. Some potential donors were reluctant to contribute to party funds as they argued that the infamous Fund should be used up before they dipped into their own pockets to assist the ailing party. It never became the preserve of the post-war Liberal Party. Indeed, for nigh on forty years the existence of the Lloyd George Fund had caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party. In the exaggerated language of Mr Frank Owen, ‘This Fund was the tragedy of Liberalism in Britain. It was the political tragedy of Lloyd

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George. In part, perhaps, it was a tragedy for Britain.³⁷

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- 1 There is much valuable material on the Lloyd George Fund in John Campbell, *Lloyd George: the Goat in the Wilderness* (London, 1977), Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970* (London, 1971) and Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914–1935* (London, 1966). For a most helpful, brief overview of the Liberal Party during these years, see also Paul Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party, 1910–1931*, 2nd ed. (London and New York), 1995. Useful also are Barbara Bliss, ‘The Lloyd George Fund’, *New Outlook*, November 1966, and Chris Cook, ‘Lloyd George’s last great battle’, *ibid.*, May 1970.
- 2 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Asquith Papers, Viscount Gladstone to Asquith, 1 August 1924.
- 3 See Chris Cook, *The Age of Alignment: Electoral Politics in Britain, 1922–1929* (London, 1975), pp. 43–45.
- 4 See Sir Ivor Jennings, *Party Politics*, Vol. 2 (London, 1965), p. 265.
- 5 *The Times*, 16 February 1927.
- 6 Wilson, *Downfall*, p. 345.
- 7 Michael Kinnear, *The British Voter: an Atlas and Survey since 1885*, 2nd ed. (London, 1981), p. 46.
- 8 Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London, 1967), p. 164, table 14. Only Totnes or Devon South, with an average of 61.3 per cent, came close to this figure.
- 9 For these voting figures, see F. W. S. Craig (comp.), *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885–1918* (London, 1974), p. 257.
- 10 Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 172.
- 11 Election address of J. G. H. Halse, October 1924.
- 12 *Manchester Guardian*, 1 May 1929.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p. 119: ‘The Agricultural Vote in 1921’.
- 15 Cmd. 114, PP 1929–30, Vol. XXIV, p. 755.
- 16 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) MS 22,532E, f. 51, Colonel T. F. Tweed to Halse, 30 April 1929.
- 17 *Ibid.*, ff. 53–53, Halse to Tweed, 11 May 1929.
- 18 *Ibid.*, f. 54, memorandum from Tweed to Sir John Davies, 16 May 1929.
- 19 *Ibid.*, f. 55, Viscount St Davids to J. T. Davids, 22 May 1929. He went on, ‘Please ask Miss Pitt not to put “very secret” outside envelopes to me. I am sure it must whet the curiosity of local post-masters, and add materially to the risk of a letter being opened’.

Indeed, for nigh on forty years the existence of the Lloyd George Fund had caused much debate and anxiety within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

- See also *ibid.*, f. 56, Halse to Sir John Davies, 25 May 1929.
- 20 *Ibid.*, ff. 57–58, Halse to Sir John Davies, 25 May 1929.
- 21 *Ibid.*, f. 59, J. T. Davies to Halse, 26 May 1929 (‘Private’) (copy).
- 22 *Ibid.*, ff. 60–61, Halse to Sir John Davies, 3 June 1930.
- 23 *Ibid.*, ff. 64–65, Halse to Sir John Davies, 4 August 1930; *ibid.*, J. T. Davies to Halse, 2 September 1930 (‘Personal & Confidential’) (copy).
- 24 *Ibid.*, f. 63, Davies to Halse, 23 June 1930 (copy).
- 25 Pelling, *Social Geography*, p. 398, table 48.
- 26 Kinnear, *The British Voter*, p. 119: ‘The Agricultural Vote in 1921’.
- 27 *Manchester Guardian*, 7 May 1929: ‘An electoral survey’.
- 28 *The Times*, 1 June 1929.
- 29 Election address of Dr Joseph Hunter, May 1929.

- 30 Cmd. 114, PP 1929–30, Vol. XXIV, p. 845.
- 31 NLW MS 22,532E, ff. 40–44, Dr Joseph Hunter to Sir John Davies, 2 August 1929.
- 32 *Ibid.*, ff. 45–50, letters, 7–19 August 1929.
- 33 See Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, his Life and Times* (London, 1954), p. 689.
- 34 British Library, Viscount Gladstone Papers, Vivian Phillipps to Gladstone, 26 July 1929.
- 35 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, pp. 691–93.
- 36 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, Lloyd George Papers G/3/7/2, Frances Stevenson to W. S. Belcher (amended by Lloyd George), 16 February 1939.
- 37 Owen, *Tempestuous Journey*, p. 707.

LETTERS

Bribery and Berwick

Bribery may not have affected the political allegiance of many Victorian voters (‘Berwick-upon-Tweed: A Venal Borough?’, *Journal* 48, autumn 2005) but it could upset people. In Berwick in 1857 a much respected Dissenter clergyman, Rev John Cairns, who became a national leader of the United Presbyterians, wrote to one of the Liberal candidates, Matthew Forster, saying that he could not support him because he had been turned out of Parliament for bribery five years previously (Alexander MacEwen, *Life and Letters of John Cairns, DD, LLD* (London, 1895)). Forster wrote to Cairns:

I am grieved at the loss of a supporter of whom I have always been so proud, but I thank you for the frank and kind terms in which you notify that loss. If you knew all the circumstances attending the decision to which you allude, I think the conclusion you have come to would have been a little more merciful. But it may be a satisfaction

to know that I have taken such precautions and securities as will prevent the possibility of any like result on the present occasion.

Whether such determination to be honest this time – or his past record of venality – was the reason, Forster, one of three Liberal candidates for the two-member seat, came bottom of the poll, beaten even by a bribing Tory.

Willis Pickard

Death duties in 1894

A small correction, if I may. In his review of *Harcourt and Son* (*Journal* 48), Martin Pugh incorrectly states that in the 1894 budget the graduated scale of death duties peaked at six per cent on estates of a million pounds. The correct figure is eight per cent, Harcourt having abandoned a proposed top rate of ten per cent after representations from Rosebery (p. 253). Professor Pugh criticises a ‘remarkably brief treatment’ of the budget, but I do at least try to get my facts right!

Patrick Jackson