## The New Orbits Group, 1958 – c.1962

The advent of the New Orbits Group straddled two eras: that of an older order in the party, with its very heavy intellectual and organisational baggage, and an emerging, rather fragile new one.

contributed (he was to become a leading international economist); 5 Year Plan by Frank Ware; New Unions for Old, dealing with the reform of the trade union movement, written by Roger Cuss, Maurice Gent (later a BBC correspondent) and myself (later a university vice-chancellor); as well as Teaching — A Proposal for an Institute of Teachers, long before the idea such an institute became fashionable and it was created.

If Timothy Joyce and Frank Ware provided much of the intellectual stimulus, Barbara Burwell provided the group's organisational leadership. The group formally continued until 1968, but the founders left as they moved on in their separate careers.

What did the New Orbits Group achieve? It contributed to the modernisation of the party under Grimond and showed that the party was capable of imaginative policy-making across a broad range of the public agenda. Its main achievement lay in the recruitment of exceptional young talented activists, which galvanised the younger wing of the party over a longer period of time. The New Orbits Group was followed by what became known as 'the Red Guard' which had its origins in Manchester University and attracted the likes of Lawrence Friedman, then a student there. He later became Professor Sir Lawrence Friedman, FBA, and official historian of the Falklands War, who also sat on the official inquiry into the invasion of Iraq. Tony Greaves from Oxford, was also a member of this group and became chair of ULS; he later worked for the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors and is now a life peer.

The tradition of dissent continued in the Young Liberals especially while Peter Hain was its chairman. He was a student of mine at Queen Mary College, London where simultaneously he was leading the successful *Stop the Seventy Tour* campaign, designed to prevent the South African

cricket team coming to Britain. He later became Labour MP for Neath, a cabinet minister and then a life peer. The JPC was a portent in the formation of the Young Liberals, which now represents both university students and young Liberal democrats within the Lib Dems.

The advent of the New Orbits Group straddled two eras: that of an older order in the party, with its very heavy intellectual and organisational baggage, and an emerging, rather fragile new one. Sir Arthur Comyns-Carr personified the older element, together with the Rt Hon. H. Graham White. The latter had been MP for Birkenhead from 1920 to 1924 and again from 1929 to 1945. He had had a year in office as assistant postmaster general from 1931 to 1932, the lowest ministerial rank but one which accorded him a Privy Councillorship. Like Comyns-Carr, he was born in the 1880s and both died in 1965.

The members of the New Orbits Group were aware of the residual influence of these older luminaries, which possibly accounted for the 'Young Fogey' character of the group. This was intentional so as to appear reformist rather than revolutionary and thus not gratuitously upset the older generation. But they were very alive to the need for radical new departures if the Liberal Party was to survive and flourish. And these new departures took root: seen as contributing to Eric Lubbock's famous Orpington parliamentary byelection victory, the new order within the Liberal Party became firmly established.

Trevor Smith (Professor Lord Smith of Clifton) was an academic who taught at the universities of Exeter, Hull, York and Queen Mary, London. He ended his career as Vice-Chancellor of Ulster University. From 1970 to 2006 he was closely associated with the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, which was the main source of income for the Liberal Party. Knighted in 1996, he became a Liberal Democrat life peer the following year.

## Corrigenda

Journal of Liberal History 93 (winter 2016-17) - 'Trevor Jones (1927-2016): An Appreciation'

p. 4 Trevor Jones was first elected as a councillor in 1968, not 1970. In 1962 another Liberal councillor, Joe Wilmington, was elected alongside Cyril Carr.

Journal of Liberal History 93 (winter 2016-17) - Letters to the Editor: 'Liberal Clubs' (Michael Steed)

p. 17 In fact there were six (not five) constituencies in Great Britain where Labour never once overtook the Liberal vote; the seat not mentioned was Bodmin, which, like the others, had a tiny industrial working-class vote.

Journal of Liberal History 93 (winter 2016–17) – Report: the legacy of Roy Jenkins

p. 39 David Owen was Foreign Secretary, not Home Secretary

Journal of Liberal History 94 (spring 2017) – Churchill Archives Centre

p. 33: Leslie Hore-Belisha was never a Conservative MP. MP for Devonport 1923–45, he was elected on three occasions as a Liberal (1923, 1924, 1929), then twice as a Liberal National (1931, 1935). He sat finally as a 'National' member, under which label he lost his seat in 1945.

Journal of Liberal History 94 (spring 2017) - Reviews: Kirkup, The Lib-Lab Pact

p. 35: the two references to the 1970 election at the top of the page should be to the February 1974 election.