

War highlighted the depths of the divisions within Ireland. Readers whose primary interest is Liberal history may find it rather too much focused on the Irish rather than the British aspects of the issues under discussion. But since the book chronicles the ultimate failure

of Home Rule – a great cause of Liberal governments – it should still be of interest.

Iain Sharpe is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and a Liberal Democrat councillor in Watford.

The Library knows Lloyd George

J. Graham Jones: *Lloyd George Papers at the National Library of Wales and Other Repositories* (National Library of Wales, 2001; 95pp)

Reviewed by Duncan Brack

Readers of the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* have been forewarned of the publication of this excellent booklet; it was mentioned in the guide to Liberal archives at the National Library of Wales written by its author, J. Graham Jones (assistant archivist), in issue 26 of the *Journal* (spring 2000). But the booklet is much more than a dry listing and numbering of archives: it includes a series of fascinating quotes from the sources themselves, a short chronology of David Lloyd George's career, a comprehensive bibliography of biographies and other monographs, some pictures and cartoons from the Library's collection, and a brief guide to Lloyd George-related material held in other archives.

The most important group of Lloyd George's political papers are held by the Parliamentary Archive at the House of Lords, but the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales holds no fewer than seven significant groups of papers, six of them acquired in the last two decades. In this it is fulfilling the prophecy of Sir John Herbert Lewis, Liberal MP for Flintshire, in 1910. Writing to thank Lloyd George for his grant, in his capacity of Chancellor of the Exchequer, to the newly established National Library, Lewis had expressed his belief that 'the Library will be, at, I hope, a very distant date your literary mauso-

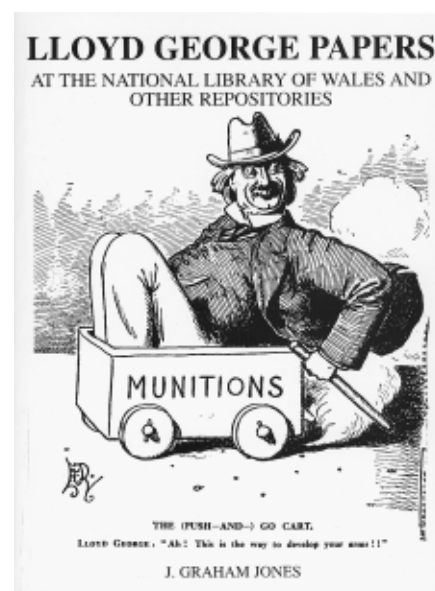
leum'. As Jones puts it, 'to a large extent, this hope has by now been fulfilled', and he is confident that no major Lloyd George archive now remains in private hands.

Lloyd George was not a particularly prolific correspondent, but he did write regularly to his first wife Margaret, and to his younger brother William, and the latter group of letters are especially interesting for their political observations. The other groups of papers derive from three of Lloyd George's children – Richard (the eldest son), Olwen (the second daughter) and Gwilym (the second son, later Viscount Tenby) – from Lloyd George's principal private secretary A. J. Sylvester, and from his confidante, mistress and second wife Frances Stevenson. The booklet describes the contents and origins of each of these seven groups of papers, and provides quotes illustrating key points in his political career and personal relationships.

His affection for his first wife Margaret is very obvious, but so too are the strains in their marriage. Trying to persuade her to join him in London, for example, he implored her in 1896 to 'drop that infernal Methodism which is the curse of your better nature and reflect whether you have not rather neglected your husband. I have more than once gone without breakfast. I

have scores of times come home in the dead of night to a cold, dark and comfortless flat without a soul to greet me.' But six years earlier she had written to him, warning him bluntly that: 'I am glad you have not seen anyone to flirt with. Remember to be careful in that line, or I will soon find out.' The profound differences in their characters are well illustrated by a letter Lloyd George wrote to his brother William in December 1907, shortly after the tragic death of his first daughter, Mair Eluned. He had resolved to go to the continent while Margaret remained at home. 'M. would rather go to Criccieth, otherwise she might very well come. But, as she puts it, she likes quiet & hates meeting people. On the other hand solitude or even quietness would kill me.'

For readers of the *Journal* it is the letters tracking the course of Lloyd George's political career, and his observations on political events and personalities, that will probably prove most interesting. In 1904 he wrote to Margaret, after a long conversation with Sir Edward Grey, that: 'We had a very frank chat about the prospective Liberal ministry – if it comes off. He says I am certain to have a seat in the Cabinet. Told him I must bargain for Wales.' In 1912, writing to William about the party's reaction to his land campaign, he observed that: 'Winston [Churchill] alone being doubtful – but he has become very reactionary of late. However Winston is not going to give



trouble provided I give him money for his navy. If he keeps quiet he is worth a million or two.' On 9 December 1916, another letter to William (expecting it would be read by his revered uncle Richard Lloyd) announced that he had 'presided over my first War Cabinet. Found it embarrassing to be addressed as "Prime Minister" by all the members ... Love to all. Thank Anita for her very sweet letter. Tell Uncle Lloyd that he is responsible for putting me in this awful job.' And in 1924, writing to his daughter Megan (on a tour of India), he observed that: 'What changes are taking place. A Socialist Govt. actually in power. But don't get uneasy about your investments or your antiques ... They are all engaged in looking as respectable as lather & blather will make them. They are out to soothe ruffled nerves ... Ramsay is just a fussy Baldwin & no more.'

The archives contain letters to Lloyd George, as well as many from him. Two from Margot Asquith are of particular interest, given Lloyd George's replacement of her husband as Prime Minister in December 1916. In May 1914, commenting on C. F. G. Masterman, the proposed Liberal candidate in the Swansea by-election, she wrote: 'I've always had the same view of Masterman. With all his brains, he is *au fond* complacent, smug & soft as margarine ... It wants a man of genius to prevent us being swept in the next Gen. Election & that man is to be sweet tempered, sunny, tactful & a man who understands men & *likes the job*. It is *you*.' And in May 1915, after the political crisis that forced the first coalition with the Unionists: 'I said years ago to Henry, I like Winston, but he is the man who will do for yr. Cabinet, he or Ll. George if he doesn't get fond of you.'

All this is simply a taster for the wealth of material available in the archives themselves, some of which, as Jones observes, have been very little used by historians. This book is an invaluable guide to those sources, and for serious students of Lloyd George, it will be required reading.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal Democrat History.

What might have been

Phillip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin (ed.):

Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical Methodological and Psychological Perspectives (Princeton University Press, 1996)

Reviewed by Andrew Hudson

Counterfactual thought offers a method of evaluating the causes and consequences of historical events by considering how they might have had a different outcome had some of the antecedent events been different. This collection of essays considers the ground rules for constructing such 'counterfactuals', their application to case studies and classes of event, the use of computers and game theory, and other related factors.

Tetlock and Belkin describe what they consider to be the rules for constructing plausible counterfactuals in the opening chapter. Six criteria are suggested – clarity, logical consistency, historical consistency, theoretical consistency, statistical consistency and projectability. Their rules on consistency largely concern the relationship between antecedent and consequent, while the concept of projectability examines whether the implications are consistent with observations in the real world.

In the second essay James Fearon considers the use of counterfactuals in the social sciences, covering issues such as the 'butterfly effect' whereby a minor event results in a major outcome, and deterministic arguments whereby individual events are dampened down by long-term trends. Fearon also queries the legitimacy of some types of antecedent, including the much-quoted 'if Napoleon had had a stealth bomber' which is generally regarded as implausible. He also adds a criterion of proximity between the antecedent and consequent when judging the plausibility of a counterfactual.

Subsequent chapters include studies of individual events such as Munich and the Cuban missile crisis, classes of event including wars and revolutions,

and the use of computer simulations and game theory. A final section deals with other factors including blending, causality, statistical inferences and psychological bias, including the tendency to see deterministic outcomes through hindsight.

The book demonstrates why counterfactuals tend to concentrate in detail on antecedents rather than consequent events, as can be seen in Niall Fergusson's *Virtual History*. Fictional equivalents, or 'alternate world' stories, as they are called by science fiction enthusiasts, are more entertaining, including books such as Keith Roberts' *Pavane* or Robert Harris' *Fatherland*. But counterfactuals are not intended for entertainment – they represent a serious study, concerned with the evaluation of historical events and the derivation of conclusions from them.

The essays are largely written by social scientists, with the bulk of the contributors being political scientists. The text is heavy going in places. The section covering computer simulations and game theory contains a considerable amount of mathematics, but this is not essential to understanding the principles.

The first two chapters, in particular, by Tetlock and Belkin, and James Fearon, are useful in providing a methodology that could be applied to the study of Liberal history. The techniques that the book suggests could also be used by council groups to consider the potential outcomes of policy options.

Andrew Hudson is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and of the Association of Liberal Democrat Trade Unionists.