

# liberator



## A Hard Time to be a Liberal

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- was founded in 1970 and is produced by a voluntary editorial collective
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- welcomes written contributions on relevant topics, up to 1500 words.

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# COMMENTARY

## WHAT WORKS?

Sooner or later, all governments confronted by terrorism have talked to the terrorists - however heinous their deeds - the British experience of this ranging from the Mau Mau to the IRA. Few have managed to defeat terrorists militarily, though most have tried.

In the case of the appalling events in New York and Washington, the United States was entitled to take military action to defend itself. America for all its faults is a free society under attack from religious extremists who seek to impose their worldview on everyone. What is disputable is not taking military action, but whether the action taken was wise.

Any comment in a magazine with Liberator's frequency risks of being overtaken by events at present, but the bombing of Afghanistan bristles with possibilities for counter-productive consequences for America, and the west generally, while offering rather less obvious avenues to success.

Whatever sympathy America initially enjoyed in the Muslim world has been squandered by the bombing, to the extent that the largely pro-American monarchs and generals who rule most of the Middle East may be toppled by fundamentalist insurrections. They are hardly likely to be replaced by anything more appealing to liberals, or more 'pro-western'.

In Afghanistan, the American bombing may have opened the way for the Taliban's overthrow. But the Northern Alliance, in effect still the internationally recognised government, was noted for brutality and chaos during its previous spell in power.

Even if a broad based government can be established under the octogenarian ex-king, would it have the power to curb Bin Laden or even maintain itself in office? If the American captured Bin Laden, what would they do? In prison he would be the object of endless terrorist acts to try to force his release, judicially executed he would inspire more misguided martyrs, if secretly killed there would be constant 'sightings' and troublemaking impostors.

It may be that terrorism is being fought out of sight, but what is being fought in the public eye lacks a clear and achievable objective, and is more dangerous for the unpredictable consequences this may have.

Unless America achieves an improbable outright military victory over Al-Qaeda, it will eventually negotiate, just as other governments have. It may not do so directly, but it may reach positions in the Middle East which take the heat out of public support there for Bin Laden, making it more difficult for terrorists to operate. Not exactly talking with terrorists perhaps, but still a recognition of what is and is not possible.

The events of 11 September will change world politics in ways that are only dimly becoming apparent. The Bush administration's first few months were devoted to tearing up international treaties and shunning the rest of the world. The support offered for the fight against terrorism may mean that Bush stops treating Europe as a giant tracking station for his star wars project, something whose pointlessness was surely demonstrated on 11 September as four civilian airliners flew through its assumptions.

It may seem indecent to talk about the consequences for British politics of an atrocity in which 6,000 people died.

But after the initial shock, it soon became obvious that politics would continue, if not quite as usual. The Liberal Democrats were right to support action against terrorism and also right to say that America should not have a blank cheque from Britain, and particularly not to attack other states of which it disapproves on dubious pretexts.

Some commentators have claimed that the measures needed to fight terrorism are good news for progressives because they entail an acceptance of the power of the state to act on behalf of the population.

As there has been precious little good news for progressives so far, let us acknowledge one bit. Charles Kennedy was absolutely right to resist the pressure for compulsory identity cards. It will be hard to make the case for civil liberty, and for the rights of asylum seekers, as Labour uses the current situation as cover for its illiberal agenda. But then no-one ever said it was easy to be a liberal.

Anyone tempted by identity cards might like to visit the National Liberal Club and see the commemorative plaque to the party member who successfully challenged their legality in 1952.

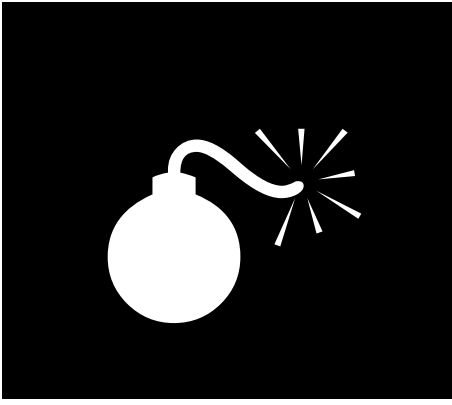
An emergency wartime measure, they had been left in place and were used as a means of harassment by the police. Or perhaps they should look at the Official Secrets

Act, passed in a panic in 1911 and still with us.

It is indeed easy to destroy liberty and hard to reinstate it. Liberals must be doubly sure that any restrictions are effective and necessary to combating terrorism, and are time limited.

Liberals should also be robust in defence of the liberties of Muslims in Britain - and that means all their liberties.

People have a right to pursue their religion and culture if they do no harm to others. There is an equal, and equally important, right for individual members of minority communities to freely choose not to follow their original religion or culture.



# RADICAL BULLETIN

## WRECKING CREW

The behaviour of assorted female peers and MPs after the defeat by the Liberal Democrat conference of the proposal for all-women shortlists was little short of deplorable.

They were not even close to winning the debate, and were defeated largely because of a campaign spearheaded by young women who disagreed with them.

Yet within hours they were threatening to boycott party photo opportunities, to reverse the vote and to withdraw co-operation from publicity in which they were asked to be involved.

Just imagine the uproar that would have ensued had all-women shortlists been agreed only for a group of men to immediately threaten to disrupt this through wrecking tactics.

What sort of impression of women candidates do those behind this boycott think they are giving to local parties?

The conference debate was of high quality. It ranged a call for all-women shortlists in seats where MP are retiring, against an amendment which proposed a package of measures to increase the number of women candidates, and to ensure that 40 per cent of target seats have female candidates.

The campaign against all-women shortlists featured women, mostly LDYS officers, in tee-shirts proclaiming "I am not a token woman". Their argument boiled down to pointing out that the party had as serious shortages of candidates of both sexes, and that training and developing female candidates had never been seriously tried.

They were helped in this by having Candy Piercy, the party's most prominent female trainer of candidates, proposing the amendment.

The backers of all women shortlists must have imagined that they had pulled off a coup by getting Paul Tyler, a senior male politician, to propose their motion. Tyler then put to conference the highly optimistic prediction that positive discrimination would be needed only for one election because electoral reform was bound to come after that. Making such an announcement to a conference that was told 20 years ago to "go back to your constituencies and prepare for power", and which is still waiting, was asking for trouble.

A more telling point came from Ian Cuthbertson, of Yorkshire and Humberside region, who pointed out that his region had had an acute shortage of candidates of either gender immediately prior to the general election, and implied it would have happily taken any party member who was not actually dead.

One moment to savour was when LDYS speaker Jo Swinson informed Shirley Williams "you are wrong". It must be 20 years since anyone has presumed to address the Liberal Democrat equivalent of the Queen Mother in such terms.

Another came when Liberator Collective member Alex Wilcock told the conference, to jeers and boos from certain quarters, that most of those women who supported all-female shortlists were "white, middle class and heterosexual", and that this sort of positive discrimination would make things worse for other disadvantaged groups.

Liberal Democrat News' account managed to mention six speakers in favour of all-women shortlists and only one from the winning side against these. It name checked the LDYS speakers Polly Martin and Lyn-Su Floodgate without reporting what they actually said.

This reverse ageism was also evident in a letter to LDN from Tim Symonds. He denounced the LDYS speakers as "callow and inexperienced...without responsibilities", and compared them unfavourably to Shirley Williams and Lesley Abdela. Symonds omitted to mention that he is Abdela's partner.

## FEW MEMBERS, FEW VOTES

The Liberal Democrat establishment's bid to entrench itself in power for ever by having all party committees elected from the whole membership has ended in richly deserve humiliation for those who expected to benefit from this.

The effect of the plan would have been to give an in-built advantage to peers, ex-MPs, incumbent officials and other famous people, since the mass membership of the party could not possibly be expected to have any personal knowledge of most candidates.

Organised factionalism would have been the only way in which anyone else could have got a look in.

OMOV supporters did not have the honesty to disclose how much their plans would cost when members were consulted in the party's comic Informed (Liberator 276).

The party responded appropriately. Just 14 per cent of members took part in the consultation, and a majority of them opposed OMOV, giving a vote of 5,330 for and 5,441 against. The result for the federal policy committee was 42.8 per cent in favour and 48.4 against. The party has shown a marked disinclination to make these figures public, so you may have read them in Liberator first.

This means the establishment will just have to fight elections among conference representatives like

anyone else. And it will save the Liberal Democrats about £90,000 a year to spend on something useful.

## LORDS A-WHINGEING

What is the collective noun for lords? Phalanx, perhaps? The Liberal Democrat peers did themselves absolutely no favours in their reaction to the debate on Donnachadh McCarthy's motion at conference to restrict their involvement in lobbying businesses.

There were plenty of holes in the motion that might have allowed the lords to argue that it should be defeated because it was unworkable, and that parts had anyway been overtaken by parliamentary rules.

Instead, the assembled peers marched into the conference hall in a black-suited phalanx, sat together, and whatever their actual intentions, exuded the aura of elitist fat-cattery.

Matters were not helped by their inability to find more than one non-noble speaker to back them. The one they found was Ian Wright, a former Owenite who now chairs a lobbying trade association. Not merely was he not a conference representative, he was not even a non-voting one. The fact that he was accorded speaking rights offended many present. His ill-judged speech, which drew attention to the specific effects of the motion on lords McNally and Clement Jones made things worse.

Perhaps it is just as well for them that these peers do not have to win the hearts and minds of the public.

## LIZ'S LEATHER

Ordnance Survey had an exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference, and from it distributed a leaflet to punters. This included a perfectly ordinary photograph of its government policy head David Lovell talking to MEP Liz Lynne. What was weird was the caption, which said the pair were "discussing leather".

This was matched for strangeness by BT, which had covered the exhibition areas and connecting corridors with footprints stuck to the carpet. As conference goers seeking telephones discovered, they led nowhere. This is presumably some metaphor for BT's current commercial plight.

## DUMB FRIENDS

As war clouds gathered after the attacks on the World Trade Centre, it was good to see that the party's defence spokesman Paul Keetch was able to keep things in proportion. In addition to his duties, he yet again used the conference to pursue his keen interest in animal welfare.

## FIGHTING IN THE AISLES

A seemingly innocuous motion on protecting local cinemas caused a backstage panic at Bournemouth because of fears that Odeon cinemas might sue over the original wording.

This was argued by some to imply that company had made improper use of restrictive covenants on sites where it has closed cinemas.

The motion got right to conference before this problem became apparent. As ever, legal advice conflicted. Conference committee was minded to take the motion and dare Odeon to try to prevent it.

But party chief executive Hugh Rickard hastily rounded up some federal executive members, who voted that it should not be taken. This ended up with Donnachadh McCarthy in a majority against taking it, while his New Radicalism colleague Siobhan Vitelli lined up with Helen Bailey in the minority arguing that it should be taken.

Conference committee then decided that the FE could not dictate to it what should and should not be debated, but did concede the FE could put up a speaker on the financial consequences of any legal action.

At the last minute a form of words was found that was ruled safe and the motion sailed through.

Suggestions that the debate should have been accompanied by a series of amateurish projected adverts for local restaurants and 'parp, parp, pa-parp, pa-parp, pa-parp' music were not for some reason acted upon.

## PRETTY VACANT

The Liberal Democrat Peace and Security Group appears to have suffered the effects of a neutron bomb. Its conferences stall had literature available, but all week there were no actual people staffing it. Group members complained to Liberator, which was nearby, that they had paid subscriptions but had seen and heard nothing for the past year.

## ANCIENT MYTHS

Some myths die very hard, particularly when national political commentators perpetuate them.

In the customary introduction by a hack to the conference agenda, Sky's Adam Boulton recalled that at Eastbourne in 1986 "I promise that, unlike some of my fellow hacks, I didn't actually raise my arm to vote in the notorious show of hands on nuclear weapons".

If Boulton really knew of members of the media who improperly took part in a vote, and even more remarkably on the anti-nuclear side, why did he not make this scoop public at the time? What journalist could have resisted such a story?

The most probable explanation is because it never happened.

If Boulton can substantiate this slur on both the Liberal Assembly chief steward and his press colleagues, let him name names and provide evidence, or else withdraw it.

As everyone who was actually there well knows, nobody "wandered in off the street to vote". This was part of the pack of lies fed to the media immediately after the debate by David Alton.

Alton never produced any evidence, because there was none to produce, and was memorably described by Des Wilson as having gone "completely off the rails".

The appalling Jane Smithard also appears to be in the grip of the myth that all Liberals were incompetent fools before the merger.

Conference committee, at its post-Bournemouth meeting, discussed the merits or otherwise of sending out badges before conference.

It was mentioned that this was done for the Liberal Assembly, and that delegates sometime still turned up without them.

Smithard sneered: "Yes well they were Liberals weren't they", before packing her bag and walking out.

# LIBERALISM WORKS

Why are Liberals always apologising for being Liberal? There was never a better time for Liberals to climb down off the fence and take pride in their values, argues Simon Titley

Confused by the current international crisis? Not sure where you stand? Try this Taliban questionnaire:

Have you done any of the following recently:

- played or listened to music;
- taken a photo of any person;
- openly expressed a point of view;
- (if female) gone to work or to college;
- (if male) shaved or trimmed your beard;
- practiced any religion other than a specific Sunni form of Islam;
- drunk alcohol or eaten a bacon sandwich;
- had gay sex;
- had sex outside marriage;
- had sex outside someone else's marriage?

Score 1 point for each "yes", and 0 points for each "no". If you scored 1 to 10 points, you will be arrested, tortured, imprisoned and possibly executed (if you scored 0 points, maybe you should just get out more often).

Just think about the Taliban for one moment and what it stands for. Doing so forces you to recalibrate your politics. Whatever you may think about New Labour, the Tories, the Americans, at least we inhabit roughly the same moral universe. We're agreed that civilisation is worth having. We're agreed that people should enjoy freedom and prosperity. We disagree about how to achieve those things but we tend to express our differences through political means and we tolerate the right of each other to exist. But the Taliban and the al-Qaida network exist right outside our moral framework.

Those of you who see some sort of moral equivalence between Osama bin Laden and the USA need a reality check. Bin Laden and his allies stand for the exact opposite of Liberalism. They are hostile to democracy, pluralism, free speech, religious and sexual freedom, education, the arts and science. They are not open to negotiation or persuasion. They pursue their worldview through nihilism. Given half a chance, they would wipe us out. They cannot be excused because they inhabit a 'different culture'. They are not a valid option.

Liberals are pluralists but 'pluralism' implies mutual tolerance. Note that word 'mutual'. We cannot afford to

tolerate groups, whether Nazis or al-Qaida, who present a mortal threat.

And here's something else Liberals cannot afford to do. Sit on the fence. We have the best political philosophy in the world, so why don't we shout about it? Yes, haven't you noticed? Liberalism actually works. The more freedom and enlightenment you have, the more likely it is you will lead a happy, healthy and prosperous life. Still not sure? Have you seen any happy, healthy, prosperous dictatorships lately?

My guess is that such brazen political pride will have shocked the "yes, but" brigade among you. If so, the problem is your moral relativism and lack of confidence.

Liberals are often pilloried as timid and petty-minded. We sit on the fence and wring our hands. When we rebel, it is through self-indulgent individualism (for example, calling ourselves 'Jedi Knights' on the census forms) rather than confronting what matters.

We have only ourselves to blame for acquiring this reputation. Why are Liberals so embarrassed? Why do we lack the courage of our convictions? One of the main reasons is our faith that everyone is reasonable like us. All we have to do is sit round the table and eventually we can reach agreement. If only that were so. In fact there will always be many people, probably a majority, who are not Liberals, who will never be Liberals, and whom we must confront. Beyond that, however, are groups so violent in their hostility that to tolerate their behaviour is to invite our own demise.

A second factor that weakened our resolve is our acquisition of a social democratic reflex. The collapse of the social democratic consensus in the 1970s and the rise of Margaret Thatcher left Liberals (like everyone else on the centre and left of British politics) floundering round. Lacking the courage of our convictions and with no idea what to do next, we instinctively defended anything that Thatcher sought to reform or destroy. We have retained this reflex to this day and this has put Liberals in an absurd position. For example, a bold Liberal analysis would see the failure of the health and education systems as an inevitable consequence of erecting centralised state bureaucracies. Instead of standing up to the vested interests, however, we line up behind the professions and defend things that are both illiberal and inefficient.

The third factor undermining our self-confidence is moral relativism. It is impossible to underestimate the damage that moral relativism has done to the Liberal cause. We tie ourselves in knots attempting to be 'politically correct' to every possible minority, while at the same time we tolerate black rap singers who advocate the murder of gays or beating up their "bitches". We tolerate female genital mutilation in Africa (after all, it's "their culture"), but we fume if the local newsagent addresses us as "love". And after the events of September 11th, there was no shortage of commentators offering extenuating circumstances for this atrocity.

Moral relativism has corrupted Liberals. It has sapped our strength and distorted our moral compass. It has led us to defend any old codswallop, as long as it is espoused by anyone who isn't a white male. If we express the universality of any of our values, we are charged with 'liberal imperialism'. We are even told that something as fundamental as political freedom should be subordinate to 'respect' for other cultures. This notion is an insult to those people, such as the Afghans, who are forced to live under dictatorial or theocratic regimes.

September 11th caused a lot of people to take stock and there is good reason for Liberals to do likewise. We are especially vulnerable because the threat of terrorism and the so-called 'war' are being used as pretexts to limit our freedoms. They create circumstances that make it more difficult to defend liberty.

Liberals need to renew their identity and become more assertive. There is a need for 'hard liberalism', bold and uncompromising, which celebrates the success of Liberal values and makes a vigorous case in the face of both terrorism and ill-judged counter-measures.

We need to take a leaf out of the book of successful corporations and their branding strategies. A successful brand does not try to be all things to all people. The first steps to building a successful brand are to establish some core values, some objectives and a target audience. Our 'key messages' (to borrow the PR parlance), if they are to work, may repel as many people as they attract.

An example of this is the Liberal Democrats' back-peddling on the issue of Europe. The overriding concern of the party has been to avoid upsetting Eurosceptic voters and the right-wing press. The party's support is under 20%. The percentage of voters who are pro-European remains some 35 to 40%. It is a minority,

but a substantially larger one than the people who vote Liberal Democrat. A robust assertion of European values is what the party needs. What it gets is a pusillanimous posture intended not to cause offence, but which lets down pro-European voters who have nowhere else to turn.

Stiffening of the Liberal backbone requires leadership, from the Parliamentary Party in general and the Party Leader in particular. But what do we get? On two issues that should have been a Liberal touchstone, the RIP Bill and ID cards, our MPs let us down.

We still categorise our MPs as 'left' or 'right' based on dimly remembered battles of the 1960s Young Liberal 'Red Guard' era. But when it's Simon Hughes who equivocates on the RIP Bill and Lord McNally who comes to the rescue, it is time perhaps to reassess who the true 'defenders of the faith' really are.

It's not just on civil liberties issues where Liberal Democrat MPs lack balls. The failure of the leadership to exploit the Tories' disarray over the summer betrayed a complete lack of confidence and was a tragically wasted opportunity. When our MPs do speak out, time and again they offer essentially technocratic solutions to political problems. They are products of their age, adopting an approach to politics that combines 1980s managerialism with their own experience of council casework.

The Liberal Democrats are coming to an electoral impasse. They are reaching the limits of what local electioneering can achieve, and they have no clear strategy for raising their game above the merely tactical. A strategic approach would build our electoral appeal by standing up for what we believe in.

We defeat terrorism by continuing to do all the things the Taliban don't like - playing music, arguing, shaving our beards and eating bacon sandwiches. And we promote Liberalism by celebrating these liberties out loud. Terrorism tends to be the product of illiberal societies, where all avenues of legitimate expression or dissent have been closed off. Liberalism offers a better way and a better life. We're right, they're wrong, and we should not be ashamed to say so.

The current crisis has created pressure to sacrifice freedoms. Now was never a harder time to be a Liberal. But now was never a better time. What is our leadership waiting for?

# CONFESSIONS OF A PADDY

Were Paddy Ashdown's dealings with Tony Blair as bad as people feared at the time? They were worse, John Tilley discovers in Ashdown's latest diaries

One might be tempted to ask why Paddy Ashdown was able to compress nine years (1988-97) into 638 pages of Volume One of his Diaries but let Volume Two run to 572 pages to cover barely more than the two years (May 1997 - August 1999).

There is another marked difference between the two volumes that hits you in the eye. The black and white photograph on the cover of the first volume portrays him as a sort of merchant banker (no rhyming slang intended here) in collar and tie and pin-stripes. Whereas on the cover of the second volume he is resplendent in army green polo neck and waxed jacket looking as though he has just delivered a box of Milk Tray to someone.

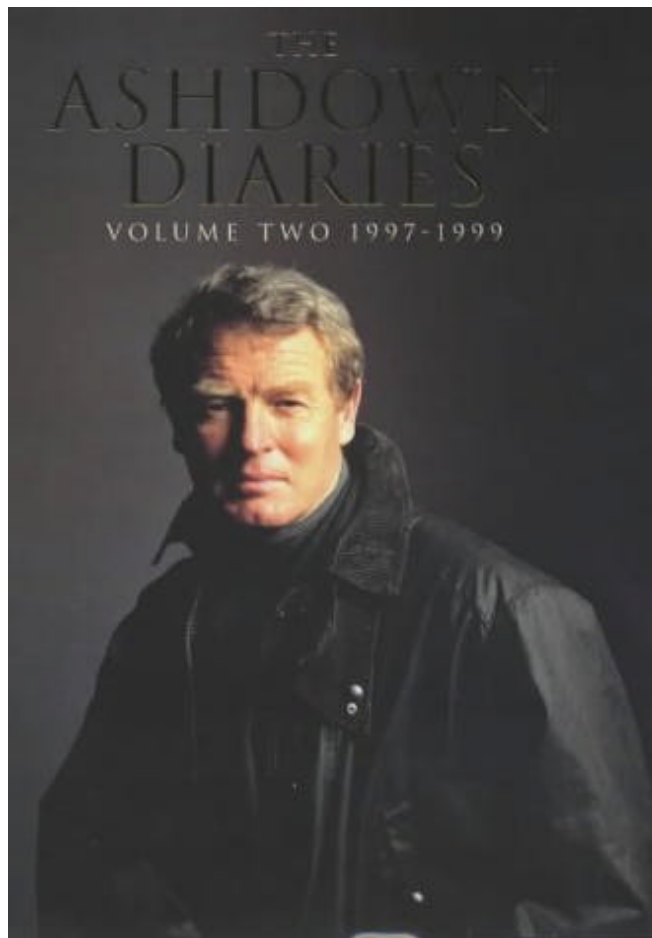
There is a danger that volume two will be remembered as 'Ashdown - the cagoule years' because of the cover rather than the content.

These superficial differences aside there is little to distinguish volume two of the diaries from the closing chapters of the first volume.

Endless reports of meetings with Tony Blair, endless disappointments resulting therefrom either immediately or some pages later, and prompting the same questions as most of us will have asked when reading the reports of these meetings before the 1997 general election.

Questions such as "Why did Ashdown persist with his Project when it was obvious Blair would never deliver? Why was he falling for it again? Why didn't he listen to all those people who cautioned against what he was doing?"

At the time of the publication of the first volume many such questions hung in the air. At that time the leader of the Liberal Democrats went out of his way to say that he was not trying to merge his party with Tony



Blair's. The author tried to re-assure people that all would become clear on publication of the post '97 election volume.

If anyone believed this at the time my guess is that they are now sadly disappointed. It is difficult to see what anyone would glean from the years 1997-99 that they had not already learned about the two principal characters and the plotting between Ashdown and Blair against their own parties. Ashdown and Blair were engaged in a plot to merge their two parties.

The astonishing thing is that although the Diaries make this abundantly clear Paddy Ashdown continues to deny it even now since their publication.

Perhaps he got so used to denying during the five or six years that he met in secret with the "Jo Group" to plan the TFM (The Full Monty - which was the code for coalition) as the first step

towards the ultimate merger.

This even went so far as a chronology for the coming together of the two parties which would have resulted in a common manifesto for the 2001 General Election (written by Richard Holme and Peter Mandelson both since discredited for the other double lives they were leading at the time).

In a letter to Blair, Paddy himself says that, "There is little or no difference between Liberal Democrats and New Labour. Over time I believe there is every probability that we will come together."

This was written a few weeks after the 1997 election and it characterised Ashdown's private position during the whole of the last parliament even though it was vehemently denied by him and his staff during that period.



In Appendix K at the end of the book there a “Handover Notes” to the new leader Charles Kennedy. These also make clear that coalition was on the cards on two separate occasions in 1997 and 1998 even though it was never the wish of the Parliamentary party nor the party as a whole.

It is a huge credit to Paddy Ashdown that he is remarkably honest about the number of people repeatedly tried to hold him back, who tried to tell him what he was doing was madness. This is especially so during the key months leading up to his ‘Joint Statement’ on 11 November 1998.

It is worth quoting some of those to highlight how strongly felt were the views of some of the leading figures in the Liberal Democrats.

- **8.11.98**

*“Chris Rennard... faxed me through a minute ... again stressing his opposition to the joint statement. It was a strange minute, almost bitter in tone... he obviously believes passionately that I am taking a wrong statement”.*

- **9.11.98**

*“Bob [Maclennan] did one of his exploding acts. He said he was completely opposed to the whole thing; it was a disaster; I mustn’t go ahead, etc. Chris [Rennard] followed. Then Nick [Harvey]... Alan Beith, followed by Diana Maddock (President of the Party) ... unsurprisingly, both advised against.”*

- **10.11.98**

*“Bob again said it was impossible, we shouldn’t do it etc. Chris Rennard sent messages to the same effect. Nick Harvey also.”*

All of which leads one to consider how and why Paddy Ashdown simply ignored them.

However these reactions from 1998 were mild compared to those of Jim Wallace when he first learned of the Joint Cabinet Committee in the summer of the year before.

- **16.7.97**

*“...he suddenly exploded. ...I said I wanted to terminate the conversation there and I would come back to him later... he was absolutely furious and shouted at me...I lost my cool, slammed down my file and leapt to my feet. So he leapt to his feet as well and we shouted at each other for about two minutes. My office staff later told me that they heard the commotion next door and thought we had come to blows.”*

Given Ashdown’s reputation of being trained to kill with his bare hands one can guess what flashed through the minds of the office staff as they listened to the leader of the Liberal Democrats on his feet and shouting at the leader of the party in Scotland. To put it mildly this would not have been the best of beginnings for devolution of power to Scotland.

It is one of a host of very strongly expressed objections to Ashdown’s behaviour throughout the period until he stepped down from the leadership.

Around the same time it is reported in the diaries that Bob Maclennan “went nuclear” when he learned that Richard Holme was to be a member of the Joint Cabinet Committee.

Understandably so when one considers that at the time Holme held no post within the party other than being a relatively inexperienced member of the House of Lords. He was of course there because he was Paddy’s Crony.

But in this as in everything else during the period of these diaries Paddy carried on with his dealings with Blair irrespective of whatever criticism or opposition he received either from close colleagues or from the party at large.

Paddy’s attitude during this period towards most of the other Liberal Democrat MPs, the party’s constitutional committees, the two successive presidents of the party, let alone the grass roots activists and organisations such as the Campaign for Liberal Democracy was little short of contempt.

He constantly worked to prevent anyone from “closing my options” i.e. do whatever he and Blair decided.

His attitude to party conferences and their decisions is summed up by the March 1998 Southport Conference. A debate was held on working with other parties - which Ashdown lost but he and his close circle decided they would “accept and spin it out into a solution”.

Using the apparatus and the employees of the party to “spin” against the democratic decisions of the party says much about the world which Ashdown, Blair and a very small circle of people occupied at that time.

A hero emerges for those of us who care about things such as having democratic political parties rather than fan clubs for leaders and their political elite. It is David Howarth (described on page 94 as “One of our activists”) who wanted to move a motion at the September 1997 conference to say no to coalitions.

Ashdown found out that most of the MPs favoured this. Howarth was thwarted in his attempt but Ashdown notes that - “The motion was avoided and a dangerous moment passed, though it was a very close-run thing.” Later in the diaries he notes that “If the Howarth amendment had been taken at the Eastbourne Conference it would have been passed easily”.

After the publication of the Blair/ Ashdown statement in November 1998, the Federal Policy Committee of 17 November was from Ashdown’s point of view “Probably the worst meeting I have ever attended. David Howarth acting angrily, bitterly and almost beyond reason. Strenuously backed up by Tony Greaves, Gareth Epps and Conrad Russell.”

It says a great deal about Paddy that he felt it necessary to describe David Howarth in this way. Paddy was obviously so far removed from the feelings of ordinary members of the party by this time that he thought that anyone who disagreed and did not just bow to his will was “beyond reason”.

It is significant that it was only a matter of weeks after this that he announced his decision to stand down as leader of the party.

There are two characters in this saga who played significant parts in the shadows.

One is Roy Jenkins who was a permanent influence although often at the end of a telephone rather than present at meetings (a sort of electronic equivalent of being behind the arras in a Shakespearian play). It is apparent that on occasions Blair and Ashdown would meet and then each of them would separately report back by phone to Jenkins. One looks forward to the Jenkins Diary appearing if only to read how he must have been laughing up his sleeve as these two youngsters continued to pay court to him.

The other (much further back in the shadowy double dealings of the project) was Liz Barker who chaired the conference committee during this crucial period. She took part in the discussions on 18 September on how to "ride off" the "resolutions being put down to ban any talks with other parties on coalitions" and made a personal visit to Ashdown on the following day on how to "handle the conference".

Ashdown makes much in his diaries about the importance "keeping his options open" on coalition and preventing David Howarth in his attempts to have this openly discussed at the conference in Eastbourne.

At the following conference in Southport a motion on coalition was on the agenda. Tom McNally was strongly in favour, but is loathed by conference goers and is reliably counter productive in conference debates, while Phil Willis and Cyril Smith opposed coalition talks and each had a record as powerful conference performers.

Ashdown thought it was significant to report in his diary entry for the day - "Tom McNally, Cyril Smith and Phil Willis all desperate to speak but Liz Barker, who was chairing the session, never called them." Liz Barker was among the last batch of people that Paddy Ashdown put in the House of Lords.

It is perhaps the most revealing thing in both volumes of the diaries just how small the group of people was in whom Ashdown confided in the years that he plotted against the independence of the party. He honestly reports the opposition from all wings of the

party at every level at every stage of the unfurling of the Project.

The other story in the diaries continues to be the Balkans. One should not underestimate the influence that Paddy has had in this area. He has been a one man world opinion changer. One might forgive all his other failings for the contribution he has made in this area. It must be a matter of considerable personal pride that he is able to record a meeting with Milosevic in September 1998 in which - "I handed him an extract from the [Geneva] Convention... and added that he could be deemed personally responsible and could be indicted for war crimes if they continued," and then to follow that up with the footnote saying that he subsequently gave evidence about this to the Hague War Crimes Tribunal.

To be able to lead several lives in one and keep a monumentally detailed diary says something about the capacity of Paddy Ashdown. I've often disagreed with the man but have never stopped liking him. Not sure if he feels the same about me but I live in a very different world from the several worlds he strides through.

For those who prefer talking books to the printed version both volumes are available on cassette. There are some interesting differences in editing between the taped version read by Paddy himself and the books. The tapes favour for example the official chit chat and foreign trips over the internal party struggles.

You may prefer the tapes if you don't want to trawl through hundreds of pages of text but in doing so you will miss the idiosyncratic footnotes. A prize example of these is the one about a previous MP for Yeovil who was offered the crown of Albania (I kid you not).

In buying the tapes you will also miss the photographs which are revealing in their own way. The photograph of Paddy with his grandson Matthias on the "first night we have been allowed to look after him by ourselves" is worth a thousand words and says much more about the humanity of the man than the cover. If he has any sense he will in future devote more time to looking after Matthias and less time cosyng up to Blair.

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# INACTION REPLAY

Ghada Karmi describes how Palestinians fear they will be 'picked up and then dropped again' by the west

I was in the US when the World Trade Centre was attacked last month. Almost immediately, the finger of suspicion was pointed at an Arab and more especially a Palestinian connection. Within hours, American television mentioned a claim of responsibility (later withdrawn) for the attack by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Later, questions were raised about the role of another Palestinian group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and whether it could have carried out the operation.

Such speculation was soon supplanted by the attribution of the crime to that current icon of evil, Osama bin Laden. But the link with the Palestinians remained. The perpetrators, it was said, had punished the US for, among other things, its support of Israel. The inference was that it was sympathy for Palestinians that had, at least in part, inspired the bombers.

If any of this was true, it seemed at first that the terrorists' aims had badly misfired. No single act could have damaged the Palestinian case so thoroughly in western eyes. In just a few hours, Israel's image, damaged by a year of critical and often hostile reporting of its harsh anti-Palestinian policies in the occupied territories, was magically reversed.

The day after the atrocity, Israeli prime minister Sharon appeared on American TV screens, expressing Israel's condolences in hushed, unctuous tones. His sub-text, and that of the numerous Israeli spokesmen who followed, was that the world would now understand Israel's predicament with Palestinian 'terrorism'. American commentators followed suit.

It seemed that at a stroke, Israel, whose army of occupation has killed more than 700 Palestinians in the last year; which has bombed their cities with F16s; demolished their homes and imposed a vicious siege on their towns and villages, this Israel was now forgiven, seen as properly engaged, along with the rest of the 'civilised world', in the good fight against the dark forces of mindless (Arab/Islamic) terrorism.

By the same token, the Palestinians, fighting against Israeli occupation, had joined the ranks of the untouchables, foot soldiers in Bin Laden's evil army. It was difficult to see how any armed resistance against Israel would be seen as anything but terrorism from now on. Even Palestinians, such as myself, living in the west, may not be immune from this demonisation.

And yet, a month on, events do not seem to have turned out so unequivocally to Israel's advantage. The US has been assiduous in keeping Israel on the sidelines. Although prime minister Sharon has taken advantage of the world's current inattention to

re-occupy Palestinian land and continue the policy of assassinations and killings, not all his plans for escalating the crisis have been realised.

Significantly, both president Bush and prime minister Blair are speaking about the creation of a Palestinian state. Mr Blair has just given the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, a warm welcome in London and emphasised the need to implement UN resolutions relating to Palestine.

None of this will be welcome news to the Israelis. But need they be too worried? Will these fine words about solving the Palestine problem come to anything more?

For Palestinians, it sounds worryingly like a replay of an old scenario. No sooner does their cause get an airing, than it is put back in the drawer again. Take, for example, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 when 27,000 civilians were killed; or the horrific Israeli-supported massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps; or the Palestinians intifada of 1987 when Israeli soldiers were breaking children's bones in front of the cameras; or the Israeli bombing of the UN headquarters at the Lebanese village of Qana in 1996, killing 150 civilians and UN personnel. Each time, there was international condemnation of Israel, each time the world remembered the Palestinian issue and each time it was forgotten again.

Could it be happening again? Palestinians certainly fear so.

They have two main anxieties: first, that the sudden revival of interest in their cause is merely expedient, in order to help the US and Britain keep the anti-terrorism war coalition together. As soon as the war is over, they will be dropped from the western agenda.

And the second anxiety is that they may be forced to accept now what they rejected at Camp David last July. The details of the American 'peace plan' are still unclear, but it may be no more than a re-vamped version of the failed Camp David discussions.

If this were to be offered again and again rejected by the Palestinians, then the new-found western sympathy for them may evaporate. In a sense, that would be the worse outcome of the two.

If they were to sink back into oblivion, at least, they would be in no different a position to the one they have now.

There is no question that the Palestinian problem needs a solution. But, it will need to be a durable solution, and that means one based on justice and international law. No half measures will now do. The destruction of the twin towers in September, awful atrocity as it is, was also an awful warning.

# THE POLITICS OF DISASTER

Liberal Party president Michael Meadowcroft argues that terrorism cannot be defeated militarily

What is the point of spending billions of dollars - or pounds, or even euros - on intelligence services, and having highly experienced advisors on every conceivable subject, if the only criterion for policy is what will appease the electorate? Rule by focus group and by opinion poll is bad enough when only domestic policy is involved but now, since the appalling events of 11th September, it could involve us all in a futile and dangerous war.

Terrorism is unacceptable in all its guises, particularly when it targets civilians, and the attacks on the USA were appalling and horrific in their enormity. No cause, however plausible and even if completely just, can justify killing 6,000 civilians in such a cataclysmic attack. In raw emotional terms the immediate popular demand for revenge and retribution is understandable, but in political terms it is wholly misguided. Have the Americans learned nothing from their experience in Vietnam? And why is Tony Blair pursuing a totally opposite policy in Northern Ireland to that which he now supports with George W Bush in relation to Afghanistan? Does no politician ever draw any lessons from forty years of conflict in the Middle East? This alliance of western militarism currently appears likely to press on inexorably into a morass in which soldiers and civilians continue to be killed year after year and from which no-one will know how to extricate themselves.

Virtually every comment and every action since the attacks has exacerbated the situation. "Bin Laden - Dead or Alive" may play well in Texas but to the Islamic world it characterises the American attitude to justice in relation to those it decides are guilty. Launching a "crusade" may sound innocent to naive American ears but it has hugely provocative historical significance to Muslim ears. To continue along the hawkish path will be completely counter productive and will recruit more terrorists determined to repeat their spectacular "success". All the proposed increased security at airports and internal surveillance is simply window dressing to make the public feel that "something is being done". It will not prevent it happening again - particularly in a country made up of immigrants from every community on the globe.

The Americans have suffered a catastrophic blow. The mainland of the USA has been successfully attacked for the first time in its history, and the myth of the USA's territorial invulnerability has been shattered for ever. All its sophisticated defence and intelligence systems were futile in the face of such an action. American politics, indeed American life, will never be the same again. It will be etched indelibly into its collective memory, even

when this generation has passed on. But, paradoxically, the events of 11 September may be so gross and enormous that they could, within a reasonable time, bring a rethink of US foreign policy, but only if it does not get completely bogged down in an unwinnable and inextricable military struggle against "terrorism", however that may be defined territorially.

The nature of the attacks on New York and on the Pentagon were, in their way, copies - multiplied a thousand times - of the recent attacks by Palestinian militants in Israel. The method used, the suicide bomber, is a concept impossible to accommodate within our mental and emotional limitations, but its very irrationality renders it impossible completely to guard against. Throughout history guerilla warfare has been the natural tactic of those with a cause but who face overwhelming military forces. It was the weapon of the Maquis - and much commemorated for it - against their German occupiers. It was effective on the grand scale against the Americans in Vietnam, and, significantly, against the Russians in Afghanistan. It was used by African liberation movements against their colonial oppressors, and it is used today by Palestinian "extremists" against their Israeli occupiers. It was the weapon of the IRA against Britain in Ireland. Where in the history of the world is there an example of such indigenous action being defeated by outside military might? It can be diminished and territory can be "ethnically cleansed" or even obliterated but, in the end, it reappears in the next town, the next province, or the next house - as the Russians are still discovering in Chechnya - with still more militants recruited by the very action designed to wipe them out.

It is not even a question of whether the cause for which the militants are prepared to sacrifice themselves is accepted as legitimate by the Americans or by anyone else, but rather what is an effective means of engaging with those who espouse it so passionately, in order to avoid it having to be promoted by such terrible means. If all that the Western allies have is military might then they are indeed weak. Such hardware is a poor substitute for the power of diplomacy, argument and persuasion. The ability to bomb Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Serbia and Kosovo is no proof of a just cause. Even the language used in the aftermath of 11 September is ill chosen. The definition of "civilised" as what the USA is and does, is grossly offensive to those countries thus portrayed as uncivilised when they have a cultural heritage way, way older than that of the States, which - as these countries well recall - slaughtered two million native Americans en route to its "civilisation".

Those politicians who, as early as 1948, surveyed the wreckage of three Franco-German wars within seventy years, then began the task of building a Europe in which the two time dishonoured enemies would be so intertwined that war again between them would be impossible. European union is still unfinished business, but its original catalyst is worth pointing out to those currently suffering across the Atlantic. Fifty years later we take western European peace for granted but in 1948 emotions were as powerful as today in America, and the enmities were as raw. I have worked in enough different countries to know how similar human beings are from whatever background and tradition they spring, and I have enough American colleagues to know that their country's belligerence does not represent all its citizens.

To turn around the present situation is actually very easy! It simply requires a leader of stature. The

transformations of recent years have been largely brought about by a Gorbachev, a de Klerk, a Rabin, and even a Trimble, being prepared to say that what has gone before for so long does not work and will have to be changed. At some point all those western governments that are even now talking of military strikes, of increasing repressive policies, considering identity cards and putting armed guards on planes, will have to deal with the disease itself and not its symptoms. Why are these passionate individuals prepared to blow themselves up for their cause? Why Israel? Why the USA? Unless and until political rigour replaces military might - or rather impotence - terrorism will thrive.

The task for Liberals is to be sensitive to the effects of 11 September on the USA but to point out gently but firmly that removing injustice is the way forward, not dropping bombs.

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# OUT OF THE GHETTO

Geoff Reid reports on politics among Bradford's ethnic minorities after last summer's riots, and urges Liberals not to play 'caste and clan' politics

It is usually slovenly proof-reading rather than careless political argument which irritates me while reading our indispensable organ of wit and wisdom. However Mark Jones's complaint (*Liberator* 276) about Ann Cryer's remarks must be refuted.

The Labour MP for Keighley may be accused of naïvety but to identify her with the Labour Party racists is a travesty.

Her comments were in defence of and rooted in the experience of her poorest constituents - Asian women. She rightly believes that the process of importing non-English speaking spouses from Azad Kashmir into Bradford metropolitan district locks women into isolation and intensifies segregation.

This damages the poorest communities of the district along with the failed urban regeneration programmes and Labour racism that Mark rightly condemns.

Had she been a more experienced politician, Ann might have guessed that the media would seize on the "compulsory language tests" side of the story and obscure the underlying message. In the event she was subjected to vilification within the Labour council group by a bunch of white male authoritarian councillors and their Asian male allies - one of the dodgiest coalitions in north of England politics.

Since the Bradford riots in July, remarkable honesty has been breaking out in all directions across the district. People have on all sides have been less inhibited in expressing their real thoughts about race relations in the city.

Some Muslims have started on a painful process of self-criticism and have admitted deep divisions amongst the faithful, which they have hesitated to allow onto the public agenda before. Asian business leaders have made a serious contribution to the debate.

There is evidence that this is being reflected nationwide, not just in the northern towns where violence erupted in the summer. Liberals can welcome this process, while trying to ensure that it is not abused or hijacked by propagators of racism in both mainstream and fringe political parties.

On the night of 7 July, I observed the Bradford riots at close quarters, standing on the pavement talking to the residents of White Abbey Road. I was impressed by the way white, Asian and black residents were supporting one another as the highway went up in flames. They displayed a mature understanding of what the police were trying to do as well as a grasp of the

causes of the disturbance. Their interdependence was rooted in many years of living with diversity in the city.

However this should not blind us to the harsh realities of increasing separatism which Ann Cryer knows only too well. After the events of 11 September in the United States, politicians around the world have become very keen to pontificate about Islam.

The Bishop of Bradford's interfaith advisor Dr Philip Lewis, the author of one of the key guides to Islam in Britain (1), has argued strenuously that politicians and other public figures desperately need a "religious literacy".

This requires that they distinguish between ethnicity, religion and culture - a distinction which many grassroots Muslims struggle to make. It also requires that they recognise that it is perfectly possible and permissible to talk about faith issues in the public domain without compromising your own integrity, regardless of your allegiance to any faith or none. Religion cannot be ignored, any more than sport or the stock market can be ignored, however much some of us try! Simply talking about these realities does not involve us in buying into the commitments of their supporters.

The expression "faith communities" has become an unavoidable piece of DTLR-speak. Liberals need to be wary of Labour and Conservative attempts to use faith-based institutions such as schools and community projects as a cover for the creeping privatisation of education and welfare. Even more insidious is the attempt to yoke conservative Christian and conservative Muslim social priorities together in opposition to abortion and gay rights. This is very different from the more prophetic "justice and peace" agenda which many Christians and Muslims see as under-girding their commitment to Liberal values.

It is these values which can go hand in hand with a clear-eyed analysis of what is going on in many of the inner city communities amongst people from Asian and Muslim backgrounds.

As *The Tablet* observed on 21 July, "one of the tenets of race relations practice - that all lifestyles and cultures should be accorded equal respect - starts to break down when a culture itself is seen to be the source of antisocial impulses."

In Bradford, as in other towns and cities, the importation of ill-educated imams along with non-English speaking spouses from Pakistan contributes to the separation which the report by Sir Herman Ouseley, like others before it, identified as being at the heart of our problems (2).

People from Sikh and Hindu backgrounds join many white people in fleeing the inner city as they become better off. Those from Muslim backgrounds are more reluctant to do this and indeed there are some who will happily create areas where Muslims are in the overwhelming majority. In these parts of the city you can shop, consult a lawyer, visit the doctor, or get your house renovated without interacting with other cultures.

Diversity is not the name of the game. Children growing up in such ghettos, educated in English, living in families where no English is spoken, are cultural orphans. They are caught in a severe conflict of values. Those who are under-educated, antisocial and resentful inevitably encounter discrimination. For a minority criminality can offer an attractive alternative to the boring or even dreary claustrophobic life of the "Muslim" ghetto. The young men I spoke to on 7 July did not need alcohol or drugs to fuel their rioting - they were high on adrenalin.

So how do Liberals respond to all this? I offer the following suggestions:

- We can offer a healthy alternative to the client politics of Pakistan, which does of course have its counterparts in Old Labour and Conservative old school tie culture. Liberal Democrat Asian Councillors in places like Pendle have shown that you can get elected, and re-elected, without playing caste and clan politics.
- We can offer quiet and sustained support to those Muslims who criticise authoritarian and patriarchal attitudes within their own communities, including those who are active inside our own party.
- We can offer an anti-racist analysis to white people in inner city areas who are unhappy at some of the practices they see amongst some of their Asian neighbours but struggle to articulate it in a non-racist way.

- We can attempt to understand the complexities of cultural and religious issues which superficially might seem to challenge some of our deeply held convictions about justice, equality and community.
- We can find ways of helping the next generation of Muslim women into positions of political leadership. In Bradford we have a powerful group of well-educated, articulate young women emerging who are working hard to discover what it means to be a good British Muslim.

Many of them have gained degrees at Bradford College or Bradford University because parental pressure has kept them at home. Many of us feel that the future of our city lies with them. Needless to say, they tend to be very supportive of what Ann Cryer has been saying!

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1 Islamic Britain, Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims, I.B.Taurus, London and New York, 1994

2 Community Pride Not Prejudice, Bradford Vision, 2001  
[www.bradford2020.com](http://www.bradford2020.com)

Rev Geoff Reid is team leader at the Touchstone Centre, Bradford and membership secretary of Bradford South and West Liberal Democrats.

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# TALKING TURKEY

Wendy Kyrle-Pope visited Turkey this summer as part of an assessment for EU membership. She reports on resentment against the west even in this majority muslim secular country

Two high, slender suspension bridges span the Bosphorus, linking Europe with Asia. From a distance, they look so fragile that a gust of wind might blow them down. They were both constructed within the last 20 years, which is roughly the same length of time that Turkey has been trying to become accepted as a candidate for membership of the European Union.

Like the bridges, Turkey's chances are slender. Economic instability, the size of the population, human rights issues, its cultural 'otherness' all weigh against admission.

Any real chance for immediate membership came crashing down with the Berlin Wall in 1989, when millions of more local Europeans were suddenly available for inclusion.

Turkey is vast, 780 thousand plus square miles. Its population is somewhere between 65 and 70 million, depending on whom you believe. The 2000 Census was conducted in the time honoured manner; everyone stops at home on the particular day, and waits for the officials to come to the house/flat/tent/cave and count the inhabitants. Even the Turkish Government admits this is a rather hit-or-miss system. Approximately 29 per cent of the population is aged under 14, which has put an incredible strain on the education system. Children now go to school in shifts, morning or afternoon. All tertiary education has to be paid for, which effectively denies nearly 70 per cent of the population from going on to further education, unless they work for several years and manage to side-step family responsibilities. Some 91 per cent of men, but only 72 per cent of women, are literate.

Despite its mountainous terrain, Turkey can feed itself. It has ample natural resources, but there are many examples of environmental mismanagement. Much of the power on the southern (tourist) coast comes from coal-fired power stations. Protests by environmentalists at the level of emissions were met by three-hour long power cuts every night, to demonstrate what would happen without these stations. The protests stopped. An enormous internationally funded project to dam the Euphrates is underway despite protests from environmentalists within and without Turkey, and from Syria, who may have this vital river reduced to a trickle when the dam is completed.

The economy is in crisis. Inflation is apparently 65 per cent a year (the latest figures available). The lire's exchange rate has dropped sharply and real growth in the economy is 5 per cent.

So great was the crisis this summer that civil servants and bank officials were told they could not take any holidays and were not paid for two months 'in the national interest'. The albeit slight drop in the number

of tourists coming to Turkey this year (this before 11 September) has caused serious problems, as 53 per cent of the work force are employed in the service sector, with 18 per cent in agriculture and 29 per cent in industry.

There is no secret about the underlying cause of Turkey's economic crisis; the national newspaper *Hurriyet* claims that between 40 and 50 per cent of the economy is black, thus depriving the state of half its tax revenue. Corruption appears commonplace. At this time of writing, Ms Cillar, a former prime minister and leader of the True Path Party, is accusing current prime minister Bulent Ecevit and his coalition government (made up of the Democratic Left Party, Nationalist Movement and Motherland Party) of corruption on many levels.

The population has had little faith in any politician since Kemal Ataturk. This extraordinary man transformed the dying, mediaeval, introspective Ottoman Empire into an independent, secular, Western-facing country, at least on the foothills of the 20th century, in only 15 years.

His early death from acute alcoholism is still blamed for all Turkey's problems today. When the military take over the government, which it has done on several occasions, it is with the approval, even in this basically democratic land, of the majority of the population.

The army is seen as the guarantor of the constitution, mothers' sons protecting their country and their democracy from extremism and theocracy. The issues of human rights are being addressed. A key parliamentary commission gave the go-ahead this September to the lifting of the death penalty. The Turkish Parliament has not ratified any death sentence since 1994, although 116 people are actually under sentence of death. This commission is also recommending lifting the ban on broadcasts in Kurdish, spoken by some 20 per cent of the population. Just prior to 11 September, parliament was debating the acceptance of the supremacy of international law over national law, but events have overtaken them. Other constitutional changes are being considered to bring Turkey in line with EU law, but they have a long way to go. As of last month, 36 people have died in hunger strikes in protest at the new cell system in Turkey's prisons. These, according to prisoners and their families, make inmates more vulnerable to abuses and attacks by warders than the previous dormitory wards.

The European Union's officer for Turkey, Karen Fogg, stated last month that the EU had observed that although positive steps had been taken, Turkey is not yet a candidate for entry negotiations. She kept alive Turkey's hopes by stating that the country had the



potential to fulfil its requirements for membership in a short time (how short she did not specify). Ms Fogg may be a little over-optimistic. With the income-per-capita in Turkey being well below the EU average, the need for any constitutional modifications, especially in state intervention into the electricity and telecommunications industries, and the performance of the economy to mention but a few of the stumbling blocks. The current talks on Cyprus under EU surveillance must come to a conclusion, and if no acceptable compromise could be reached, hard times awaited all the relevant parties.

In the aftermath of 11 September, Turkey has been staunchly supportive of its Western, NATO allies. However, there is growing disquiet about how just the cause is, and disgust at America's utterances about crusades and that only the West is right. Ozdem Sandberk, the former (very pro-western) foreign minister, accused the US of perpetrating the myth that all Muslims are anti-western, and said that American ignorance of Islam and the Islamic world is as bad as the fundamentalism preached by bin Laden. In the same article in last month's Turkish Financial Times, he went on to criticise the UK for its failure to integrate its Asian Muslims, and Germany its Turkish ones.

This understandable anger resonates throughout Turkish society. I had originally gone to Istanbul in an attempt to assess how close Turkey was to becoming a candidate country for the EU, and to talk to some interested parties. In the event, our discussions barely touched on it. One of the most moderate of Muslims, while roundly condemning the attacks on America, was so enraged by the west's attitude to Islam that he poked me in the chest and dismissed my religion as being 'based on a completely false premise', an unheard of insult, totally out of character. I was afraid not of what he said, but what he managed to hold back.

Is Turkey becoming more fundamentalist? There has been a growth in the number of fundamentalist groups within Turkish universities (funded by Saudi Arabia, some claim). More students are bearded or veiled, despite university edicts discouraging such displays.

The main 'growth' area is in the cities, particularly Istanbul, which sees thousands of immigrants from the interior pouring in every day, seeking work and a better life. Buildings are put up so fast that many of the streets do not have names yet. In 1978, the population of Istanbul was 750,000; today it is estimated as being between 12 and 14 million. Traditionally, Turks live within their extended family, which they leave behind when they move, and are, as a result, lonely and rootless. The mosques being built in the sprawling suburbs on the Asian side of the Bosphorus almost as fast as the apartment blocks welcome them, help them with food and accommodation, and try to create a substitute family in Islam.

The majority still believes in Ataturk's creation of a secular state, and in our post 11 September world we need to nurture that belief, and help Turkey overcome its problems and achieve its goal to join the EU. Globalisation has made many in the West blind to other systems, ignorant of older ways. Is capitalism the only true defender of the freedoms we take for granted? Can democracy survive along side any fundamentalist religion? The Turks know it is a delicate balance, as delicate as the bridges over the Bosphorus which link Europe and Asia, which is why we need them.

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# DON'T DIVIDE THEM AT 5

William Tranby argues that more faith schools will only increase the level of racism in our society

If Tony Blair is serious about being tough on terrorism he also needs to be tough on the causes of terrorism.

Extremists on any political or religious spectrum are created by their desire to strike out against an oppressor, real or imagined. The politics of hate are easier to develop when there is ignorance of other people's views, beliefs and lifestyles.

When people of different cultures mix together socially, at least for part of their daily life, suspicions are allayed and the creation of a multi-cultural society becomes a real possibility.

Breaking down the ghettos, and breaking down the ghetto mentality that creates them is therefore a desirable aim of Government.

I am not advocating top-down social engineering. In the field of housing, for example, breaking down the ethnic boundaries between the estates of some of our northern towns is a long way off. We have to win the hearts and minds of people first.

Maintaining the ghettos is achieved by dividing the next generation at school. Unfortunately, we have had 'aided' schools (the vast majority of which are faith schools) since the 1944 Education Act.

This Act provided the framework for aided schools to operate within the state maintained system. All their running costs are borne by the state, as well as 85 per cent of the capital spending needed to maintain their buildings.

The starkest example of what this system can create can be seen in Northern Ireland where more than 90 per cent of pupils go to faith schools.

When I visited Belfast in the 1980s and took a bus ride from the city centre, I was astonished to see every primary school child from the age of 5 upwards kitted out in full school uniform, whether they were protestant or catholic. This was at a time when school uniforms at English primary schools were not generally worn.

Nothing appears to have changed since then, because only recently we have seen incidents on our TV screens of adults jeering at little girls walking to a catholic infant school down a protestant road in Belfast.

Whoever created the religious hatred in the first place, the state is surely shoring it up by supporting sectarianism in our education system?

Liberal Democrat education spokesman Phil Willis is therefore quite right to be critical of the Government's White Paper which includes a proposal to create more faith schools. However he qualified his position by stating that as a pragmatist he will not be arguing for

state funding for church schools to be removed. But I think it is time for Liberals to reconsider this issue.

Some of course will cry, 'What about the parents' right to choose? Surely parents have a right to give their children a religious education?'

The 1944 Act does allow for 'education otherwise', which means that parents can educate their own children outside of a state recognised school (subject to certain checks by the local education authority). But of course this is impractical for many who cannot afford the time to teach their own children.

However I see no reason why Saturdays and Sundays cannot be used by the faith communities to provide religious instruction to children.

The state's role should be to provide funding for secular schools serving local communities.

The curriculum should not include religious instruction in one faith, but should provide a spiritual, moral and cultural curriculum which draws on all faiths and none. For those that are religious let them access religious teaching at the weekend organised by their own faith communities.

By bringing our children and young people together for five days a week, we can make a start on teaching religious and racial tolerance in a secure setting.

By maintaining the faith school system we divide our young people for seven days a week into cultural ghettos which are the breeding grounds for bigotry and racism.

And it is only one small step from racism to terrorism.

Tony Blair has made great play of defending the Muslim community in our own country, and so he should.

But by choosing a Roman Catholic school for his own sons he is perpetuating the tribalism which undermines the chance for us all to build the multicultural society he says he wants.

David Blunkett is proposing to bring in a new law to make it an offence to incite religious hatred, while his successor as education secretary is proposing more state funded faith schools.

New Labour cannot have it both ways. If we are to be tough on the causes of terrorism, it is not enough to tackle the physical poverty and lack of opportunity for communities across the world.

If we are to bring people together so that they can understand their differences, we should bring them together at the earliest opportunity, and in our schools would be a good place to start.

# TIME FOR A RADICAL RESTART?

James Graham reviews the Progress of the “new Radicalism” movement within the Liberal Democrats, and invites all Liberals to a Radical Winter School to plot a way ahead

In June 1998, Donnachadh McCarthy organised a conference open to all interested Liberal Democrats around the theme of “New Radicalism”. This was attended by Bob Maclennan (then MP) and Conrad Russell.

“New Radicalism” was the phrase he coined to wrap around a number of tenets which he believed radicals within the Lib Dems should concentrate over the next few years.

For those of you with short memories, the tenets were as follows. “A Healthy Community” calls for work for healthy, well-educated, balanced communities for all, whether advantaged or disadvantaged; Community Economics: supporting community politics and balancing the global economy by a strong local economy that respects communities. “A Pure Environment” sets out the environmental rights of our own and coming generations. Open Democratic International and Local Government calls for the powers of multi-nationals to be democratically regulated and restates the need for open democratic local governance. Lastly, “Politics by Example” suggests the Party should be run entirely in line with its principles.

Generally speaking I think those tenets are a reasonable summary of the modern radical cause (although I personally hate the third one - “A Pure Environment” both for its inherent illogicality and unfortunate resemblance to eco-fascism), and they formed the basis of what were very productive discussions on the day of the conference and beyond.

More fundamentally though, the day was an excellent networking opportunity for the people who attended. New friendships and alliances were made, people were able to put faces to names and generally there was a sense of a unity of purpose which has helped radicals working within the party ever since. It is no coincidence that there has been a marked increase in the number of radicals elected to federal committees since then.

And months later, the links made at that conference ensured that the grassroots response to the Ashdown-Blair Joint Statement was that much better co-ordinated and vocal.

Now, almost four years later, we again find ourselves in a post-election period of opportunity. And again, a small group of us have come together to organise a similar brainstorming conference. Titled, for the sake of argument (you know what we liberals are like with names!), “A Radical Agenda for Radical Liberal Century”,

this New Radicalism conference shares similar aims and objectives to the previous one.

The preliminary agenda contains workshops on a number of different subjects. Urban Renewal: the breakdown of civic society in urban Britain and what we should do about it.

Mutualism: the radical liberal answer to the public services debate?

The Global Divide: Since the World Trade Centre disaster, the global rich-poor divide is more apparent than ever. Can the West continue to ignore it any longer?

Taking Liberties in the Internet Age: how do we learn to love big brother? Women’s Rights and Beyond: universal suffrage and the rise of feminism has transformed lives for women in the West, but severe cultural challenges remain - what is the liberal approach?

Happiness: Thomas Jefferson wrote of “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”.

In the last century we have made major steps forward with the first two, but what about the third?

The conference will be taking place on Saturday 26 January 2002, at the Burley Liberal Club, Leeds. A symbolic location, this is on the edge of the centre of 70s-80s Liberal activity Leeds West and the current Lib Dem hopeful seat of Leeds North West.

It is hoped though that this axis will prove more than symbolic, and that Liberals of all parties and none will feel welcome to attend.

At the time of writing, the world and our political institutions are in crisis. We are cursed to live in interesting times. If you want simple answers to the problems we face, I can categorically assure you that this is the wrong conference for you. If however, you want to come together to work out some of the questions, then I hope to see you in January.

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For more information, contact James Graham at 8 Woodview Mount, Leeds LS11 6LG (0113 270 2845)

Email: [jamesgraham@cix.co.uk](mailto:jamesgraham@cix.co.uk))

Website: <http://www.leeds-first.co.uk/radical>

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## INVISIBLE MAN

*Dear Liberator,*

I agree with much of what Mark Jones had to say about the state of the Liberal Democrats outside target seat areas (*Liberator* 276). But a response to his comments about Leicester is not out of place.

We have fought our way up from no representation on the council in 1985 to our current 16 councillors, and status as 'official' opposition.

Yes, making further progress will not be easy and yes, the local parties are not as robust or united as many of us remember or would like. And yes, we need more able and committed people and fresh minds to build up support in wards we do not hold, and to stand for election as councillors. And yes, we need a new generation of younger activists to take on the mantle from those of us who are getting long in the tooth.

Mark is just such a person. He stood in St Augustines ward in 1987 and lost by only 12 votes. But he didn't follow up this effort and only resurfaced in time for the 1989 elections, which he again narrowly lost. He never again stood for the council. What a waste, and what a pity. Indeed, most of the criticisms he makes of the local party he could himself have helped to address, and could properly be applied to him. His final involvement was when we appointed him as our paid organiser for the local elections in 1998, after which he promptly disappeared again from view.

Where I have to disagree strongly with him is over the matter of exposure in the local press and what he claims is our concentration on the wrong issues.

Has he forgotten the City-wide and successful campaigns we have mounted in recent years over the attempt by Labour to close down everything in sight - libraries, community centres, sports facilities, and family centres - and our campaigns on 'budget stuffing' and the council tax, and the appalling mismanagement of the council's property assets, and our successful campaign to freeze council rents to avoid tenants being fined by the government?

# LETTERS

They all featured prominently in the local press. His attack on the council group for not using council resolutions to promote Nick Clegg's petition about the textile industry is contrived, and sits ill with his criticism of the party for failing to promote 'big ideas'.

I have always admired Mark's political acumen but, to paraphrase Ann Widdicombe, there does seem to be something of the gadfly about him. I for one would welcome him back when he gets tired of Plaid Cymru.

*Bob Pritchard*

*Chair Lib Dem Group  
Leicester City Council*

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## PUBLIC POSITION

*Dear Liberator,*

Your commentary 'in the public eye' (*Liberator* 276) hits the nail on the head regarding the role of local authorities in contract culture.

One of the biggest dangers of the Liberal Democrat policy working group is that it will seek change for change's sake, and fail to grasp the nature of the problem with public services; which is the demise of the public service ethos.

There has also been some appalling management in the public services, but replacing one set of bad managers with another motivated by largely commercial criteria, euphemistically described as the 'customer care ethos' - fails to address the problem.

Customer care culture is largely a con trick that is a euphemism for charging more for a worse service while claiming to be providing an improved service.

Sickness and blame culture may well be rife in the public service, but privatisation often results in the biggest blame culture of all. That is

why no one wants to restore the railways to genuine public ownership. The blame can be placed on the train operators, yet curiously, as with bus services in London, they are rarely removed irrespective of the quality of the service provided. The customer/producer split is largely erroneous in the case of personal services as well as being potentially divisive.

What is worrying is that with the so called reforms in local government, a career structure is being created for professional politicians at the same time that the top layer of management is becoming increasingly involved in policy and spin.

It has become a bit like the situation of the pigs and the humans in *Animal Farm*. Salaried councillors seem to be becoming indistinguishable from civil servants and often accept the advice of senior managers without question.

Curiously enough there is evidence that the public service ethos is merely dormant and far from dead. The response of the emergency services in New York, particularly the fire brigade, shows that even in a country like the United States, which Tony Blair sees as a role model, there are areas where private sector provision remains unthinkable.

*Andrew Hudson  
Leyton*

We welcome letters by post, or by email to [collective@liberator.org.uk](mailto:collective@liberator.org.uk)

**Servants of the People  
(updated version)  
Andrew Rawnsley  
Penguin £7.99**

Rawnsley has, necessarily hastily, updated his expose of new Labour to take it up to the 2001 general election. He will presumably have to keep doing this until the Blair government ends. While there must be a temptation to put off reading about the Blairites until they are safely history, this is high quality journalism as history's first draft.

When Rawnsley's original book came out, many were disbelieving. Could Blair and Brown really hate each other that much? Does the high command of a preachy regime really swear so much? Was Peter Mandelson really such a manipulator?

Yes, yes and yes. Rawnsley had been able to be rather more forthcoming about sources, and I've not seen any convincing refutation of what he has written.

In this book we get the September 2000 fuel blockades, the second

# REVIEWS

Mandelson resignation and the foot and mouth outbreak. The Mandelson affair is somewhat less confusing after reading this, and the new Labour high command's willingness to knife each other is striking. The full dimensions of the foot and mouth cock up were not apparent when Rawnsley wrote, and he is going to need a third volume.

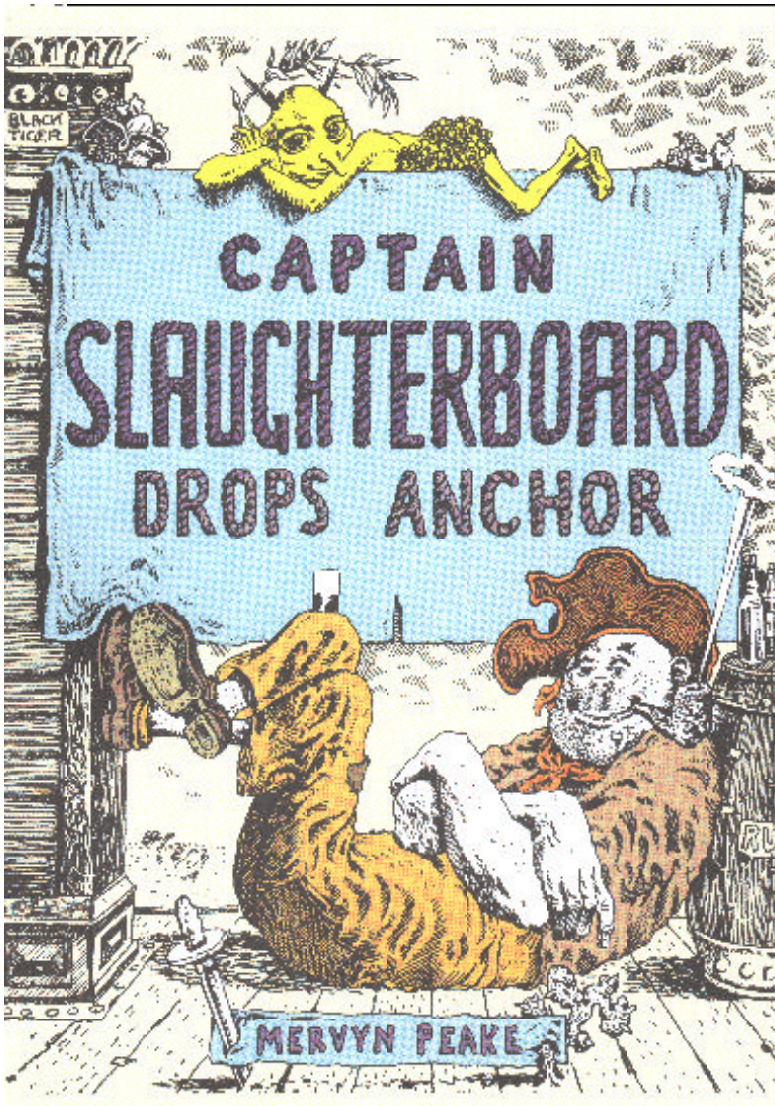
There is little new specifically on the Liberal Democrats, though the details of Paddy Ashdown's naivety and duplicity in 1997/98 will still shock most party members.

What is really striking is how much the Blairites were obsessed

with winning the 1997 and 2001 general elections, but how little idea why they had of why they wanted to win.

Liberals have often been told that having policies without power is rather pointless. The Blairites seem to have perfected the reverse. They want to be in power and the limit of their ambitions is to take only those actions judged necessary to stay there. Reading this, I still think that new Labour's support is wide but very shallow, and when it falls, as all governments eventually do, it will fall utterly having never troubled to cultivate committed support.

*Mark Smulian*



**Alice's Adventures in  
Wonderland & Through  
the Looking Glass  
by Lewis Carroll,  
illustrated by Mervyn  
Peake  
Bloomsbury 2001  
£22.50 or £9.99  
separately**

**Captain  
Slaughterboard Drops  
Anchor  
by Mervyn Peake  
Walker 2001 £12.99**

Avast, those swabs from Walker have brought Cap'n Slaughterboard's adventures with the Yellow Creature back into print and a jolly fine job they've made of, and there's more, Bloomsbury have Peake's Alice to blast all the other out of the water.

With the exception of the Gormenghast trilogy, too many of Mervyn Peake's books or book illustrated by him have been out of print for too long. In the wake of

what was a pretty good television drama of the first two Gormenghast books (a vindication of the BBC and public service broadcasting) last year, a few titles are creeping back. Everybody needs at least two Alices - Tenniel and another. Bloomsbury's Alice is wonderful. Tenniel is dark; Peake, in the aftermath of his war experience, darker, and a rather more sensual Alice. Libernus Press do a very attractive edition for a mere £150.00 incidentally.

Slaughterboard is one of the great stories of love, comradeship and adventure. Most of us will have only seen the black, white and yellow editions of the post-war period - the first (in colour) mostly went up during the Blitz. Julia Thompson at Walker has brought back the colour. Peake's son Sebastian is pleased with the product and feels his father would have approved. Walker have reproduced the work from the original drawings, only correcting a couple of spelling mistakes along the way.

Stewart Rayment

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## Great Liberal Speeches edited by Duncan Brack & Tony Little Politicos 2001 £30.00

There has been a demand for a book of this kind for a long time - more than twenty years spring to mind, since Bullock's & Shock's *The Liberal Tradition from Fox to Keynes* (OUP 1956) and Plamenatz' *Readings from Liberal Writers* (George Allen & Unwin 1965) have been out of print. Those books were like gold dust in my university days, so the academic market at least must breathe a sigh of relief. Confirming this need, *Politicos* inform me that the title is selling well.

There is little overlap between the three books, none with Plamenatz (who interestingly cites Tawney within the canon) and single speeches of Fox, Macauley, Cobden, Gladstone, Joe Chamberlain, Campbell Bannerman and Rosebery in Bullock. Bullock remains stronger on the Victorians, but I was irritated by the editing at the time of review - Macauley's *It is the duty of the state to educate people* (something it seems to have forgotten) gets twelve and a bit cramped pages in GLS, two and a bit

in LT. With hindsight I will probably remind myself that Bullock got to the meat of the speech, which is otherwise full of references to obscure acts of Luddism and the like best left to the Hammonds, but mercilessly exhumed by the historians of the New Left anxious to prove a humane socialism. This also reminds me that cramped pages are less easy to read; costs of publication have to be borne in mind, especially on a high risk publication like this, but the ease with which the page can be taken in by the eye is ultimately reflected in the ease of understanding.

Campbell Bannerman's is not a complete overlap. He makes his *Methods of Barbarism* speech in Holborn in June 1901. Perhaps Bullock used a speech at Stirling of October that year because it was closer to Rosebery's riposte of 16th December. Both of these speeches would qualify in a collection of greats, for their impact on the course of the Boer War, and also for their impact on the Liberal Party. Rosebery recognised that the Limps were perhaps more out on a limb than the radicals, especially if viewed in light of the progress of the war and the party's long standing traditions thereto.

So much for the Nineteenth Century - say two thirds of GLS, the criteria easy to define as above. The Twentieth Century, it has been decided, will be marked by a speech by each party leader, and from the merger leader of the Liberal Democrats, though I don't suppose David Morrish would ultimately quarrel with that.

I have heard all of the speakers except Lady Violet since Grimond. *The sound of gunfire* was an important speech in the context of the party. Steel's *Militants for the reasonable man* and *Go back to your constituencies* (along with its parody in the Liberal Revue) meet the same criteria Ashdown's Chard speech may have the wider resonance that clearly accords to Jenkins' Dimpleby Lecture. The imp had the audacity to assert as much in his Diaries; we must await a few Labour memoirs.



As orators? Russell Johnston and Conrad Russell have been the best value for money to my ears. I heard Jo Grimond as caretaker leader I think, trying to make an important speech to that year's Young Liberal conference; it was a good try. Ashdown and Steel have never really moved me, Kennedy, better than I'd bargained, but I don't see a major contribution to the canon as yet. Thorpe was surprisingly good, as bete noir of Young Liberals in the Sixties. Who might have been included? Cyril Smith, Cle Freud, Tony Greaves and Roger Pincham spring to mind... and an appendix of the greatest heckles of John Tilley.

Stewart Rayment

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## Marketing for the Voluntary Sector Edited by Paula Keaveney and Michael Kaufmann Kogan Page £14.99

Paula Keaveney and Michael Kaufmann are both marketing and communications specialists who have edited a book that everybody involved in a voluntary sector organisation should find valuable. It is concise, easy to read and practical.

At a time when the 'professionalising' of the voluntary sector is reaching small and community based organisations, this book can only be an asset.

Each chapter is written by a different specialist in their field, which makes it a stylistically uneven read but a thorough exploration of the subject. It covers topics such as branding, marketing on the internet, evaluation and relationship marketing and makes good use of case studies. There are also contributions from Ollie Grender on PR-led marketing communications and David Hughes on political communications.

All voluntary sector organisations (especially their management committees) would find this book a useful addition to their bookshelves.

*Sue Simmonds*

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## **2020 Vision: Liberalism and Globalisation** edited by Graham Watson MEP Centre for Reform £8.99

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## **Trading for the Future: Reforming the WTO** Duncan Brack and Nick Clegg MEP Centre for Reform £10

Two publications from the Centre for Reform hit upon possibly the most significant debate for Liberals in our times. Overshadowed by terrorist atrocities, they have published a thorough analysis of the history, triumphs and shortcomings of the WTO, and a rather less focused collection of more philosophical tracts on globalisation, compiled by Graham Watson.

The WTO pamphlet is perhaps surprising, given that one of its authors is Nick Clegg, known by many of being on the free-market side of the argument. (Its other is Duncan Brack, who readers of these pages know as a more disinterested voice) Clegg's EU knowledge shows through in a persuasive set of arguments. Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy comes out for particular flak, and the NGOs aren't spared: being accused of scaremongering, although admittedly failing to be provided with a voice at the

negotiating table. (A bit like the Lib Dems' Parliamentary team?)

The clear losers of the WTO, of course, are the poorer countries unable to afford the lobbying base to play any significant part. Crucially, the paper states that support on the forthcoming Qatar Round of talks must have the price of fundamental reform to provide a level playing field for developing nations. What is surprising, therefore, about the Watson book is the complete absence not only of an agenda for reform, but the complacency of the vast majority of contributors (usually significant Euro-Liberals) about the system in the first place! In particular, the failure to acknowledge the need for development and reform of other international institutions gives the longer series of essays, compiled by Graham Watson, a less than satisfying feel.

The basic premise of the compilation seems to be that "Globalisation is Liberal"; that free trade fits in rather neatly with continental economic Liberalism (which, clearly in the eyes of the contributors, it does). Not a problem in itself, of course: but they come across as remarkably weak and repetitive. The wider context of rapidly advancing trade disciplines with inertia, at best, in other international institutions is largely ignored. One culprit is Jan-Kees Wiebenga who implies that the imposition of the set of liberal European values on nations and peoples who resist it (such as the Internet) is a step forward for civilisation. (There is no consideration of the level of regulation of many such systems "similar to Afghanistan"). Other articles continue in the same vein; one particularly silly article dismisses Mr Bové's ATTAC movement and proponents of the Tobin tax (most Lib Dems) as "Marxists"; although articles from D66' Louswies van der Laan redress the tone somewhat.

The saving grace of the Watson book is a well-reasoned and topical article from John Alderdice about conflict resolution and the Northern Ireland example. Unlike virtually anything else here, it recognises the damage that can be done by partition and

factionalisation; but instead of advocating a sort of Blairist homogeneity, it recognises that basic living conditions and the championing of diversity have a role to play in making the world a safer place. Nevertheless, a fascinating look at contrasting ways to skin this particular cat.

*Gareth Epps*

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## **Garibaldi** by Jasper Ridley Phoenix 2001 £14.99

Ridley's book has joined the canon of texts on Garibaldi, along with Trevelyan and Mack Smith. Ridley has the advantages with time of access to a wider range of sources and a more cosmopolitan approach. Unfortunately nothing is added in the twentyfive or so years since his book first appeared, but it is good to have it in print again at a reasonable price for its size.

Garibaldi remains a colourful character, the pragmatist who sold out the finer principles of Mazzini, a love-hate relationship to the end. A few days ago, in a guest house, for want of anything else, I read a 'thriller' - a quarter the size, it didn't take long... there is far more meat in the life of this veritable Peter Pan, and as told by Jasper Ridley, plenty of excitement; take it on your next holiday.

*Stewart Rayment*



## Monday

What a lot has happened in recent weeks. Our brave cricketers have seen off Zimbabwe five-nil ("Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, Rev. Canaan Banana, your boys took a hell of a beating" as a Norse footer commentator might put it), we have all met in Bournemouth and the country has gone to war. One of the less salubrious events has been Blair speech to the New Party Conference in Brighton. If I recall aright, it went like this: "We could solve all the world's problems, if we chose to. We could have new technology to do it, if we wanted. Of course, that technology will have to be provided by global corporations. But I warn them not to be motivated by the search for profit. [Wild applause] We could sort out Africa. And Asia. But people must display the right attitude. We've no patience with slackers in this house. That is why we are going to beat you, Tompkins. Amen."

## Tuesday

Nothing is more irritating than an old man telling one how good things were in "the old days" — you never met people like that when I was young — and besides it is nonsense, as thanks to our Liberal reforms, things are so much better these days. Take, for instance, the decline of peer spotting. There was a time in the Fifties when no member of the Upper House could venture out of doors without being followed by a gaggle of small boys armed with knitted pullovers, skinned knees and copies of *Debrett's*. While at first this attention was flattering — a number of dukes took to wearing sandwich boards giving their full titles — the attraction soon paled and one took to travelling with a gamekeeper or two to ward them off with their orchard doughties. These days the same little chaps would be blowing up aliens on their computers; speaking as the peer in the street, I welcome the change.

## Wednesday

I read in the Manchester Guardian that our leading scientists are unable to distinguish sheep from cows. I am at a loss to explain this: as Nanny pointed out years ago, sheep are the woolly chaps who go "Baa" at the drop of a hat. Let us not, however, judge them too harshly. I remember an unfortunate incident when some years ago at the Hall when, as the result of an inaccurately labelled tea chest, some tigers intended for the safari park were delivered to Pets' Corner instead. People can be so unkind.

## Thursday

Have you noticed how large the Liberal Democrat Conference is getting these days? I had great trouble finding a venue for my fringe meeting "Delivering local services: the feudal solution" and was eventually obliged to hire the swimming pool. Slapping on the goose grease and donning my nattily striped gentleman's bathing suit I plunged into the deep end and gave my address while essaying the Australian crawl. I flatter myself that it went Terribly Well.

Another highlight of the week was the meeting on drugs organised by those amusing young people at *Liberator* magazine. I had intended to tell the story of an unfortunate

# Lord Bonkers' Diary

friend of mine who tried cannabis but did not exhale; sadly, I was not called to speak.

## Friday

As I write this we are bombing Afghanistan, and for aught I know we may still be bombing the poor Afghans when you read it. No doubt I will be told that my ideas are old-fashioned, but I cannot see how bombing people will make them come round to your point of view. I speak for experience: I recall a by-election in industrial Lancashire during the 1960s. Things had not been going well for our party, so some of us persuaded Thorpe to give the Young Liberals their head and let them run the campaign. Their chief tactic was to seize some moorland which overlooked the town and shell the inhabitants for

several weeks. As the sceptics had forecast, this tactic did not go down well with the voters and the Liberal candidate lost his deposit. In fairness I should act that the result he obtained was not markedly worse than those we achieved in other by-elections of the period.

## Saturday

Did you attend the debate on getting more women into politics? The sad loss of Mrs Bollard earlier this year showed the need for us to have more members of the fairer sex in positions of influence. We have, I grant you the likes of Patsy Kensit, Hazel Grove and the woman who invented the orchard doughty (*supra*), but we could do with more. There were those who favoured quotas, but they are a nasty Socialist measure and rightly we decided to have no truck with them. I was particularly impressed by the performance of a Mrs Floodgates, who appears to be made of the right stuff. My only concern is that the New Party is trying to excuse its assault upon the poor Afghans by referring to their government's policies towards drugs and women. I fear that it may be a good idea to wear a tin hat in Brighton next September.

## Sunday

A furious hammering at the lodge gates attracts my attention and, spying a curious figure besplattered with ketchup and Plasticine, I load the twelve bore. Just as I am lifting it to my shoulder I recognise Wallace. No, not William Wallace or Danny Wallace, but Jim Wallace, the deputy prime minister of Scotland. "Sanctuary! Sanctuary! I cannae stand it any longer," he cries, before adding (rather inconsequentially in the opinion of your diarist) "The noo." I take him to the hall, supply a gentleman's measure of Auld Johnston and listen to his troubles. It transpires that Wallace has banned the practice of smacking north of Hadrian's most celebrated erection, and as a result exasperated Caledonian parents have been sending him their unruly offspring. I long ago delivered myself of the judgement that, however enjoyable it may be, hitting small children does little good. Nevertheless, I wonder if it is the business of the state to tell parents how to raise their brood — in the "land of the mountain and the flood" or anywhere else. I do not think the first Lady Bonkers would have taken kindly to such interference.

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Lord Bonkers, who was Liberal Democrat MP for Rutland South-West 1906-10 opened his diary to Jonathan Calder.