

liberator



- ^{*} Referendum - opportunity or disaster:
Graham Watson, Julie Smith, Jane McBennett, Trevor Smith
- ^{*} Finding the mood of the country - Roger Hayes
- ^{*} Lessons from Chilcot - Jonathan Calder

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Commentary 3

Radical Bulletin 4..6

LACK OF VISION THING 7

The Remain campaign's attempts to bore or frighten voters helped lose the referendum, says Kiron Reid

GETTING OUT OF CAMERON'S MESS 8..9

The useless Remain campaign and Conservative in-fighting have landed the UK amid an economic disaster, but escape may be possible, says Graham Watson

IT WASN'T THE ECONOMY, STUPID 10..11

Britain Stronger in Europe failed because it was run by business figures with no idea of how to run a campaign that could inspire anyway, says Julie Smith

DRAGGED INTO THE PAST 12..13

Britain's image of itself as modern, harmonious, diverse and multicultural reached its zenith at the 2012 London Olympics. It doesn't look like that now, says Jane McBennett

A CRISIS FOR DEMOCRACY 14..15

The roots of the discontents revealed by the referendum go back decades and only new thinking can prevent mayhem, says Trevor Smith

MARCHING TOWARDS MORE GUNFIRE 16..17

Roger Hayes proposes a project to uncover the condition of the country and devise Liberal answers

PATHS THROUGH

POST-REFERENDUM CHAOS 18..19

Liberator asked given the EU referendum result saw the country split 48% Remain and 52% Leave, how should the Liberal Democrats appeal to the 48% and should they try to appeal to the 52%? Here are some responses

DISGRACED IN THE DESERT 20..21

The Chilcot Report has destroyed Tony Blair's reputation, but was the Liberal Democrats role quite as glorious as its seen in retrospect, and what happens next time, asks Jonathan Calder

WHEN LAWS FORGOT HIS SHARPENER 22..23

Former minister David Laws' account of the Coalition shows that despite brave words it changed very little, says David Grace

LEARN TO LOVE THE LISTS 24..25

Energlyn Churchill says Welsh Liberal Democrats face an existential crisis after yet again neglecting the vital regional list assembly seats

LETTERS 25

OBITUARY: DAVID RENDEL 26

Nick Winch pays tribute to the former Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury

REVIEWS 21..23

Lord Bonkers' Diary 24

Cover Illustration - Christy Lawrance

Bagpuss image - SmallFilms/V&A

COMMENTARY

A LAKE TO FISH IN

Not everyone who voted Leave in the EU referendum is any or all of idiot, bigot, racist, nostalgic fantasist or small minded nationalist.

However, all those who do fit those unsavoury categories voted Leave.

In that is a clue about how the Liberal Democrats should approach a political horizon that seems utterly changed by the Brexit vote.

Last year's disastrous general election brought the party an unexpectedly huge influx of members and the disastrous referendum result has brought almost as many more.

Each will have their own motive, but looking at who these new members are and where they live ought to give the party a guide to where it is most likely to recruit more members and voters.

The Leave win has quite fortuitously handed the Lib Dems an extensive lake in which they can fish for the core vote the party has never really had.

Some of those 48% will be diehard supporters of other parties, some of the 52% may repent their errors once economic calamity follows the Brexit vote and also become amendable to listening to the party, but it's important to be clear about what a core vote is.

Tim Farron was right to immediately identify the Lib Dems with the Remain voters because while the 52% might contain some people who might be disposed to support the party, he could be absolutely certain that the 48% contains a lot of them.

A core vote means having people committed to the party who vote for it routinely because they see it as representing their interests, and not just their economic ones.

It does not mean that nobody else is invited to vote for it, or that the party ignores less promising places, it means that it knows its likely supporters and draws up its priorities accordingly.

For the same reason that the Green party does seek votes from owners of gas guzzling cars, or Ukip from pro-Europeans, so the Lib Dems should stop trying to avoid offending those with illiberal views.

That road has been shown to lead to short term success and long term disaster as a party that claims to stand for everybody and 'win everywhere' is equally able to stand for no-one and lose almost every seat.

If the party is putting forward a coherent programme based on the 'drawbridge down' idea - that it favours the EU, welcomes diversity, likes the rest of the world and isn't going to pretend that the last 60 years of social change can somehow be magically erased, then it should anyway attract those who share these views.

Nothing there stops the party trying to appeal to people who voted Leave and who will come to regret their error.

It is though time to stop endlessly pulling punches for fear of upsetting some special interest somewhere.

Some people are not liberals, and the conceit that somehow they would be if only Lib Dem policies were explained in greater detail and more often has led nowhere.

There is no point in trying to appease those who actually are idiots, bigots, racists, nostalgic fantasists or small minded nationalists. They no doubt genuinely believe in what they believe, just as the Lib Dems are entitled to tell them they are wrong and seek to speak for those who disagree with them.

Depending on events, Farron may of course have to change 'remain in the EU' to 'get back into' or 'we want a better compromise deal on leaving' by the time the next general election comes round and that will be a matter of judgement.

It is at least now clear that Lib Dems votes are most likely to be found among the 48%, that some will be found among disappointed (and they will be) members of the 52% and that no resources or political capital should be wasted on the most committed leavers.

TAKEN DOWN WITH BLAIR

In the wake of the referendum we would do well to remember when the Lib Dems stood up for what was right and did not sit on the fence in case some voter segment took offence - the Iraq war.

The Chilcot report has shredded what little remained of Tony Blair's reputation and taken the senior ranks of the intelligence services, military (and indeed by implication the Conservative party) with him.

Blair's now proven deceit of the public, his craven cowardice in the face of American bullying and his responsibility for the hell that Iraq was left to become after the invasion have justly discredited him. The latter is the most tragic and damning consequence of Blair's folly.

The problem is that he has taken the rest of politics with him. Politicians and parties of all kinds have suffered collateral damage since Iraq as voters assume they are being lied to.

'Experts' were lined up to back the now discredited evidence on which the UK went to war - 13 years later people preferred the words of charlatans to those of experts over the referendum.

RADICAL BULLETIN

CHILD'S PLAY

In times when many are glued to computer screens for their entertainment, it is pleasant to note that traditional children's games have a place in the high echelons of the Liberal Democrats.

How else but through a session of Pin The Tail On The Donkey can one explain the choice of seats issued for fast-track selections in the event of a snap election?

These seats are to have a version of the by-election rapid selection process, with those chosen in place until May 2017 in case of an unexpected election.

Normal selections are due after that, though anyone who has been an 'interim PPC' will have a head start unless they have done something appalling.

In addition to most seats held until 2015, or in some cases 2010, there were some deeply puzzling choices.

These included: Leyton & Wanstead (fifth place with 5.7% of the vote); Poplar & Limehouse (5th, 4.2%); Esher & Walton (4th, 9.4%); Birmingham Edgbaston (5th, 2.9% and Canterbury (4th, 11.6%).

The list did not include Maidstone, at which ludicrous levels of resources were hurled to no great effect last year, or some other surviving second places such as Newton Abbot and Romsey.

Some seats were designated as all women shortlists and others as requiring applicants from under-represented groups to be shortlisted.

Again, this process was opaque with one former MP in the space of 24 hours asked if he would re-stand in a snap election, agreeing to do so, finding out by chance that his old seat was now designated women only, then being told this didn't apply if he did want to stand again.

Former Torbay MP Adrian Sanders has told local members of a saga in which he was asked whether he would contest a snap election and was told his answer "was not binding".

This turned out to mean that it in fact was binding and Sanders says he "was not told that Torbay would be an AWS as a consequence of my answer and this has been a very unfair blow to some excellent local potential candidates who because they are the wrong gender would be debarred from putting their names forward".

Sanders says it was also not made clear to him that any commitment to stand would be valid only until May 2017, not until 2020 (when he does not wish to stand anyway).

He then applied to stand in Torbay if there is a snap election and is waiting to hear how this will be resolved.

While tails are pinned on donkeys, the dogs contentedly munch their breakfasts.

WE (DON'T) KNOW BEST

Historians will doubtless long debate the question "why was the 'Remain' campaign so bloody useless"?

Liberator's spies on the inside report that right from the start the Britain Stronger In Europe (BSIE) campaign was run by figures from the very establishment the nation seems so angry about.

Former SDP and New Labour donor David Sainsbury, who provided much of the funding, clearly sees the world through an establishment, elite prism, and it never occurred to any of those at the top that they should do anything more than simply present economic arguments from the captains of industry, economic experts, and other members of an elite that never leaves the London/ Oxford/ Cambridge bubble.

Attempts to get them to sideline the politicians and business figures and to instead use World War 2 veterans, sports personalities, celebrities, or indeed real young people to enthuse about the positive and more idealistic benefits of being European, were dismissed by the all-knowing titans of industry and politics.

Will Straw, son of Jack, was in charge of BSIE, a clever think-tank type who has never run a campaign, unless one counts his dismal failure to win Rossendale & Darwen in 2015.

Meanwhile on the Labour side, Corbyn's bag carrier Seamus Milne created a wall between Labour HQ and Corbyn's office. Milne hates everything that the US favours, and that extends to the EU, which he sees as just a capitalist club. So Milne made sure there was almost no communication between the HQ and the leader. They hardly spoke and failed to coordinate with Corbyn's diary.

When Labour HQ politely complained that Corbyn was habitually late coming to events where donors were present, they were told being on time was bourgeois. An additional problem was that everything Corbyn said had to be written down for him as he appeared incapable of thinking on his feet and has little interest in international issues beyond Palestine and Latin America.

The Labour In campaign had good material and good intentions but met only obstruction from Corbyn's office.

At constituency level there was almost no coordination between the parties, and the BSIE people were clueless about campaigning and most of their leaflets were awful.

As though all this were not bad enough, BSIE's director of strategy was Ryan Coetzee, who masterminded the Lib Dem campaign that was such a resounding success at the 2015 general election.

BSIE hoped that parties in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would deliver those countries, and

threw everything but the kitchen sink at London, while neglecting the rest of England.

In a way this worked, with huge Remain majorities in all but a handful of London boroughs, but as results came in the BSIE camp were quite surprised to be getting healthy leads in places like Surrey and Buckinghamshire, as it apparently hadn't occurred to them to try working these areas, which could well have offset the avalanche of bad results in the north of England and won the referendum.

INVISIBLE FLOUNCE

Even with only eight of them, Lib Dem MPs can still have internecine disputes, and so it proved when leader Tim Farron was quick to say the party would continue after the referendum to campaign for 'remain', thus identifying itself with the 48%.

Greg Mulholland objected and resigned as chair of parliamentary campaigns, a post few knew he held and whose function is to say the least not very clear.

This maybe because Mulholland had tried in vain to press Nick Clegg to commit the Lib Dems to an in/out referendum in the 2015 manifesto. Clegg refused, at least one thing he got right.

BOARD STUPID

The final Lib Dem Governance Review proposals have emerged, based again on a basic web survey that asked questions about party bodies most members would never have heard about and asked them to take important decisions without explaining what they do.

Plans to force through the scrapping of spring federal conference have been dropped after numerous previous attempts were defeated and Federal Policy Committee objected.

However the work of both FPC and the Federal Conference Committee is now to be subservient to the 'Federal Board' as the Federal Executive is due to be renamed.

This is supposed to become 'a strategic body' despite having the same role and remit as the FE, which has never operated strategically since the party's inception and which has routinely been described by members as the worst committee they have ever sat on.

Since it appears to be more powerful than before the FB will be even more susceptible to being filled by useless time-servers than its predecessor; and with committee terms increased from two years to three, they will be harder to remove.

A business motion for conference says: "More members should be able to serve on party bodies" but then constitutional amendments cut the number of directly-elected places for which they might stand.

The successor to the Federal Finance and Administration Committee has no directly-elected places; neither does the successor to the Campaigns and Communications Committee, which will become responsible for candidate selection.

The FB will have fewer than half its members directly elected, thanks to a sleight of hand that removes state party representation from being counted in the minority of indirectly elected places. The size of the FPC's directly-elected contingent is also reduced and both the party's diversity bodies and the FFAC successor will lose direct accountability to conference

with their reports subsumed into that of the FB.

For some reason, and without discussion, the review also proposes to abolish the powers of Federal Policy Committee over the manifesto. This appears to be a back-door route to a leader's veto over the manifesto, a proposal laughed out of conference only last year (Liberator 375).

CUCKOO IN THE NEST

Former Hereford MP Paul Keetch claimed when started his Liberal Leave campaign to support withdrawal from the EU that he was still "thoroughly Lib Dem".

Oh yeah? Keetch was perfectly entitled to campaign for Leave and could have mounted a liberal argument in favour of leaving - it might have been interesting even if it found few takers.

Instead Liberal Leave comprised Keetch and half a dozen nonentities, and Keetch occupied himself reposting odious garbage from the Leave campaign on Facebook.

On 6 June Keetch posted abuse about the salary of Jean-Claude Juncker that was shown as originating with "Nigel Farage and Ukip supporters uniting for Brexit."

On 8 June Keetch was raising scares about immigrants with a Leave posting that said by 2030 "it is predicted" (it omitted to say by whom) that over five million more EU migrants will move to the UK.

The next day he reposted the Leave campaign's advert that implied the UK was about to be swamped by Turks, which stated "Turkey's 76m people are joining the EU", contrasting the average wage in Turkey and the UK and concluding "Let them Join? Click No!"

On 10 June Keetch reposted a video shown as originating with Ukip about what "might happen to the British army's oath of allegiance if we stay in the EU".

On 14 June Keetch followed this with a quote found by the Leave campaign from the British Embassy in Ankara "We have a dedicated team working on projects to improve Turkey's prospects of joining the EU." No context was provided.

When Ukip's vile anti-refugee poster came out Keetch at least felt constrained to point out that the official Leave campaign deplored it and "Nigel Farage is no part of the campaign". So why was Keetch merrily reposting Ukip's rubbish?

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HAVANT GOT A CLUE

The Mitcham and Morden Commemorative Gold Toilet has been spoilt for choice for its next destination.

Competition was hot this time for the highly sought-after prize awarded by Liberator at each conference for the worst motion submitted.

East Kent Coast was a contender for a motion on abolishing the entire child social service system and getting a royal commission to dream up a replacement, the premise for this motion being a report from the Centre for Social Justice, a body founded by Iain Duncan Smith.

A motion from Simon McGrath and 10 members laid in to the “extensive lying by the Leave Campaign during the EU referendum, the SNP in the Scottish Referendum and the NO2AV campaign”, though it was unclear who exactly lied in the latter case.

This concluded by calling for the extension of the remit of the Advertising Standards Authority to political advertising published and promoted by national party agents and for the Office of Budget Responsibility to “be charged with providing an analysis and costing of the manifestoes of all parties contesting more than 50 seats”.

Since both these provisions would necessarily apply to the Liberal Democrats this was perhaps a case of being careful what you wish for.

The winner though is Havant for a motion proposing that the disconnect between voters and politicians would be solved by “a simple question asking for voters to give their opinion on how central government is performing on a scale of 1-5, [which] could be asked on a separate ballot paper issued at the same time when there are non-Parliamentary elections”.

The results of this absurd exercise “could be counted later and separately, and announced several days after the regular election count, thus minimising the cost to local authorities”, surely something that would increase costs by having to do it all twice.

Havant failed to explain the point of asking people to give such a snapshot answer across the entire range of everything government does and nor did it explain what of practical value anyone would learn from it.

Still, for detail Havant matched the motion writers of Mitcham and Morden in 1983 - who specified the distance between public conveniences.

Its motion stipulated: “Local authorities [are] to carry out such a simple opinion poll on different coloured paper, issuing the form at the same time as the normal ballot papers, collecting them in a separate ballot box, but not having to count them immediately, only to carry out a quick check to ensure that no ballot papers for the district or other non-Parliamentary elections taking place at the same time, have not been put into the wrong ballot box.

“Local authorities to organise the sorting and counting of these opinion polls with minimal overlooking by local political parties or groups as it is testing opinions, not determining an election, and convey the results to regional areas.”

These unspecified regions would, for no particular reason “announce the results of such an official opinion poll two weeks after the election day”.

PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT

Former leader Nick Clegg has called for an

early general election following the disastrous referendum. This comes oddly from the man who secured the fixed term parliament act as part of the Coalition deal.

But his motives may not be as mysterious as they first appear. An early general election would allow Clegg to leave parliament and get on with whatever he intends to do next instead of kicking his heels for a further four years as a member of a parliamentary team that he did so much to reduce to eight.

Private Eye in July reported a plot to unseat Tim Farron and replace him by Clegg, rumours of which had also reached Liberator, although the person we were told was responsible was aghast at the idea and denied it.

Since Clegg’s public popularity remains close to zero surely only the most benighted of his acolytes could take such an idea seriously?

PIDGEON FANCYING

The decision to describe the party during the London Assembly elections as ‘Caroline Pidgeon’s Liberal Democrats’ continues to cause ructions in the London region.

No blame attaches to Pidgeon herself, but the idea was that Pidgeon was more popular than the party and so putting her name first would increase support.

One rather obvious flaw in this was that all manner of things are more popular than the Liberal Democrats but that does not mean the party normally hides its name on a ballot paper.

Anecdotes abound of people looking for the Liberal Democrats under ‘L’, failing to find it and concluding the party was not standing.

The end result was that the Lib Dems lost one of their two assembly seats to Ukip. A case of trying to be too clever by half if ever there was one.

THERE’S A DELETE KEY

After the tragic murder of Labour MP Jo Cox, the south east Liberal Democrats notified their members of a suspension of referendum campaigning.

Sadly this did not extend to removing the ubiquitous ‘donate’ button from the bottom of the email concerned.

NO GOING BACK

In 1995 Emma Nicholson defected from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats and so impressed was the party with its new recruit that it declined to allow her to defend her Torridge and West Devon seat in its colours.

Nicholson was later an MEP and peer, but has now left the Lib Dems, disagreeing with Tim Farron over Europe.

Rumour has it that the Tories declined Nicholson’s kind offer to rejoin them and she will now sit as an independent.

In a letter sent to all Lib Dem peers, she said: “I deeply and sadly regret that the new policy is one that I simply cannot follow and worse than that it is a policy to which I am profoundly and very strongly opposed.”

Since Nicholson played no discernable role in the referendum it is hard to see what subsequently got her goat.

LACK OF VISION THING

The Remain campaign's attempts to bore or frighten voters helped lose the referendum, says Kiron Reid

There are three especially shocking things about the referendum. The failure of the Remain campaign to put forward any positive vision, the 'dishonesty on an industrial scale' and the failure of either leaders on either side to have any strategy to bring the country together after the referendum.

Stronger IN repeated the same mistakes as the Scottish referendum campaign, a negative message based on economics, and failed to inspire their supporters.

I took part in one activist conference call - activists wanted a positive message and the campaign heads just wanted us to push out more of the same. It combined classic New Labour (they'll vote for us anyway so we don't need to do anything to inspire them) with Lib Dem (don't talk about principles or anything controversial, don't upset anyone) tactics to disastrous effect.

There was no vision to inspire people. The issue of reform was completely ignored. No pushing Cameron's deal, nothing on staying in to get more reforms and a better EU. I was flabbergasted to find Ryan Coetzee - a key Lib Dem strategist from 2015 - was our man in the HQ.

Maybe though the pro-EU coalition could never work as it comprised many Tories who are keen on the common market but not the rest, Labour who are keen on the social aspects but not the rest, and Lib Dems who know reform is needed but have infrequently articulated that.

The referendum showed that deliberate intentional deceit should be a criminal election offence. A reform of election law is needed. I thought Elwyn Watkins' groundbreaking case against Labour's smears in Oldham East and Saddleworth had nailed blatant untruths in election campaigns. With this following the agreement between parties a decade earlier to a code of practice on race issues, and one on postal voting, I thought we would see a cleaning up of British politics.

In this referendum, the influence of big money and the bile of the tabloids was worse than anything I've seen in corruption in the Balkans or Ukraine, places that the UKIPers, Tory antis and racists think that we are far superior too.

Should we have stooped to their level? Unused ads by PR firms were published by Campaign. Early talk from inside Stronger In reported by the Guardian was that attack ads were vetoed by 10 Downing Street. Presumably David Cameron was thinking of the need for post-referendum conciliation inside his party. Maybe he simply wasn't ruthless enough.

At first I thought this was entirely right - we should have fought a positive campaign not a dirty negative one, the advertising agencies and New Labour politicians were still getting it wrong. But when it was clear that the Mail, the Sun, the Express, Farage,

Gove, Johnson, and their minions would not tell the truth - would use totalitarian-level lies - I was wrong.

The pro-EU side should have countered the Orwellian lies with truth, personal shocking truth. Leave decided to destroy trust in experts. Who could possibly believe that anyone could rank the three or so A-listers on the Leave side (Dyson, Tim Martin, err, err) against the cream of our business and scientific and intellectual worlds?

This war will continue. Those of us who want Britain to be at the heart of modern Europe are not going to give up. But reconciliation will be needed. The most shocking strategic point for me about our leaders is the lack of any plan for after a bitter referendum campaign. The Tories must mostly take the blame, but it also shows the despicable divisive nature of Farage.

There is no point blaming Jeremy Corbyn. According to Guardian analysis his MPs did have to persuade him to throw himself into the campaign, and Labour heavyweights like Gordon Brown were deployed at the last minute.

Certainly in Liverpool Labour did a lot, but like the Lib Dems were more interested in council elections and a mayoral contest. It's great that Tim is now seen as a cause of hope for many, but if we all hadn't screwed up spectacularly in 2015 he could be leading from a position of greater strength.

The Liberal Democrats were the only party that got wholly involved in the official pro-EU campaign. This showed the party committed and united but Labour, and the Greens, were tactically stronger. They had learnt from the failure of the Scottish campaign that it wasn't good to be seen as all the political establishment together. And they produced more distinctive, stronger literature. The Liberal Democrats fully engaged by reproducing the same dull, uninspiring, economically based slogans that were just crap.

Now Tim is doing what the late Simon Titley and Liberator always advised - taking a stand and working to build a core vote. The days of loyal voters for parties may have gone but we still need votes to make our case for a better Britain in a better Europe. We have different visions for Europe but must work with anyone in the resistance to make Britain and Europe better.

Kiron Reid is a member of the Liberator Collective

GETTING OUT OF CAMERON'S MESS

The useless Remain campaign and Conservative in-fighting have landed the UK amid an economic disaster, but escape may be possible, says Graham Watson

When I wrote in *Liberator* 361 in September 2013 about Boris Johnson becoming prime minister after winning a referendum to take the UK out of the EU I had no idea that my prediction would come so close to being proven right.

It will not be Boris Johnson who succeeds him, but prime minister David Cameron and his party have been the cause of the most calamitous case of self harm in British diplomacy since George III lost America over a tax on tea. They have plunged not only UK politics into a spasm but the UK's economy too, and quite possibly continental politics and the continent's economy to boot.

The origins of Cameron's foolhardy gamble with the nation's future - asking the electorate to resolve what was essentially a problem internal to the Conservative Party - lie in his campaign to win his party's leadership, when to beat front-runner David Davies MP he won over the anti-EU supporters of Liam Fox MP with a promise to take the Tories out of the European People's Party.

Cameron became their prisoner from the very start. He never enjoyed freedom of manoeuvre in the UK's approach to EU developments. So his relationship with fellow continental heads of state and government from the centre-right was never an easy one; it was a partnership in which their patience with the UK as a fellow member of the club went from being frayed to being threadbare.

The initial reaction of the presidents of the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament on 24 June and of the foreign ministers of the founding Six the following day was one approaching relief that they were finally to be shot of this awkward and obstructive member.

I spent six months (Dec 2014 - May 2015) as one of Nick Clegg's two representatives on David Sainsbury's referendum council, set up to prepare for the referendum which all agreed was likely.

Having fought a steadily building anti-EU storm for the whole of the 20 years I'd served as a member of the European Parliament, I was dumbfounded by how many around the table believed a referendum in 2016 would be essentially the same as in 1975. I argued (alongside only John Kerr) that the conclusions drawn by Peter Mandelson and senior Tories from Andrew Cooper's *Populus* research - namely that the Remain campaign could not convince people the EU is a good thing so had to focus exclusively on the negative economic consequences of leaving - were unlikely to work.

This tactic had been tried in Scotland's referendum campaign (on whether to continue a 400 year old

union) and had very nearly backfired. It was hardly likely to save a union of 40 years which had been badmouthed daily by the UK's major newspapers. Upon hearing the referendum commitment in Cameron's June 2015 general election victory speech I resolved to stand down from the leadership of the European Liberal Democrat ALDE Party at its November 2015 conference, to devote three days a week to the referendum campaign.

FLAWED CONCEPTION

As Julie Smith writes elsewhere in this edition, the official Remain campaign was hamstrung by its lack of ambition, flawed in the conception of its message and hopelessly inadequate in its fundraising. I failed in my bid to represent the party on its board so concentrated my efforts on fundraising, organising and other campaign efforts, essentially in the south of England. I set up together with Mandy Cormack a cross-party south-west outreach team on behalf of Stronger IN. But at the crucial moment when we needed limited support from the centre, none was forthcoming. I spoke at over 100 debates or campaign rallies and never wavered in my belief that the vote could go either way. (My only regret is not having put a bet on Leave winning when the bookies' odds were very favourable.)

Since the referendum I have concentrated my efforts on trying to convince people on the continent that there is a good chance Article 50 - a formal request to withdraw - will never be invoked and that no doors should be slammed shut in the meantime. But as the Tory party becomes increasingly obsessed with leaving despite the evidence of the cost and the Labour party increasingly embroiled in an internecine wrangle, the prospect for saving the situation appears to be receding.

It seems to me incredible that the result of the referendum - in any case only advisory - should be considered to tie the UK's hand. Had people voted to leave by 52-48% more or less evenly across the country there would be little doubt in any democrat's mind about its legitimacy (though had it gone the other way Farage would not have accepted the outcome). But there is hardly a community in the UK in which the aggregate 52-48% outcome was mirrored. Normally it was closer to 65-35%, either in favour of leaving or in favour of staying. In Gibraltar some 95% voted to remain.

In any scientific enquiry there are the questions of validity and reliability. The validity is whether the result is measuring what you intend to measure. The reliability is whether, if you repeated the test, you would get the same result. The referendum fails on

both counts. It can be argued cogently that it was neither valid nor reliable.

Not valid because the reasons people voted against ranged from xenophobia to inequality.

Not reliable because a repeat of the vote would probably produce a different outcome.

Moreover, other questions about its legitimacy are legion. They include the absence of a qualified majority to render the result valid. There were controversial restrictions of the franchise. There is evidence of Russian money being involved in supporting the Leave campaign, just as it supports Marine Le Pen's Front National in France. And there is overwhelming evidence of lies and deceit in the Leave campaign. Such a false prospectus in any commercial offering would be legally indefensible.

If Remain campaigners decide they will not take this lying down and if British business interests decide to back them, a reversal of the result is not only possible but perhaps likely.

Law firm Mishcon de Rey has mounted a legal challenge to the government's right to invoke Article 50 without seeking the consent of Parliament. Its leading counsel, Pannick and Hickman, have written in the wake of the vote about the legal restrictions of the unprecedented decision. Hickman argues that Government would be violating parliamentary sovereignty if it activated Article 50 on its own, as it would contradict rights established by the European Communities Act 1972.

The outcome of the referendum is not in doubt, but it is not legally binding and we need a process that follows UK law to enact it. Article 50 should not be invoked by the Government without a full debate and vote in parliament.

On the continent, the initial glee of some (including my erstwhile colleague Andrew Duff who has long sought to relegate the UK to the associate member status also to be granted to Turkey) has dissipated.

The ultra-federalist voices no longer reflect majority opinion. Angela Merkel insists that the UK be given time to sort out its affairs; other northern countries take a similar view. That time could even stretch to the time needed to conduct a general election if the next prime minister decides she wants to seek her own mandate from the people. While the concessions made to Cameron are now null and void and the European Council specifically stated at its meeting on 28-29 June that there will be no change to free movement of goods, services, capital or people, there are strong hopes that the UK government will find a way to stay in the EU. And there is no small degree of incredulity at the idea that the UK government might risk an economic recession to satisfy an ideological drive to withdraw.

Should the UK choose to leave the EU, the conditions likely to be offered to it will be designed to discourage others from taking the same route. A paper drawn up by Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble and leaked to the newspaper Handelsblatt just days before the UK vote laid down what Germany would be prepared to offer the UK in the event of leaving the EU. It made clear there would be no automatic access

“It can be argued cogently that the referendum was neither valid nor reliable”

to the single market; while the Germans might accept free trade in motor cars they have little appetite to allow the UK to continue to sell financial services. Nor would there be access to support from

the European Investment Bank, which now has a loan book twice the size of that of the IMF and whose support for major public infrastructure projects is often crucial for success. There is no guarantee the UK would be offered the same terms as Norway, even if the continued freedom of movement and the continued payments into EU coffers which these entail were acceptable to a Conservative government.

WAITING GAME

There is concern in some circles that the UK might delay invoking Article 50 by a year or more; the EU Treaties set no time limit. This would interfere in national elections next year in Germany and France by adding to economic uncertainty. If the waiting game drags on too long and creates too much political uncertainty, the remaining 27 countries could either deem the referendum result and Cameron's subsequent statement to have triggered the Article 50 process, or decide to trigger the treaty's Article 7, which invokes sanctions against an EU member for failing to uphold the 'values on which the Union is based'.

But the UK's referendum vote will also lead to some rethinking of why the EU fails to appeal to its citizens. The heads of state and government of the other 27 countries will meet informally in mid-September. Proposals for further EU development in the areas of security, employment, youth and euro-zone cooperation should be presented to that meeting, according to an agreement reached by prime ministers Merkel and Renzi and president Holland at a meeting in Berlin on 27 June. The possibility of development towards an EU with more powers in defence and foreign policy and perhaps fewer in some domestic policies is actively canvassed in Brussels.

The UK has already paid a heavy economic price for its vote. If we quit, Liberal Democrats will campaign to re-join, though this would then involve joining the euro and Schengen. The best scenario for a UK which leaves the EU appears to be one in which any further loss is limited to loss of influence rather than territory or wealth. By contrast, a decision by the UK government to reject the referendum result, in whichever way, might limit further losses to loss of face.

Sir Graham Watson was a Liberal Democrat MEP from 1994-2014 and president of ALDE 2011-15

IT WASN'T THE ECONOMY, STUPID

Britain Stronger in Europe failed because it was run by business figures with no idea of how to run a campaign that could inspire anyway, says Julie Smith

I write as a self-confessed referendum sceptic who was always dubious about the idea of a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU). The UK has a proud tradition of representative democracy and the idea of holding a popular vote on matters as complex as the EU is a risky business. Referenda rarely focus on the issue formally on the ballot paper and over the last quarter of a century plebiscites on EU matters across the Union have caused embarrassment for governments from Dublin to Athens, via Paris, Copenhagen and The Hague.

Those referenda were mostly about ratifying treaties and without the agreement of electors in the countries concerned, the treaties under consideration would not have gone ahead. Thus, it was in the EU's interest to try to bring those countries on board, usually by dint of some tinkering with the treaty to make it more acceptable followed by a second referendum, something that would clearly be toxic in the UK.

The idea, initially peddled by Boris Johnson before he became the face of Vote Leave, that there could be two votes on the UK's membership of the EU to get the best deal for the UK always seemed fanciful. A vote to leave would not provide the perfect opportunity for the UK to exert leverage over the other 27 states; it would mean the UK leaving the EU.

This was destined to be a one-shot game with the highest of stakes. It would require skill and determination from those who wished to keep the UK in the EU, cooperation among parties that are otherwise in competition – Lib Dems working with Labour, pro-European Conservatives and the Scottish National Party – and it would require leadership on the EU from someone famously unable to provide it, namely prime minister David Cameron, who until February devoted himself to trying to get a better deal with the EU to serve as the basis for remaining.

The renegotiation yielded little of value to those seeking to make the case for the UK's continued membership, aside from guarantees to the City, but it did provide an excuse for some Conservatives to side with the Leave campaign, arguing Cameron just had not achieved enough. The Leavers gathered momentum thanks to a clever if mendacious campaign while the Remainers struggled to gain traction with an uninspiring official campaign overly focused on a narrow economic case at the expense of passion, vision and values.

It all started rather badly. On 12 October 2015 Britain Stronger in Europe was formally launched as the umbrella campaign for the UK to stay in the EU. The natural abbreviation – BSE – augured badly, reminding many of that other BSE – bovine

spongiform encephalopathy or 'mad cow disease' – which had caused tensions in the UK's relations with the EU in the 1990s when John Major was prime minister.

It wasn't a great start for pro-Europeans and it was compounded by the appointment of ex-Marks and Spencer boss Lord Rose, formerly Sir Stuart Rose. That Rose had until recently been a supporter of the sceptic Business for Britain made him an odd choice to front the whole Remain campaign. Bringing in a zealous convert after Cameron had completed his renegotiations might have been an inspired move to show what a great job the PM had done, but in October Cameron had not even told the country what his wish-list was, far less achieved it.

And Rose certainly did not show much zeal for the cause, repeatedly fluffing his lines and apparently unable to remember the name of his own organisation. He was not alone in lacking passion or conviction.

I had first had forebodings about the Remain campaign last summer when the media reported that former special advisor to Nick Clegg and strategist for the 2015 general election, Ryan Coetzee was involved with the embryonic Britain Stronger in Europe.

He and I had not seen eye to eye over the Liberal Democrat manifesto. I had fundamentally disagreed with his steely focus on polling our 'core voters' as a way to determine key messages rather than drawing on our core values to craft a distinctively Liberal Democrat position.

His approach seemed transactional and like others I was immediately worried that he seemed to be 'the Lib Dem' in BSE, even if strong pro-Europeans Danny Alexander and later Jim Wallace were the political Lib Dem figures on the BSE board.

WORST NIGHTMARES

Presentations by BSE confirmed my worst nightmares – the focus was on a group of 'swing voters' who were most likely to be persuaded by economic arguments for remaining in the EU made, it seemed initially, by white male figureheads.

The peace narrative, so crucial to the founding of the European Communities and the reason why so many of us have believed passionately in membership of the Union, would have no place in the umbrella campaign. Nor would passion. While Vote Leave were crafting an ever-more vigorous campaign based on (lost) identity and illusions of sovereignty, which was intended to inspire both 'hard' leavers as well as those whose views were more moveable, BSE's focus was on a narrower section of the electorate. The passion was to be left to the political parties – if only they could get traction in

the media.

To be fair – this was not something driven by Coetzee alone. It seems the line came from No 10, reluctant to see ‘blue on blue’ conflict, even though the main reason for calling the referendum in the first place had been divisions within the Conservative Party. The Prime

Minister’s unwillingness to debate with Johnstone or Michael Gove (or, frankly, anyone head-to-head) was the most visible sign of this. He pledged to campaign ‘heart and soul’ for the UK to remain – and later claimed he had done so.

Since referenda offer a binary choice – in or out/ remain or leave – the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and the specific legislation for the EU Referendum outlined arrangements for two umbrella groups, one on each side.

Yet, political parties and other organisations could also be involved. On the leave side, Vote Leave appeared to have harnessed support from most leavers regardless of party – as demonstrated by Labour’s Gisela Stuart co-chairing with Gove, with some leading Ukip figures also on board. There was some evidence of separate campaigning, for example by Labour Leave, but it did not seem significant, while the presence of Leave.EU, which had failed to secure the Leave designation, seemed to provide a more hardline, anti-immigration stance which would shore up the Ukip vote.

By contrast, while the main political parties were supporting Remain there was a reluctance to come together as a single campaign. The Conservatives were officially neutral and were thus unable to help bankroll the Remain cause as might otherwise have occurred under the rules.

Conservatives In did campaign but were apparently told to tone down the passionate case for Europe. Labour, having been badly damaged in Scotland for its role in the Better Together campaign in 2014, was reluctant to get too close to the other parties.

North of the Border, Nicola Sturgeon’s pro-EU case was positive but the motives of the SNP were somewhat suspect as it was clear that a vote to leave the EU might give the SNP the excuse they sought for a second independence referendum.

The Lib Dem remain campaign – In Together – was active and engaging. The small team led by Iain Gill did try to bring more passion and a different narrative to the campaign. The idea of POPES: peace, opportunity, prosperity, environment and security, was inspired. While some Liberal Democrats might be cautious of anything that sounds too clerical (as a Roman Catholic, I had no such qualms), the ideas and ideals it enshrined surely offered scope to make the positive case for the UK’s membership of the EU, not the largely transactional approach favoured by BSE and 10 Downing Street.

PEACE MESSAGE

Regardless of what the pollsters said, ‘peace’ did resonate on doorsteps and at hustings. There were

“That Rose had until recently been a supporter of the sceptic Business for Britain made him an odd choice to front the whole Remain campaign”

apparently more Lib Dem street stalls during the short campaign than stalls for other parties. Yet, even within our own avowedly pro-EU party, the referendum was not the sole priority. That the chief executive could send an email to tell members that 5 May was the most important date in the year is telling.

Some of the leavers had been waging war on the EU almost since the close of the ballot boxes in June 1975 when British citizens were last invited to vote on membership of the EU. Others had come to their cause later but all recognised that the crucial date, not just for 2016 but for decades to come, was 23 June. Meanwhile, mainstream parties across the UK focused their attention on 5 May. To be fair, the SNP and Plaid Cymru had pressed for a later referendum given the impending Scottish and Welsh elections but to no avail: the Government was determined to push ahead with a poll before the summer to ensure the issue would not overshadow another Tory party conference. Inevitably the vital decision became overshadowed by other polls and barely four weeks were given over to making the case to stay in the EU. By then it was too late – the immigration issue had been whipped up by the Leavers and Remain seemed incapable of overcoming it.

Yet, it should not have come as a surprise. Already in December, academics such as John Curtice and Matthew Goodwin had identified the challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses for the two sides: the economy for Remain; immigration for Leave. Why BSE did not create a counter narrative on immigration is unclear – had they failed to listen to the ‘experts’ while Vote Leave, which formally rubbished them, actually paid heed?

Those questions are for another day. What is clear is that the Remain side’s lack of passion made it hard for even the most enthusiastic pro-Europeans to make our case loudly and clearly. The problems were myriad. The choice of the word ‘remain’ always sounded stale and sterile – and this was not of BSE’s doing but rather the result of a decision by the Electoral Commission. Though why call the organisation ‘in’ when the ballot paper would say ‘remain’, one wondered. That Vote Leave had won the messaging war became clear at a hustings for the British Deaf Association. The two sides were asked to sign our names in British Sign Language – my co-remainder and I had to sign ‘Stronger In’, which wasn’t on the ballot paper. The leavers gave the instruction ‘Vote Leave’. Many clearly obliged.

Julie Smith is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords.

DRAGGED INTO THE PAST

Britain's image of itself as modern, harmonious, diverse and multicultural reached its zenith at the 2012 London Olympics. It doesn't look like that now, says Jane McBennett

As the dust settles on the shocking referendum result, many are saying that the underclass in the deindustrialised wastelands of our country have screamed a protest at the indifferent metropolitan elites.

And of course there is some truth in this, just as there is truth in the proposition that this was an anti-migrant vote by the populations of the East Midlands and East Anglia where the arrival of workers from eastern Europe is widely seen as driving down wages even further in a perpetually low wage economy, putting an intolerable burden on local services.

However such an analysis is incomplete and therefore misleading as to what has actually happened. On a rare positive note in the deprived city of Liverpool people voted 60/40 in favour of remaining in the EU. But across whole swathes of non-metropolitan England people voted in large numbers to quit.

By no stretch of the imagination are they deprived or doing badly – the family in the home counties where a close family member only recently enjoyed excellent life saving treatment in Barcelona voted en masse to leave the EU. Another couple whose son has just got a first at Oxford also voted out. I could list many more examples of people with comfortable life styles who nevertheless decided they were better off out of Europe.

What I think these groups share is a sense that something has gone terribly wrong and that England has lost its way and something incalculably precious has been lost.

A woman living in Spain told reporters that whilst she was voting to remain had she been living in the United Kingdom she would have voted to leave. She did not wish to return because "I feel like a foreigner in my own country." Outside of the metropolitan cities and university towns this view is shared overwhelmingly by the alienated working class and the shire middle classes alike.

OLD CERTAINTIES

Be in no doubt that this is a vote for Nigel Farage and the Daily Mail's vision of a Britain which has been brought down by multiculturalism, political correctness and interference from Brussels and needs to rid itself of these influences in order to have the 'great' put back into it. It is a vote for the old certainties of discipline in schools, respect for the law, neatly mown lawns and standing up for the national anthem.

Those who wished to remain in the EU were ill-served by the campaign for it was led by a prime minister who was himself doubtful of the wisdom of the European project (except in the narrowest of trading terms) and who had called the referendum

as a way of dealing with internal divisions within his own party. Cameron had more than half an eye on party unity and the need to keep the post-referendum Conservative party together and only latterly woke up to the dangers of losing the vote. The Liberal Democrats, the only true cheer leaders for Europe, had been all but wiped out in the 2015 general election and the Labour party had a leader who was lukewarm about EU membership at best. The result was negative campaigning warning of the dangers of leaving with no one making a sufficiently positive case for remain. The effect was to hand the initiative to the Brexiteers.

In truth the English have never had any love for the EU and have never been educated as to its workings, its purpose or the importance of membership to the UK. The EU of popular imagination is a malevolent group of foreign bureaucrats imposing crazy regulations on the country while extracting large amounts of money from it to spend on idle foreigners elsewhere.

Nowhere in Britain will you see any acknowledgment that far from being pushed around by Brussels, Britain is in fact one of the more important members of the EU. It has proved more convenient for British politicians to use the EU as a whipping boy and the author of all that is currently wrong with our island. But here again I think the roots of our problem with our relationship with Europe go deeper.

Our perception of ourselves as a modern, harmonious, diverse and multicultural society, outward looking and inclusive, reached its zenith at the 2012 London Olympics and Danny Boyle's masterful opening ceremony.

Taking as its starting point a clichéd pastiche of a pastoral arcadia of the imagination, Boyle proceeded to dismantle this myth and to hold up to the British a mirror so that they could see what they truly were. He reminded us that we are the heirs of an industrial revolution, that we have welcomed West Indians in the Windrush, being at the forefront of technology, harboured refugees, delivered what is probably the finest example of social welfare medicine anywhere in the world, that we are quirky, full of humour, that we have James Bond and the Queen. The audience lapped up this image of their nation and applauded wildly.

At his eve of poll rally Nigel Farage presented his vision of Britain, with footage of spitfires, the coronation and Ian Botham as our sporting great. The implication is that our finest hours are firmly behind us and located in the second world war. Dad's Army is still one of our most popular sitcoms. At showings of the recent film remake, audiences regularly sang along to the title song and applauded. At football matches England fans sings songs about the second world war

and taunt the German and French fans caricaturing them much in the manner of 'Allo Allo' another, less great, British sitcom. As education secretary, Michael Gove wanted to change the history syllabus to one which concentrated on British history alone.

NOSTALGIA AND XENOPHOBIA

It is our collective failure to come to terms with our post-1945 history and to find an up to date narrative for our island story which drives our nostalgia, our unwillingness to give credit to other nations and our xenophobia. It is what unites the football fan on the sink housing estate defiantly flying the flag of St George with the ladies of the shire middle class hanging out the union jacks for a Queen's birthday street party.

With intelligent leadership we could and should have affirmed our place at the heart of Europe. We could and should have played a leading role in shaping the continent to which we belong. his would, I believe, have been of benefit to the EU but also to us in restoring to us a proper sense of national pride and our place in the modern world. Instead we have sat sullen and suspicious on the sidelines carping, negative and resentful.

And so it comes about that the proletariat of Marxist folklore is now making common cause with the people of middle England uniting them in resentment of the mythical behemoth that is their perception of the EU.

Boris Johnson and Michael Gove did not want to win this referendum. What they wanted was to seize the leadership of the Conservative party following a narrow remain win.

But when they lost the economic argument they chose to harness themselves to the Farage anti-immigration bandwagon in what is probably the most reprehensible act of political recklessness ever seen in this country. They had no plan in place for a Brexit win, no idea of how to deal with the Irish border, reassure the markets or cope with refugees dumped here from Calais.

Instead they were quite prepared to unleash nihilism, declaring that the country had had enough of experts and making outrageous promises that they never expected to be called upon to keep. In exchange for policy we were given slogans and grandstanding gestures and a completely incoherent narrative.

This is quite possibly the only time in history when given the choice the electorate has voted for the apocalypse. For now Farage is centre stage, a man who holds no public office in this country. His victory speech was not gracious but inflammatory. He talked of a victory for ordinary decent people over the elite. He invoked the possibility of a domino effect unleashing Fascism across the rest of Europe. He followed this up with a disgraceful show of triumphalism in the European parliament.

Farage knows full well that what has been promised cannot possibly be delivered. But that is not his game. Not for nothing have his posters and his methods being likened to the national socialism of 1930s Germany. Now there are multiple examples of migrants being taunted in the streets and told to go home.

However it is not Farage who will lead the negotiations with the EU to try to fashion a new relationship. For in truth this has been the victory of the euro sceptics of middle England. They have already seen off two, possibly three prime ministers. Cameron in holding the referendum has succeeded only in spreading the contagion. I think that Theresa May will be the next prime minister and she is of their ilk. It is eurosceptic opinion that is going to inform the Brexit negotiations with the EU. Even now when the political system is in a state of collapse, and the economic future looks scarily precarious the newspaper headlines still say: "Cameron warns the EU that they will have to make concessions on freedom of movement if they want to trade with Britain." Frankly the misunderstanding of the strength of our negotiating position beggars belief.

With the Labour party disintegrating, as matters stand the only pressure on a euro sceptic negotiating team will come from Ukip and the right. It is vitally important that we lead the way in uniting the forces that voted for and still wish to retain close ties with the EU.

We have embraced the wider social and cultural values of being part of Europe. We embrace multiculturalism, globalisation and diversity. Our aspirations too now hang in the balance and we must unite to resist the regressive forces which are threatening to envelop us.

Jane McBennett is a Liberal Democrat member in Leeds

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A CRISIS FOR DEMOCRACY

The roots of the discontents revealed by the referendum go back decades and only new thinking can prevent mayhem, says Trevor Smith

After the EU Referendum vote for Brexit, change in UK politics is moving so fast that daily newspapers are out of date before they are published while the weekly magazines are just recording recent history. Hourly radio news bulletins and the social media are the only channels that can cope with the new frenetic situation that “an hour in politics is a long time.”

Speculation following the Referendum points to the growth in inequality, regional differences, educational disparity, inter-generational division as well as ethnic factors and alarm at the prospect of mass immigration as being the main influences for Brexit.

They are identified among the reasons for the increasing public disaffection with the erstwhile pattern of politics, together with its leaders who are seen to compose an aloof elite preoccupied with themselves rather than the needs felt by the electorate. Hence the protest vote result in the referendum and certainly the evidence is all there.

The problem is that almost all of these commentaries suffer from analysing only the very recent political past of developments in the UK. They tend to go no further back than looking at the legacy bequeathed by the Thatcher and Major years at best, though almost all take a glance at how Harold Wilson orchestrated the referendum to join the EEC in 1975.

The fact is that the seeds of the present parlous state that we now find ourselves in go back very much further.

In my view, political volatility, resulting from the advancing alienation on the part of the public, has its roots in the suspension of party politics during Churchill's wartime Coalition. That was highly necessary then with the overwhelming need to concentrate our efforts on defeating the Nazi war machine. But with the coming of peace, the melody, very unfortunately, lingered on to the detriment of parliamentary democracy and its essential correlate - authentic political discourse.

The Attlee government's programme consisted largely of consolidating the Welfare State as the Beveridge Report had outlined in the later stages of the Churchill Coalition. The advent of the Cold War necessitated the maintenance of the North Atlantic military alliance. The nationalisation of basic industries, though disputed by the Tories at the time, was maintained by them when they were returned to office in 1951. This resulted in the development of the Keynesian-type consensus termed Butskellism that endured for more than a decade. This, in turn, was succeeded by the new economic planning consensus that was adopted and sustained by the two Harolds - Macmillan and Wilson - and Edward Heath.

The accession to power of Margaret Thatcher is

often regarded as a historic break with the successive consensus of the post-war era with her wholesale privatisation of the state industries that had managed to endure. She insisted on TINA - “There is No Alternative” which, in its way, had the similar but greater anti-democratic effects as had ‘consensus’ - namely the suppression of much of political argument and debate.

THATCHER AND MARX

The Milton Friedmanite neo-liberalism that underscored her policies, including privatisation, brooked no argument. Thatcherism was continued by both the Major and Blair administrations. However, privatisation did not usher in a regime of free market competition, that Friedrich Hayek would have advocated although the rhetoric employed tried to infer this. Rather, the policy pursued entrenched a system of ‘monopoly capitalism’ of the kind that Karl Marx had predicted.

The cartels thus created would be immune to the discipline of market forces but they could not be allowed to run entirely free as the fancy took them. In the event, a new, vast industry of regulatory agencies was created, ostensibly at least, to monitor and occasionally supervise these new corporate monoliths. These added greatly to the Quangos and other non-governmental bodies that had mushroomed in the second half of the twentieth century and which, despite successive governments' promises to cull their numbers, continue to grow apace.

Their origins go back a long way with the creation of the Brethren of Trinity House to supervise the maintenance of lighthouses dotted around the coast. The intention is to remove direct responsibility from government ministers for the provision of state supervision of necessary services to ‘independent’ boards, policy tsars, task forces and other such ad hoc devices, reporting either to ministers or in some cases to Parliament.

Ministers were thus distanced from such supervision and could not be questioned on the day-to-day workings of these authorities, which earlier had included the public corporations created by Attlee to oversee the nationalised industries. In this way, similar to the effects of consensus and TINA, open political discourse was thus further curtailed.

The UK polity that emerged over the post-war years, I would argue, was the result of two forces that came together. Those of what Preston King has called “tentacular government” and those I termed “anti-politics” which I described in a book with that title published more than 40 years ago.

Tentacular government embraces the remorseless growth in the many and varied types of regulatory agencies and privatisation schemes that have been

spawned to essentially outsource what hitherto were government activities.

The nineteenth century advocates of ‘the night watchman state’ always insisted that the internal and external defence of the realm, foreign affairs and diplomacy and the broad principles defining the economy should be the monopolistic preserve of national government.

That dictum has been ignored long since. Westminster and Whitehall have ceded vast areas of security to private contractors as can be seen in the running of prisons at home and the provision of security guards in war zones abroad. Similarly, the formulation of the economic public agenda has been usurped by the multi-national corporations. In his presidential valedictory address Dwight D Eisenhower presciently warned of the rise of ‘the military-industrial complex’ that would endanger the democratic process of policy-making. As events have proved, he underestimated the situation as undue corporate influence now affects most areas of activity and is not confined to defence.

The tentacular state in all of its manifestations is essentially extra-constitutional, being largely beyond the purview of parliamentary, and therefore public, scrutiny.

The associated forces of anti-politics work in the same direction. One aspect of this is to be seen in the hollowing-out of the senior civil service, transferring much of its work to out-sourced management consultants. A major result of this was to destroy the ‘departmental memories’ and skills that traditionally had been an important resource for policy-making. This is now highlighted by the acknowledgement that too few Whitehall staff are available with the requisite skills and experience to handle the forthcoming Brexit negotiations with Brussels. Transient technocrats, contracted short-term, are poor substitutes for so formidable an operation.

The relentless promotion of private business methods and values was a very strong element of Thatcherism, but it was enthusiastically embraced, more fully articulated and promoted by both Blair and Cameron. The operational precept was adopted that politics should be conducted along the lines of business. A striking example of this was to be seen in the appointment of outside non-executive directors to all Whitehall departments.

Public administration and civic values were discounted in favour of the pursuit of private sector ideas and practices to which David Marquand has constantly drawn attention. It is taken as axiomatic that ‘private’ is equated with good and ‘public’ with bad – and this, quite amazingly, at a time when corporate greed and corruption, first among the financial services and now extending to retailers, was endemic in the business world.

RAMPANT MANAGERIALISM

Thus, rampant managerialism has become the operational principle for much of Whitehall that, in turn, spawned a technocratic caste of mind which is inimical to parliamentary representative democracy. Technocracy, by its very nature, starts by seeking to impose a pre-conceived and contrived consensus or TINA in the determination of policy outcomes; as such, it is the antithesis of democracy which seeks to

achieve policy consensus as the end result of open and transparent debate.

I am advancing the view that the twin forces of tentacular government and anti-politics combined and seriously discouraged, constrained and at times even suppressed the exercise of public debate which is the hallmark of parliamentary democracy.

It nourished a simmering and growing discontent and, arguably, it was this as much as anything else that led to the populist eruption which culminated in the explosive decision to opt for Brexit. Most unfortunately, the Referendum seemed to be treated by the electorate more as a by-election which could be a vehicle for a large protest vote against the government without risking toppling it. But it wasn’t confined to a backwater constituency; being nationwide it had massive repercussions. Although catalytic in its effect, it was a symptom - albeit a major one - of an anti-political tendency that had been brewing for a long time.

It was a very major consequence of the inability of Westminster to tackle some vital questions that contributed to increasing widespread public disaffection. Demands for greater devolution, including complete independence for Scotland and the UK from the rest of the EU were advanced. A paralysed and sclerotic Westminster opted to refer these issues to the citizenry to resolve by means of referenda. Scotland declined the offer – at least for the time being – but the UK accepted secession from the EU.

After the Referendum, the resulting condition of the UK was succinctly summed up by the Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, as being economically, politically and constitutionally broken. It is a real crisis of enormous proportions. Indeed, we are nearer to the situation that prevailed in the inter-war German Weimer Republic, and we know where that led.

At least three responses have been advanced to remedy the situation. First, there is a general feeling that the right kind of good and determined political leadership can return the UK back into a well-ordered civil society and prosperous economy.

Secondly, this should be accompanied by some realignment of the political parties together with a more proportional voting system. And thirdly, there should be a greater devolution of powers to more local bodies.

Commendable though these developments would be, very much more is needed by way of policy innovation.

Political and stable democracy will not be maintained without throwing off many of the old paradigms that have led to the present crisis. Not just in Britain but in western democracies more generally, new approaches must be devised if viable stable democratic government is to survive. To be sure, determined and intelligent leadership is a necessary but is, by no stretch of the imagination, not a sufficient condition to ensure a restoration of democratic governance in the likely prevailing conditions of the future.

It will require a good deal of original and lateral thinking to break out from the silo outlooks and related practices that have contributed to the chaotic upheaval we are currently experiencing. To deny this is to guarantee the perpetuation of continuing mayhem.

Trevor Smith is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords

MARCHING TOWARDS MORE GUNFIRE

Roger Hayes proposes a project to uncover the condition of the country and devise Liberal answers

Three years ago, before Simon Titley was taken ill, he and I discussed a writing project which he had entitled Towards the Sound of Gunfire.

Simon had discovered that the opening Saturday of the 2013 Liberal Democrat conference would be exactly 50 years to the day since Jo Grimond delivered his famous 'gunfire' speech, and he thought it would be good to mark the anniversary with a new statement on the purpose and direction of modern British Liberalism.

I mapped out a few ideas but sadly we never did complete the work and the next year Simon was cruelly snatched from us.

Since the dramatic events of 23 June I have dusted off the notes we made and thought afresh about the need to complete the task. This article is not that work - something far more substantial is required - but I do want to offer a possible shape to such an endeavour and suggests a methodology by which it might be achieved. Your thoughts and comments would be most welcome.

When I started this thinking three years ago two events affected me: the towering figure of Seamus Heaney has recently died and in his essay, 'Something to Write Home About' he talks about 'riding the marches' and how ones land, or ideas, may 'march' (or bound) that of others.

Although not a Liberal, his sweet prose, his gentle persuasion and his great good sense made an impression on me. Also as I was making notes Grayson Perry was giving the Reith Lectures. I am an admirer of Perry - both his mind and his art - and one of his lectures that year was called 'Beating the Bounds'. These two things helped shape my thoughts and offered a good metaphor for examining how Liberalism is developing in the opening decades of the 21st century and how well it is now equipped to face the gargantuan challenges and changes that lie ahead.

So, in beating the bounds and riding the marches of modern Britain I hope we might be able to establish some marker-stones for 21st century Liberalism. I also hope that by beating its bounds in a more rigorous sense, we may be able to get to a deeper understanding of the true underlying issues that face us as a people and as a party. Against that better understanding I hope we will be able to judge our potential for the future and also to test our limitations and seek to find ways of overcoming them by asking the 'why not' and if so, 'how' questions.

THREE STAGE PROCESS

This is what I have in mind: an editorial team with Liberator providing the core membership, but done in collaboration with the Social Liberal Forum, as they

have a good country-wide base for such an exercise. The very excellent essay by Gordon Lishman, the acting chair of SLF, is also a good starting point and if you haven't read it I recommend it to you. You can find it online. However, there need be no hard and fast rules for making this work. We are, as you might say, all in this together.

I see the output being a publication, or compendium of publications. Not an academic work, philosophical treatise or a policy digest - well maybe a bit of all of that - but more importantly I feel it needs to satisfy three things:

- ☛ It must be based on what is really happening to our country and what people really think not how we would like to think things are to satisfy our agenda and our prejudices - we have enough opinion, I want us to discover the evidence.
- ☛ It must articulate what modern Liberalism stands for; the purpose of the Liberal Democrats and why the country needs us; and go on to define the key approaches we will take to unite our broken nation.
- ☛ It must offer practical solutions that will allow us to once again take our place in Europe, as well as simultaneously and compatibly acting internationally; that might be a how-to or what-to manual that works for every region, local party and ward to develop their campaigning plans; actions that will be relevant to local people wherever they may be and tackling the things that really matter to them to address the causes not the symptoms

STAGE I - AUDIT

Between now and conference, that gives us a couple of months, I think we should begin to undertake a political audit of our country. We don't have the time or the resources for this to be a scientific study, but I believe nonetheless that we do have enough talented people around Britain who can reliably articulate what is going on. What we must not do is act like the much despised intellectual metropolitan elite (even though some of us are) and assume we know what it's like for the very many people in our country who feel marginalised, continually let down, overlooked and demoralised.

I want to know where the common themes lie but also where are the differences and heart-felt special cases? We can then begin to discuss these at conference through a series of fringe meetings and discussions. As well as our 'roving reporters' gathering the evidence around the country we could also establish an online survey that asks the membership for its views on a series of questions and of course gives people the

option of contributing some open feedback.

We will need to take notice of changing times and most obviously what to do if a snap election throws a clog in the works. However, assuming we can make progress the audit process, and its analysis, would probably run through to November.

STAGE 2 - DEVELOPMENT

Armed with that deeper understanding of what ails us, we then need to set about describing a series of Liberal solutions and approaches to those issues. A manifesto of values and approaches rather than detailed policies – the indivisible cornerstones of what we stand for (and how and why we stand for it) rather than any (well much) detailed policy as that tends to come and go as the priorities and circumstances of the moment will always change over time.

I hate to suggest an Orange Book, with the weight of baggage that drags with it, but isn't it time we produced some new words, for a new time, with new urgency, that proclaims a new purpose? And I for one would not be upset if it were bound in orange with the word Liberal on the cover.

How such a document will evolve, be divided up, what its chapter headings and its authors will be is a matter for debate and direction from the editorial panel. I want to be involved but what I offer here is an idea to rally round, not the eventual solution.

To do it justice will probably take a year, but it would be nice to have something to offer at Conference 2017.

STAGE 3 - INTERPRETATION

To complete the circle of activity, my vision is that the 'main' document should then have a community politics element with hints and tip, and an online best practice/bright ideas, campaigners section so that everyone can take the nationally/internationally oriented ideas and interpret them for their own region, or an individual constituency, or even a ward or neighbourhood.

We have longed been criticised by other parties for saying different things in different parts of the country.

Well, as long as those things are not mutually exclusive or illiberal, of course we have. By definition different places are, well, different and therefore need different priorities and approaches. It should always be up to local people to decide what is needed most, where.

Importantly this local interpretation should be a call to action not just a shopping list of ideas or requests, or a wishy-washy hotchpotch of uncosted, impractical policies. But I hope that through its values and principles it can provide a mechanism for policy development and a yardstick against which to measure what we do, how we do it, and the success we hope it brings.

In his Gunfire speech Jo Grimond said, "Dictatorships do not primarily arise from the ambitions of wicked men. Lust for power is very often the symptom of a malaise in the body politic. Dictatorships arise when

"Isn't it time we produced some new words, for a new time, with new urgency, that proclaims a new purpose?"

democracy ceases to serve the interests of the ordinary people... we have got to make our policies live for ordinary people so that they mean something to them. That is the prime task of this party next year.

"Can we imbue partnership with life and

give it magnetism? Can we make structural reforms inspiring? Can we kindle again in this country the flame of political interest and catch the divine spark which has been so sadly lacking in our public life?"

Well, how true and how prescient still today. The result of the referendum most certainly shows that our democracy has ceased to serve the interests of the ordinary people. We must redouble our efforts to make ourselves and what we stand for relevant once more.

Let us make this our task – a rekindled vision of a Liberal Britain; relevant to everyone, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances; supported by practical, evidence-based solutions that can speak to the people because they are formed from the voice of the people. We can offer a serious advancement on representative democracy that need not depend on the crude and divisive, deceptive and populist, blunt instrument of referenda; and instead let us move to a participatory democracy where everyone can be as involved as they choose to be; whenever they want to be; in whatever interests them; under the stewardship of Liberal Democrats.

There can be no doubt from which direction the sound of gunfire now comes. And I am convinced that a sensible response is to define, and then work for, a Liberal Britain. But if recent events have taught us one thing surely it is that soundbites and platitudes are no answer to complex national and global issues. The Labour Party has rendered itself impotent, believing that its own civil war is of more importance than the harmony and indeed very existence of our country. The Leave campaign was led by scoundrels and charlatans prepared to say and do anything that might drag their ragbag of falsehoods over the line. And now some of them have tried to trade that illegitimate success for the highest office in the land while others have cravenly melted with the morning mist.

If 'sovereignty' and a return to democratic decision making was their cry then there can be only one next step – a general election. Anything less would not be democracy, it would be an act of usurpation.

The Liberal Democrats are the only united party and with care and skill a golden opportunity presents itself that might yet avoid isolation and disaster for Britain and for Europe. Let's take it with open arms, open hearts and open minds.

Roger Hayes is a former Liberal Democrat leader of Kingston-upon-Thames Council. He can be contacted about the work proposed in this article at roger@anderhay.com

PATHS THROUGH POST-REFERENDUM CHAOS

Liberator asked given the EU referendum result saw the country split 48% Remain and 52% Leave, how should the Liberal Democrats appeal to the 48% and should they try to appeal to the 52%? Here are some responses:

“The country may have split 48/52 but within districts and regions there were major variations.

In our once traditional stronghold of the South West of England many former (and potential future) Liberal Democrat voters backed Leave in the referendum. It was strategically naive to appeal to the 48% immediately after large numbers of our supporters had backed Leave. While we all want more members it is seats that count and we won't win them by giving past supporters the impression we only represent people who voted Remain.

“We are polling below our general election support where we only won eight seats. The alleged Tory election expense offences are being investigated and if nothing emerges our remaining seats could be outspent several times over leaving us with no MPs.

“We have to communicate that a vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote for change and not a vote to overturn a referendum. It is a vote for a fairer society and one that listens and acts on the hopes and fears of all the people. A vote that respects peoples' choices even when we disagree with them. That I always thought was the Liberal way.”

Cllr Adrian Sanders, Liberal Democrat MP for Torbay, 1997-2015.

“Downing Street, Manchester; a low wall encloses a garden of tents. The homeless and dispossessed built this community; they eat and shelter together as they survive in a country that offers them no hope. Daily thousands of their fellow citizens pass them by, some closing their eyes whilst others look on unable to help.

“This is the beginning of the city's third shanty town; the first two demolished in a Labour city where homelessness is criminalised rather than condemned as a crime against humanity. Some of these people have lost everything three times, first their home, then their first tent then their second. They are not here because they choose to be, but because it's the only place they can survive.

“In a country where housing is a commodity and food is a profit margin, families are torn asunder. For these and many others Britain's membership of the EU is not working. Those who voted out were not necessarily racists or fascists, but ordinary people fearing for their futures. Amongst the 52% are the desperate and the dispossessed; it is their lives we Liberal Democrats exist to improve.”

Iain Donaldson was a councillor in Manchester for 19 years representing some of the poorest communities in the country.

“We should absolutely be appealing to the 48% while every other party is grubbing for their slice of the 52%.

“We should do this by being unashamedly Liberal: pro-Europe, pro-democracy, pro-reform, and anti all the nasty xenophobia, racism and nativism that has been revealed by the result of the referendum.

“I'm not hopeful that the racism genie will be stuffed back into its bottle any time soon, and I am mindful of the fact that, as John Pugh says, posterity has no votes; nonetheless, there's clear right and wrong here, and we should seize the opportunity to be on the side of what is right.

Jennie Rigg is the chair of Calderdale Liberal Democrats and self-described bi-poly curmudgeon.

“I am very disturbed by this question. The assumption behind it seems typical to me of the reason why LibDem support has declined. We have wantonly thrown away what used to be our core vote: people who feel that the ruling elite in this country despise them.

“Most people who voted for Leave did so on these grounds. We need to understand that for many people the shift to extreme free market economics, and power moved from democracy to global business has not brought the freedom that those who make out that this is “liberalism” claim. The Leave campaign let the suggestion grow that a vote for Leave was a way of making this point. This was an appalling act of conmanship, because the Leave campaign was run and funded by people whose main complaint against the EU is the limitations it places on extreme free market economics.

“The suggestion that we should now concentrate only on the more sophisticated and urban electors who voted Remain, and not bother with the plebs and peasant who voted Leave is appalling. We must gently get it across to them that they were fooled, and that we are on their side.”

Former Lewisham councillor Matthew Huntbach joined Liberal Party in 1978, having been brought up on a Sussex council estate and seeing it as the only party then that cared for people like his family.

“Without a doubt the Liberal Democrats should be focusing on appealing to the 48%. We must be unabashedly pro-European and make the case for staying in the EU and leading efforts for reform. We must proudly make the case for the benefits which immigration brings and we must not be afraid to make ourselves unpopular with some of the 52% in the process.

“The state of upheaval in British politics offers an opportunity to finally build up a significant core vote. It also offers us an opportunity to exist some of our longstanding failings.

“By denouncing post-referendum racist attacks perhaps we can start engaging with the systemic issues of racism and discrimination facing BAME communities in Britain. And by fighting to prevent economic chaos and stay in the EU perhaps we can reach out to those who’ve previously put their faith in the Tory reputation for economic competence.

“But nor should we ignore the 52%. For far too long we’ve had a tendency to write off too many places as areas where we can’t do well and therefore don’t campaign. These are often the places which voted Leave. We need to break out of our middle class bubble, listen to working class voices and find a way to make a radical Liberal message of reform relevant to their lives in a way that we have so far failed to do.”

George Potter is a Liberal Democrat campaigner in Guildford and a member of the Liberator collective.

“I’m a 48-er. I put my cross in the Remain box. I’m proud to have fought for Europe. Today, some water has flowed under the bridge but the passion we felt for our European citizenship remains. Now, a large number of ‘bregreters’ have joined the ranks of ‘Remainers’ and experiencing a hint of the dreadful mistake of Brexit is swelling the ranks of those who would turn back.

“There’s a window of opportunity that will close if we do not keep the hope of positive change alive. The 48ers want peace, stability and prosperity for all. They’ve no wish to step back half a century.

“Lifting the living standards of all parts of our community is at the core of our unity. The failure of the last few years has been to say ‘we are all in this together’ but not to mean it. To appeal to the 48ers and beyond not only do we need to echo the words of unity but show by our actions it’s happening in every neighbourhood. 48ers are not about building barriers. Not about putting up walls. Not about limiting basic freedoms. They are confident adventures. Liberal Democrats must appeal to a big tent: abstainers, remainers and rbegreters

John Vincent was a Liberal Democrat candidate for the European parliament in 2014 and parliamentary candidate for Runnymede and Weybridge in 2015.

“I think as campaigners for the Remain side it is vital we still choose to stand for the 48% of voters who wanted to remain in the European Union. I have heard a lot about how this referendum was

an example of true modern democracy. Though that may be true, we still as a nation (not just the 48%) need to understand the proximity of this outcome.

“Those of us who voted to Remain still have the right to want to change things, but we still have to accept the result of the referendum - even if we are not OK with it. Currently the 48% do not have a voice. Unless you’re an active member of a party you are not able to see the plan going forward. As an outsider all you see is your prime minister packing his bags whilst the opposition party is in chaos.

“That’s why it’s vital we tell the 48 that we are here and we will stand for them. In terms of appealing to the 52%, we should. Not to those who made their decision with consideration and but to those who feel betrayed, lied to and regretful. To those who want a second chance.

We cannot ignore the result. Yet this does not mean we are to sit quietly and do nothing. The 48% need a voice and currently we seem to be the only ones completely dedicated to providing one.

Sharon Virk is a Young Liberal member in Gravesend

Although the Liberal Democrats have drawn support from some pretty contrasting places – Twickenham and Redcar, Cornwall and Cambridge – British politics have long largely been economically based. Broadly, richer people voted Tory and poorer ones Labour.

The referendum may mean we are seeing the onset of the sort of cultural politics that have bedevilled the USA, though fortunately without the religious dimension.

There seems a pretty high correlation between places that voted Leave and voters with socially conservative views – people concerned about identity, nationalism and suspicious (to put it no higher) of foreigners.

Since poorer areas will suffer most from the effects of Brexit, these places voted against their own economic interests by backing it so heavily.

The Lib Dems probably could fashion economic policies to appeal to such voters but they cannot and should not try to appeal to social conservatives.

Mark Smulian, Liberator Collective member

Vox pops edited by Liberator Collective member George Potter.

DISGRACED IN THE DESERT

The Chilcot Report has destroyed Tony Blair's reputation, but was the Liberal Democrats role quite as glorious as its seen in retrospect, and what happens next time, asks Jonathan Calder

"We want you to get up the arse of the White House and stay there." Tony Blair put it more elegantly when assuring George W. Bush that "I will be with you, whatever," but this order, given to Christopher Meyer when he became Britain's ambassador in Washington by Blair's chief of staff Jonathan Powell, conveyed the essence of the relationship that led to disaster in Iraq.

It was entirely reasonable of Tony Blair to associate himself closely with President Clinton when he first became prime minister. Here was a popular and successful politician with views notably similar to Blair's own.

But the Blair inner circle's insistence that Meyer became so unhealthily close to the US had its roots in Labour's long years in opposition to Margaret Thatcher and John Major. With the Thatcher years dominated by the Cold War and arguments over the British deterrent and the deployment of American weapon systems on British soil, Labour struggled not to be painted as unpatriotic.

Blair overturned all that, and it drove the Conservative Party mad. You can see this in their reaction to Charles Kennedy's brave speech in the Commons before action in Iraq began. Their outrage was surely a mask for their anger that Labour had usurped their role as America's staunchest ally. Somewhere there too was the jealousy of a younger boy who fears he has lost the friendship of an older, cooler boy because the latter has allowed someone else into their gang.

ILL-SUPPRESSED EXCITEMENT

Blair, the new boy in the gang, certainly saw it that way. In his book *DC Confidential*, Christopher Meyer records that the new prime minister "pulsed with ill-suppressed excitement" during his first official visit to the US. That excitement continued when George W. Bush was elected, no matter how crass his views and actions.

As Peter Osborne reminds us in his book 'Not the Chilcot Report', in January 2002 Bush startled his allies by naming Iraq, Iran and North Korea as "an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world":

Iraq, he claimed, had been plotting for more than a decade to develop anthrax, nerve gas and nuclear weapons. As a supporter of "terror", it might well provide these to terrorists.

In fact, there was no evidence to support this last claim: not only was Saddam Hussein ideologically opposed to al-Qaeda, but he wouldn't allow it to operate in his territory.

Regardless, the United States now set about seeking allies for an attack on Iraq. Thus, Bush invited Blair and his family to visit him at his family ranch in

Crawford, Texas that April – nearly a full year before the invasion.

Most unusually, there were no advisers present and no notes were taken.

Osborne goes on to piece together what he thinks was said at Crawford.

Bush, he argues, told Blair he was committed to regime change in Iraq. Blair expressed strong support for this, but said he would need to find cover under international law by seeking support from the United Nations. Well-placed observers, claims Osborne, also believe that he also made a private pledge to commit Britain to war.

The real Chilcot Report sets out the background to this meeting. On 12 March 2002, just weeks before the Crawford summit, Blair's chief foreign policy adviser David Manning had a conversation with Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser. The prime minister, Manning told her, "would not budge in [his] support for regime change".

Five days later, Meyer met the US Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. Meyer told him that Britain "backed regime change, but the plan had to be clever and failure was not an option". And on 25 March, just before Blair's meeting with Bush, the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw sent him a memo.

To provide legal cover and a plausible pretext for war, said Straw, Blair needed to present his objective as the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, rather than regime change. On this analysis, Hans Blix and his weapons inspectors were dispatched to Iraq in the hope that Saddam would deny them entry and provide a pretext for war.

Osborne concludes that Blair committed himself to regime change – and agreed to support US military action – during that secret meeting at Crompton.

Blair's response to this widely made charge is strange. On the one hand he maintains that war in Iraq really was caused by fear of Saddam's chemical and biological weapons, yet whenever he makes the moral case for that war, he does so entirely in terms of regime change. So the end he denies seeking before the war was fought is not the one he uses to justify it.

To listen to Blair now you would imagine that, in those febrile weeks before war began, he argued that we must take action in Iraq to overthrow Saddam's dictatorship. I love to see tyrants overthrown, their statues torn down and their prisons broken open to public gaze. If you are not a pacifist, such action must sometimes be an option if the tyranny is extreme enough and the prospects of success are strong enough.

But that was not the case Blair made. The first bombs fell on Iraq on 20 March 2003, but as late as 25 February he told the Commons:

"I detest his regime but even now he can save it by complying with the UN's demand. Even now we

are prepared to go the extra step to achieve disarmament peacefully.”

Blair frequently implies that there was no middle position between doing nothing about Saddam and invasion. The truth is there were many things we could and did do against Saddam before we went to war in 2003. There had been two separate no-fly zones in Iraq since the first war in 1992.

Tony Blair today cuts a tortured, Christ-like figure, albeit one with a peculiar orange hue and multi-million pound annual earnings. It is hard to resist the conclusion of the Guardian journalist Mike Carter:

A colleague just said to me: “if Blair hadn’t toppled Saddam, he’d be doing his PR for him now.” Scary thing is, that’s probably true

The war was a disaster for the people of Iraq, not least because the victors had no plans for running the country after it was over beyond disbanding the Iraqi army and civil service.

IMPERIALIST NOSTALGIA

Though British participation was buoyed by imperialist nostalgia – we flattered ourselves that we understood the Arab world in a way the Americans never could – we were not prepared even to count the number of Iraqis who died under our rule. As a result the independent website Iraq Body Count was set up. It now estimates there have been more than 250,000 deaths from the war and the violence that engulfed the country afterwards.

Besides the Iraqi people and Blair’s reputation, progressive politics in Britain have suffered because of the dishonest way the country was led into war in Iraq.

Look at the disputes between the Corbynistas and the rest of the Labour Party today. The former use the cry of “Iraq” as a means of silencing their opponents in the way that previous generations of far-leftists used “Fascist!” So it is that, because of her support for war in Iraq, a mainstream Labour figure like Angela Eagle is branded a “Tory”.

Not have the Liberal Democrats escaped the baleful legacy of Iraq. Because the party lacks strong intellectual foundations, often seeming to be shored up by a combination of support for Guardian editorials, leaflet distribution and general benevolence, we find it hard to explain how it is that we differ from moderate Labourites. We have a tendency so seize upon policy questions where we are in the right, such as Iraq or identity cards, and elevate these into insurmountable peaks of principle.

You would never guess from all the praise for Charles Kennedy and his courage in the face of that heckling from the Conservative benches that he had originally been wary of opposing the war in Iraq and was rather bounced into opposition by the wider party.

Writing five years after the event, the Liberal Democrat blogger James Graham recalled the opposition from the party’s big-wigs after a motion he

*“Charles Kennedy’s
opposition to war in Iraq is
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lessons we draw from that”*

and Susan Kramer took to the Federal Executive, calling on the party to oppose the war and on members to join the Stop the War demonstration, was passed:

Senior figures in the party did everything they could to stop any aspect of this motion from being implemented. They point blank refused to put anything up on the party website ... they wouldn’t link to my site.

Then, with less than a week to go before the demo itself, Kennedy was asked a direct question by David Frost on live television and, bottling it, turned volte face and said he would be “very happy” to go on [the demonstration]. Suddenly we got our link on the front page of the party website, publicity in Lib Dem News (which until that point had been relegated to the letters pages) and the full weight of the party’s campaigns and press departments behind us.

Yet even then Kennedy remained obsessed with having it both ways. Notoriously, his Hyde Park speech argued meekly that he was “not persuaded” of the case for war and demanding that Parliament be allowed a vote (it was; the troops went in).

In my experience those party big-wigs were never much interested in Liberal Democrat News, but that was how James saw it.

Charles Kennedy’s opposition to war in Iraq is now established in the popular mind and the party’s own mind, as our finest hour. But we do need to be sure what lessons we draw from that.

We are not a pacifist party, so in what circumstances would we support military actions abroad? Must there be United Nations support for it. Must we be part of a wide international coalition? Must we be sure of success? We need to be sure.

And those who oppose such action need to be clear why they do so. I did detect a conscious rerunning of the debate on Iraq by those Lib Dems who opposed what turned out to be near token action against ISIL forces in Syria.

It is too late for the people of Iraq or for Tony Blair’s reputation, but the rest of us need to learn from the wretched affair and be clear about which lessons we need to learn.

Jonathan Calder is a member of the Liberator Collective

WHEN LAWS FORGOT HIS SHARPENER

Former minister David Laws' account of the Coalition shows that despite brave words it changed very little, says David Grace

As I left the house in May 2010 to attend David Laws' re-election celebration, I spotted my knife-sharpener on the kitchen table. After hastily tying a Liberal Democrat rosette to it, I took it with me and presented it to David saying, "As chief secretary to the Treasury you are about to become the most unpopular man in Britain as your job will be to cut everything. This is to remind you not to cut deeply but finely and in accordance with Liberal principles".

In his lengthy (nearly 600 pages and I've read them all) and detailed Coalition, David tells the story but with two mistakes, one of personal significance to me and one of fundamental importance to our differing views of the coalition. Firstly, he says the local party gave him the present – no matter. Secondly, he says it was a knife. No, it was a sharpener.

After his sudden and early departure from the Treasury he left it for his successor, Danny Alexander, who, in my view, made little or no use of it, cutting gleefully and without precision.

David is a nice man. This is not a book filled with malicious gossip. There are mild anecdotes of remembered phrases used by Liberal and Conservative ministers but do not buy this book expecting revelations or personal attacks. His accounts of the development of policy behind the scenes and events, dear boy, set out times, places, personnel and arguments but will not surprise journalists or political hacks with their eyes to the cracks in Westminster or their ears pressed to glasses against the walls of Whitehall.

MAGIC GARDEN

For those of us not dwelling in that magic garden there is much to learn. It is interesting to understand a little more of the day-to-day texture of government, the pressures and dilemmas of office and, yes, what I wanted to know, the compromises of coalition. The book concludes with a postscript asking and giving his answers to three questions: did the coalition work, did the coalition deliver and what mistakes did the Liberal Democrats make? My answers may be different.

Did the coalition work? In a simple sense, of course: Her Majesty's Government lasted a full five years. So

why did it not fall apart? One of David's answers is that the four horsemen of the apocalypse, sorry, the Quad – David Cameron, Nick Clegg, George Osborne and Danny Alexander – got on well together. He adds that the two parties had both moved to the 'centre ground'. He admits that the Tories didn't stay there long. More disturbingly he argues, "...under Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrats had become more liberal and less statist." [My emphasis]. He adds that "...the party had fully and almost unanimously endorsed the coalition agreement...".

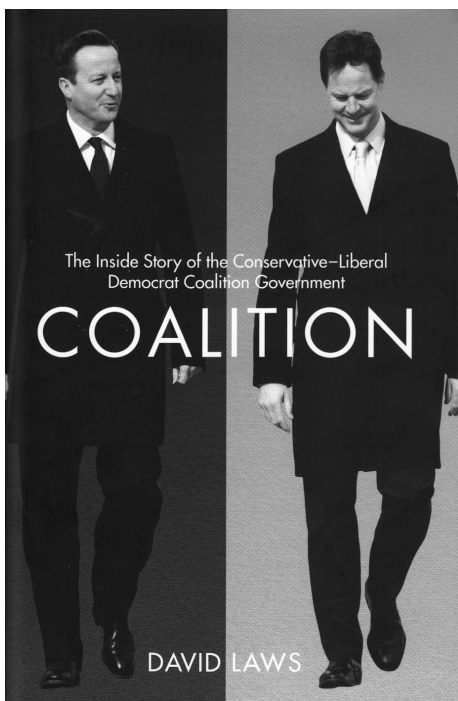
I spoke in that debate and got accepted my amendment which said that "...the Liberal Democrats remain an independent political party and that nothing in this agreement prevents the party from developing new policy through its democratic processes."

Some people thought it unnecessary to say this. Five years of coalition government showed how necessary it was and, indeed, how much our leaders were determined to ensure it didn't happen. Laws rejoices that Clegg's policy advisors found a clever way to block debate on "a surprisingly well-crafted motion on the economy". He refers to the Federal Conference Committee's unconstitutional decision not to provide time for a debate on an emergency

motion chosen by conference representatives at spring conference 2013. At the autumn conference in Glasgow that year Laws feared that passing amendments to Clegg's economy motion tabled by what he labels "the so-called Social Liberal Forum" would have moved the party from centrist to left of Ed Miliband. The amendments called for more spending on housing and changing the Bank of England's fiscal mandate to support growth. As Vince Cable observed, SLF's amendments were tamer than anything he wanted to say.

Clegg had confessed to Laws that if he lost the vote he might well need to resign as leader. This epitomises the view that any party policy which differed from coalition policy could not be heard in public, a restraint that no Tories recognised themselves.

Laws' detailed account is revealing as much for what it does not say as for what it does. Clegg fought the general election in 2010 promising a new kind



of politics, for which there was clearly public demand. What we got was very much more of the same. Electoral reform failed; reform of the Lords failed (Laws mentions Tim Farron asking “Do we really care about it ?”) but even on a day-to-day basis

parliament and government did not change very much.

Yes, there were two parties in government and Laws recounts many of the detailed battles over policy but honestly they sound like the normal wrangling between ministers in a one-party government. The House of Commons still operated in its archaic binary fashion – government and opposition. Ministers still had to approve each others’ speeches to be given at party conferences! The Whitehall system easily accommodated itself to having two parties in government. The public can scarcely have been aware that there were two parties in government supposedly with two different views.

The only innovation was the Quad and that was like a bridge party with a dummy; Danny Alexander very quickly went native and was referred to by Richard Reeves as “the Treasury’s representative to the Liberal Democrats”. David’s assiduous praise of Danny cannot conceal how he became the third Tory in the Quad, supporting the awful NHS reforms, resisting bigger rises in personal tax allowance, arguing to cut the 50% top rate of income tax, becoming rigid over budget orthodoxy and in the months leading up to the 2015 general election advocating a balanced budget with no borrowing for capital projects and finally calling for cuts of £38bn.

Laws asks if the coalition worked; he does not ask if it could have worked differently with two parties presenting different views to the public and showing how compromise works. He complains at one point that we got no public recognition for our influence on policy and then explains why, because the bargaining took place behind closed doors in the Quad.

David also asks: did the coalition deliver? He ends the book with a list of policies achieved by the Liberal Democrats, but if you look back to the early chapters on the start of the coalition, they fade into insignificance. The coalition was launched with three priorities: clearing up the economic mess, a green economy and an ambitious programme of political reform.

The economic mess now appears worse than ever, relative poverty has not diminished, debt has increased and public services have been savaged. The green deal failed and Osborne has been busy dismantling what progress we did make on the environment. Political reform? Don’t make me laugh. Fixed-term parliaments, that’s it.

OBVIOUS FAILURES

Apart from the obvious failures on voting reform and the Lords (a Liberal objective since 1911), party funding was not reformed. There was one constitutional innovation, the European Union Act, which provides – oh joy, deep joy – for a referendum on any transfer of powers to the European Union, which

“David’s assiduous praise of Danny Alexander cannot conceal how he became the third Tory in the Quad”

brings us neatly to the elephant in the room.

David Laws’ book was written before the referendum. He acknowledges that such was the difference in Conservative and Lib Dem views that it was agreed early on to say little or nothing

about the EU and for Clegg and Cameron to resolve any problems. Then in December 2011 Cameron apparently vetoed a new EU treaty (actually all he achieved was to isolate Britain while the other member states agreed a treaty amongst themselves). David says this caused a row between Clegg and Cameron because he didn’t agree the so-called veto with Clegg first.

David does not mention that Clegg was ringing round European leaders before the European Council meeting to persuade them to support Cameron’s ideas. He doesn’t tell us that Clegg supported Cameron on the radio when news of the ‘veto’ broke on the Today programme. Clegg did finally row back after pressure from Paddy Ashdown and Shirley Williams, but David doesn’t tell us. This was a classic example of something Clegg regretted later, much too late, when he said to David, “I tried too hard to show that coalition could work”, when he should have been using his own veto on Tory policies.

Indeed it was not Clegg but his wife Miriam who told Cameron over dinner that he should stop lecturing other European leaders and try to influence them more. Clegg did have the prescience in 2012 to warn Cameron that his ‘strategy’ of renegotiation followed by referendum was hugely risky and could backfire. Laws reveals that later on Paddy urged Nick to support the call for a referendum.

David does not come across as a great fan of the European Union himself. He admits that he repeatedly argued for the party to talk about anything but the EU when fighting European Parliament elections. He was unenthusiastic about Clegg taking on Farage in 2014. He was certain that parading our support for the EU was unpopular with voters.

David, it’s that attitude among supposedly pro-European politicians that has landed us in the Brexit mess we have today. While europhobes spread their lies for three decades, our leaders never hesitated to join in the cheap and popular denigration of the European Union and failed to make the case for it. Two months in 2016 could not make up for years of failure.

Laws’ book gives us an insider’s view of life in government but that is perhaps its weakness. The sheer pressure of being in government changes the writer’s perspective, the electorate at a distance, the party a nuisance and the long-term too difficult. Did we change British politics or did we achieve any more than changing the faces at the cabinet table? It doesn’t look like it now.

David Grace is a member of the Liberator Collective. *Coalition*, by David Laws. Biteback Publishing £17.99.

LEARN TO LOVE THE LISTS

Energlyn Churchill says Welsh Liberal Democrats face an existential crisis after yet again neglecting the vital regional list assembly seats

My optimistic assessment of the Welsh Liberal Democrats' Assembly election prospects proved to be just that (*Liberator* 377). While the 'Liberal hearse' was turned away, our modest Assembly presence now consists of Kirsty Williams and her huge personal vote in Brecon and Radnorshire. It is a scenario that I suspect is common to the eight parliamentary seats that we managed to hold in the 2015 bloodbath, and it is certainly not a model for future success.

I've tried to gather my thoughts on what a model of future success might look like, and highlight some of the painful realities that have led to our current circumstances.

The grim reality is that no one really knows what the Welsh Liberal Democrats are for. While that is a problem that is common to the Lib Dems as a whole, it was keenly felt by the Welsh Party last May, and it is the primary reason for our appalling performance at the ballot box.

We have persistently failed to articulate what Liberalism is, choosing instead to define ourselves in terms of what we are not rather than what we are. We can no longer rely on protest and tactical votes, popular local candidates and single issue time-limited campaigns. The tarnish of coalition and the rise of Ukip have put an end to that. After last May's Welsh result, we face nothing less than an existential crisis that we can only hope to fend off by developing a compelling narrative of what the Welsh Liberal Democrats are for. That narrative needs to be underpinned and articulated through key policy areas that we make our own, and which bring Liberalism to life.

The space to discuss the unique selling point of Liberalism is limited within the context of this article, but to me the 'three Es' seem obvious contenders: education, economy and environment.

Education is particularly intrinsic to Liberalism, and in spite of widespread underachievement the education debate is a muted discussion in Welsh politics. There is political territory to be gained, and we need to rebrand ourselves as the 'party of education' in Wales. Kirsty's unexpected, but broadly welcomed, appointment as Minister for Education provides us with the perfect opportunity to do this. This fortuitous development allows us to maintain relevance at a time when we should be irrelevant, a point not lost on a number of grumbling backbench Labour AMs. The number of Welsh Liberal Democrat education policies that get

implemented will be a critical barometer of Kirsty's success or failure. It is absolutely essential that she 'owns' the education portfolio and uses her platform to convey an unashamedly Liberal message on education to build a distinctive identity for our party.

Like Scottish parliamentarians, Welsh Assembly members are elected through a mix of traditional constituencies and regional lists. We fought a campaign that focused on winning or holding constituencies. In what are always challenging financial constraints, precious resource was targeted at the 'big four' of Brecon and Radnorshire, Ceredigion, Cardiff Central and Montgomeryshire. Other local parties were essentially left to their own devices.

REGIONS, NOT CONSTITUENCIES

In almost every assembly election since devolution we have followed the erroneous belief that, if we fail to win in the constituency, it will translate into enough votes on the regional list to see us home. This assumes

"The grim reality is that no one really knows what the Welsh Liberal Democrats are for"

that our residual vote holds up in the other constituencies in the region and that voters vote the same way on the regional list. Neither is true. Our list vote has always been lower than our constituency vote and our residual vote crumbled in the aftermath of the Coalition. Kirsty's personal vote in Brecon and Radnorshire didn't translate into Lib Dem votes on the Mid

and West Wales regional ballot, for instance, and when you also throw Ukip into the equation the outcome was always going to be one of near annihilation.

Building up a Lib Dem vote across a region is considerably easier than it is within a constituency. It doesn't matter whether it is sufficiently concentrated in one constituency or another, just so long as there is enough of a vote across the region to deliver at least one assembly member. However, the fundamental problem is that current regional structures are not effective enough to implement a credible core vote strategy on their patch.

Within each of the five assembly regions there are several local parties. In my own region of South Wales East we have three. While they are part of the Assembly Electoral Regional Committee, its sole function seems to be to run the process for electing regional candidates. Its role in coordinating campaigning is minimal, and it lies dormant for the two or three years prior to an assembly election, only awaking from its slumber when we need to elect regional candidates.

In reality there is very little campaign or fundraising

coordination between the three local parties, which operate independently of each other without any common campaigning themes or strategy. We usually find ourselves in the ludicrous situation where the lead regional candidate goes cap in hand to members across the region to fund the regional campaign while local parties are doing exactly the same to cover constituency candidate costs and deposits.

ANNOYED MEMBERS

Such terrible planning not only causes tensions between regional and local candidates, it also annoys members who are left wondering why they are being asked to dip into their pockets twice. If our current structures do not allow us to ask our members for donations effectively, then they sure as hell don't allow us to fight a coordinated regional election campaign either. With modest memberships and a limited base of activists to draw upon, our current local parties are not fit for purpose.

We need to put parochialism aside. If we are to maintain a credible presence between elections, and fight credible assembly election campaigns, we need local parties that are capable of providing the necessary strategic direction and regional focus. I believe that the only way in which we can do this is to merge existing local parties into larger regional ones that mirror the assembly regions. Within such a structure local constituency branches could continue to be responsible for selecting council, assembly and parliamentary candidates, but the regional party would take a central role in campaign strategy, regional targeting and key messages.

We need to learn to love the list, as any future revival is likely to be built on our ability to get regional assembly members elected. Instead of prioritising constituency candidates over their list counterparts, we need to turn this on its head, at least in those regions where our chance of winning a constituency seat is nil. It is to our lead regional candidates that we should look for local leadership. It is their name that we should be promoting across all the local papers, through radio and television and through social media. People should be left in no doubt as to who they are voting for on the regional ballot paper in the future. It takes time to build a candidate's profile, which is why winnable constituencies usually elect their prospective candidates sooner rather than later. We need to embrace that approach and recruit our list candidates for the next assembly election now.

Whatever path the party takes going forward, the human capital needed to make it happen is critical.

The loss of four assembly members has also meant the loss of party staff. When the painful round of redundancies and restructuring is complete we will probably be left with no more than two members of staff. We have always been a party that relies on our volunteers and activists, but now we need to ask for more. With critical elections due at the end of this year for key party committees those putting themselves forward have to be prepared to roll up their sleeves and take a more 'hands on' role than they have previously been used to. If ever there was a time to get all hands to the pump, it's now.

'Energlyn Churchill' is a Welsh Liberal Democrat who works in a politically-restricted post

PATRIOT GAMES

Dear Liberator,

Dr Johnson described patriotism as being the last refuge of scoundrels although he probably meant nationalism which didn't exist as a word in his lifetime. George Orwell distinguished patriots from nationalists by claiming that a patriot loved their country whereas a nationalist hated everyone else's.

In his article offshore centre (*Liberator* 378) Tom Barney fails to explain why patriotism demands a remain vote. He makes no attempt to query the patriotism of the brexiteers whose supporters include a considerable number of tax exile newspaper proprietors whose patriotism doesn't appear to stretch to paying taxes at the standard rate and seems about as genuine as the new found concern about the wages of lower paid workers expressed by brexiteers who complain about the red tape of employment regulations and appears to be an example of Dr Johnson's claim.

He mentions characteristics of what he refers to as Englishness, which will no doubt continue either in or out of the EU and are totally irrelevant to the campaign.

It is also not clear that there is a patriotic case for remaining in the EU and that largely focuses on whether Britain remains in the EU and has a considerable influence in the world or whether it remains on the sidelines with virtually no influence but it hardly makes a vote to remain an act of highest patriotism.

Andrew Hudson
Ulveston

MARKET PLACES

Dear Liberator,

I welcome Michael Meadocroft's call that we "swap mindless activism for arguing for a Liberal society" (*Liberator* 378). However, I must take issue with his claim that "[Liberalism] believes in 'the market where possible, the state where necessary.'"

This is a shorthand too far, because it can be read to imply that, where a market is possible, Liberals prefer it.

This is manifestly untrue. Markets are possible in both health and education, indeed they already exist and their share of provision is sadly growing. Being Liberals, we would not ban such private provision, but we prefer public provision. Similarly private provision has encroached into such areas as prisons, court services, and even public order, areas which surely should be the sole responsibility of the state.

Rather it is more true to say that Liberals believe in a mixed economy with a combination of direct provision by national and local government, the private sector, co-operatives, mutuals, not-for-profit-enterprises and charities, whichever seem most appropriate.

Whatever the provider we believe that employee participation should be facilitated, other 'stakeholders' represented and, where there are profits, these should be shared.

Peter Wrigley
Batley and Spen

OBITUARY: DAVID RENDEL

Nick Winch pays tribute to the former Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury

It was in the Victorian Corn Exchange, which he had been instrumental in getting re-opened as an Arts Centre in the market place of the town he had represented in Parliament for 12 years.

More than 300 Liberals and many from other parties and none gathered to celebrate the life of David Rendel. His charm, intelligence, determination, kindness and, above all, his dedication to Liberalism were honoured by both speakers and audience alike.

David, who died in May aged 67 after a battle with cancer, was born in Athens in 1949 in the house where General Metaxas had famously said “Oxi” (“No”) to the Italian request to invade Greece nine years earlier.

David was the son of a Times correspondent who, during the war, had worked with the Greek resistance in Crete and who was portrayed by Cyril Cusack in the film “Ill Met by Moonlight”.

After Eton and Oxford (where he won a rowing blue), he worked in finance departments of various energy companies and began his political career fighting Fulham in the 1979 and 1983 elections – increasing the Liberal share by 10% in the latter.

He moved to Newbury in 1986 when his wife Sue, whom he had met at Oxford, got a job as a GP. He became a district councillor the following year, continuing until 1995, although he often moved wards to fight and gain an additional seat. Selected to fight the 1987 general election, he also fought in 1992 when he received 37% of the vote. The following year, the newly-elected Conservative MP Judith Chaplin died in a routine medical operation. The Newbury by-election broke a wide range of political records and the career of Norman Lamont. David secured a majority of 22,055 votes.

For his years as a local MP, David left an impressive legacy: the Newbury by-pass (the battle with protesters was a feature of his early years in Parliament), a new hospital, the return of Greenham Common to public land, a new cinema and, in later years, the abolition of fox hunting, which led to his seat being targeted in 2005 by members of the Countryside Alliance, whose hostility confirmed Oscar Wilde’s observation of the hunting community as being “the unspeakable”.

On a national level, he was a front-bench spokesman on local government and, from 1997-99 on social security. He led the largest rebellion against cuts to single-parent benefits and led opposition to benefit cuts for those with disabilities. He championed the SERPS fiasco, forcing the government to restore the pension rights of widows at a cost of £12bn. He later served as vice-chair of

the Public Accounts Committee, a role perfectly suited to his analytical mind and attention to detail.

He expressed reservations about Paddy Ashdown’s plans for closer co-operation with Blair’s Labour Party and stood for the party leadership in 1999, showing faith in the party as a stand-alone force. He came last behind the victorious Charles Kennedy; while his campaign was never likely to succeed, he felt that, as being party leader was the best way to shape public and party policy this was his chance to have a go. The 2001 Parliament saw him as higher education spokesman, leading the party’s opposition to tuition fees and top-up fees and his proudest moment was joining colleagues in opposing the Iraq War having marched with thousands of Liberal Democrats in the great anti-war demonstration in central London.

Historically a Tory constituency, Newbury Tories eroded his majority and in 2005, massive financial support from Central Office and an invasion of anti-Rendel pro-hunt campaigners saw the Conservatives regain the seat after 12 years.

David’s fate was not helped by a Lib Dem administration on West Berkshire Council which was running out of steam and at odds with itself, but David was too loyal to criticise his colleagues and suffered from the public disillusion with the council.

After his defeat, he gained a seat on the council and fought Newbury again in 2010. He was said to have turned down a peerage, but remained active on the Federal Executive and after the 2010 election was the only FE member to oppose the Coalition, saying it did not go far enough in guaranteeing electoral reform. He was consistently at loggerheads with Nick Clegg and called on Clegg to stand down after the 2014 Euro-election disaster, but typically, this was done with courtesy and in private. Not for David the shambles of an attempted coup.

Even after a diagnosis of, and treatment for cancer, he carried on campaigning, fighting Somerton and Frome in 2015, but his cancer returned and about a year after polling day, he died at his home in Berkshire.

Shortly before his death, he returned to Athens, visited the house in which he had been born and met Metaxas’ grand-daughter who remembered the Rendels and the time when David was born. His life – a full one devoted to others and to the causes he so passionately believed in – had come full circle.

Nick Winch is a member of the Liberator Collective



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The Beast: riding the rails and dodging narcos on the migrant trail by Oscar Martinez Verso. £9.99

Imagine waves of wretched people risking their lives to flee violence that has devastated their communities; people who are swindled and abused by traffickers, rejected and demonised by the inhabitants of countries they pass through: Syrians? No, Central Americans.

Oscar Martinez is a gifted and brave Salvadorian journalist who joined the wave of Central Americans escaping a drug gang-fuelled conflict that makes sleepy towns in Honduras statistically as deadly as the Middle East. If you happen to witness something you shouldn't, your whole family will be killed, just as if you are a shop-keeper who cannot pay the mobsters their protection money. No wonder they leave everything behind in the hope of sneaking into the USA to find back-breaking, undocumented work.

Martinez joined migrants on their hair-raising journey eight times, including risking his life to cling to the top of train carriages for ten hours at a time in freezing weather. Literally thousands fall to their deaths, but, as with the savage violence endured by the migrants, the Mexican authorities don't bother to investigate. Police and army are so compromised by their narco"connections, or so afraid, they look away as drug gangs kidnap, torture, rape and murder.

Narco members trick migrants into revealing if they have family in the States, imprisoning them until their relatives pay between \$500-1,000 – a vast sum for someone picking strawberries in a Southern California field. Mexicans living on the migrants' route prey upon the strangers, deceiving, stealing, and raping eight out of 10 women making the journey; six out of 10 men are sexually assaulted. Martinez says the "parasites" along the way do so with impunity, knowing no illegal migrant will file a complaint or stay around to be a witness.

Train drivers slow down so bandits can climb on and steal from the Central Americans; train crews also extort, and helpful locals point the travellers in the wrong direction, into the arms of kidnappers. Police hand



REVIEWS

migrants back to their kidnappers, should they escape. A kindly old lady selling tortillas produces a gun and herds migrant children into the grip of the notorious Los Zetas gang.

Young women are kidnapped and trafficked into prostitution, and people are forced to become drug mules to get the gangs' product into the USA. What is hard to digest is that many young people from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are escaping such violent communities that prostitution and drug smuggling don't seem so bad. A boy who collects fares on buses in Guatemala City is told by the ruling Mara Salvatruchas gang that he must shoot bus drivers who won't give the gang protection money. When he refuses, he is shot.

The chink of light in all of this misery is the decency of Catholic lay people, priests and nuns who provide shelter, food and somewhere to wash to the thousands making the perilous journey. Certainly, there are church authorities taking donations from drug gangs, in exchange for their silence. But there are also everyday Catholic heroes, risking their lives to be good Samaritans. Add to this tally of saints the 40 Mexican mayors and dozens of journalists who have been killed while trying to expose the complicity of their legal, security and political ruling elite.

While drug gangs hold such an iron grip on the state in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras there is little hope anything will change. But part of the solution seems glaringly obvious, and it is tackling the demand rather than the supply end of the drug equation.

That means decriminalising some narcotics. Yet, it also means examining the despondency and degeneracy of North American and

European society that requires us to self-medicate to such an extent. Few politicians will wish to confront that vote-losing subject.

The book should be read by all those who want to build walls to exclude migrants, especially those who never leave the comfort of their limousines and private jets, and who believe they are "brave" and "tough" because they spout politically incorrect slogans. But, alas, reading or empathising isn't something the wall-builders do.

Rebecca Tinsley

Peace beyond Borders by Vijay Mehta Catapult, 2016. £9.99

Despite what most Brexiteers believed, the European Union has been a great success as a peace project. That is the central thesis of veteran Indian peace and justice campaigner Vijay Mehta's latest book, in which he argues that exporting the EU model to other parts of the world would help end conflicts. In fact, several other parts of the world have indeed been regionalising in recent decades, from South East Asia (ASEAN) to the Gulf Arab states (GCC) and South America (UNASUR). None has up till now gone as far in terms of economic let alone political integration as the EU, but they all acknowledge that they are stronger together.

The author looks at each continent or sub-continent in turn, seeing how cooperation has overcome divisions and historic rivalries, as well as championing the potential of further cooperation. This strengthening of a multipolar global reality is healthy, he believes, rather than the United States being the only super-power (as it became after the collapse of the Soviet Union), acting like some sort of world

policeman. In a final section, Mehta acknowledges that there are nationalist forces resisting the sharing of sovereignty, just as within some countries (including the UK and Spain) there are forces that want more regional autonomy or even independence. Scotland, of course, may well re-examine the case for independence if Brexit is now successfully implemented, preferring to remain within the EU. Reading this book one can only lament that just over half the voters of Britain did not understand the elements of peace and hope inherent in the European project. Had some been able to read it before they cast their vote, maybe it would have changed their minds.

Jonathan Fryer

In Sadness and Solidarity. Poetry from Wordshare Palewell Press. £5

Jane Sherwin, Camilla Reeve and Jenny Messer are part of Wordshare, a group of poets based in south west London. Their work reflects their commitment to human rights and the environment.

The 18 poems in their latest collection, *In sadness and solidarity*, cover subjects such as the Gaza Strip, Syria, Afghanistan, Sangatte, Homs and the legacy of the First War.

Even the most compassionate have become inured to human suffering,

partly because, as Sherwin's marvellous poem *Tahir Square* puts it, "sisters and brothers united/with their new technology in the new millennium".

News coverage, like carpet bombing, is so all invasive, all pervading, so intense,

that, although the technology brings us as close as it is possible, the deluge of coverage becomes too much, and the immediacy quickly becomes distancing, blunting our senses.

This collection acts as a personalised aide memoire to the atrocities and human disasters and failings, charting some of the grisly milestones of the past 100 years. Poetry, as it has for millennia, is the media which reawakens our senses, stirs our souls, and, at its best, delivers the punch to make us do something.

Wordshare want to do more than just arouse compassion for the plight of refugees, asylum seekers and survivors everywhere. But what can be done in a world of 60 million refugees, endless conflicts and disasters? As the end of *Tahir Square* reminds us, "how do you change a society from bottom up? / Desmond Tutu says 'like eating an elephant - bit by bit'".

Buy this slender volume, to remember and reconnect. Enquiries to: www.palewellpress.co.uk

Wendy Kyrle-Pope

Child Migration and Human Rights in a Golden Age by Jacqueline Bhabha Princeton University Press. 2016

This important but disturbing book presents some unpalatable truths about the wealthy white world's indifference or hostility toward immigrant children, even when they are alone and seeking refugee from conflict. Our laws offer protection to minors, in theory, but our actions imply we regard these children as dispensable, and "not really like our kids."

For instance, although schools in the UK must accept refugee children, they are reluctant for fear the newcomers will bring down the overall test scores. In theory, unaccompanied children have legal representation and shelter from the moment they arrive, but in practice children live on the street while different agencies pass them around, trying to decide how old they are and if they can be returned to their country of origin. Vast numbers of them simply vanish: in 2009 in one country alone, 173 disappeared. In another local authority area, 66 unaccompanied West African girls vanished, only to reappear as slaves in brothels in Italy.

The author describes a fundamental contradiction which imperils child migrants: while the state has an obligation toward vulnerable children, thanks to the International Convention of the Rights of the Child, we also expect the state to protect us against "threatening, unruly and uncontrolled outsiders," even if they are six years old. Bhabha is especially unimpressed by the US

authorities' attitude to children born in the US to immigrant parents, who are deported, against the best interests of the children, and despite the children's automatic right to American citizenship under the 14th Amendment.

In the name of keeping the family together, they are sent back to Central American nations where narco-criminals make daily life more deadly than Iraq or Syria. The fear or dislike of 'the other' trumps the 'family values' in which some American politicians wrapped themselves.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that each year 1.2m children are sold by their parents, or leave their home country alone, trying to escape drug gangs or conflict. They are trafficked into prostitution (79% of global trafficking, often girls), crime and sweatshops, or forced to become soldiers (mostly boys). They are coerced not just by physical force but through psychological pressure and manipulation by people who provide an abusive form of mentoring and, paradoxically, a survival structure.

Often the children are escaping violent or feckless parents. Once 'rescued' they find the institutions into which they are put not much better than the street. They have no right to a guardian to help them fight deportation to places where they will be unsafe, so they vanish. They also face bureaucrats who cannot grasp the dangers facing them back at 'home'. For instance, officials claim that children cannot face persecution because they are too insignificant as political actors to be targets.

Across the world there are 4.5m children growing up in refugee camps, some of them unaccompanied, and preyed upon by unscrupulous adults. They live in limbo, unable to settle down, never belonging. They have few educational opportunities, poor healthcare and nutrition, and few prospects. Yet, the current political discourse in the wealthy white world has made a fact-based conversation about immigration almost impossible. This is a problem requiring rational, long-term policy, coordinated internationally. What must happen before that occurs?

Rebecca Tinsley

Bagpuss (exhibition) Museum of Childhood

The Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green is one of London's gems and the perfect place to take children on a cold, wet day. You can laze in a deckchair and imagine you're on the beach while they play in the sandpit. But wait, you will want to wander around Clangers, Bagpuss & Co first. Through to October there is an exhibition of Smallfilms' wonderful creations. One wonders at the ingenuity of Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate as they brought their animations to life.

There are drawings and cut-outs from Ivor the Engine and Noggin the Nog; you'll meet Clangers, Pogles and Bagpuss and his friends, who have delighted children over more than four decades.

Oliver Postgate once wrote something for *Liberator*. I can't remember what or when, but think it was early 1980s and possibly about fox hunting - certain Young Liberal branches, inspired by Iain McNair, were big into sabbing to hounds in those days.

Although they were created in the 1960s and 70s, Smallfilms productions are essentially timeless. Who would guess that Bagpuss's Emily is Peter Firmin's daughter and not out of the first golden age of children's literature? Oliver Postgate would be delighted that fox hunting is now banned, but there are few such anachronisms (and of course, you can still ride to hounds, just don't hunt). Their environmentalism was way ahead of its time.

A small exhibition, befitting Smallfilms, for Bagpuss and cameras aside, most of it would fit into a suitcase, let alone a Froglet's top hat. Can that be said of today's productions? Enjoy. You'll leave whistling.

Clangers, Bagpuss & Co. runs until 9 October 2016 at the Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA.

Stewart Rayment



The Leeds Yellow Book: Essays on a Liberal Future for Leeds Beecroft Publications £7

I may not be the best person to review this, the sum total of my acquaintance with Leeds being having twice spent a few hours there for work-related conferences, but on other hand I carry no personal prejudices about what is best for the city.

Michael Meadowcroft, Elizabeth Bee and Ian MacFadyen have done something that as far as I know no other group of Liberal Democrats have - create a book length (just under 100 pages) publication on what their city could look like were a liberal approach applied to it.

Chapters range from policy ideas that might at least in part be applied in other conurbations through to Joanne Binns' moving account of how her efforts to improve community relations led to her becoming a victim of serious anti social behaviour.

The introduction states that in addition to being an argument for strengthened local government and specific policy ideas, "we wanted to produce a book of essays that demonstrate more intellectual rigour than is, alas, usual in politics today".

Producing a book at all on local liberal politics is fairly unusual. Hopefully others will follow the authors' example.

www.beecroftpublications.co.uk

Mark Smulian

The Conceit of Humanitarian Intervention by Rajan Menon OUP 2016

Does the international community exist outside the imagination of the UN, and a few academics and NGOs? Is humanitarian law worth the paper it is written on? Rajan Menon's book demolishes the notion that there is such a thing as global civil society and universal human rights. He argues that countries only intervene to help others when the costs and risks are not excessive and will not harm their national interests. He highlights the inconsistency of an 'international community' that turns a blind eye to the mass atrocities in Indonesia, Guatemala, Rwanda and Sudan, while intervening in Libya and Iraq. He also shows in distressing detail how useless and even counter-productive the efforts to nation-build in the wake of our interventions (Bosnia, Libya, Iraq) have been.

At the heart of his argument is what the philosopher John Gray calls it the myth of historical progress: the belief that history is linear, rather than cyclical. "Treaties and declarations and resolutions record states' agreement that the evil of mass atrocities must be extinguished," Menon writes. "But the signatories of these parchments have shown themselves unwilling to undertake concrete obligations with any degree of consistency."

Menon concludes that the global response to the Syrian refugee

crisis is proof the international community does not exist. With the exception of Germany, Canada and Sweden, wealthy countries are taking very few refugees, and he notes the reaction of oil-rich Gulf Arab countries who seem to have no interest in helping fellow Arab Muslims in need. Sadly, though, he fails to mention the deafening silence from 'brother' African countries when ethnic cleansing and genocide rages in the continent.

Another quibble with this fascinating book is the author's failure to discuss possible non-military interventions such as targeted smart sanctions. If he had explored the other options available, one might feel slightly more hopeful for the human race. As it is, he leaves us to ponder Gray's withering judgement: "Civilisation is natural for humans, but so is barbarism."

Rebecca Tinsley

On Global Justice by Mathias Risse Princeton University Press 2012

In this broad survey of theories of justice, Mathias Risse, a professor of philosophy and public policy at Harvard, tries to reconcile competing opinions on who we owe our duties of justice to. He explains there are two main camps: statisticians who think we are only obliged to others within our state; and cosmopolitans who think justice extends to everyone equally. Risse finds neither of these positions satisfactory and presents his own theory. He believes the state is a special unit of justice and there are strong claims of redistribution among its people. But there is also a global justice which is founded on common humanity, common ownership of the earth and membership in the global order. He looks at the practical implications of these grounds of justice, and I would like to highlight two which are relevant to our EU referendum.

In discussing immigration, Risse considers how the ground of original ownership of the earth affects proportionate use of the world's resources. Having argued there is a collective responsibility to make sure all people have their basic needs met, he then looks at

what happens next if there are parts of the world which are under- and over-used. Use is defined as the per-capita use rate of common resources. He argues immigration should be permitted until the level of use is very similar in all states, and there should be global coordination.

This is a sensible idea, but the calculation needs to be a lot more nuanced. Being rich in raw materials is of little importance when you consider global migration routes. The key factor which attracts migrants is the quality of a state's institutions to make good use of the resources it has and distribute benefits throughout the population. Requiring migration to a resource-rich but institution-poor state is unlikely to help it develop. Further, a popular country like the UK may be relatively over-using its natural resources, but if its institutions are efficient and capable of generating more work, should it be permitted to deny entry to economic migrants?

More consideration also needs to be given to what happens to migrants when their sending state then becomes a suitable receiving state. For example, following the migration to western countries in the EU after the accession of the eastern bloc, what happens now the eastern countries are becoming more wealthy? Should they be required to receive migrants from other states, or would their own returning nationals have a higher claim? This should make us think about whether free movement of peoples within Europe should be used to impose tough migration rules on non-EU nationals.

The second way this book is directly applicable to the EU is when Risse considers the interaction between justice and trade. He finds the literature shows trade liberalisation has benefited the world economy, including people in developing countries. The discussion becomes very interesting when he looks at the link between human rights and trade. This is a foundational belief of the EU, which makes membership (in part) conditional on states meeting basic human rights conditions. He thinks that because states must realise human rights, they must adopt policies which foster development, which include trade liberalisation.

This may suggest the EU is harming human rights by restricting membership of the trade bloc. However, Risse also acknowledges trade liberalisation may have little effect if a state's institutions are weak. This supports the EU's policy of requiring states to be stable and open before they may enter the trade group. The benefits of trade liberalisation should also make us consider whether a state which removes itself from free trade arrangements is impeding the human rights of its own population.

This work presents a fresh vision of how our common humanity and shared ownership of the Earth mean we all owe basic duties to each other. Risse argues there is a core of redistributive justice that all people participate in. His work provides many interesting points to consider as we face the possibility of leaving an organisation founded on sharing resources.

Eleanor Healy-Birt

Liberator's blog

***The blog by the editorial
collective of Liberator***

<http://liberator-magazine.blogspot.co.uk/>

I write these words on the terrace of the Hotel Splendide, Antibes. The British people, egged on by liars, charlatans and a buffoon in an ill-fitting Donald Trump fright wig, may have voted to pull out of Europe, but I'll be damned if I am going to.

Judging by last Tuesday's Manchester Guardian, which a fellow guest kindly passed on to me yesterday evening, the old country has not yet returned to its senses. In particular, a woman whom I swear I remember as a clerk at one of the Bank of Rutland's less important branches looks set to be elected leader of the Conservative Party and thus our prime minister.

Meanwhile, the entire shadow cabinet (with the exception of 'Semtex' McDonnell and a fellow from Leicester called Ashworth) has resigned, only to find it cannot agree about who should be its unity candidate. The corridors of Westminster ring with their scuffles, curses and brawling, but no winner emerges.

I have been known to say harsh things about the Scottish Nationalists, but I am forced to admit that they now appear a beacon of good sense in a naughty world. They are talking of holding a second referendum north of the border, and who can blame them? We are thinking of having one in Rutland ourselves.

Next spring, be sure to search your ponds and watercourses for faragespaw and get rid of them of it. Left undisturbed, it will metamorphose into full-grown farages. These froglike creatures hop about making a thorough nuisance of themselves in pubs and can frequently be heard expressing rude and reactionary opinions. Why, only the other day one turned up in the European Parliament! It was last seen being chased down the street by a posse of angry Belgians armed with butterfly nets.

Where are they now, those Liberal Democrat titans of the 2010 parliament? Bob Russell, as is well known, takes visitors on tours of his beloved Colchester. Before I left for the Riviera I travelled to that fine Essex town to join him on one I learnt a great deal about its history (who knew that the Plantagenets were around at the same time as the dinosaurs?) and the Suffolk Police were very good at putting us right when we got a little lost.

Paul Burstow is now a professor of public health or polling day organisation or something like that, while Norman Baker has set his sights upon the hit parade. Nick Clegg, I learnt after some research, is still a member of parliament.

I must also record that I ran into Steve Webb the other day. "You must have a lot on your plate," I told him. "I am always reading of your having taken up some new job or other." He confided in me: "The thing is, I need the money for my future. I know it's silly, but I never got round to taking out a pension plan."

Lord Bonkers' Diary

Looking back on the affair, I should have entered a firm nolle prosequi when Freddie and Fiona telephoned me proposing a barbecue at the Hall as a 'thank you' to everyone who worked on the side of the angels in the recent unpleasantness. However, I dithered and, sensing weakness, they put Ryan Coetzee on the line. I suggested various alternative ways of raising the morale of the troops, such as a party at the Smithson & Greaves

Brewery, but he was adamant: "I'm telling you, man, there's nothing like a braai."

So it was that, a few days later, the great and good of the Remain campaign made their way up my drive. The Rutland weather, as it so often does, obliged with a warm, still evening. All in all, it was a glittering occasion.

My doubts reawakened when I learnt that Coetzee proposed barbecuing a whole wildebeest to feed the growing throng. "Are you sure you will be able to cook the thing through?" I asked. "Of course I will, man," he returned. "We just need to get a good blaze going."

That he certainly did, aided by a pallet of unsold copies of Ad Lib that I had arranged to be sent up from Great George Street. It's just that, as I did point out at the time, he had sited that blaze terribly close to the Hall.

You have no doubt read what happened next in the newspapers. So let me just pay tribute to the doctors and nurses of the Royal Rutland Infirmary for coping with so many cases of food poisoning, and I can honestly say that the Rutland Fire Brigade excelled itself.

Let me also praise the Well-Behaved Orphans: armed with buckets, they formed a human chain to bring water from my ornamental lake before the professionals arrived. Most of the water they brought was poured over Coetzee and Freddie and Fiona rather than the blaze, it has to be admitted, but I did not like to Say Anything. (Incidentally, the outside cuts of the wildebeest were rather good.)

Do not mourn the damage to the Hall too deeply, gentle reader. To be honest with you, I have never much liked that wing. As I sit here gazing out at the blue waters of the Mediterranean, I have my plans for its rebuilding laid out before me among the breakfast things.

I decided against employing the services of an architect – those fellows are full of the silliest ideas and do sting one terribly. Instead I have drawn up the design myself, with the help of a builder from the village. The busts of great Liberals (Mill, Masterman, Elizabeth Shields...) set amongst the castellations of the roof are, I flatter myself, a happy touch.

As to the barbecue: after deep refection I have convinced myself that poor Coetzee would have made no better a job of organising a piss up in a brewery.

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