

liberator

Massive erection in Brighton

We're staying here
until the constitutional
amendments
are over!



- 🌟 Time to stop the compromises - David Howarth
- 🌟 The Theresa May I knew - Norman Baker
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Liberator Publications
Flat 1, 24 Alexandra Grove
London N4 2LF
England

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Liberator is printed by Lithosphere
Studio 1, 146 Seven Sisters Road, LONDON N7 7PL

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🔊 was founded in 1970 and is produced by a voluntary editorial collective

🔊 acts as a forum for debate among radical liberals in all parties and none

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COMMENTARY

BEYOND THE PARTY OF 'BACK IN'

Tim Farron's rapid move after the referendum to turn the 'party of in' into the 'party of back in' was a smart move that identified the Liberal Democrats as unambiguously pro-European and the natural home of much of the 48%.

As former MP David Howarth explains in this issue, the 48% contains ample people to constitute a substantial Lib Dem core vote without wasting resources on trying to cultivate those who oppose the party's fundamental values.

But what does being the party of 'remain' mean beyond the short term? It's important to be the party that opposes Brexit for as long as there is a viable possibility of preventing it, but the Lib Dems are not in control of events and must start thinking about acceptable and unacceptable Brexits too.

Unless some way is found to overturn the referendum by a general election, a second vote or in parliament - and with the Tories and Labour both split those paths are littered with obstacles - sooner or later politics will move from leaving to what sort of 'leave' happens.

A continuing loud angry noise from 'remain' supporters is needed to press those who want to negotiate a 'soft Brexit' to hold off the Tory and Ukip hardliners and headbangers who want to leave the single market, end immigration and tell the rest of the world to get stuffed.

MPs and peers can expect to vote on Article 50, perhaps on the process of reaching a deal with the EU, and ultimately on whatever terms are secured.

While voting for the status quo will be fine as an initial statement, if Brexit cannot be prevented the party needs to be clear what it considers a tolerable deal with the EU.

Some obvious red lines are the four freedoms of the single market and maintenance of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Voting on these matters could get interesting. Those Tories who imagine a world of de-regulated free trade in which the UK still accesses the single market but also strikes deals elsewhere are at least outward looking, however misguided.

To win the referendum though they had to make a Faustian pact with nationalists and racists whose chief concern was stopping immigration, and in not a few cases trying to find a way of throwing out foreign nationals already here.

Those two outlooks cannot co-exist for long on the same side and one or other Brexit supporters group will be disappointed and at the other's throat, with some sort of Tory split at least possible.

The Lib Dems will also need to think about what sort

of UK (or remnant of the UK) they want and how to get it.

This country has already become a nastier, more insular place after a victory for Brexit - even if some of the bigots among the 52% dressed this up as concern for theoretical concepts of sovereignty - with a post-referendum spike in hate crime and in people from non-white and non-British backgrounds being made to feel unwelcome.

The referendum revealed the scale of support for some revolting and illiberal views. The Lib Dems should resist chasing short term populist votes and place themselves firmly on the 'drawbridge down' side of politics, where 48% of the population can be found, many more than have ever voted for the party.

APPROACH WITH CAUTION

Commenting on the Labour leadership battle might attract an accusation of intrusion on private grief, but it's hard to see Labour holding together and Liberal Democrats should be thinking about the possible consequences.

If Jeremy Corbyn is re-elected how could the 172 MPs who supported a 'no confidence' vote in him simply retract this and say they are willing to work under Corbyn and see him as prime minister after all? They would look idiots.

If Owen Smith wins, people who were on the far left of Labour anyway may well resume their customary position of waving placards on the sidelines, but those who have joined because of Corbyn would find a party in which he had just been beaten a very uncomfortable place.

Talk of a Labour split is premature and indeed something even worse, from Labour's point of view, could transpire in which both sides remain in the party but occupy themselves knocking lumps out of each other, rendering it politically ineffectual and publicly disrespected.

Care is needed with any split. Nobody in their right mind who went through the seat sharing out process of the Liberal-SDP Alliance could possibly want to repeat this, and if some separate party does emerge from Labour there should be a careful assessment of what it is before Liberal Democrats have anything to do with it.

It's often forgotten now that one factor that eased the formation of the Coalition in 2010 was the authoritarianism of the Brown government. Labour was the party of identity cards and 42 days detention without trial, and neither side in its current disputes shows much sign of prizing liberty.

RADICAL BULLETIN

MONEY NO OBJECT

A Liberal Democrat campaign with ample funding? It happened during the referendum, not that many noticed.

Some £4m was donated to the party to support the 'Remain' campaign, £2m of it from David Sainsbury (Liberator 379), sometime backer of both the original and Owenite SDPs.

For once therefore, money was not a problem, but these donations resulted in less value than they might have because Lib Dem HQ still treats local parties as branch offices.

Some local parties were taken completely by surprise by the arrival of poster boards less than seven days before polling day, when they consequently had no opportunity to find volunteers to put them up.

They were equally surprised by random deliveries of boxes of leaflets, whether or not they had the capacity to deliver them, though many will have helped towards local recycling targets.

Local parties had hoped to get some funding for effective leaflets showing why popular local Lib Dems (former MPs and prominent councillors for example) were arguing for Remain.

Instead they were sent quantities of nationally produced leaflets saying little more than "Tim Farron says that this is a most important election." Whoever did the cut and paste job failed to notice that the referendum was not an election.

Those who received these missives may have known little about Farron, let alone been willing to base their vote on his professed opinion that the referendum was 'an important election'.

Supposedly stronger constituencies saw the outside pages of their local paper covered with a paid advert saying little more than the Lib Dems favoured 'Remain'.

There was nothing in these adverts in the name of people who might have been trusted and credible locally, and no good reasons given for voting Remain. The adverts were as poor as those in the general election.

The party's recovery - despite some modest good news in local by-elections - will not take off until it learns how to campaign again. The new director of campaigns and elections Shaun Roberts - whose appointment was universally welcomed - has been there too short a time to make a difference, but once in harness should be allowed to change things without being subject to control by those at HQ who ran the flawed general election and referendum campaigns.

MARSHALLING RESOURCES

Richard Wainwright was a famously radical Liberal MP and would no doubt be turning in his grave at the fate of think tank he founded.

The Centre for Reform was created by Wainwright in 1992. After his death in 2003, multimillionaire Paul Marshall, former SDP candidate for Fulham, stepped in to finance it.

He changed its name to Centre Forum and although it drifted well to the right in Lib Dem terms it was still visibly affiliated with the party.

After his defeat in Yeovil last year David Laws became Centre Forum's director and it has now morphed into the Education Policy Institute.

Marshall has left the Lib Dems, as he is thought to consider Tim Farron a dangerous lefty. He was a prominent backer of Vote Leave, complete with an ill-judged appearance on the BBC's Question Time, when he suggested that vast numbers of people from Africa would pour into the EU by informing each other of its benefits on their mobile phones.

It was kind of Marshall to finance a job creation scheme for his old Orange Book sidekick Laws, since relatively little of his money came the Lib Dems' way when he was a member.

He donated £100,000 when Charles Kennedy (for whom he was once a researcher) was leader, but most of his cash went into Centre Forum, which became a vehicle for pushing the party in an 'Orange Book' economic liberal direction, the fruits of which can be seen in last year's general election result.

Thus has Wainwright's creation ended up being run by a Brexit supporter and someone who is about as right wing as one can be and still be a Lib Dem, with a narrow remit well away from his original concept of a Lib Dem-aligned general think tank.

PENSIONED OFF

There are three mysteries about Zahida Manzoor. Why did Nick Clegg waste a rare Lib Dem life peerage on her, why did Tim Farron eject Mike German from the role to make her the party's spokesperson for work and pensions and why has she now resigned from the Lib Dem benches?

A statement earlier this summer noted that Manzoor had resigned for the cross benches as she was "unhappy with the direction of the party's travel since the result of the referendum"

This followed Emma Nicholson's perplexing resignation over Tim Farron's response to the referendum (Liberator 379).

Manzoor went to the Lords only in September 2013, and her appointment caused bafflement (Liberator 361) as she was unknown in the party, including in her local party, but was reputed to be a personal friend of the Cleggs.

She was someone who could reasonably be made a peer, having had a serious background in public life as a previous legal services ombudsman for England and Wales. But her lack of party connections made her an

odd choice.

Manzoor had barely been appointed when she considered running for Lords' group leader when Tom McNally stood down in 2013, though she ultimately did not.

Her moment came in 2015 when Farron, presumably seeking to up the party's diversity count, made a lot of appointments without reference to the group in the Lords.

Manzoor was given the DWP brief, despite German having been awarded the role only months earlier, and her having little experience of this notoriously difficult brief.

She did work hard, though this subject area consumed a large proportion of the Lords' meagre research resources.

One of Manzoor's last acts as a Lib Dem was to attend the parliamentary awayday, where others debated party policy, direction and strategy.

Attendees say she remained largely silent during this, but days later resigned with her rambling statement about the party not going in the right direction.

THE COMPANY THEY KEEP

Remember Mark Gettleston? He was thrown off Norman Lamb's 2015 leadership campaign along with Gavin Grant when it emerged that information from the party membership list, issued to both candidates, had found its way to an external polling company, which phoned members to ask questions designed to put Tim Farron in a bad light (*Liberator* 373).

Grant was later cleared of breaking party rules and news reports say Gettleston was similarly cleared, though *Liberator's* request last winter for confirmation was not answered.

But who is this on the list of officers supplied to the Electoral Commission by Vote Leave?

Step forward Mark Gettleston, who stands out as a lone Lib Dem among the usual Tory and Ukip activists who ran this campaign. Nothing in the description suggests he has left the party.

Gettleston's entry states that he was "an adviser on microtargetting and direct communications to several [political action committees], senate and governor campaigns in the [US] 2014 midterm elections".

Curiously, it does not say for which party.

PRETTY VACANT

A party HQ email headed in bright red 'CONFIDENTIAL – NOT TO BE PASSED ON' naturally quickly found its way to *Liberator*.

This was an appeal to find candidates for 47 English seats should a snap general election happen.

These seats would not be on anyone's winnable list, but the introduction from Arfan Bhatti, head of diversity, candidates and talent support, was interesting.

It said: "As you will be aware the Federal Executive took a decision on 26 June immediately after the Referendum to make immediate preparations for a snap general election.

"A significant aspect of this is candidate selections and as such the English Party has already selected at great speed well over 300 candidates all over England."

So it can be done. Readers may recall the row in the

winter of 2014-15 when the general election campaign team were aghast to find that hundreds of seats still had no PPC and yet the English party insisted it had to follow cumbersome processes rather than parachute in candidates, as had been the practice at previous general elections (*Liberator* 369).

In early 2015 speed in this matter was deemed quite impossible. Not so now. Bhatti admits: "In many cases a name on the ballot paper is all that is required", which is what people were trying to convince the candidates committee of in 2015.

VOTE OFTEN

Chief executive Tim Gordon tried to extend his power yet further this summer by seeking a voting place for himself on every party committee, a privilege not even Tim Farron enjoys.

This was proceeding through the governance review when it was spotted and stopped by Federal Executive members Chris White and Caron Lindsay.

For this act of lese majeste, they are no doubt off Gordon's Christmas card list.

RED BENCHES RESTIVE

The contest to replace Jim Wallace as leader of the Lib Dem peers should be resolved just before conference in a contest between chief whip Dick Newby and former MEP Robin Teverson.

There was nothing sinister to Wallace's departure, as he pointed out, he has been an MP or peer for 33 years, during most of which he has had arduous weekly journeys to and from London and Scotland.

Newby is expected to stand down as chief whip whatever the result of the leadership election, and Judith Jolly is talked of a successor, although there is pressure for an elected chief whip.

There has been unhappiness in the Lords group over poor communication and a feeling that it had little influence during the coalition period when members were expected to abandon their normal role of scrutinising legislation in favour becoming uncritical lobby fodder.

There is also concern that the group has very little public profile despite holding the balance of power in the Lords, and that both government funding and peers' contributions have mostly been handed over to the party so that there is little to support peers' work in holding the government to account.

GRIMY HANDS

Turmoil continues in the Young Liberals (who still haven't finished their rebrand from 'Liberal Youth') with yet more resignations from an executive that has now lost well over half of its members in the space of a year.

One former YL/LY member is self-described 'classical liberal' Darren Grimes, who joined the Conservatives last year.

Though his departure prompted much handwringing from his fellow classical liberals about alleged intolerance towards their views having driven Grimes away, it would appear he has accomplished a remarkable feat of fund raising.

Press reports in August said his one-man 'BeLeave' campaign against remaining in the EU received a donation of £625,000 from the official Vote Leave campaign just days before the referendum.

TIME TO STOP THE COMPROMISES

David Howarth says the Liberal Democrats need a core vote and it's useless to be frightened of being seen to represent specific interests

Last year Mark Pack and I published a pamphlet entitled 'Building a Core Vote for the Liberal Democrats'. Its thrust was that the party's main weakness has been a failure to develop a core vote, voters who will support us regardless of temporary political fads and fashions.

Estimates of the proportion of the electorate who identify strongly with the party vary, but according to the best, it fell to around 1% in 2015. The core votes of other parties are not vast - something like 8% for the Conservatives and 11% for Labour, but their core votes, and those of Ukip and the SNP, are considerably larger than ours as a proportion of their total votes.

Too much of our support, even at a catastrophically low 8%, was made up of transitory or tactical voters. Our thesis was, and is, that if we are to survive as a party, to get back to something like our previous levels of support and this time to stay there, we need to build a much stronger core vote.

The obvious question to ask is where we might find it. That breaks down into two issues: why have we failed to generate a core vote, and how might we succeed?

Two reasons stand out; first, many people in the party do not want one; and second, our campaigning methods get in the way.

The first might seem surprising. Why would a party not want a high loyal core vote? But one of the most common reactions to our pamphlet from those who rejected its conclusions was precisely that it is somehow illiberal to develop a core vote. Their argument was essentially that core voters are people who support a party for reasons of class or selfish pecuniary interest and we are not that sort of party.

REACTED WITH HORROR

In the wake of the EU referendum, when Tim Farron made a pitch for the party to become the voice of the 48% of the voters who had voted remain, a move entirely in accordance with the goal of raising our core vote, some members reacted with horror, claiming that we were committing ourselves to supporting the interests of a metropolitan elite, abandoning the poor and the northern.

But this is a misunderstanding of what a core vote is. The core votes of the SNP and Ukip are higher than ours but are not obviously based on class or pecuniary interests. They are based on a set of values. We reject those values, which centre on nationalism, but that does not mean we should reject the very idea of voting on the basis of strongly shared values.

Even the core votes of Labour and the Conservatives contain voters who are attracted by what they perceive as those parties' values and not just by perceived class interests. We say Liberal Democrats should be aiming

at a core vote based primarily on an identification with our values.

As for the 48%, the argument that speaking for pro-Europeans means pandering to the metropolitan elite does not stand up to some basic arithmetic. The number of working class remain voters (in the sense of 'social grades C2DE') was in all likelihood larger than the number of upper middle and middle class ('AB') remain voters. That is because the electorate contains far more C2DE voters than AB voters and their greater number more than makes up for the lower proportion of C2DE voters who supported remain.

Using the Office of National Statistics' figures for the social structure, the Electoral Commission's December 2015 estimates of electoral registration and Lord Ashcroft's large scale poll for the proportions of remain voters in each social grade, even if turnout among AB voters was a full 10 percentage points higher than among C2DE voters (an unlikely gap) the remain vote would have contained around half a million more working class voters than upper middle and middle class voters.

The second cause of our failure to develop a core vote has been our own behaviour, which has tended to obscure rather than bring out our values. In national politics the party allowed coalition to mute its voice. It might have argued for its own values behind the scenes but in public it espoused a position that coalition and compromise were good things in their own right, leading a large chunk of the electorate to believe that we were in government for no particular purpose other than holding office.

In local campaigning the pursuit of tactical votes crowded out explanation of what we stand for. In opposition pursuing tactical votes was less of a problem because we could rely on our national campaigning to provide some degree of definition. But when coalition was allowed to undermine distinctiveness at national level, pursuing tactical votes ended up reinforcing the impression that we had nothing substantive to say and were pursuing office for its own sake.

And then there is the fees debacle. If anything counts as a previous attempt at creating a core vote for the party it was the slow growth of a dedicated group of supporters who placed a very high value on education and who were attracted by policies such as the 'penny on income tax for education'. When we broke our pledge on tuition fees we launched a direct attack on our own nascent core vote, destroying with one blow the work of two decades.

So how do we build a core vote now? The first question is where to look for one. The simplest answer is to look for people who believe the same things as we do. We are a party built neither on sectional interests

nor on manoeuvring for office but on values. Our core voters will not be a social or economic interest group but people who share those values.

That means people who are liberal: open-minded, humane, internationalist and anti-conformist. But there is a complication.

Modern politics requires parties to take positions not just on the liberal-authoritarian axis but also on economic policy, on the conventional left-right axis. Liberals almost by definition care less about left versus right issues than liberal versus authoritarian issues, but we need to provide some kind of basic response to left-right issues to get a hearing. We should ask where people who are open-minded, internationalist and humane come out on left-right issues such as support for the redistribution of wealth and income, privatisation and public spending. The answer is that, if one looks at the available data in, for example, the British Election Study, on all those questions small-l liberal voters tend to the left, supporting redistribution of income, opposing further privatisation and supporting environmentalism.

On the crucial question of how they would deal with the government's budget deficit, only 15% favour mainly or exclusively relying on spending cuts rather than tax increases. In contrast, 18% favour tax increases alone, 23% mainly tax increases and 34% by tax increases and spending reductions equally. Small-l liberal voters are statistically significantly more likely to give 'left' answers and less likely to give 'right' answers than other voters.

This does not, however, mean that the best place to be is on the far left. There are too many liberal voters in the centre for that to make sense. But it does mean that it would be absurd to place ourselves on the economic right, where not only very few voters overall are to be found but also even fewer liberal voters. As their answers on tax and spending levels illustrate, the centre of gravity of liberal voters is just to the left of centre and that is where we propose the party should position itself to maximise its appeal to liberals.

The next question is how to find our potential core voters and how to detach them from their current political positions – whether as supporters of other parties or as lukewarm supporters of the Liberal Democrats.

Some obvious points stand out. The first is that distinctiveness at national level is absolutely crucial. The obvious issue that gives us distinctiveness at the moment is Europe. We are the only undivided and unequivocally pro-European party. More than that, the European issue illustrates very well our values of openness and internationalism. And because we have held our pro-European position for over six decades we cannot easily be accused of opportunism. Above all, unlike most of the past 40 years, Europe is now very high on the public's list of the issues facing the country.

The European issue, like all individual issues, does not map perfectly onto the voters we need, but it is closer than any other issue we can find. The voters we have designated as our potential core, voters of the

“The European issue, like no other current political issue, sorts liberals from non-liberals across the whole of society”

tolerant and open-minded centre left and centre, were overwhelmingly Remainers, as were small-l liberals generally. That relationship holds both for those on above median and below median income and across all occupational groups. The European

issue, like no other current political issue, sorts liberals from non-liberals across the whole of society.

EMOTIONAL PULL

We will undoubtedly need to campaign on other issues on which we are distinctive and which connect with our potential core vote, not least civil liberties and political reform, and we need urgently to construct a clear and distinctive economic position. But none of these currently has the salience or the emotional pull for liberals of the European issue.

The second obvious point is that we need to maintain our distinctiveness over a prolonged period. It does us no good to express a clear position for a few days and then to muddy our own waters by immediately suggesting compromises. Our party has more than its fair share of people prone, to use a phrase of Andrew Stunell from his period as political secretary of ALDC, to 'an attack of the sensibiles'. They want desperately to be reasonable and find consensus.

But we are not in government any more. Our job is not to help the Conservatives or the Labour escape the absurd positions in which they have put themselves. Our job is to give voice to people who share our values. To do that we have to stick to our guns.

The object of the exercise is not merely to express a view but to be able to do something about it. At some point that will mean re-entering government. As we have learned, government involves compromise, particularly coalition government.

But, as we have also very painfully learned, it is a catastrophic mistake to compromise on fundamentals. Creating a core vote and identifying fundamentals on which no compromise is possible are related processes. That is why opposition to a core vote strategy often comes from people who are perfectly happy to negotiate away every single position the party holds. But the better response is that the issues around which we construct our core vote are ones on which we must be prepared to refuse to negotiate our position away. Compromise on inessentials is the essence of practical politics, but compromise on essentials rightly risks political oblivion. We did that once. We are lucky still to be around. We should not do it again.

David Howarth was Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge 2005-10

THE PM I KNEW

Norman Baker worked with Theresa May in the Home Office during the Coalition and saw up close how the new prime minister really operates

So what is Theresa May like? Here's the inside track.

In September 2013, I left the Department for Transport, having been promoted to Minister of State at the Home Office, which was across the road, but might as well have been on another planet.

On the wall were photographs of the Home Secretary, Theresa May, and the Permanent Secretary, Mark Sedwill. Every other department had photographs of the ministerial team in the entrance area, but not the Home Office.

I entered the Home Secretary's office, so barren it looked like it could be evacuated of all traces of its occupant within a matter of minutes. She was working through a pile of files on her desk, requests for authorisation for communications interceptions it appeared. She got up and sat opposite me at a long table. She bore the icy smile of a snow queen.

I learnt the next morning that my transfer had generated a welcome present from the Home Secretary's special advisers (spads) in the form of a hatchet job in the press. Two friendly journalists had rung me up to tell me what was going on. The spads had been furious I had been moved into the Home Office and briefed against me. I had moved from the sunny beach to the snake pit.

During my time in the Home Office, I concluded that while Theresa May did not necessarily initiate such behaviour herself, she gave her spads considerable latitude coupled with a general steer, and did not look too closely at exactly what they were doing, which as a consequence gave her deniability.

Those same special advisers, Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill (then Cunningham) are now firmly ensconced at No 10.

After a row with Theresa over the hostile welcome I had received, there then followed an extended dispute over portfolio allocations. She wanted to reduce the areas Jeremy Browne had covered.

NAKED ATTEMPT

This was a naked attempt to disadvantage Lib Dems, and to minimise what I would be able to do in the department. I told her that she could move responsibilities among her Tory ministers around as much as she liked, but the portfolio allocation to the Lib Dem was a coalition matter and I would have to agree it or it would not happen. I was not in fact totally certain of my ground, but the Home Secretary did not challenge the statement. Shortly after, she agreed to the deal I had suggested.

To my dismay, I discovered that the coalition rules and conventions that had applied from day one at the Department for Transport were largely absent. While the former had been run as a coalition department, the Home Office had clearly been operating as a

Conservative department with a Lib Dem in a corner. I had to recreate basic procedures, such as access to papers.

On my first day in post, I learnt there was to be a meeting of chief constables with the Home Secretary and Damian Green, the policing minister, but I was not invited, even though I was now minister for crime prevention. I raised this with the Home Secretary's office and was told she strongly advised against me going. No good reason was given, so I went along anyway, to her visible annoyance. It was trench warfare, with every inch of ground having to be fought for.

Many civil servants were genuinely afraid of her spads, who were not above shouting at them. What was in place, at least as far as senior officials were concerned, was close to a thinly-veiled reign of terror. The tramlines were laid down by her spads, whom Theresa called "my voice", and woe betide any civil servant who went outside them. Officials who did find themselves shunted out to cul-de-sac postings.

I thought this was not just nasty but an approach that smothered ingenuity and innovation in a rather central soviet way. The officials most under the cosh were in the department's press section. Lines came down from the spads and this exact language had to be used. The answer was to be substantially the same no matter how much the question changed.

Despite all that happened, I never felt any animosity towards Theresa May. Indeed, I respected and even admired her. She was clearly competent and it is no mean feat to survive so many years as Home Secretary. She was brave, for example in taking on the Police Federation, and also principled in her beliefs, even if I did not always agree with her principles. You do not have to agree with someone, or even like them, to acknowledge their strengths.

CLIMATE OF FEAR

The problem was I did not like the way she ran the department. She would argue that without this vice-like grip at the centre, she would not have lasted so many years in post, and perhaps that is true. But the price of that was a climate of fear in officials, a gloomy air of drudgery around the department, and the stifling of ideas and innovation. We could all see the stick, but where was the carrot?

It did not help either that she was generally reluctant to delegate very far to her ministers, Tory or Lib Dem, and would intervene on really quite small matters.

There were areas where in my portfolio where we agreed and so worked well together, such as on alcohol, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation.

But too often her hostility to the coalition limited the opportunity to achieve good outcomes, even where

she and I agreed and No 10 disagreed, such as on the need to maintain the European Arrest Warrant.

Of course there were plenty of issues where we disagreed. Many centred around immigration and her cavalier approach to human rights. Typical was a nasty proposal to deprive UK nationals of their citizenship under certain circumstances, which for me reinforced the view that in a contest between political expediency and rights, the Tories will ultimately always opt for the first over the second.

Generally, the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister could not resist tinkering around endlessly with the immigration rules and regulations, like continually picking at a spot.

Sadly, Theresa May was not against meaningless gestures to please the right-wing tabloids. One such example related to knife crime, where she wanted a 'two possessions and you're in' policy. I thought this unattractively populist and simplistic, and that it fettered the discretion of judges.

Theresa does not forget when she has been crossed. Michael Gove, who had opposed the two of us on many matters, was never going to get a government post after she became PM. And Nicky Morgan, a competent minister, was sacked almost certainly for supporting him in the Tory leadership contest.

Nor was she a great fan of Boris, who crossed her clumsily over water cannon, so his appointment as Foreign Secretary looks very much like a poisoned chalice.

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of Theresa May's personality is that she is a technocrat, obsessed with capabilities in a value-free way. This became clear in discussions over the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Bill, a piece of emergency legislation to maintain the existing capability of the state in relation to communications data.

Julian Huppert and I worked out a raft of radical concessions we wanted to extract in return for Lib Dem support and to my astonishment, David Cameron, with one minor caveat, agreed the whole list. The Home Secretary was livid about the concessions, though whether she was consulted by the PM then overruled, or not consulted at all I was not clear.

Theresa in fact took a hard line on any matter which related to interception or data retention. She was very concerned to provide the security services and the police with whatever technical solution was available, and seemed to see the civil liberty consequences that arose as something of a nuisance, rather than a genuine issue to be addressed in tandem. She was especially wedded to the 'snooper's charter'.

But it was perhaps on drugs that Theresa May was most implacably opposed to any sort of evidence-based policy.

She decided to ban khat, a flowering plant found in Africa and the Arabian peninsula that has been chewed by local communities for thousands of years. This produces a mild amphetamine-like effect, and is regarded as less harmful than tobacco or alcohol by the

“Perhaps the most worrying aspect of Theresa May’s personality is that she is a technocrat, obsessed with capabilities in a value-free way”

World Health Organisation.

Nowhere was her prejudice, and that of her spads, greater than when it came to the International Comparators Study of drug policy that the Lib Dems had insisted upon and that I was overseeing.

She seemed obsessed both with the idea that cannabis was 'dangerous' and that a hard line was the way to reduce consumption. This

even extended to refusing access to medicinal cannabis for those for whom it made a positive difference.

The study, written by civil servants, proved the first authoritative review of drug policy for 43 years. It included the following paragraph: “We did not in our fact-finding observe any obvious relationship between the toughness of a country’s enforcement against drug possession and levels of drug use in that country.”

This was dynamite and pulled the rug from under the whole Tory ethos of tougher sentences axiomatically leading to reduced drug use and reduced crime.

The study considered Portugal, which had removed criminal sanctions for drug possession for personal use back in 2001, and replaced them with lay panels that evaluate the personal circumstances of the individual and refer them to the appropriate place for help.

It concluded: “It is clear that there had not been a lasting and significant increase in drug use in Portugal since 2001,” and “One of the clearest changes in Portugal since 2001 has been a considerable improvement in the indicators of health outcomes for drug users.”

This was in contrast to the situation in the Czech Republic where the introduction of harsher laws had markedly worsened health outcomes.

No wonder the Home Secretary and her spads were not keen to release the report. It contradicted their prejudices.

Yet I sometimes wondered if Theresa completely believed the hard line rhetoric she signed up to. I did not doubt her spads did, but she was a more thoughtful person and rather more nuanced in private than she appeared in public. She had, for example, quietly started to undo the damage of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act by allowing heroin to be made available, in three pilot areas, to a narrow category for whom methadone was not working.

She also agreed to make foil available to heroin users to discourage them from injecting, provided I led on this, suggesting she was sometimes prepared to take a liberal line on drugs so long as nobody noticed.

So what kind of Prime Minister will she be? Competent, reasonably principled, self-effacing, humourless, tribal and, I am afraid, illiberal.

This article is an updated and amended extract from *Against The Grain*, published by Biteback, by Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat Mp for Lewes 1997-2015

CHUCKING ITS MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN

The more money donated to a local party in 2015, the more votes were lost, Seth Thévoz's research shows. What are the lessons from this paradox?

"Where we work, we win", or so the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC) saying goes.

To that, we might add, "Where we raised the most money, we lost the most votes." That was one of the more curious findings of my recent study into the effectiveness of Lib Dem fundraising in held and target seats in 2015.

The 2015 Election Review did not pull its punches in the lessons to be learned from the last election. One theme it touched upon was the question of party fundraising and resource allocation. There is an understandable reluctance in most political parties - including our own - to query the efficacy of fundraising and resourcing, not least so as to not tip off opponents as to our weaknesses, and to not discourage potential donors.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that much relevant data is already in the public domain, in plain sight, and it seems remiss to not look at what the evidence suggests about our fundraising and resource allocation in 2015. Indeed, with this data in the public domain, the absence of such a study opens up the real danger that the other parties would have a much better idea of the party's vulnerabilities than the party itself, as indeed happened in 2015.

The Liberal Democrats lend themselves to this kind of study. They have a far more devolved fundraising structure than any other party - the Lib Dem ratio of donations made to the central party compared to local parties was 1.6 to 1 across the last parliament.

That compares to 7.1 to 1 for the Tories, 7.3 to 1 for Ukip, 7.8 to 1 for Labour, and a quite staggeringly centralised 73.6 to 1 for the SNP. As such, it's not hard to get a fairly good idea of where money is going to in the Lib Dems, just from the Electoral Commission's data.

The Liberal Democrats were not short of money in 2015, either nationally, or in held seats. But much of this money seems to have been misallocated, being donated to seats that were unwinnable by 2015. At least £2.9m was raised in 2014-15 in the local parties of target seats that were lost. Some of these were tight races, but many were not - for instance, in 2014-15, £172,601.71 was donated to Hornsey and Wood Green, lost to Labour by 11,058 votes; £129,242.53 was donated to Dorset Mid and Poole North, lost to the Conservatives by 10,530 votes; and £82,429.45 was donated to Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, lost to the SNP by 10,809 votes. By any definition, this was money down the drain.

NOT SERIOUSLY COMPETITIVE

As the pre-election polling predicted, and as the final result confirmed, the party was not seriously competitive beyond 2011 in more than 20 seats. Yet in the first half of the Parliament, a '75 by-elections' strategy was being touted, and as David Laws's recent memoir states, even in the autumn of 2014, around 40 seats were still being targeted. By the general election, hopes were still being pinned on 30 seats, contrary to the polling evidence.

It does not appear that target seats were lacking in money in the short campaign. Few local parties had trouble raising the £12,000-£16,000 needed for this spending period: Electoral Commission returns show that more than 50 Lib Dem candidates were able to spend over 90% of the maximum permitted in the 2015 short campaign, fighting well-funded campaigns in these final days.

However, spending returns for the long campaign tell a different story, with its £34,000-£37,000 spending limit per seat.

Electoral Commission returns show that the total number of Lib Dem candidates who spent 90% or more of the maximum during the long campaign was just nine. Revealingly, none of those nine seats was won, and in some of them, the party didn't even come close; most notably, Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, where Michael Moore trailed in third place.

This seems to point to the party having spread itself too thinly in the long campaign. Since rival Conservative, Labour and SNP candidates in these seats often spent more than the Lib Dems did, it seems the party was still trying to fight on too broad a front in the long campaign.

To put it another way, out of 62 held or target seats for the Lib Dems in 2015, four of the eight seats which were won at the election appear in the bottom 13 for fundraising. Conversely, only two of the top 30 seats for fundraising were won in the general election.

As the election drew nearer, it is clear that there was a narrowing electoral front of well-resourced seats, but it appears that this was enforced too late. 'Hard decisions' were taken about cutting off central funding to local parties, but these did not always correlate well with party fortunes on the ground.

Some of the cases of MPs who were 'cut off' are heartbreaking. On paper, Alan Reid, in Argyll & Bute, managed to raise a perfectly respectable £67,674.76 in donations in 2014-15 — until one realises that all but £10,000 of this total was donated by Reid himself, out of his own pocket. Judging by his past Register of Members' Interests entries, Reid is not a rich man.

Given that he was one of only five Lib Dem

candidates in 2015 to increase the party's vote, one cannot help but feel that he did not deserve to be abandoned by the central party in this way. By contrast, the resourcing of Norwich South for so long, where Simon Wright came fourth, even after spending 97.1% of his short campaign maximum, seems baffling.

The blanket decision to abandon all central support for Labour-facing seats meant some similarly odd decisions. Several such seats were able to compensate with impressive fundraising operations of their own, like Cambridge, and Bermondsey & Old Southwark, no doubt aided by high-profile incumbent MPs.

In particular, the central party's decision to abandon Cambridge, which turned out to be the narrowest Lib Dem loss of 2015 (by 599 votes), appears highly questionable.

In Orkney and Shetland, Alistair Carmichael fought a campaign on a shoestring. In 2014-15, he attracted no declarable donations above the £1,500 threshold, and his entire short campaign spend was just £6,702.27 — a mere 57% of what he was entitled to spend, and he still held on.

Understandably, there seemed to be far more readiness to donate to the local parties of high-profile MPs, but this did not always correlate with whether their seats were winnable.

Consequently, junior ministers and backbench MPs tended to fare less well with fundraising and spending, even when they were fighting some of the most winnable seats. In Lewes, Norman Baker was able to spend just 48.3% and 74.7% of his long and short campaign limits respectively, and lost by just 1,083 votes.

In Eastbourne, where Stephen Lloyd lost a mere 733 votes, he had been able to fight a well-resourced short campaign with 96.7% of the limit permitted — but his long campaign spend had been just 52.0% of the amount permitted.

Similarly, in Thornbury and Yate, Steve Webb fought a well-resourced short campaign with 98.3% of his limit spent; but in his long campaign he was only able to spend 49.5% of his limit, and lost the seat by 1,495 votes. It is conceivable that a higher long campaign spend in such seats might have led to different outcomes.

NEGATIVE CORRELATION

Yet it is possible to read too much into these figures. As mentioned, the most striking finding of the study was a negative correlation between the amount of money donated to a local party in 2014-15, and the change in votes between 2010-15.

In other words, on average, the more money that was donated to a local party, the more votes were lost. This is somewhat counter-intuitive - and if future donors are to be encouraged to part with their cash, then we need to show what we have done to address it.

How do we explain such a trend? I considered several possible explanations: Omitted Variable Bias may have been one (there was perhaps some other factor at play

“The Liberal Democrats were not short of money in 2015, but much of this was misallocated to seats that were unwinnable by 2015”

here, linked to fundraising and election performance); or perhaps the party showed consistently poor judgement in backing the seats least likely to perform well (which might explain a handful of cases, but would be a far-fetched explanation across the board); or maybe it was down to the “poor message discipline” identified by

the 2015 Election Review (although polling showed the party's support dropped to its present levels in 2010-11, so it can't have been messaging in the short campaign alone).

In the end, what seemed the most convincing explanation was that the party's basic stance in 2015 was most likely to alienate the very people who had previously been likely to vote Lib Dem.

Prior to 2010, Lib Dem voters had overwhelmingly cast their votes for a left-of-centre liberal party, more often than not as the best-placed electoral chance to stop the Conservatives in their area. This pitch gave the party 299 first or second places in 2010, and an average poll of 15–20% outside of such ‘winnable’ seats.

After 2010, the party campaigned as a centrist or right-of-centre liberal party, consciously modelled on Germany's (now also largely-vanquished) FDP, making little secret of the desire to renew another term of a Conservative-led coalition, pushing itself as a moderating influence on the Conservatives.

This electoral pitch gave the party 71 first or second places in 2015, and an average poll of 2.5–5.5% outside these ‘winnable’ seats.

Money can be seen as a proxy for constituency activity; and the constituencies most able to echo this central message - with the most money - were the ones that saw the most voters desert the party.

There seems to be further circumstantial evidence for this if we look at outliers. Relatively successful seats like Cambridge — which ‘only’ lost 1,574 votes — eschewed the party's central messaging in their literature. Similarly, severely under-resourced seats like Lewes, Norfolk North, and Southport did their own thing, and either won, or came close to winning.

There is clearly much scope to target resources better than in 2015. It may be worth re-learning the lessons of the 1990s targeting strategy which was so successful in helping Lib Dems to break out.

That in turn means not spreading the party's resources too thinly. But resources are only part of the story. The party's values, policies and central pitch are essential. If the message does not excite the party's voters, then no amount of extra resources will win more seats.

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ROBBER BARONS AND FALLING INCOMES

If a democratic polity is to be resumed in the UK, political parties must address a whole new set of problems and devise a whole new set of policy remedies, says Trevor Smith

In *Liberator* 379, I argued that the referendum vote for Brexit was but one – admittedly major – manifestation of the simmering discontent with the manner in which UK politics had been conducted over many previous decades.

It's essentially 'anti-politics' character led to very limited public discussion, while the unremitting growth of 'tentacular government' shielded the state from much of the public's gaze.

It is not that political leaders failed to be aware of the problem, and they tried to address it. Margaret Thatcher invoked St Francis of Assisi in her first address outside No 10. John Major spoke of the sound of cricket being played, old ladies cycling to church and drinking warm beer as being hallmarks of stability. Tony Blair's promotion of 'Cool Britannia' and David Cameron's notion of 'The Big Society' had the same aim. As did Ed Milliband's plagiarising of the Disraelian notion of 'One Nation' for Labour.

More recently, Theresa May's first speech as prime minister, similar in style to Thatcher's, called specifically for a more equal society and reformed capitalism. All are examples of how party leaders glimpsed there was a need to reach out to the electorate. It's too early to judge May, of course, but in the case of the others, their utterances were just gesture rhetoric. As such, they neither informed policy-making nor engaged with the public, but may well have added to the general disillusion.

If a democratic polity is to be resumed in the UK, political parties must address a whole new set of problems and devise a whole new set of policy remedies that will have to be explained fully and put to the electorate.

It's "the economy, stupid", but not as it has been in the past because the economy is now open to new and very big forces, arguably the most noticeable of which is the changing character of contemporary capitalism.

Numerous factors are involved. They include the increasing 'robotisation' of work (that has extended to middle class occupations such as banking with the law and very much more to follow) accompanied, somewhat paradoxically, by a skills gap.

Then there are falling real incomes and growing inequalities in wealth, including stark inter-generational ones that mean the millennials will be the first to earn less than their parents. A fast-ageing population with a declining birth-rate that will not replace itself. Also, following Brexit, there is an uncertain and uncharted international position. There are other pressing issues, not least the environment and growing internal and external security threats, but the problems I have catalogued

are quite enough to show how very different they are, both in kind and certainly in magnitude, from the economic forces at play in the fairly recent past.

MASSIVE SHIFTS

And merely to cite those I have, immediately illustrates the need for new ideas and policies of a very radical kind. Massive paradigm shifts in both political style and content are vitally necessary.

Taxation and the raising of public revenues to finance the activities of the state are likely to become more vexatious as employment opportunities reduce and the general value of incomes drops. No amount of increased taxation of the expanding wealthy rich decile of the population can compensate for that.

The changing nature of work involving frequent turnover of jobs and the concomitant acquisition of new skill-sets over an ever-lengthening lifetime career, will lead to frequent bouts of self-employment, home working, and much greater use of distance communications.

These will have profound changes for the locations, including offices and manufacturing plants, commuting patterns, industrial pensions and the like. Such changes will not be confined to civilian life. With greater reliance on drones and similar technological inventions, the future patterns of military and defence provision will be transformed.

Camps, barracks, army manoeuvres, troopships, and forces of occupation may well become distant memories with only the Trooping of the Colour being retained as a nostalgic tourist attraction evoking memories of when the world atlas was emblazoned with imperial pink.

In order to sustain a reasonably cohesive society, it is likely that a new type of welfare state may have to be invented, not dissimilar in intent to that created by William Beveridge.

Already there are the beginnings of a debate about the need to devise a minimum social wage, paid to all, to guarantee a sustainable standard of living in the face of much-reduced employment opportunities.

This, in turn, may lead to a greater promotion of worker co-operatives and other such types of industrial democracy and mutuality, such as employee-directors on the boards of companies, which May is contemplating. The problem with such schemes is that they will tend to increase labour immobility as staff seek to hang on for as long as possible before having to move on to new pastures. Co-operatives may well help at certain times, but the John Lewis approach may be less sustainable in the febrile dynamics of the globalised economy.

This leads on to the wider universe of commercial corporations for companies, as such, will not be immune to the new set of changes. Commercial law, including a new definition of what or who constitutes ownership, particularly with high-frequency trading and hedge funds swapping shares in nanoseconds, is already long overdue. The robber barons are back with a vengeance and the ostensibly more benign 'managerial revolution' is all but another fond memory. Again, May seems to be more aware than her predecessors that new measures are needed to police this blatant form of piracy.

With an ever-growing older population, there are implications for two major policy areas. First, there is the question of the nation's health. Costs both for medical and care treatment are rocketing. How may these be contained, if at all? One likely trend, already at work, is a much greater emphasis of the promotion of healthy life styles. St Ninian's primary school in Stirling has pioneered a one mile run or at least 15 minutes walking before the school day begins. It has successfully abolished obesity among its pupils. Not surprisingly, it has been widely emulated in Scotland and beyond. It may well be made compulsory along with other measures. This is bound to happen in a cheaper attempt to put a greater emphasis on health promotion rather than cure.

An allied problem is how to allocate the costs of increasingly expensive care and treatment. Should this now be referred, as some are arguing, to a high-powered multi-expert Royal Commission? A type of public inquiry long since thought to be a relic of the past. Consulting widely, producing interim reports inviting public discussion, as well as drawing on foreign experiences, it could help establish a consensus about re-drawing the lines between direct payments (as now for prescriptions, dentistry and spectacles), insurance (both state and private) and taxation.

Should both National Insurance and taxation be rolled up into a separate hypothecated tax? This may be a solution in an age which has seen recourse to plebiscites and referendums. It may be that no other way can be found to resolve the allocation of resources in the area of health.

Not unrelated to health in many ways, is the vexed question of immigration and how best to deal with it. It was clearly a big issue for many of those opting for Brexit.

The first point to make is that immigration is extremely difficult to control. The USA has tried in vain to stop illegal intrusions along its border with Mexico over more than a century. Desperate people will stop at almost nothing to escape from the deprivations of their homelands as can be seen by the hordes remorselessly crossing the Mediterranean from Asia and Africa. Governments find it very difficult to admit this blindingly obvious reality. For the UK being an island helps but it will certainly not be enough by itself. There will have to be an agreed pan-European policy to which all of the continent can adopt.

In the very long run, for example, it may well be that

“To sustain a reasonably cohesive society, it is likely that a new type of welfare state may have to be invented”

an elaborate form of grants to secure a basic living wage world-wide similar will have to be devised, similar to that being mooted for nations in the developed world. This will take a long time to secure electoral acceptability along with a robust anti-corruption system. It may well have to come, in much the

same way that toxic fuel emissions are beginning to be examined: should the developed world subsidise developing nations to help reduce fuel toxicity in the interests of a wider world that has no boundaries regarding pollution?

There is a second issue arising from immigration given the rapidly declining birth-rate: will the UK, along with other developed countries, be able to sustain itself? While an Australian-type points system would allow in aliens with the requisite skills that are needed, such as those trained in finance, medicine and nursing, it is very unlikely to be accorded to those with lower, though equally in demand, skills. As The Economist recently pointed out: “One in 20 people employed in adult social care – which includes old folks’ homes and social work, for instance – is EU born, a total of about 75,000 people. The sector is already acutely understaffed: last year there were 70,000 unfilled vacancies...[it is] estimated that by 2020, this figure could rise to 200,000, or 14% of the workforce required. It also noted that 60% of pensioners voted for Brexit. “Those who did so in order to limit immigration may find, too late, they were the ones who needed it most.”

CYNICISM AND ALIENATION

All of these are extremely complex issues. As such, they must be given the greatest possible public airing if widespread cynicism, disillusion and outright alienation of the kind that led to the Brexit vote is to be avoided. Populism thrives, as we are witnessing in Britain, the USA and elsewhere, if the public is effectively excluded from coming to informed decisions. The old world of 'anti-politics' must be abandoned and replaced by one of inclusive and transparent political discourse.

Are the political parties up to that? The omens are not great. Party splits and tinkering with re-alignments, advocating greater devolution to localities and so on are all very well in themselves but they don't get near to the heart of the fundamental policy reform that is needed.

As a postscript I would add, with reluctance, of all the parties, the Lib Dems seem least well-prepared for the future. A diet of daily criticism of current government policies and travelling to hot spots is publicised; local by-election gains are flaunted; as are (albeit rather modest) increases in party members. All this frenetic activity merely provides a standby vehicle for protest. It has to be complemented with the formulation of ideas and policy programmes relevant to the rapidly emerging future. This intellectual neglect will yield a very poor electoral harvest.

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

A WARNING FROM THE NORTH

Northern England voted heavily for Brexit and Ukip will try to capitalise on this unless Liberal Democrats can offer alienated places something better, says Paul Hindley

On 24 June, Britain awoke to a new political landscape. The impossible had happened, Britain had voted to leave the European Union by 52% to 48%. This was the biggest shock in British politics for decades. Despite pro-Remain support coming from the government, most of the main parties, businesses, trade unions, financial institutions and well-known celebrities; a majority of the electorate still rejected the EU. It was a seminal moment and will undoubtedly define the politics of a generation.

All of the regions of northern England returned sizeable votes for Brexit. However this simple fact does not show the whole picture. The big northern cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Newcastle all backed Remain. The vast majority of the north's towns and rural areas however voted Leave. Not a single local authority area in Lancashire or Cheshire returned a vote for Remain and only one area returned a Remain vote in Cumbria and the whole of north east England.

The results of the referendum showed that were large divisions within the regions themselves. This has led to some communities being described as 'left behind'.

This in particular can be used to describe some communities that feel abandoned and ignored by the establishment and mainstream politics. In Blackpool, Burnley and Hull two-thirds of people rejected EU membership. While in Barnsley, Doncaster and Hartlepool, 68%, 69% and 70% respectively supported Brexit. Even in relatively liberal areas with large university populations such as Lancaster and Sheffield, Leave won narrowly.

Why was the EU so roundly rejected by the vast majority of northern England outside its largest cities? The north and some of its most industrially deprived areas have benefited from EU regional development funding. This has resulted in millions of euros going towards local infrastructure and building projects and this has created much-needed growth and jobs. Between 2007-13 for example, the EU Regional Development Fund invested more than €1.5bn in the north.

Bill Clinton's presidential campaign coined the phrase "it's the economy, stupid", however the north appeared to benefit economically from its EU membership. So what other reason could explain the Brexit vote?

Some people might highlight concerns about a mythical 'super-state' or about levels of immigration. Having spoken to many Leave voters in Lancaster I know these were some of the reasons that people

gave. In reality the source of the Brexit victory was a rejection of globalisation.

Following such a clear defeat for the EU among many northern working class areas; it's hardly surprising that Ukip seeks to capitalise on this with its staunch anti-immigration message in the most alienated parts of the north. Ukip and their Brexit allies embody only a part of an anti-globalist movement that has swept across America and Europe. Following years of inequality, the financial crisis and successive political scandals; political establishments are held in disdain. From Donald Trump in America, to Marine Le Pen in France, to Syriza in Greece; the rise of anti-globalist populism is becoming a defining part of our current political age.

In France, the Front National has surged in the opinion polls and is now running neck and neck with the main centre-right party.

DISILLUSIONED SOCIALISTS

The FN has gained support from disillusioned socialist voters in the poorest areas of France. Ukip hopes to do the same in the north of England at a time when the Labour Party is gripped in a bitter civil war. Ukip's nationalism and anti-immigration rhetoric aims to fill the void left behind by the collapse of Labour's traditional social democracy in working class communities.

Concerns about immigration have led to some politicians on the centre-left and even within the Liberal Democrats talking about the need to control immigration. Liberals shouldn't oppose immigration, we should defend it and its positive benefits to the economy, local businesses and the NHS. It is dangerous to buy into the rhetoric of Ukip, a party that gets traction if the debate is framed on their terms. You can't out-kip, a kipper. If the electorate only has a choice between diet Ukip and full fat Ukip, many voters would choose the full fat version every time. If liberals can't stand up and defend liberal stances, who will?

Concerns about immigration are merely a symptom of our current climate, they are not the cause. To understand the cause we must look to the words of Franklin D Roosevelt: "True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made." FDR draws a profound link between individual freedom and social hardship. When this social hardship is not addressed, it gives rise to extremists.

The fruits of globalisation have not been spread evenly across the country. Many northern towns

have felt left behind as inequality, joblessness, low living standards, housing shortages and even food poverty have grown. Fear and social hardship have become embedded in these communities. This is the root of their alienation from the political mainstream. For the last three and a half decades the disciples of market fundamentalism have failed to address these social inequalities.

The greatest enemy of liberalism isn't fascism or communism; it is fear. Because fear gives strength to forces opposed to liberalism. In the absence of hope, fear prevails and liberalism falters. Fear is the fuel of conservatism, nationalism, fascism and communism. Decades of market fundamentalism has hollowed out British politics and the philosophy of its 'mainstream'.

The real division in British politics today is not between left and right, it's not even between nationalists and internationalists, it is much more fundamental than that. It is a division between the agents of hope and the agents of fear. Liberalism can only ever be an agent of hope. Liberalism thrives with a radical vision to deliver hope, empowerment and social justice and it shrinks in its absence. Liberal Britain was defeated in the referendum; only such a vision can revive it.

Is it inevitable that increased alienation with Labour and mainstream politics will lead to Ukip rising in the north? Not necessarily, Ukip can be halted and the dissatisfaction with Labour can be replaced by a rediscovery of radical liberalism. An anti-establishment liberalism which challenges the market fundamentalist orthodoxy can reach out to many people who are dissatisfied with contemporary politics and provide hope.

The Liberal Democrats have long supported devolution and decentralisation. In an age of identity politics it is vital that real political power is brought closer to the people. There are increasing demands for devolution across north from 'Devo-Manc' in Greater Manchester to a growing movement for a Yorkshire Parliament. Perhaps regional assemblies could be revisited (although regional identities are not as strong as city and county identities). Another possible solution is a devolved Northern Government. Whichever form it takes, northern devolution must be on the national agenda.

It is not enough merely to devolve additional powers; people's voices have to be listened to. This cannot be done under our current voting system. For people to have faith in politics they need a vote that actually matters. Electoral reform is essential to have a more proportional system for electing politicians at every level; ideally by using the single transferable vote. Democracy has to work for everyone not just for those who vote for the establishment party in a safe seat.

POPULIST TAX

To provide hope, wealth must be more fairly distributed. Liberals have supported wealth taxation ever since David Lloyd George's People's Budget

“The real division in British politics today is a division between the agents of hope and the agents of fear. Liberalism can only ever be an agent of hope”

of 1909. The Liberal Democrats must support new wealth taxes, such as, a land value tax, a mansion tax and possibly (with international agreement) a financial transaction tax. It may seem populist to tax the wealth assets of the richest, but it is entirely consistent with the radical liberal tradition. The richest must be seen to be paying their fair share, with some of the money raised

hopefully being used to restore austerity-ridden local government public services.

In their attempts to capture the north, Ukip politicians talk about a 'liberal middle class elite'. It implies that liberalism is out of touch with the plight of working class communities. Liberalism is not just for the bourgeois middle classes; it is also for the working classes. Liberalism transcends class and the social divide. It is not the enemy of working people, it exists to be their enabler.

The Liberal Party was once an integral part of the working class movement from legalising trade unions, to ensuring collective bargaining rights, to extending the right to vote to working people. A modern liberal working class agenda should focus on strengthening workers' rights, rooting out corporate corruption and bad practices, and challenging anti-immigration sentiment. Liberals have long been in favour of bridging the divide between bosses and workers. Workers must have a stake in their workplaces either by helping to take decisions alongside their company management or by reviving the much neglected co-operative movement.

There is an appetite across northern England for anti-establishment politics. This cannot be left to Ukip and the Brexiteers. The Liberal Democrats must provide a positive and radical alternative. An alternative based on northern devolution, genuine democracy, taxing the wealth of the richest and empowering workers in their workplaces.

Liberal Democrats must make the case for anti-establishment politics. We cannot sit idly by and let Ukip take advantage of Labour's woes in the north. We cannot turn our backs on the parts of the north that have been left behind for decades. These communities need wealth, power and a voice that will be listened to. The battle for the soul of the north, may indeed be the battle for Britain itself. In the absence of hope, fear will prevail; radical liberals must provide it.

Paul Hindley is a member of Blackpool Liberal Democrats and of the Social Liberal Forum council

TWO TRIBES GO TO WAR

Tribalism is an enduring African problem, and it is tearing South Sudan apart, says Rebecca Tinsley

Once more an African country teeters on the brink of civil war, and once more, the international community hasn't a clue what to do about it.

South Sudan may be geopolitically unimportant, but its short yet dismal story illustrates wider problems preventing many African nations from breaking the cycle of poverty and conflict.

To recap: South Sudan won independence from Sudan in 2011, after decades of insurgency against Khartoum's bloody campaign to impose an Arab and Islamic identity on a mainly non-Muslim and African population. Thanks to the leadership of John Garang, 65 ethnic groups fought together against their Islamist oppressors in Khartoum.

However, in the 1990s, the Nuer leader, Riek Machar, switched sides, taking Khartoum's money and arms, and killing many non-Nuer before he had a change of heart – an episode that has not been forgotten in South Sudan – (“Memory is everything here,” says a local commentator).

Under US pressure, Khartoum granted a secession referendum, but the resulting peace deal never addressed residual tensions between South Sudan's largest ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer.

In 2005, Garang died in an accident, and the interim South Sudan government, in place between the peace deal and the referendum, was led by a Dinka, Salva Kiir, with Riek Machar as his deputy. More than 40% of the interim legislature members were illiterate appointees, taking little interest in checking the eye-watering theft of foreign aid – an estimated \$5bn vanished - flooding into South Sudan. This should have dampened the international community's giddy optimism about the new nation, but they averted their eyes.

In 2013, only two years after secession, civil war erupted between the Dinka and Nuer, leaving 50,000 dead (out of a population of 11m). The scale of atrocities on all sides, as well as sexual violence and looting, shocked South Sudan's international backers. So too has the political and military elite's utter indifference to the suffering of its citizens.

LOST CONTROL

In 2013 vice-president Riek fled to the bush, but lost control of his opposition militia which disintegrated into dozens of local battles, sometimes prompted by long-running cattle raiding disputes. In August 2015, after enormous international pressure, Riek and President Kiir signed a peace deal, much of which is unimplemented. Riek only returned to the capital, Juba, in April 2016, accompanied by his private Nuer army because he was so suspicious of President Kiir and the majority Dinka. In July, his Nuer guard clashed with Kiir's Dinka soldiers (although they both served in the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the

SPLA) and fighting erupted, leaving 300 dead in Juba alone.

Violence continues in the provinces at the time of writing, but since few foreign journalists go there, it has received less media attention than the rampage of 100 SPLA soldiers through the Terrain Hotel in Juba, raping and beating Western aid workers and killing a local reporter. (UNMISS, the peacekeepers less than a mile away, ignored their repeated pleas for help).

Riek then fled to the DR Congo, and his followers replaced him with another leader who has become Kiir's new vice president. Kiir blows hot and cold on allowing in 4,000 more international peacekeepers to protect the airport, civilians and UN facilities.

Kiir objects on grounds of sovereignty, not because UNMISS is useless, which it is. He recklessly abuses the Western donor nations, only to row back when he realises he might have gone too far in biting the hand that feeds him. As of now, 100,000 South Sudanese have fled the country, with 4,000 people a day pouring over the border to Uganda.

The world's newest nation conforms to every Western cliché about Africa: corpulent warlords-turned-politicians pursuing personal vendettas, laying waste to their country's meagre infrastructure, squandering foreign aid, imperilling their downtrodden and fearful citizens. The Dinka and Nuer elite sabotaged attempts to form an army and an administration that might serve all citizens. Right down to village level, allegiance is purchased in a trickle-down manner benefitting the Big Men, but not the masses, 51% of whom live below the poverty line, and 83% of whom are in marginalised rural areas.

In addition, the only source of revenue, besides foreign aid, is the oil fields on the contested border with Sudan. When pressed, South Sudan's leaders tell foreign donor governments what they wanted to hear, promising to invest in education (there is 80% illiteracy), health (a 15 year-old-girl is more likely to die in childbirth than reach secondary school) and infrastructure (no paved roads in a country the size of France).

Instead, they have bought weapons, accrued power for their ethnic groups, and built luxury homes in Kampala and Nairobi. There has been little attempt to develop the pitiful agricultural sector, even though South Sudan, if efficiently farmed, could feed all of Africa.

In the words of a South Sudanese diplomat: “It is not in our culture to grow crops.” Yet, evidently, it is in their culture to accept the foreign aid necessary to buy food grown in Uganda and Kenya.

According to Professor Pauline Riak from Juba University, this failure “could be due to the fact that political and military leaders, without exception, have their children and immediate families outside South Sudan, and are able to access money to maintain their families' education and health care costs, leaving

their poor relatives with a lack of social services and development funds”.

IRRECONCILABLE AMBITIONS

Some African intellectuals insist the conflict is rooted in the irreconcilable personal ambitions of Kiir and Riek, rejecting as “neo-colonialist” the view that South Sudan is fractured by ethnic competition for power and money. They blame the West for creating ethnic division, ignoring the fact that ethnic groups pre-existed colonialism and did not live in bucolic harmony. Some accuse the West of deliberately plotting

South Sudan’s downfall by even daring to mention the ethnic aspects of the conflict. A few local commentators also accuse the West of stopping the South Sudan government from delivering good governance, a claim that strains credulity.

For their part, some western academics and officials contort themselves like pretzels to deny the tribal element of South Sudan’s demise, as if it is somehow racist to acknowledge what every African villager freely admits: ethnic identity matters more than colonial borders or recently created flags and anthems. Until the international community grasps the primacy of ethnic affiliation, and the ruthless self-interest of the elite, it will continue to push peace deals based on magical thinking.

Belatedly furious with South Sudan’s leaders, in August the UN Security Council took the unusual step of voting for an arms embargo if President Kiir does not accept 4,000 more peacekeepers. Kiir recently said: “Now these whites are saying they want to bring a protection force: to protect who?” Tellingly, it doesn’t cross his mind that his citizens need and deserve protection from their own army.

The US is so enraged by Kiir’s obstinacy it is floating the idea of an external administration or trusteeship, like those in post-conflict Kosovo or East Timor. Kiir countered by threatening a new election to renew his mandate “to hear the voice of the people.”

This is an odd claim, since his administration has jailed, intimidated and even killed journalists who were attempting to articulate “the voice of the people.” He has also accused the UN and foreign aid workers of being in South Sudan for monetary gain: brave words from a man who survives very comfortably on foreign aid.

When the UN’s representative on sexual violence, Zainab Hawa Bangura, met both sides she emerged furious, saying in unusually undiplomatic language, that she was “very angry and very disappointed.” Officials had signed commitments to prevent sexual assaults, yet 217 women admitted to being sexual assaulted, yet 217 women admitted to being raped by soldiers between 8 and 25 July in Juba alone. Given the stigma attaching to rape, it is likely that only 5-10% of women who were raped reported it. Women were raped at the gates of the UNMISS compound,

“Some western academics and officials contort themselves like pretzels to deny the tribal element of South Sudan’s demise, as if it is somehow racist to acknowledge what every African villager freely admits: ethnic identity matters more than colonial borders or recently created flags and anthems”

getting no help from peacekeepers (and little media attention, because they were Africans, not foreigners).

The international community wants a truth and reconciliation process, as specified in last summer’s peace agreement. Yet, at village level there is a persisting feeling that while ‘their’ leaders are thieves, guilty of human rights abuses, they remain ‘their’ leaders.

Hence people defer to them, preferring them to the elite from another ethnic group. Deference outweighs merit, tribal loyalty outweighs demands for

justice, traditional conservative village values trump the views of the educated South Sudanese elite in Juba who want accountability. This isn’t a South Sudanese problem, but one found in many troubled corners of the continent. Until it is confronted by Africa’s own leaders, it will make change - including challenging harmful traditions - difficult, and prosperity elusive.

Meanwhile, international envoys seeking peace in South Sudan focus on the military and political elite, sidelining civic society and the regions. Typically, negotiations take place in luxury hotels in Addis Ababa where participants have no incentive to make haste. Would you prefer a pool side cabana at the Radisson Blue or a tent in the bush? The late Richard Holbrook put the warring sides in the former Yugoslavia in a no-frills air base in Dayton Ohio, sealing them off from outside communications. It produced a peace settlement, however flawed, in a short period.

Fretful foreigners should promote the status of South Sudan’s Council of Churches within peace talks. They represent one of the only non-tribal forms of civic society. They have quietly nurtured neutral forums at a local level, allowing grievances to be voiced, providing space for authentically African forms of reconciliation and restorative traditional justice. They recognise that people want accountability, but that getting justice must not inflame one side or the other.

Put simply, there is no neat solution to South Sudan’s problems – not one that corresponds to Western notions of justice and accountability, power-sharing and confidence-building measures. Nor will hurling more money after bad achieve much, so long as it goes to the ruling elite.

South Sudan doesn’t matter in the global scheme of things and its nuisance value is much less than Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan. Its citizens may flee to Uganda, but they are so poor, unworldly and isolated they are unlikely to become part of Europe’s refugee headache. Sending in 4,000 troops against the will of its admittedly useless but belligerent and well-armed government may be the start of a new nightmare. Watch this space.

Rebecca Tinsley is the founder of Waging Peace: www.WagingPeace.info

A SOCIOPATH IN THE WHITE HOUSE?

If Donald Trump gets his hands on the nuclear codes, be very afraid, say Christine and Dennis Graf

It's time to hunt up the old Canadian flag patches, wherever they are, stuck away somewhere during the years of Obama, but oh, so useful earlier. We're going overseas and we need protection, against the campaign and - God forbid - the election of President Trump. We'd prefer not to be identified as the Americans we are, not to face the inevitable questions.

A telling piece in the New York Times hints at why the Trump phenomenon flourished. Like many reporters, Maureen Dowd has been so taken by this unlikely candidate that her columns on him are usually favourable. In a post-convention interview she didn't challenge Trump's assertions or ask tough follow-up questions.

By contrast, Katy Tur, a reporter for NBC, had to depend on secret service agents to escort her to her car after a Trump rally where Trump singled her out for negative attention. She wrote in an article for Marie Claire: "the crowd seemed to turn on me like a large animal, angry and unchained". That's what can happen to a serious reporter covering Trump.

For months, the mainstream press was so charmed by Trump's diverting blather and flouting of the rules of political correctness that reporters missed the main point: there's no 'there' there.

The Emperor in an improbable blond pompadour not only has no clothes but is incapable of sustained thought, communicating in insulting tweets and sound bites. Although he bought no TV ads until recently, Trump received \$2bn in free publicity, always giving good headlines for the media.

One can't ignore the fact that the man has appeal. Millions of people voted for him in the primaries as better-funded and more respectable Republicans, favoured by the establishment, were knocked off one by one.

America, according to Trump, is a disaster. Our jobs have been shipped abroad, thanks to Obama's horrible trade deals. We are losing against the Chinese, the Mexicans, losing against everybody. Our military is a mess. ISIS is gaining strength - in fact Obama created it. (Trump spent over a day affirming this, then declared he had been sarcastic "but not that sarcastic.") Terrorists are everywhere. We have to close our borders. Only Trump will solve our problems. How? Nobody knows, probably not Trump himself. "I have a plan", he says.

The Trump campaign has touched a nerve with many, the unemployed, the underemployed, the ones who look back to a time when there were fewer brown people with foreign accents around. Gridlock in Washington has turned people against traditional politicians, who can't work together and get anything done. Many people feel that a famous businessman

could solve problems that their senators and representatives can't handle.

SINISTER TURN

What might once have seemed funny has taken a sinister turn. The Democratic Party's emails have been hacked, almost certainly by the Russians; Trump invited them twice to start hacking again and turn over Hillary Clinton's missing emails. When called out on it, he said he was only joking. He would say the same about his praise for dictators, people like Saddam Hussein and Vladimir Putin. But he sounded serious enough when he stated he'd direct the military to use torture again, waterboarding and worse.

We're familiar with the soup du jour. With Trump it's the outrage du jour. At a rally he came up with a broad hint that some of his supporters might like to take Hillary out using their second amendment rights - in other words, shoot her - to keep her from picking liberal Supreme Court judges, but as usual he later dismissed the comment as a joke, not a clear call for gun nuts to take up arms against her. More recently he and his surrogates have been accusing her of being brain damaged, fragile, and on the verge of collapse.

Many people do find Hillary hard to like. When the subject of the then-presumptive Democratic nominee came up, Deborah, our landlady, snapped "she's a liar". This was in February when we were staying in Tucson, Arizona, a rare liberal city in a Republican state. Deborah's lawn was sprinkled with 'Bernie' signs in support of the socialist senator. When asked when Hillary had lied, she cited her erroneous claim that she was fired upon in Bosnia. Deborah says she knows what a disaster a Trump presidency would be, but she's still not ready to vote for Hillary. "I may just stay home", she says.

Hillary has a serious public-relations problem, and if she were running against anyone but Trump, she'd probably lose. It's not really clear why people dislike her, but decades of right-wing character assassination have taken their toll. She has been accused of everything including murder. The Clintons are careful about not doing anything illegal although they sometimes seem to go close to the edge.

Hillary has been attacked for hiding her personal as well as her official State Department emails on a private computer server. This was exhaustively investigated, with nothing illegal found although Clinton was sharply reprimanded. As of now, there's no evidence that her private system was hacked. Currently she's being attacked for her connection to the Clinton Foundation. Even though it's a well-regarded charity, Republicans accuse her of having used her position to attract wealthy donors, including foreign businessmen and representatives of foreign

countries. Evidence of serious wrongdoing is thin. What has proved damaging is a long history of charges, many of them probably baseless partisan attacks, but all contributing to a pattern suggesting carelessness on her part.

Last year when most people including seasoned professional commentators were expecting the Trump candidacy to flame out at any moment, Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert cartoon, predicted that Trump would win in a landslide. Adams, who has studied hypnosis, explained Trump's hypnotic techniques: he characteristically attaches a line, a word or two, to his opponent's name. During the primaries it was "little Marco" [Rubio], "lyin' Ted" [Cruz] and "low energy Jeb" [Bush]. Soon whenever one would think of each of them it was with the Trump adjective. Clinton he calls "Crooked Hillary."

FLEECING THE GULLIBLE

It's the height of irony considering Trump's own sorry history of non-payment of debts, and his well-documented record of fleecing the gullible, but there's enough concern about Hillary and her missing emails to make the description stick.

Who is Trump really? At first, you might have been tempted to dismiss him as just another self-absorbed businessman, the long-winded bore you want to escape from at parties. But Tony Schwartz, interviewed in the New Yorker article Trump's Ghostwriter Tells All, knows Trump better than most people do, and he's afraid.

Schwartz ghost-wrote the Trump best-seller *The Art of the Deal*. To research it he spent months hanging out with the Donald, listening in (with permission) on phone calls, because his subject didn't want to spend time being interviewed.

"He has no attention span," Schwartz says. He was appalled by what else he found: "Lying is second nature to him," reported Schwartz. "More than anyone else I have ever met, Trump has the ability to convince himself that whatever he is saying at any given moment is true, or sort of true, or at least ought to be true."

Now Schwartz is remorseful over his own part in creating the Trump legend. He says that if he were writing *The Art of the Deal* today, he'd call it *The Sociopath*. His association with the Donald has brought him to this frightening conclusion: if Trump should win in November and obtain the nuclear codes, he could bring about the end of civilisation.

The true nature of Trump's campaign comes across in his rallies. We've never attended one, but New York Times reporters have. Their video *Voices from Trump's Rallies Uncensored* shows scenes of aggression along with shouts of obscenities at any mention of Hillary.

Fights erupt outside the rallies, with the many thugs who commonly attend working themselves up to a frenzy against protestors in anti-Trump T-shirts or carrying the wrong kind of sign. Instead of calling for calm, Trump encourages violence. And Republican leaders, most of them, still endorse Trump.

"Hillary has a serious public-relations problem, and if she were running against anyone but Trump, she'd probably lose"

Thousands crowd his rallies to hear him sound off against Mexicans, Muslims, the Chinese, the other. And they cheer when he calls for a protester to be taken out.

"Beat him up", Trump has said, "I'll pay your legal costs." At a March rally in Iowa he advised his crowd that if they saw anyone getting ready to throw a tomato, "Beat the crap outta

him." Earlier in Las Vegas he'd had a similar reaction to a protestor: "I'd like to punch him in the face, I tell ya." He went on to reminisce about the good old days when somebody like a certain protestor would have to be "carried out in a stretcher."

His tax information would reveal a great deal about Trump's businesses and connections to Russian and Chinese interests, his contributions to charities and whether he even pays federal taxes.

Citing an audit, he refuses to release this information, although every presidential candidate since Nixon has done so. Trump speaks highly of Putin, and Paul Manafort, his previous campaign manager, earned millions working for the Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians.

Even Manafort seems moderate compared to Trump's latest choice, Steve Bannon, current campaign chief executive, associated with the 'alt right' and a sleazy record at right-wing Breitbart News. In general Trump has been given a free pass: imagine if Hillary had five children by three husbands, and owed large sums of money to the Chinese? Yet Trump treats the charitable Clinton Foundation as a scandal.

Unless things change and Trump finds his footing, Clinton is likely to win. Most states are safe for one side or the other - California will vote Democratic - but some of the largest are swing states which could go either way, states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Right now, polls favour Hillary.

This is a crazy time. We like a comment supplied by a reader, Will W, in the Washington Post. He starts with Trump's words:

"When Mexico sends their people over here they do not send their best and brightest", adding "When you look at the people attending a Trump rally, you are not looking at America's best and brightest. Seventy-two percent of them still think that Obama wasn't born in the US. What does that say about those yahoos?"

What indeed. And what does it say about the US, today that so many people flock to hear a Trump? Years from now we'll look back and be appalled that for months we and everybody we know were obsessed with a thin-skinned narcissist, a pathological liar who is managing to push his way uncomfortably close to the White House.

Christine and Dennis Graf are *Liberator's* American correspondents

TINKERING AT THE EDGES

Cautious centrists have neutered the Liberal Democrats' policy paper on social security, but an amendment on minimum income could give the party something to campaign for, says George Potter

At autumn conference Liberal Democrats will be debating a policy paper on social security called Mending the Safety Net. Its name is ironic as the paper proposes nothing of the sort when it comes to the welfare state.

Rather than fixing a social safety net so broken that 18 million people in the UK live in poverty, the paper mainly just amounts to committing the Liberal Democrats to tinkering with, but ultimately preserving, a system which routinely fails people in need.

Ultimately the paper is wrong, both morally and politically, as well as representing a spectacularly missed opportunity to offer a compelling vision in the first Liberal Democrat policy paper on welfare for over a decade.

The paper is morally wrong because it does nothing to address the fundamental flaws of a system which is perfectly happy to allow people in need to starve or go homeless if they're unable to tick all the checkboxes on a bureaucrat's paperwork. Rather than designing a safety net to meet the challenges of social and economic inequality, it persists in maintaining the broken safety net we have, complete with all its holes.

To make things worse, the paper is also politically wrong because it offers nothing which will help Liberal Democrats gain support. There is no distinctive Liberal vision offered to stand out as different from the Tories and Labour and there is nothing which will have any real appeal to those who care about social justice and poverty.

Above all, the key policies offered either only benefit the already well off or are largely so technocratic that few members of the public will be interested in them, let alone understand them.

There are four key policies in the paper and each of them represents a failure. The first is to introduce opt-out income protection insurance schemes for employees if they become unemployed. However, given the cost of paying for such insurance, the only people likely to be able to afford to pay for it, and hence the only ones likely to benefit from it, are those already on above average incomes. It is a policy to protect the well-off while doing nothing to help those in need.

The second is a grand commitment to abolish child poverty. Unfortunately there are precious few hard proposals on how to do this other than by giving £5 extra a week to the first child in households receiving Universal Credit (the successor to tax credits) and incentivising the second adult in a couple to get a job. Neither of these proposals are inherently bad but they're also nowhere near enough to significantly reduce child poverty, especially when the policy paper

also commits to continue spending billions on paying child benefit to middle class families.

The third is to reform the Work Capability Assessment, used to determine whether people are too sick or disabled to work and entitled to the relevant benefits. While reforming the assessment is long overdue, once again the paper offers warm words over actual substance. Once you get past the rhetoric there is precious little detail as to how the overhaul will be managed and beyond that no wider look at disability benefits, or an acknowledgment that other disability benefits use assessments just as toxic and badly designed.

The fourth is strong language about the iniquities of sanctions where claimants can have all their benefits taken away for being a couple of minutes late to an appointment or failing to jump through all the hoops necessary to prove they've been looking hard enough for work in the eyes of bureaucrats in Whitehall. Unfortunately, this is once again another case of warm words over action.

Instead of following the rhetoric to its logical conclusion and abolishing sanctions, the paper instead offers tinkering to make them less unfair, and to allow more discretion as to when they're applied, as well as an infantilising bonus of £10 a week extra for claimants who go beyond the job seeking requirements.

DEMEANING HOOPS

So apparently, rather than stopping people from being forced to jump through demeaning hoops, Liberal Democrat policy would be to provide an extra reward for those who are particularly good at jumping through hoops.

Based on this, it should not take a genius to see that this sorry collection of tinkering and fudged compromises is utterly unfit for purpose. It neither offers a compelling and unique vision for Liberal Democrats to fight for, or goes anywhere near far enough to appease the segment of the general public who despise spending money on social security.

In fact, the policy paper is a symptom of the way in which far too many people in the upper echelons of the party are stuck in a coalition, Tory-lite mindset. Why else was the working group which wrote the paper told they had to adhere to George Osborne's 2015 fiscal envelope which even the Conservatives have now abandoned?

Fortunately there is an alternative. The 'minimum income' amendment submitted to the Federal Conference Committee has been written specifically to lay the foundations of a radical, sensible and fundamentally liberal approach to social security.

It starts with the principle that every member

of society should be unconditionally entitled to the bare minimum level of income they need to survive - just in the same way that every member of society is entitled to unconditional access to basic education and healthcare - and that

providing this guarantee is the role of social safety net.

This is a fundamentally necessary and liberal principle. Poverty robs people of freedom in a way which few other forces in modern day society can.

If you are poor you do not have the freedom to fully participate in society. You do not have the freedom to leave an unsuitable job or a bad employer. You do not have the freedom to take time to train and to gain new skills. You do not have the freedom from constant stress and worry necessary for good mental health. You do not have the freedom to fulfil your potential and make of your life what you choose.

Or, rather, you cannot afford these freedoms. The freedom to leave a job is a good example. Under the current system, if you leave a job voluntarily, no matter how good your reason, you are automatically denied access to benefits for six months. As any liberal knows, the freedom to choose between an unhealthy work environment and starvation is no true freedom.

All of these factors combine to explain why poverty blights life chances, causes ill health and costs the UK £78bn a year. Failing to tackle poverty isn't just morally wrong, it's economically illiterate.

The only logical, and liberal answer, is to provide every member of society with the guarantee that, no matter what, they will have the bare minimum income they need to survive.

TOXIC BRAND

And this is what the amendment does. It's core concept is to reform the existing UC system - which is likely to be a toxic brand by the time of the next election - to create a new minimum income which guarantees a basic level of support to every individual in need - in exactly the same way that the NHS guarantees every individual has access to healthcare.

Under the reformed system, entitlement to support for housing costs and for any children in a household will be determined solely by need and income. There will be no conditionality to force a claimant to prove they are looking for work and they will never be sanctioned. Furthermore, the first 30% of the current basic component of UC - worth around £20 a week for an adult with no other income - will similarly be free of conditionality and sanctions.

Receiving the rest of the basic component will remain dependent on looking for work and payments to claimants will continued to be tapered away at a rate of 65p for every £1 of income the household has, ensuring that there will continue to be an economic incentive to work.

The authors of the amendment are under no illusion that £20 a week plus rent is enough to live on. But it is enough to survive. Enough to provide food and a roof over your head even if that is all you have. This is surely the very least that one of the wealthiest countries in the world should provide to all its citizens.

This is the core of the minimum income amendment

“There are four key policies in the paper and each of them represents a failure”

but it also goes much further than this.

It commits to abolishing sanctions and conditionality for 100% of the basic component within 10 years, provided that, as is likely, the initial reform doesn't result in a significant fall in

the willingness of claimants to seek work.

It commits to abolishing child benefit for those not on incomes low enough to qualify for UC, to increase the child component of UC by £70 a month to lift half a million children out of poverty.

It sets out a commitment to replace disability benefits with a disability pension for those unable to work and a benefit to cover the additional living costs caused by disability, in the process offering a chance to finally get rid of fundamentally flawed assessments for disability benefit eligibility.

The amendment also commits to establishing a five year pilot of a Basic Income scheme in one town in the UK to see if the concept of paying an unconditional income to every citizen could offer a better long term model for social security.

The Basic Income concept is one which was backed by 56% of members who replied to an FPC survey on welfare policy and yet is singled out for outright attack and condemnation in the policy paper; largely on the flawed logic that, since some versions of Basic Income don't do enough to support certain groups of people, all possible versions of Basic Income must be bad.

And, finally, the amendment also commits Liberal Democrats to increasing taxation if necessary in order to preserve an adequate safety net.

In a nutshell the minimum income amendment would, if passed by conference, would confirm indisputably that Liberal Democrats believe that no member of society should be left without the bare minimum level of income necessary to survive and makes it clear that providing this unconditionally is the party's distinctive vision for the social safety net.

That the amendment has already won the backing of the Young Liberals and dozens of party members both on the left and the right of the party speaks volumes. It fundamentally appeals to those who are fed up with insipid centrism and who want to campaign for a radical, distinctive and liberal vision for society.

If the amendment makes it on to the agenda I have little doubt that members will overwhelmingly back it as opposed to fence-sitting tinkering. All that remains to be seen is if the FCC will allow the debate to happen.

George Potter is a member of the Liberator Collective and sat on the working group which wrote the policy paper *Mending the Safety Net*

PLAYING A LONG GAME

Brexit doesn't necessarily mean Brexit, says Nick Hopkinson

The one bit of good news emerging from the 23 June European Union (EU) referendum is that it provides Liberal Democrats with a tremendous opportunity. The Conservatives, after extending their internal split on Europe to the country, are all Brexiteers now. The 70% of Labour Party members who are pro-European are led by an acquiescent, if not Eurosceptic, leader.

Brexiteers ludicrously suggest our Olympic triumphs and recent good short-term consumer figures prove we can jettison our major trading and political partners in the EU. Meanwhile, our leader has been quick to identify the 48% who voted for Remain as a potentially large new source of support. To ensure we capture them, we need to plot a political, constitutional, legal, economic and international roadmap for the likely long rollercoaster ride ahead.

The referendum set a clear direction of travel towards Brexit but it does not necessarily mean Brexit will happen. Pro-Europeans should not let Leavers bully us into standing down because we lost the referendum, nor make us believe we are being negative, nor make us think our calls for a second referendum are undemocratic because the British people have spoken.

While we should accept the referendum's result, like the Leavers of the 1975 referendum, we shouldn't stop standing up for what we believe in. We know EU membership is the best deal for Britain. On the referendum scoreboard, we are tied one all. We should actively reject Brexit is a *fait accompli*, counter public acquiescence, and champion remaining in even if Article 50 to leave the EU has been triggered.

The Leave campaign was mendacious and the franchise was unfairly denied to 16-17 year olds (unlike in Scotland) and most taxpaying EU citizens resident in the UK. Although four million inspirationally forced a debate in Parliament, it is premature to press fully for a second referendum. We should however reject the Government's stance that the referendum has settled the question of our EU membership.

As 'Project Fear' gradually becomes reality, we should not hesitate to expose the adverse consequences of Brexit and pin the blame on the Leavers. The consequences of the recent 12% drop in the pound will feed through to forecast 3% inflation only next year. The Chancellor's autumn statement is likely to reveal reduced tax revenues from a slowing economy. The major hit from leaving though is only likely to become apparent as we near conclusion of the Brexit negotiations, possibly in late 2019.

Only then can we start negotiating new, and inevitably less favourable, trade and investment deals, first with the EU and then non-EU countries.

There are a number of steps and possible scenarios resulting from the referendum which will be shaped by our economic and political fortunes, a possible second independence referendum in Scotland, and new uncertainty about the Good Friday peace process.

These are: triggering Article 50 without parliamentary approval and assent of the devolved authorities; triggering Article 50 after approval by both Houses of Parliament and assent of the devolved authorities; a 'hard' Brexit with a bad economic deal and strict immigration controls; a 'soft' Brexit with a good economic deal and greater control of EU free movement; a referendum around 2019 asking the people whether they support the actual Brexit deal negotiated; an early general election or the scheduled 2020 General Election which either validates or reverses the referendum; leaving the EU without a Brexit deal and having to negotiate new trade deals with all 163 World Trade Organisation (WTO) members.

The Government has argued that Article 50 does not require a vote in Parliament. At least seven legal cases, notably *Mischon de Reya's*, argue that there is no prime ministerial prerogative and that any amendment or repeal of the European Communities Act 1972 requires a subsequent Act of Parliament.

Even if these cases win, and Parliament reasserts its sovereignty, many pro-European MPs are likely to respect the people's advice in the referendum. Although roughly two-thirds of MPs are pro-European, majorities in two-thirds of all constituencies voted for Brexit. Many in the House of Lords oppose leaving the EU, but they face the inevitable refrain from Leavers and unelected print media that a body of unelected politicians should not stand in the way of the will of the people. Ultimately, the importance of Parliament's interventions may be less the outcome and more a delay in triggering Article 50, which in so doing casts further doubt about the benefits and feasibility of Brexit.

The Government may also need the assent of devolved jurisdictions. Scotland could argue it has an implied veto under the Sewel Convention. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she would tell her MSPs to refuse 'legislative consent' if and when the Scottish Parliament was asked to ratify Brexit. The Northern Irish and Irish governments will be important voices on their shared land border and free movement, and London will demand significant input into the negotiations.

Once Article 50 is triggered, with or without the assent of Parliament and devolved jurisdictions, we should seek to influence the Brexit negotiations. No doubt we shall seek the best possible deal for the UK, in particular ensuring that areas with a pan-European dimension (e.g. the environment, workers rights) are safeguarded in UK legislation and new agreements with the EU. We should press for optimal access to EU markets and, as Tom Brake MP is already advocating, protecting the rights of EU citizens already resident in the UK. Advocating the best Brexit deal for Britain does not prevent us from arguing to remain or rejoin.

POISONED CHALICE

The Conservatives' remarkable renewed unity on Europe in the referendum's immediate aftermath already appears to be unravelling. Making a success of Brexit will prove challenging. May has cleverly given the three Brexiteers, Johnson, Davis and Fox, the poisoned chalice of delivering it. They will be confronted by civil servants, businesses and mercantilist global trading partners laying bare the reality that Brexit trade and immigration fantasies are unlikely to work in practice. Leavers still cannot agree what Brexit should look like. The 'hard' Brexiteers want a quick divorce and stringent controls on EU immigration, with little regard for our economic well-being and our national unity. More cautious 'soft' Brexiteers, in May's words, want to secure "greater controls on immigration whilst securing the best deal for British goods and services". Many EU member states and the European Parliament have no wish to offer the UK a generous precedent lest it emboldens greater populism, copycat referenda, and causes the EU to unravel further.

It is believed May is against an early general election as she does not want to introduce further uncertainty at this tender juncture. However, there is an obvious temptation to secure a stronger and more legitimate mandate while Labour is in turmoil. Those emboldened by the 48% remain vote and prospects for a new 'Progressive Alliance', could however be disappointed by the result of an early election. The Conservatives and Ukip could prove to be the main beneficiaries, and the chances of a disastrous hard Brexit would be all the more likely.

However, should pro-Europeans form the next Government, whether in an early general election or one in 2020, Article 50 negotiations could be abandoned. The House of Lords EU Committee has noted there are no legal impediments to withdrawing notification of Article 50. This period could be extended to before final ratification by all parties. We therefore should seek to remain an EU member on existing terms. If we have left, we should seek to rejoin the EU on the same terms as those prevailing at the time of our departure.

However advocating remaining in or rejoining the EU alone is not enough. As I argued in Lib Dem Voice (29 June 2016), we need to help the 'left behind' who voted Leave. Westminster should match our net EU contribution of £8.8bn with an EU Impact Fund for affordable housing, health and social provision to ensure all areas of the UK benefit more equally from our membership, and strengthen border controls.

Should Parliament or a general election not change the dynamics of the Brexit process, we should demand a referendum once the negotiated terms of Brexit are known, perhaps in late 2019.

"As 'Project Fear' gradually becomes reality, we should not hesitate to expose the adverse consequences of Brexit and pin the blame on the Leavers"

LITANY OF LIES

There is a considerable body of legal opinion arguing there must be a second referendum on the exact terms of the negotiated Brexit deal. The June referendum gave only an advisory mandate to the Government to leave the EU – it did not give our consent to the terms of departure. By 2019, momentum will have grown for a second referendum as more Leavers suffer 'buyer's remorse' and realise they have swallowed

a litany of lies. Brexit will be associated with having made life more of a struggle, plunging the UK into a constitutional crisis, and not delivering the hoped for benefits, notably on migration.

Even then the terms of our trade both with the EU and 135 WTO members outside it will still not be known. Many Brexiteers argued we can simply rejoin the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and retain our access to the EU market. The problem is that the Norwegian Government has already suggested it could block the UK's readmission to EFTA – its four small members fear being dominated by a large 'problem child'.

A second referendum would give voters another chance to assess in the cold light of post-referendum experience whether the actual Brexit deal achieved (and uncertainty about our future global trading relations and national unity), or the known terms of our existing EU membership is best for Britain. Electorates make mistakes. Like the Danes and Irish in their second referenda on the Maastricht and Nice treaties, the UK electorate could very well reverse our previous decision.

We need to play a long game. Brexit will become increasingly associated with economic downturn, constitutional crises, regulatory obstacles, bureaucratic hassle and cost, and a deterioration of both our EU and non-EU relations.

Any Government progressing Brexit is unlikely to be able to demonstrate tangible benefits from it, not least because no one will conclude trade deals with us until our departure from the EU is completed and new trade relationship with it is known.

Any Government consumed by the complexities of Brexit, rather than focused on addressing the immediate real social and economic problems of voters, will gradually lose support. The majority of voters may at last come to realise we already have the best British deal as an EU member. The last line of the Eagles' 1976 song Hotel California "you can check out any time you like, but you can never leave" could have renewed meaning.

Nick Hopkinson is chair of the Liberal Democrat European Group and former director, Wilton Park, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

LOOSE TALK

The Bank of England's response to the post-referendum downturn will lead to low wages and high house prices when government borrowing could deliver growth, says David Thorpe

The response of markets to the referendum result was distressingly predictable, a rush to risk off assets, a decline in the value of sterling, and a sharp dip in economic expectations.

Politicians have also largely replied as expected, with 'I told you so's' and hand wringing despair from those on the Remain side, and protestations to think long-term from those who advocated Leave.

The policy response from Mark Carney is on the surface of it, text book. If one fears a crisis of confidence and liquidity in the economy, cut interest rates to make borrowing more enticing, and make additional liquidity available to the banks to increase the volume of cash available for lending.

Many market participants contend that while reducing interest rates has historically worked, when rates are already as low as 0.50% cutting to 0.25% may have limited impact. Advocates of this position can cite the examples of both Japan and the eurozone, where rates have tumbled for years and rates are negative, an outcome completely untested in the history of economics.

Cutting interest rates, improving liquidity and potentially re-introducing quantitative easing, also announced recently by Carney, played a role in the UK emerging from the great financial crisis but don't themselves inspire incremental economic growth.

A majority of economists and market participants anticipated in the immediate aftermath of the referendum result a short-term recession in the UK caused by a dent to confidence, and the financial crisis showed that monetary policy tools can be an effective remedy for that problem.

The question of whether Brexit has led to a slowdown in economic activity is otiose, the data doesn't lie, and while a recession is not certain, the economy is sailing sufficiently close to the wind to imply that action is the prudent course.

The concern for Liberal Democrats should be to ensure that the consequence of the Bank Of England's short-term manoeuvres is not a rise in longer-term inequality, and more of the sort of rage against the political machine that led to votes for Brexit.

That is because exceptionally low interest rates and quantitative easing may be a balm for many parts of the economy, but contribute to inequality.

These policies boost asset prices, the rich have more assets than the poor, and the old more than the young.

That helps to explain both why QE and its chattel policies fail to aide growth to a sufficient extent to enable a measure of relaxation on the part of policy makers - rich people are less likely to spend the extra wealth they receive because they have most of the desires money can buy already. The old have much less need to increase consumption as well.

So house prices rise, the young don't see wages rise at the same rate, houses become less affordable, they feel poorer, so don't have the confidence to spend money, feel disenfranchised, and vote for radical answers. Older voters in post-industrial towns kept being told about the wealth of the economy, and felt none had come their way.

This explains why UK house prices were rising in the early years of the coalition government, despite the economy showing little buoyancy.

This is 'the wealth effect', the notion that if a person feels richer (through their house or stock market investments going up) they will feel more confident, and spend more.

If house prices are rising, then bank balance sheets look healthier prompting banks to lend more.

But banks are required to maintain a certain proportion of their balance sheet in liquid assets, such as government bonds and cash. The returns from those fall along with interest rates, making it harder for banks to make money, so they don't feel richer.

Exceptionally low interest rates may also serve to suppress wages, because low rates allow inefficient businesses to continue to operate, creating structural over-supply in the economy, denting the pricing power of companies, and restricting the wage rises of employees, so employees don't feel the benefits of the economic growth they hear politicians refer to. This may explain why unemployment numbers didn't rise as starkly in the last recession as on previous occasions.

All of that combines to make quantitative easing and loose monetary policy look like measures that suppress the wages of workers, and make homes less affordable, hardly progressive outcomes and likely to ferment protest and unrest if practiced over the long-term.

Low interest rates around the world, and low growth, is rather the perfect setting for the government to increase borrowing, and use the cash to fund infrastructure projects, precisely as Keynes advocated decades ago.

That would inject just the same sort of short-term confidence boost into the economy that low interest rates do, but the wealth unlocked would go in greater proportion to the young and the working, people with a greater desire to spend it.

With government borrowing costs low, the UK has an opportunity to boost short term demand and long term infrastructure in one move, a far more interesting course than yet further rate cuts.

David Thorpe is an economics journalist and sits on the London Liberal Democrat regional executive

GENERATION GUILT

John Bryant benefited from easy mortgages and free higher education. Liberal Democrat policy should offer the same opportunities to younger people, he says

I'm alright. But increasingly I feel guilty. You see I took the opportunity of accessing a free university education. I got there because the local grammar school only had one objective, which was to get as many pupils into university as possible.

I bought a two-bedroom terraced £7,950 house in Hull at 25, with a 90% mortgage. And I got away with a bank loan for the deposit too. I was made redundant a year later but social security paid the interest on my mortgage while I looked for work, and my redundancy payment cleared the bank loan.

After divorcing, I ended up in London with £10,000 after selling 50% of the equity to my wife. I used most as the deposit on a two bedroomed flat in Wembley. I paid for the crippling 14% interest rate mortgage by letting the larger bedroom.

Undeterred by negative equity I bought a second a few years later in Kilburn on a 100% mortgage while renting out a room in my first flat to a young teacher. I eventually sold my first flat, still at a loss against its purchase price, but received enough to clear the first mortgage.

I eventually sold my one-bedroom Kilburn property 2014, allowing me to buy a three-bedroomed semi-detached ex-council house in Harrow for £10,000 less than Kilburn's sale price. I am likely to inherit some money, so I should be unexpectedly mortgage-free by Christmas.

Why am I feeling guilty? Because I have managed to buy four properties without ever having to save for a deposit. And for the last 20 years my mortgage payments have been between a half and a third of the equivalent rental value of my properties. So while I have never earned above the average salary for London I have had the disposable income to enjoy the city's arts and culture, and regular holidays abroad.

I apologise for anyone under 40 who thinks this piece is just a baby-boomer gloating about their good fortune.

The opportunities I took meant that I achieved the social mobility which Liberals would expect to be available to everyone in a liberal society. But there are more obstacles in the way for those under 40, which make it ever more difficult for them to progress from surviving to enjoying their lives.

I often wondered why, when I was a councillor in Camden, the largest proportion of those volunteering to run community groups were from the baby boomer generation. Getting anyone under-40 to take an interest was an uphill struggle. I think it was because the younger generation were working long hours simply to survive, with high private sector rents, student debts, and with short term rental agreements they were often moving on with no chance of settling.

The generation gap needs to be addressed. I recently attended the launch of the Resolution Foundation's commission on this topic. There was plenty of evidence to show the income imbalance between the generations, but the key factor is the impact of housing costs, expressed as either private sector rents payable by locality or the average mortgage payments payable on averagely-sized properties. The regional variations will be wildly different, but the cost-of-living gaps between the older and younger generations will be stark in every region. Those baby-boomers who did not buy a property are still more likely than younger generations to have permanent tenancies in social housing, and therefore genuinely affordable rents.

The Liberal policy response to the generational divide needs to comprise several elements, because if nothing changes social mobility will come to a shuddering halt. Without older generations helping out younger family members with house deposits, those who come from households who have only ever rented will find it impossible to save for a deposit to buy, especially if they have student debt.

The Government is proposing to withdraw all student grants, so those who make the jump into higher education will be saddled with a debt they will struggle to pay. That is why targeted grants for students from modest backgrounds should continue to be an ingredient of Liberal Democrat policy.

Private sector rents, unless regulated by local tribunals with the imposition of longer rental agreements, will continue to rise exponentially. The Liberal Democrats should be radical enough to propose bringing private rents under control.

All parties have been calling for an increase in housebuilding. Councils should be encouraged to exploit record low interest rates to 'borrow to build'. And the skills shortage in the building trades should be addressed by expanding the college courses available. That means the Liberal Democrats should be calling for investment in further education colleges; the Cinderella of the education sector.

It is the imbalance in the housing costs of successive generations which has contributed most to the inter-generational divide. So my ambition to gloat without a guilty conscience means that the Liberal Democrats should be espousing policies which address the inter-generational issue on several fronts - on housing supply, on rental costs, and by reducing student debt.

John Bryant (as William Tranby) is a member of the Liberator Collective and was a Liberal Democrat councillor in Camden from 2002-14



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GREENS UP THE POLE

A Green-run council has given Brighton & Hove an environmentally damaging white elephant, says Rob Heale

One of the most important decisions made by the Green councillors when they controlled Brighton and Hove City Council in 2011-15 was to support the building of the i360Ltd Observation Tower on the historic Brighton seafront.

The decision to lend £36.2m from the Public Works Loans Board to i360 Ltd has proven controversial not least for the way Green councillors conducted themselves and their failure to be open or democratic about the process.

A secret committee meeting in 2014 decided to go ahead with funding the tower, yet was less than open about who had voted for it. It was actually the Greens who had been promoting the building of this private tower, which has become increasingly corporate in its approach and is within a historic conservation area.

An original decision to support “an observation spire and heritage centre” near the old West Pier had been supported in principle by the council in 2006 but it had included 48 planning conditions and the council did not agree to fund it.

One condition was that building work should begin within three years otherwise planning permission would lapse. Although no real work was done in this period, i360Ltd sneakily claimed – seemingly with the support of the ruling Greens – that removing a piece of debris from the beach near the old pier fulfilled that condition.

The i360 project was supposed to protect heritage yet it actually destroyed some by demolishing seafront arch structures that had formed part of the coastal defences during the Second World War, including gun emplacements. Part of the vast amount of funding loaned to i360Ltd could easily have been used to incorporate those arches into the West Pier Heritage part of the project.

The environmental credentials of the i360 also leave a lot to be desired. A great deal of disruption, noise and disturbance has been caused by the building of what is – in effect – a corporate tower. The people behind the project have now dropped their plans to generate electricity and ‘harvest’ water due to practical and safety concerns. Now they seem to have also dropped their promise to renovate the historic buildings that stood at the front of the West Pier, possibly due to the cost.

This Tower leaves a considerable “carbon footprint” from its building and maintenance without contributing much more than a view of the area – something that can be achieved elsewhere. The view from the pod at the top of is likely to be obscured on many days because of the inevitable mist common in coastal areas.

Scarce public money has been directed into a project that is not only dubious in terms of heritage and the environment but absorbs investment that could have been put into more practical schemes, such as the

affordable housing that is needed due to high house prices and lack of public housing investment in the city.

Private investors were reluctant to back the tower so it is dubious for the Green councillors (and those Tories who voted with them) to place their faith in a business idea that is risky, has little social benefit, contains a number of likely flaws in its business case and may not even break even financially.

It is not as if the Tower is attractive – to many it looks like a giant power station chimney that has been dropped on the seafront and casts a massive and ugly shadow over the historical streets nearby. Unsurprisingly, it is often called “the i-sore”!

There have been further concerns about the way that the i360 has seemingly attempted to stifle competition from other attractions and the way it has blocked to the upper and lower promenade. Some might argue it has led to the part-privatisation of the seafront.

This project shows up the Green Party as being undemocratic in their approach and environmentally bankrupt. Other aspects of their record in power include a big drop in recycling rates; the demolition of a landmark Victorian pub without proper consultation; removal of lighted crossings and safety railings at busy junctions; and failures to meet housing needs – they have shown themselves to be dubious and inept. The Greens sometimes claim to represent ‘new politics’, yet in reality much of what they did given the chance of power seemed like the worst of the old politics.

Some in the Greens try to claim that they are part of a progressive alliance, yet they constantly undermined Liberal Democrat and Labour candidates during the general election campaign. They also supported Scottish independence, which most Liberal Democrats and Labour MPs opposed, the consequence of which would probably have been more Tory dominance in England and Wales.

The Greens are a flawed party with the danger that their extreme ‘greenism’ becomes authoritarian and slightly fascist because often their thoughtless and sometimes bizarre policies can have serious consequences for ordinary people.

Liberal Democrats and Labour should think very carefully before trusting the Green Party.

Rob Heale is a member of Brighton & Hove Liberal Democrats

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Liberal Youth is about to rebrand as the Young Liberals, explains Charlie Kingsbury

Liberal Democrats of all ages will be converging on Brighton for our annual autumn conference. It'll be an exciting time for party members old and new, reconnecting with old friends and getting to know new ones. But there's something rather special happening for Liberal Youth at Brighton this year. On the Saturday at 8pm, Liberal Youth will be unveiling the progress we've made so far on our rebrand and transition into the Young Liberals.

Earlier this year, I sat down with a few colleagues of mine to discuss some of the broader problems facing Liberal Youth. As with any organisation our size, there are always going to be a few issues to solve, and Liberal Youth is no exception. One of the things which stood out however, was the feeling that Liberal Youth was not of its members' creation, didn't have enough of a vision, or was unclear as to what purpose it filled.

So, we started looking at ways of giving Liberal Youth a fresh coat of paint to reflect the tremendous growth in membership we've experienced over the last year and a half. It's important now more than ever that we can articulate clearly what the Liberal Democrats' youth and student wing is for, and what it offers its members.

Alongside a new name, inspired by the radicalism of the Young Liberals of decades ago, we took the opportunity to develop a new logo, designed by ordinary members wanting to help build something new. And, that's rather the point of the whole thing, the youth and student wing of the party isn't there for just me, or the party establishment. It's there as a vehicle for change as driven by our own membership.

That's what we're going to be reasserting in our new vision: we aren't always going to be fighting for what's convenient for the party, or what makes older members smile with nostalgia, we're going to fight for the bold, new ideas, the policies passed by the young and student liberals of the party.

This doesn't stop with fighting for the policies passed by our membership either, which is something we've always done. Sometimes this means having to take the fight to the party itself and the way it's run, making sure that young voices are no longer underrepresented federally as they have been for years.

It's time that the party realises that if it has any chance of survival, it has to do more than ally itself with the pro-European ideals of young people – it has to listen to and engage with them as well. Less of the patronising ageism we've seen over the past year when Liberal Youth finds itself not conforming to the mainstream opinion, and more of the engagement we see in Scotland and Wales – where they respect their state youth wings so much so that they have a guaranteed seat on every party committee there. It's no wonder then that at Scottish and Welsh conferences, it's a common sight to see as many

young people and students going up to speak as there are older folks, and not a single one of them called ignorant or naïve because of their age.

Most important of all: the party has to support its young people, and help more of them seek election to public office, whether in local government, devolved parliaments or indeed in Westminster.

We've already trialled a programme we hope to roll out further next year, depending on the next executive, whereby we bring in trainers to encourage and provide young people with the skills they need to go out and win big for the party. Ranging from raising awareness of other organisations in the party that can help, to tips on how to best utilise social media in order to run an effective online campaign, Young and Winning, as we call it, looks to be a useful tool for just about anyone hoping to stand for election, in particular the young people and students of the party.

'Young and Winning' is something I want the Young Liberals to continue delivering, so that we care for the professional development of our membership as well as the advancement of their goals and aims. It is my hope that a fresh, rebranded, and rejuvenated Young Liberals will lead the way for the party, and teach a few old dogs some new tricks.

Charlie Kingsbury is co-chair of Liberal Youth

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WALES WASN'T LISTENING

Dear Liberator,

The account by Energlyn Churchill in *Liberator* 379 of campaigning in the Welsh Assembly regions is not universally accurate.

Whereas it is true that the Welsh Liberal Democrats' central party wrote off the regions and shamefully abandoned three of the five Assembly Members to their fate with little support or help, the situation in my region of South Wales West did not reflect that which prevailed in South Wales East.

Having been told that we were not a target seat, and having been starved of visits and resources, the South Wales West regional party determined to deliver the best possible campaign we could. Here we have always operated as a region, with regular meetings of the regional executive over the 17 years I was an Assembly Member and a co-ordinated campaign across the seven constituencies.

We raised £58,000 in donations and contributions from members, local businesses, and individuals not previously associated with the party using a combination of personal contacts, appeals, a crowd-funding site and tapping up existing funds in our print society and local parties.

That fund was used to pay for centrally-produced literature for both the region and the constituencies carrying identical messages and complemented with directly mailed blue letters to nearly 20,000 people. We ran a very personal campaign built around my public profile in the region, trying to overcome the negatives that still existed around the Liberal Democrats.

We used a mailing house to produce our regional freepost literature. This consisted of enveloped personally addressed letters and leaflets in a three way split. If we had had more money we could have done more, but alas that was not forthcoming. Nevertheless my region had the best result for the Welsh Liberal Democrats of all five, maintaining our support from 2011 and increasing the regional vote in numerical terms.

Unfortunately, whereas in 2011 I held on by 54 votes, this time there was a fifth party and it was on a roll. Ukip effectively took the my assembly seat.

Energlyn Churchill says that nobody knows what the Welsh Liberal Democrats are for. He advocates a narrative based on the economy, education and the environment. The reality is though that we had a narrative in which we highlighted what we had already achieved in those areas as well as health, put across clear policies and argued that we needed to concentrate on the basics to improve delivery of essential services across Wales. The problem was that nobody was listening.

As well as fighting the legacy of the coalition, we also had to contend with a resurgent Ukip vote and tens of thousands of former Labour voters in the valleys who thought they had to cast their ballot for Farage's party on 5 May so as to get out of Europe.

The mathematics of the d'hondt system used in the Welsh Assembly elections and the limited number of top up seats available in each region meant that we had to do significantly better than we had done in 2011. Alas our diminished base of support as a result of the coalition government did not allow us that luxury.

Cllr Peter Black (AM for South Wales West 1999-2016)

LETTERS



NOT THAT HE KNOWS

Dear Liberator

Graham Watson (*Liberator* 379) says I experienced 'glee' at the outcome of the referendum, since 'dissipated'. He does not know this.

What I do believe is that although Brexit may well ruin Britain, it should not also be allowed to ruin the remaining EU. Article 50 is designed to expedite an orderly departure of the seceding state and to limit collateral damage. As far as EU law is concerned, now that her country has decided legitimately to leave the EU, the prime minister, as a member of the European Council, is duty bound to invoke the secession process.

Any inordinate delay by the UK in triggering Article 50 risks the wider disintegration of Europe. If used well, Article 50 can build a bridge within two years towards a future agreement between EU 27 and the UK. But the details of that settlement can only be negotiated later once the UK has left the union, and under different legal bases.

For frustrated Remainers to continue to deny the result of the referendum by litigious or political means is a democratic outrage and will plunge both the UK and the EU into further constitutional crisis.

Liberal Democrats should not be party to such adventures. Instead we can encourage Europe to move forward firmly without the UK in the federal direction, as Churchill once did. And at home we must work to build a new political movement to rally the country's pro-PR and pro-EU forces.

Andrew Duff
European Policy Centre, Brussels

TRUTH AND LIES

Dear Liberator,

Your readers might have been a bit puzzled by a reference in *Liberator* 379 to a motion submitted by myself and other people on truth in politics. The motion was in response to the widespread lying during the EU referendum (and indeed previous referenda) and suggested the national political advertising should be subject to the same requirements as to truthfulness as other advertising and regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority. Quite why the Collective should object to this I can't imagine.

Simon McGrath
Merton

Reaching beyond the tribe! Working together with new alliances

Rt Hon Sir Vince Cable (former Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and

Skills) in conversation with Frances O'Grady (General Secretary, Trades Union Congress).

Chair: Helen Flynn

Fringe meeting sponsored by the Social Liberal Forum and *Liberator*
Hilton Hotel Brighton, Balmoral Room
Monday 19 September | 130-1230

The Witchfinder General, a political odyssey by Joyce Gould Biteback 2016

The title of the book derives from Gould's role in driving the Militant Tendency out of the Labour party. At the time, while we were implacable enemies, I had much sympathy with the Millies. After all, we were taking seats off of the Labour right because they were useless; Labour has just lost Scotland on the same basis. Militant were doing the work. The built in inertia of the Labour party is part of the problem. The Labour right's retaking control of the party (illegal wars aside) completed its transformation into a machine for electing career politicians, of a barely different hue from those of the Conservative party. Either way, left or right, the Labour party has betrayed the working class. Gould acknowledges that 60% of the vote gives Corbyn a mandate, but is circumspect about the mechanics of his election. From a Liberal point of view, Corbyn gives a clear alternative, as Militant did in the 1980s and 1990s. Seize the opportunity, do not repeat the errors of Ashdown with Blair.

Gould seems a reasonable enough person, though she's a bit of tankie in Labour party terms. That 40% of Labour MPs are women is something of a personal achievement. All women shortlists are something the Liberal Democrats are only just coming to terms with, though, of course, they don't have safe seats to hand on in that sense.

There is little reference to Liberals. The formation of the SDP gets scant mention, finding it "difficult to understand how long-standing members could break away and attempt to destroy the Labour party" – I can sympathise with that, but it needed to be done, and still does. Most surprising to her was Tom McNally. She says that she, and colleagues, were slow in taking note of Jenkins' 1979 Dimpleby lecture – too far up their own backsides to realise the opportunities that were opening up.

Of by-elections, Gould was sent to Grimsby in 1977, but regrets the loss of Ashfield on the same day. When Jenkins made his farewell to the Commons to take up his European Commission post, he said - with



REVIEWS

his usual substitution of 'w' for 'r' - that he "was leaving without rancour", to which the Beast of Bolsover famously chirped up "I thought you were taking Marquand with you".

Not surprisingly Labour thought Ashfield a safe seat, with its 22,000 majority, and far too few Liberals turned up to support Hampton Flint – a good lad, but the Tories managed to win by a couple of hundred-odd votes.

Gould thinks that this was down to the electorate not liking their MP going off to a lucrative post elsewhere, but my experience is that that it was the pay-back for years of Labour neglect, as I canvassed council houses, many suffering subsidence from the mines underneath.

Simon Hughes won Bermondsey as a Liberal in 1983; there are some notes on the Labour selection process, and similarly for Chesterfield, where Max Payne took the Liberals to second place against Tony Benn in 1984. Rosie Barnes unfortunately didn't live up to her promise in Greenwich after 1987. When she stayed with the Continuing SDP after merger, there was some talk in the Collective of persuading Lindi St. Clair to stand against her, although this did not materialise and the local Lib Dems choose to back Barnes in 1992 (she lost).

Gould believes: "Maintaining the history of the party is essential for future generations", bad times as well as good. She was dismayed by the destruction of the records of Labour's Yorkshire region. So please note – make sure you deposit your records with your local county history archive, or whatever is appropriate. She also notes the demise of detailed NEC reports and conference reports. As we enter the digital dark ages, one wonders how Liberals shape up on this – badly I expect, but there are

County Records Offices and the like where deposits can be made.

Stewart Rayment
EU Environmental Policy: its Journey to Centre Stage. By Nigel Haigh. Earthscan/Routledge, 2016

Within the European Union the United Kingdom is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases after Germany. But the UK and Germany are also two of the loudest voices within the EU in support of tough climate policy.

These contrasting facts highlight the uncertainty – and potential damage – deriving from the UK's withdrawal from the EU – a decision with consequences that received barely a mention in all the sound, fury and distortions of the referendum debate. The most urgent and salient of environmental issues - stabilising the global climate – calls for a rare kind of leadership, great powers of negotiation and collaborative work.

As David Baldock argues in a stocktaking chapter at the end of Nigel Haigh's book: "Since 2009 the EU has lost some of its previous status as a global leader in international climate negotiations, although it is still an important player." One index of the importance of the EU in climate negotiations is the months of effort invested by the European Commission in shuffle diplomacy to secure the agreement of 28 countries to new national emissions-reduction targets to achieve the EU's goal of reducing greenhouse gases by at least 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, which runs ahead of that of most other OECD countries.

The draft law is the first major piece of legislation since Britons voted in June to leave, and is a test of the EU's cohesion and a vital contribution to the pact agreed in Paris last December aimed at holding global warming 'well below' two degrees celsius.

The UK's departure from the EU involves not just turning our back on an important negotiating table, it reduces the opportunities to participate in the shared learning experience and peer group pressure that are fundamental to stabilising the global climate.

Nigel Haigh has devoted most of his adult life to helping to understand, develop and promote EU environmental policy. He is an expert on the subject and Michael Gove should be forced to sit and listen to him for hours on end. Haigh is a lucid guide to the EU's engagement with the major transboundary issues that impact on everyone's life. On lead in petrol, acid rain, the protection of the ozone layer, climate change and much else, he explains the collaborative process of policy development, and the unique role of the EU in securing crucial international agreements.

While it is a cruel irony that Haigh's book was published a few weeks before the UK's momentous referendum decision, it will remain an essential summary of the progress made in recent decades, and a strong reminder to all concerned with the further effective evolution of that policy of the benchmarks already laid down, most of which would not be in place without decades of diligent work by committed experts in numerous EU countries. The global environment would be in a much worse state without the work of the European Union.

Robert Hutchison

Eccles Cakes, an odd tale of survival

by Jonathan Fryer
When does an Eccles Cake become a Banbury Cake? Jonathan does not answer that tricky question, in what turns out to be an autobiography.

The book barely covers the first 19 years of Jonathan's, half of which covers a few months. Orphaned, abused, mis-schooled; it seems incredible that this is the past of someone so familiar to so many of us as a friend and colleague.

No child should suffer sexual abuse, no one should. Most of us, I hope, don't. It is courageous to recount these things, and useful for a wider understanding, not least for those of us who have to deal with

such problems as councillors.

So, scarred, how do we arrive at the person we know? Jo Grimond set him on the road to Liberalism, and foreign travel, against the background of the Vietnam war, his internationalism. We know that he will end up in Oxford, that his first travels will lead to a career in journalism, and of course, his politics, but the book doesn't quite get there. We know he has a visa to get into Syria - the bravado that only a school-boy could pull off; but does he get there? Only the next 19 years will tell.

Jonathan's book is available on Amazon, both as an e-book and paperback, and will be available at the Liberal International British Group stall in Brighton, where Jonathan will be signing copies 1pm-2pm on 19 September.

Stewart Rayment

Dull Disasters – How Planning Ahead Will Make A Difference

by Daniel J Clarke and Stefan Dercon
Oxford, 2016

This very readable book challenges policy makers to make more effective use of economics, psychology and science to prevent extreme natural shocks turning into major disasters. The authors argue that afflicted countries seeking funding for a predictable disaster post event does not work as it leads to delayed response.

Furthermore funding is rarely available with the timeliness and in the quantity required, and the responsibility for managing the risk is ambiguous.

The authors suggest that, instead of the 'begging bowl' approach, governments must bring experts together to predict and plan for disasters, and create a consensus about what will be protected.

Pre-agreed financial arrangements, based on insurance model type partnerships between public (including international donor agencies) and private sector would clarify who was funding what. This would reduce the confusion that follows a disaster and ensure donors will follow through on pledges while also enabling them to propose risk reduction measures are incorporated in the plan.

Leaders are exhorted to think as if they were an insurance company (this suggestion may be questionable) and focus on financing the outcomes set out in the pre disaster plan. Of course disasters rarely occur to plan but this is countered by the argument that this is precisely why leadership is critical to implement fast, evidence based, decision-making processes. The challenge is that politicians are willing to invest in disaster.

The book draws on a wide range of research which is helpfully summarised. It is spot on in emphasising the importance of pre-planning and the importance of involving stakeholders. The proposals are timely - the World Bank has recently talked of developing an insurance system to combat the (still unknown) impact of Zika virus. A few examples are provided of communities and countries that have identified and pre funded disasters.

Its format, however, does not, however, allow for detailed modelling. It would have been interesting to have seen what a pre-agreed plan for the widely predicted Nepal earthquakes would have looked like or what a plan for Haiti would have added up to. Inevitably the complex social and political challenges have been minimised to keep the argument simple.

In most of the countries where disaster response has been particularly ineffective, governments have been distrusted, infrastructure weak, communities disempowered and legislation did not support a co-ordinated, rapid recovery programme. The political challenges both of agreeing what might be acceptable trade-offs and incentivising politicians to invest in future disasters may have been under-estimated. At the end of the book the authors make a statement which is powerful by its simplicity - in order for this to work "politicians will have to care – for their people, for the poor". Creating this political cadre supported by skilled disaster planners is the real challenge if disasters are to be 'dulled'.

Margaret Lally

As those of you who subscribed to the leather-bound edition of my collected journalism last year will know, I am a regular contributor to the newspapers – and not just the High Leicestershire Radical, which I happen to own. Thus it was no surprise when I was invited to contribute a piece under the title: “How the Liberal Democrats can revive their electoral fortunes” by one of Fleet Street’s most prominent organs.

So I sit in my Library, straight after breakfast, simply bursting with idea for this article, which must be filed this evening “without fail”. First, however, I had better sharpen my pencils.

As it turned out, I have more pencils than I remembered. I also decided to rearrange the Liberal Philosophy section: would you believe I had my Hobsons shelved before my Hobhouses? If any of my friends had noticed, I should never have lived it down.

Then I had to lean out of the window and advise Meadowcroft, who was trimming the edges of my croquet lawn in preparation for a match against the Deputy Returning Officers of Northamptonshire next week. He was surprisingly ungrateful when I pointed out that he had Missed A Bit. And then it was time for morning coffee, so I had to stop writing.

While I enjoy my Caffè Bellotti, let me share with you my thoughts on our future if we leave the European Union.

I recently heard a Conservative politician who has been Members of the European Parliament since they were 14 say that Brexit will make us a “buccaneering” nation again. Well, we remember those days hereabouts and dark they were indeed.

Merchant vessels carrying Stilton and pork pies out of Oakham across Rutland Water were set upon by pirates, who stole their cargo, made the crew walk the plank and went “Arrr!” in a most annoying fashion. (I suppose they wanted they wanted the foodstuffs to feed their parrots.)

I grant you those days were not without glamour: every Rutland schoolboy knows the story of how one of my ancestors ordered a footman to lie down in a puddle so that Queen Elizabeth would not get her pretty shoes muddy. Yet every fair-minded person will admit that the elimination of piracy in Rutland is one of the European Union’s greatest achievements and entertain no wish to see it return.

I must now pause for a modest luncheon. You are no doubt wondering how my article is coming along. Well, I am (as I may have mentioned) simply bursting with ideas for it, but I have been concerned for some days about a spot of subsidence at the Bonkers’ Home for Well-Behaved Orphans. Being firmly of the belief that we must put children first, I hurried over their after coffee to supervise the repairs.

The foreman of the builders suggested that the problem was due to a tunnel that had been dug from the coal cellar under the walls of the orphanage, put I pooh-poohed the idea. It must, I told him, be an adit

Lord Bonkers’ Diary

left over from the Rutland Gold Rush or the work of a particularly large mole.

Lunch was enjoyable, but before I get down to writing my article I must attend to this morning’s post.

What do we have? A letter from an Irish bishop inquiring about visiting hours at the aforementioned orphanage. Another from a journalist who wants to interview me about my part in the archaeological dig that discovered

‘Ashdown Man’ – at one time the old boy was thought to provide important evidence about the evolution of Liberalism in Britain, but these days people are Not So Sure. What else do we have? Bills (we won’t bother with those), dividends from my shares in the oil rigs on Rutland Water and an illuminated address thanking me for my work in suppressing vice amongst canvassers in the West Country.

Then there are the usual letters from Liberal Democrats around the country. These tend to repeat the same questions, so over the years I have dictated standard replies to them and given each a number. Today’s required replies are: 1 (“Thank you for your kind words – I enclosed a signed photograph”), 17 (“In such a marginal seat I would recommend the use of the Bonkers Patent Exploding Focus”) and 84 (“Take a cold tub and volunteer for extra delivering”).

Now it will soon be time for tea and I really must get on with that article.

Tea was delicious, as indeed was dinner – cannon of Norman lamb with pugh lentils. The sun gone down over Rutland Water with a loud hiss and I have before me a blank sheet of paper.

Well, not quite blank.

Beneath the heading “How the Liberal Democrats can revive their electoral fortunes,” I find I have written the words:

“I’m buggered if I know.”

Still, a deadline is a deadline, so I shall now have a junior footman take it to the village post office so it can be telegraphed to London.

I wrote all the above yesterday, and will confess that I spent the night tossing and turning. How would my piece be received in Fleet Street?

I need not have worried. This morning I received an excited telephone call from the organ. I won’t pretend to understand everything that was said, but the gist of it was they had published it on the electric internet under the title: “We asked a Liberal Democrat peer to tell us how his party can be revived: You won’t believe what happened next!”

Not only that: it appears I have “broken the interweb”. I was about to apologise, but it transpired this was a good thing and that I am “bigger than Kim Kardashian’s bottom”.

And that, I think we can agree, dear reader, is Very Big Indeed.

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