

liberator



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London N4 2LF
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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

🔊 welcomes written contributions on relevant topics, up to 1800 words.

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COMMENTARY

REMAIN 'REMAIN' FOR HOW LONG?

If anyone had said in May 2015 that 18 months later the Liberal Democrats would have 78,000 members and have gained a seat in a by-election they would have been dismissed as an incurable optimist or worse.

The gain in Richmond Park came on top of the good showing in Witney and was followed by a third place in Sleaford. The latter would not normally be significant but was notably achieved by pushing Labour into fourth place.

Angry 'remainers' have indeed proven themselves to be a large and readily aroused constituency.

Witney and Richmond had voted 'remain' anyway and while Sleaford was heavily for 'leave' the Lib Dems were able to pick up much of the 'remain' minority precisely because the Tories and Ukip were aligned to 'leave' and no one (including Labour itself) knew where Labour stood.

Just targeting the 'remain' 48% could be enough to deliver plenty of seats to the Lib Dems and this is certainly likely to bear longer lasting fruit than will exploiting transient local grievances.

But as Nick Harvey writes in this issue, it isn't enough to win back what was lost in 2015 let alone expand beyond that.

It may be that some unforeseen event - economic disaster, a second referendum, a general election, halts the looming calamity of Brexit.

But if it doesn't and the next general election finds the UK a poorer, isolated, inward-looking place dominated by the sort of Brexit supporters who hate the rest of the world and everyone in it, what will the party say and do then?

It is quite legitimate to continue to campaign for the UK to return to the EU - just as the Europe-haters never accepted the result of the 1975 referendum and campaigned against that. But that would then be for the very long-term.

Being pro-'remain' may serve the Lib Dems well for another year or so and all power to it, but what comes after that?

It's obviously tempting to say that the Lib Dems, and 'remain' voters generally, should keep their hands clean and so ensure that the blame for any economic disaster is hung firmly round the necks of 'leave' supporters. They won, let them sort it out and keep up the 'remain' campaign to swoop when they fail.

But just because the 'leave' campaign was run by liars and bigots, many from the sewers of British politics, it does not follow that all their supporters fell into these unsavoury categories.

A platform that is purely pro-'remain' may look

rather threadbare by 2020. The party needs to have something to say to those - even if they are a minority among 'leave' voters - who felt the EU did nothing for them but who are not small-minded nationalists.

'Remain' will serve well for a while yet, but the party has to think about what it wants a post-Brexit UK to look like. We all know what too many 'leave' supporters want it to look like.

LIMITS OF INTERVENTION

As the war in Syria appears nearer to its end, with a victory for the Assad regime in sight courtesy of Iranian and Russian intervention, recriminations are starting again about whether or not the west should have 'done something'.

Parliament refused to 'do something' in 2013 as it was unclear how bombing Assad would end. Great controversy was caused in the Lib Dems last winter when most MPs backed the idea of the RAF bombing ISIS in Syria even though it was again unclear what the consequences would be on the ground.

Syria was always the country in which the Arab Spring was least likely to lead to a democratic transition (Tunisia was the most likely) as the Assad regime is one of minorities. In a democracy the Sunni majority would prevail, so Assad's supporters would fight to the end to prevent that.

Faced with that, western intervention needed an effective fighting force on the ground to support, and since there wasn't reliably one outside Kurdish areas what could such intervention have achieved beyond a warm glow that the UK was 'doing something'?

Iraq ought to have taught western governments the limits of intervening in other countries with neither plans for their future nor the means to impose these even where they exist.

Tempting as it is when nightly horrors appear on television to think "we must do something" it is impossible to half-intervene, to drop a few bombs and or put in a few troops with no clear objective.

Wholehearted intervention requires a determination to fight a full scale war and for governments to justify the dead bodies coming home.

Does anyone seriously think that western troops could have successfully simultaneously fought Assad, Hezbollah, ISIS and assorted militias to a successful conclusion, or that voters would have stood for the consequences?

Last year anger over MPs' support for involvement in Syria was surely right - there are some horrific situations abroad in which it is simply impossible for the UK to improve things.

RADICAL BULLETIN

UNDER THE CARPET

It was a surprise to rather too many people when the Electoral Commission announced on 7 December that it would fine the Liberal Democrats the maximum £20,000 for delivering an incomplete return of campaign spending for the 2015 general election and would refer chief executive Tim Gordon to the police over whether he had “knowingly or recklessly” made a false declaration by signing the statement in question.

This related to the commission finding 307 payments totalling £184,676 missing from the party’s spending return.

The commission “noted that the failure by the party to notify it that the return was incomplete prior to submission or at any point afterwards was a significant aggravating factor” and that it would have imposed a higher fine had it powers to.

Its statement was the first the public knew of this, but a large number of senior party figures were kept similarly in the dark until almost the minute this bombshell exploded.

Liberator understands that the Federal Finance and Administration Committee became aware of it only 36 hours in advance and the Federal Executive only the evening before.

Although the commission indicated it would fine the party in November the first FFAC heard was at its meeting on 5 December.

The next day FFAC, FE members and the party trustees were asked to take part in an urgent phone conference with party president Sal Brinton and were told the commission’s announcement would be made the following day.

One of those who listened in was surprised to find proceedings couched in terms of how difficult this was for Gordon personally rather than for the party.

A party statement the next day said the mistakes in the return were “a result of human error and failures of process”. It added: “Tim Gordon will be remaining in post but beyond confirming that, the party will not be commenting further.”

Committee members were sternly admonished that any other comment “would be extremely unhelpful”.

Liberator understands that the errors involve legitimate campaign spending that was incorrectly calculated because the party was rushing to meet the filing deadline.

In retrospect, the party might have been better advised to take the late filing fine and do the whole thing properly a bit later.

TRIDENT TESTED

One of Tim Farron’s first acts as leader was to ensure that the policy debate on renewing Trident was kicked into touch by setting up what was

possibly the 687th working group to consider the matter.

Last autumn’s Brighton conference saw a 90 minutes consultation after which there was a deafening silence and no meetings of the working group took place in October. In November, party headquarters circulated a draft report to members which was constructed to lead to the conclusion that UK should go ahead with replacing Trident with the Successor programme.

This puzzled some group members are there had at no point been a discussion among them on what should be said.

It turned out group chair Neil Stockley drafted the report with help from staff and group members known to favour keeping nukes.

The group’s membership had of course been chosen from the outset to ensure a pro-nuke conclusion would be reached.

Members went through the motions of debating anti-nuke amendments but only minimal changes were made at a meeting where rare attenders were rather obviously whipped to come or phone in.

The group’s remit said it would “look at the case for and against the UK continuing to be a nuclear power”. It did the latter part of this only during the debate on the amendments.

It was also supposed to consider “the ethics of being a nuclear power.”, that too happened only briefly and inconclusively.

Much of the group’s deliberations were taken up not with the rights or wrongs of nuclear weapons but about the positioning of the party and not rocking the boat.

Expected amendment to at spring conference promise an interesting row.

YOU DON’T GET ME I’M PART OF THE UNION

November’s Scottish Lib Dem conference saw a motion try to ease the party away from leader Willie Rennie’s hardline unionist position on a second independence referendum, by leaving options open.

To give added spice, it was proposed by two notable figures: ex-MEP Elspeth Attwool and former Gordon candidate and hitherto entirely establishment figure Christine Jardine, who resigned her front bench position in the summer.

Two wrecking amendments were duly tabled; the party’s conference committee rejected the one from the establishment in the name of Alex Cole-Hamilton, the only potential alternative to Rennie as leader. Instead the party voted for an amendment by ex-Argyll MP Alan Reid which was even more hardline unionist.

Cole-Hamilton was phoning round party bigwigs canvassing support for his amendment and saying it was a resignation issue for Rennie. In other

circumstances that could have been met with relief, but it is widely understood that the other four Lib Dem MSPs are even more hardline unionist and right-wing than Rennie.

The amended motion has been accused of being unconstitutional because it rejects the Claim of Right, enshrined in the Scottish preamble as part of the work towards creating Holyrood, which acknowledges “the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government best suited to their needs”.

There was also a fuss when pride of place in the conference lobby was given to the Scotland In Union group, who argue against referendums generally, and an independence referendum specifically. They seem to many no more than a Tory front that has Rennie by the short and curlies. After the vote several activists resigned leaving Rennie leading an even smaller party.

There seems to be no sense of irony about supporting a second EU referendum but not a second one on independence.

ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

Another of Nick Clegg’s surprise peerages has gone sour. Raj Loomba, a previously unknown figure handed a peerage in 2011, has resigned from the Liberal Democrats though has said he has no policy disagreements.

Loomba’s main interest is his charity, which does admirable work with widows in India, and his Lords appearances were largely limited to matters connected with this.

It is thought by other peers that he was tired of being whipped to come in to vote as he rarely took part in proceedings.

At least, unlike Baroness Manzoor (Liberator 381), has hasn’t joined another party, but the question remains why did Clegg waste precious peerages on people of such questionable commitment to the Lib Dems?

There is some speculation that Loomba was not the only peer frustrated by being expected to be present at the Lords at short notice at odd and unpredictable times for largely meaningless votes when other parties allow their members much more latitude. Some of those who were not previously MPs feel the workload was not explained to them when they accepted peerages.

Loomba’s departure came just before an even more surprising one, that of former MP Alex Carlile. At time of going to press other peers had not been told why he has gone.

DON’T ALL RUSH

The change to electing Lib Dem federal committees by all members, rather than just conference representatives, was supposed to lead to a great flowering of participatory democracy.

Instead, elections to the new Federal Board, Federal Policy Committee, Federal Conference Committee and International Relations Committee were ignored by almost all party members.

Even making allowances for the time of year and problems some members had in receiving voting credentials the turnout at 9.4% was pathetic, with just 7,347 out of 78,000-odd members voting.

Only 91 of those 78,000 stood for any of the posts on offer, though a handful stood for more than one body.

There was a notable lack of organised slates. Social Liberal Forum circulated a call to support individual members who had stood, Liberal Reform appeared to have no candidate except Joe Otten and there was little sign of campaigns by those with regional power bases.

Nor were peers and former MPs much in evidence, despite fears that they would dominate the elections through high name recognition, with Liz Lynne being the only former parliamentarian elected.

One surprise casualty was Ramesh Dewan, well known for his generosity with cakes, who had been on the old Federal Executive for many years but was not elected to the Federal Board.

Among the newcomers was Dinesh Dhamija, a former Tory donor endorsed by Nick Clegg and Gavin Grant, not perhaps the two least controversial figures in the party.

Dhamija’s motives for switching parties seem unimpeachable. He is reported as having told the Eastern Eye newspaper: “The Conservatives were trying to appease some of the Ukip demands so supporters could come back, which means the left side, where I was, was left [behind], so I decided to go towards the Lib Dems.”

Elections to the English party’s assorted posts from among its council members incited even greater apathy, apart from that for chair, where Liz Leffman ousted incumbent Steve Jarvis by 77 votes to 39.

Only two other posts were contested, for representatives to federal committees, and the prospect of serving on the English executive was greeted with such enthusiasm that three of the 12 posts remain unfilled.

IT’S LEMBIT UKIP

Can you change ‘Opik’ to ‘Ukip’ changing one letter at a time but as many principles as you like?

We are indebted to the Sunderland newspaper the Chronicle for revealing that former Lib Dem MP Lembit Opik was booked by Ukip as the entertainment at a local fund raiser, which curiously for the kippers had a Spanish theme. How much lower can this preposterous buffoon sink?

SOUND OF SILENCE

The Sleaford and North Hykeham by-election in December was fought on territory similar to that of the old Grantham seat, which Liberator Collective member the late Simon Titley fought in 1983.

He claimed to be the last British politician to feature in a silent newsreel, after a local photographer recorded a campaign meeting.

This was shown at a cinema as part of the local news, but as late as 1983 still without any sound.

JOGGING THE CONSCIENCE

An embarrassing silence descended at Haringey Liberal Democrats annual dinner as the auctioneer reached an unsought prize - jogging with Tim Farron.

It was surely the prospect of having to jog, rather than that of meeting Farron, that deterred bidders until a public spirited member ended the all-round embarrassment and bid.

A WARNING FROM THE WEST

The 'core vote strategy' currently being articulated risks alienating large chunks of our regular support base, and writing off rural seats we held for years, says former MP Nick Harvey

Paul Hindley's excellent article 'A warning from the north' (Liberator 380), focusing attention back onto the concept of people being 'left behind', struck a chord with me in the south west.

The debate on a 'core vote strategy' stimulated since the 2015 debacle by David Howarth and Mark Pack (Liberator 380, but long articulated in Liberator by the late, great Simon Titley) contains some admirable analysis and suggestions, but leaves me distinctly anxious.

Our lamentable 8% vote in 2015, once stripped of tactical and protest voters, reveals just how tiny is our underlying core. Building it to 20% is a grand – if incredibly ambitious – goal. A reliable block of 20% support: what's not to like?

The question is where to find and how to build it. In the early days of voter segmentation – long before the Tories did such beastly things to us in 2015 – Party HQ overlaid Mosaic categories onto our EARS database, seeking to identify our most promising target voters.

Presently they sent a 'toolkit' to seats, and my organiser burst in one day to declare: "Good news! According to Cowley Street's latest wheeze, we have almost 600 Lib Dem voters in this seat!" (I had polled almost 24,000 at the preceding election).

To me, that illustrates how our brightest brains in London never remotely understood, nor came to terms with, who was actually voting for us in the half of our seats which were rural or at any rate less cosmopolitan.

DOG SHOOTING

In the 1979 election the Liberal Party, despite dog shooting and other difficulties, polled 14%. An academic study of why people voted as they did, revealed that about a third voted Liberal 'to get us out of Europe', and a third 'to send the immigrants home'. One hopes the two overlapped, but these findings reveal our problem.

At the seven elections after that, we barely strayed more than 3% ('margin of error') from a 20% support level. There were discernible components of our regular support base: public sector workers, academics, students and young people, the dispossessed poor – whether rural or urban depending on our campaigning, and overlaying all this a sprinkling of the open-minded 'chatterati'.

During the Coalition we alienated each of these constituencies, appearing to collude with the Tories to savage public services and freeze wages, shaft students, disappoint the young and abandon the poor. We took some of the chatterati with us, but even there

our support diminished.

Small wonder so many peeled away in 2015. But any attempt to rebuild a regular 20% vote share must try to recover all of those constituencies, not just the chatterati and academics. We cannot afford to write off people with a long habit of voting for us just because we now decide they 'don't share our values'.

Through the 20th century, when Liberal fortunes ran pretty thin, North Devon elected Liberal MPs for more than two-thirds of those hundred years. In 1959, just three seats were won in genuinely open contests – Montgomery and Orkney & Shetland being the others. So it's not a bad place to start looking for a core vote.

When I recaptured the seat in 1992, I recall party HQ sending a consignment of manifestos after the campaign launch. An elderly volunteer asked me what should be done with them. In the pre-internet age, my response was simple: hide them in the cupboard under the stairs, and ensure that absolutely no one sees them before polling day.

It wasn't that I personally disagreed with the manifesto, but I judged it better pitched at voters in Islington than North Devon. With plenty of dispossessed rural poor and public sector workers (a higher proportion in economically marginal areas), but no universities so few academics or students, and a small middle class so few chatterati, it just wasn't hitting the right notes. In various roles thereafter, including chair of campaigns and communications, I attempted to drag the party's messaging to address the full cross-section of groups we needed to attract.

This isn't a left/right issue. North Devon's public workers and dispossessed voters hold firmly left of centre economic views on tax and spending. With strong Methodist traditions, they disdain authority and detest Conservatives. They are suspicious of power 60 miles away in Exeter, considerably more so of Westminster 220 miles away, and as for Brussels 450 miles away – well, let's just say that many people who have voted Liberal all their lives are trenchantly anti-European, including party members and sitting councillors.

Most such voters are quietly proud of British efforts on international aid, and any concerns about immigration are economic in motivation. They are accepting of equal marriage but would prefer us 'to make less fuss' about it, and passively approving of campaigns against ID cards and internet snooping – without seeing them as important priorities, just good opportunities to bash the authorities.

Some of them, bluntly, inhabit a different world from our manifesto writers and Federal Policy Committee (I've always thought FPC candidates' attendance

record is less relevant than their canvassing record – they should get out more). What they want to hear Lib Dems prioritising are rebuilding public services, taxing the rich and improving welfare policies, not banging on about Brexit – which they probably view as a done deal, for better or worse. In other words, the appeal to them is virtually the opposite of what voters in Richmond wanted to hear.

And that highlights the dilemma we have battled with for decades. What appeals to Lib Dem voters in affluent London suburbs, and university seats like Bath, Oxford, Cambridge and Sheffield Hallam (and to Lib Dem activists and Liberator readers) can largely pass over the heads of voters in our rural target seats, like in the south west, Scotland and Wales.

We have reconciled this successfully by focussing on issues of most immediate concern constituency by constituency and campaigning effectively to resolve them. This ‘community’ approach ultimately elected 100 Lib Dem parliamentarians. Alternative strategies – trying to shift entire demographic groups through ideological and policy-based messaging – proved hopeless in 2015, rather as it had for the SDP.

I lost almost 18% of the vote in 2015, falling from over 47% to under 30%. It is instructive to see where it went: 1% to Labour and 4% Green, maybe reacting to the Coalition, but I could have ridden those out; 6% to the Tories, reacting to too much talk about hung Parliaments (not least from Lib Dems) and nonsense about the SNP. But the biggest defection was almost 8% to UKIP: people who have always voted Lib Dem, but no longer saw us as champions of the ‘left behind’, ready to cock a snook at the establishment, but rather as people who had ‘sold out’ and joined it – and apparently wanted more of the same.

OUT OF TOUCH

We can win those people back, and must if we are ever to regain seats like North Devon and many like it. But we will have to address issues which matter to them and not look ‘out of touch’. Warbling on about small ‘liberal’ issues, which mean much to us but nothing to them, is not the way to achieve it. Not that they are implacably hostile to such ideas, but put simply: they couldn’t give a flying duck.

I am not remotely suggesting that we should change our beliefs or values and start espousing social conservatism. That is not the point; the voters I am describing would not respond positively to that – quite the opposite, we have looked too much like Tories, not too little. The debate is what we use limited air time focusing on, what we campaign about, what we tell people we are for and why they should vote for us.

David and Mark tell us their suggestions ‘should be controversial’ within the party, because they propose a ‘radical departure from previous practice’. God knows we need something radically different to the practices of recent years – look where they have got us. But the vox pops in Liberator 379 suggest that plenty share my belief that we must appeal beyond the floating voter

“Any attempt to rebuild a regular 20% vote share must try to recover all of those constituencies, not just the chatterati and academics”

element among the 48% of Remainers.

Low living standards and poor public services understandably alienate people who see others prospering from globalisation. We must rediscover our voice as champions for those people, and as campaigners against ‘the establishment’.

Surely, by now, it is a no-brainer to say that we must

talk to people about what matters to them, rather than what matters to us? ‘It’s the economy, stupid’ remains valid, and some of the alternatives – identity politics, for example – are ugly by comparison. We must urgently fight off the concept of a ‘liberal middle class elite’ and not reinforce it in our messaging and prioritising.

To some extent, the economic interests of our ‘dispossessed poor’ constituency could be at odds with those of our ‘chatterati’. But we have generally found unifying messages to address both in the past, relying on the altruism of the latter (though I remember lively friction in parliamentary meetings about the mansion tax). Unifying themes – a narrative or, as David and Mark put it, a ‘recipe’ to mix together the ingredients of our policies into something greater than the sum of their parts – are nevertheless at a premium.

Whatever our role in the austerity measures of 2010, repeating the medicine yet again now, years after the treatment was meant to have ended, means that NHS funding is in crisis, social care on the verge of collapse, prisons about to erupt, and schools (in Devon at least) near the precipice – but not daring say so while touting for pupils in a competitive market.

The environment has been abandoned. The consequences of Brexit are beginning to bite, with impact on public finances, living standards and economic performance sure to worsen over the next couple of years while the Government flounders around trying to control the monster it has created. (A clever campaign could yet secure another vote on the final deal, provided it doesn’t bolt too soon – timing is all).

No shortage of issues with which to engage our lost voters. It is surely not beyond the wit of our leaders, campaigners and policy wonks to grapple towards a formula to take the growing momentum from council and parliamentary by-elections and get us going forward nationally. This must entail a return to the centre-left ground we occupied from the time of Lloyd George through to 2010.

The one thing which might get in the way, however, would be taking our eye off the concerns of the ‘hardest to reach’ part of our traditional vote, and using our limited political bandwidth to focus on issues they perceive as irrelevant.

I really don’t want to revert to hiding manifestos under the stairs – apart from anything else, in the internet age I won’t get away with it!

Nick Harvey was Liberal Democrat MP for North Devon 1992-2015 and minister of state for defence 2010-12.

MENTAL HEALTH - WHY IS IT LAST IN LINE FOR RESOURCES?

Claire Tyler has secured new legislation to improve child mental health but says the sector still lacks money, and not enough what there is reaches the front line

Both throughout the Coalition years and during the current Parliament, Liberal Democrats have made mental health one of our key policy areas, and rightly so. In my view it is one of the issues that defines who we are and what we stand for. Norman Lamb and other parliamentarians, as well as local campaigners, have ensured that this vitally important issue – which makes such a difference to the quality of people’s lives and their overall sense of wellbeing - has consistently remained on the policy agenda.

As a result, we have started to see a welcome shift in public attitudes towards mental health, and a growing commitment among communities, workplaces, school and yes, within Government too, to change the way we think about mental health. Starting with Future in Mind, a string of reports and commissions have highlighted the problems and offered well-considered solutions.

However, despite numerous Government promises, a growing recognition of the problems, and ample reports and recommendations, very little real progress has been made. Rhetoric has not turned reality. So why such a lack of progress and what can be done about this? I am going to focus primarily on children and young people’s mental which I have been focussing my efforts in the last year.

In January, the prime minister became a late convert to the cause, making a much heralded speech about mental health as part of her vision for a “shared society”.

She described the woeful reality of the failures in mental health as one of the ‘burning injustices’ of our time. Theresa May also acknowledged the need for a new approach from government and society as a whole and, rightly, placed a strong focus on schools and employers.

This followed a speech from health secretary Jeremy Hunt just before Christmas, in which he admitted that CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) is the “single area where the NHS is letting down the public the most”, and conceding that the Government’s plans were insufficient to tackle the unfolding crisis.

On top of that, a letter signed by every former health secretary of the past 20 years criticised Government inaction and voiced “alarm and dismay” at the Government’s failure to improve mental health services.

NATIONAL DISGRACE

If that wasn’t enough a recent survey showed that seven in ten psychiatrists deem the services available to under 18 year olds experiencing a crisis in mental health to be inadequate. The fact that just 28% of psychiatrists believe CAMHS services to be adequate or good is nothing short of a national disgrace. This is particularly troubling given that the number of under 18s attending A&E due to a mental health crisis has risen by more than half in the past five years. And all this comes after Public Health England revealed that while 1 in 10 children aged 5-16 years suffer from a clinically significant mental health illness, only 25% of children who need treatment receive it.

The same report disclosed that for far too many, access to CAMHS services proves to be a battle, with only the most severely affected young people getting appointments. Back in November, we learnt that serious concerns around the lack of early intervention had prompted another inquiry into child mental health services. Dr Sarah Wollaston, chair of the Health Select Committee which will lead the enquiry, stated: “Services have been seriously underfunded and are unable to meet demand.” In short children and young people’s mental health services are in a state of crisis.

Of course we can’t divorce this from the wider crisis in health and social care which hit the headlines on a daily basis. At its very heart is a lack of funding -and sustained under-investment over many years - to meet the changing needs of changing population. The announcement that there was not an additional penny in the Autumn Statement for the NHS - despite £240m additional funding for the expansion of grammar schools – was frankly a disgrace.

The self-same issue lies at the heart of the lack of progress in children’s mental health care. In 2012-2013, child and adolescent mental health illness was estimated to account for just 0.7% of NHS spending. Seeking to reverse this, thanks to the efforts of Norman Lamb and others, the Coalition Government in 2015 promised £1.4bn to CAMHS over the next five years. However, in the first year only £143m was released and, of that, only £75m reached the frontline. Quite frankly a drop in the ocean after years of underfunding, unmet need and rising demand for services.

Indeed a YoungMinds Freedom of Information request published just before Christmas has revealed that a whopping half of all Clinical Commissioning Groups in England - GP-lead bodies who decide

what money is spent on at local level and commission services - were using some or all of their share of the money allocated for mental health for other purposes. In short the rest is being used to plug gaps elsewhere in the health service caused by funding cuts or on totally different priorities. This diversion of funds means that the desperately needed improvements to frontline children's mental health care is simply not happening.

The Government won't be taken seriously on children and young people's mental health unless they are prepared to do something much more radical to ensure the money allocated for mental health actually reaches the frontline. That's why I have repeatedly been calling on Government to ringfence the money earmarked nationally for children's mental health and bring forward the additional funds that have so far been held back. I've been told at the despatch box that ringfencing isn't possible because ministers don't have the powers to do. My riposte is simple – if ministers want to do something they can easily will the means. That's what being in Government is all about.

One small glimmer of hope is offered by the introduction of the Mental Health Five Year Forward View Dashboard. These CCG 'dashboards' are a viable solution to ensuring better accountability and transparency. In essence they oblige CCGs to publish facts and figures concerning their level on spend on mental health and the type of services they deliver.

But a lack of information on how the Dashboards will be publicised and how local people can benchmark the performance of their local CCG compared to others across the country, leave doubts hanging over their effectiveness. I want to see clear accountability in the system at all levels from the Secretary of State to NHS England to CCGs and ultimately the quality and availability of frontline services.

CULTURAL CHANGE

While proper funding is imperative, other things do need to change too, including a cultural change in the way we think about children's mental health. This recognition of the need for culture change provided the starting point for the Values-Based Child and Adolescent Mental Health System Commission, which I have had the privilege of chairing last year. The commission's report *What Really Matters in Children and Young People's Mental Health*, published in November, explores how different values drive deep-seated culture, attitudes, decision making, practice and behaviour – the invisible drivers if you like – which can either inhibit or promote a system-wide approach to the re-design of services.

Where this works well all players in the system come together to prioritise the things that really make a difference to the young people using the services, thus improving their outcomes. Its recommendations demonstrate how a more explicitly values-based approach – with a shared language – can improve the mental health and well-being of children and young people by looking across the whole system including schools, families and communities, the voluntary sector, and health and social care services.

One of the reports key recommendations is that Government should recognise schools as a crucial component of the children's mental health care system

and fund them accordingly. It calls on Government to help schools develop a framework for empowering and enabling children and young people to better understand their own mental health and to advocate for themselves. Additionally, it recommends that schools should be able to teach children and young people about mental health in the same way they teach them about literacy or numeracy. The focus on recognising the important role that schools play is reinforced in other recently published reports such as the *Time to Deliver*, by the Education Policy Institute. This report calls for high quality, statutory personal, social, health and economic education in all schools and colleges with dedicated time for mental health.

Sometimes it is possible to secure small but important changes. Recently I was shocked by ONS data which revealed that children in care are four times more likely to have a mental health difficulty than their peers. This was further compounded by the fact that at least 45% of children entering care have a diagnosable mental health condition, a figure which rises to 72% for children entering residential care. More shocking still is the fact that the current health tests for children entering care do not incorporate mental health assessments.

It was this that spurred me to fight to secure an amendment to the Children and Social Work bill. I campaigned for a change that would ensure that children, upon entering the care system, would undergo a mental as well as physical health assessment in order to establish the help - including therapeutic support – they needed and then ensure it is provided.

Following persistent discussions with both officials and ministers at the Department for Education, I am delighted that this important change will now go ahead. In response my amendment, ministers have committed to start piloting different types of mental health assessment for children entering care in up to 10 local authorities as early as April this year. I am hoping that once the benefits of such changes are established, mental health assessments and support for children entering care – some of the most vulnerable children in our society many of whom have suffered from neglect and abuse before entering care - will be rolled out more widely. This will be a clear and practical example of true parity of esteem between mental and physical health.

Liberal Democrats have consistently been fighting for improvements in mental health. It appears that the prime minister and Government have finally woken up to this reality.

The litmus test that will determine the seriousness of their commitment will be when extra investment finally gets through to the frontline resulting in improved mental health care being delivered in the right way, at the right time and in the right place.

Crucially this will need investment in workforce development. Only then will all children and young get the help and support they need to relieve their distress and turn their lives around.

Claire Tyler is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords

ANOTHER THROW OF THE ALDERDICE

Will Lord Alderdice's review of barriers to black and minority ethnic members in the Liberal Democrats amount to much? Lester Holloway has his doubts

One of the last leadership hustings in 2015 was before a mainly ethnic minority audience. Tim Farron and Norman Lamb both pledged that, if elected, they would order a 'Morrissey 2' inquiry into how the party treats ethnic minorities. You can listen to a recording on the EMLibDems soundcloud.

Morrissey 2 had already been discussed and approved by the Federal Executive. It arose from a recognition that Helena Morrissey's 2013 report into party culture and processes - following allegations of sexual harassment against Lord Rennard - did not go far enough in addressing complaints that institutional and systemic barriers were holding back black and minority ethnic (BaME) talent. So, this new inquiry would look specifically at race.

Two years later Farron made his first 'race speech' in October 2016, during black history month. He announced that the review would be conducted by the party's former Northern Ireland spokesperson, Lord Alderdice, and that work would start "immediately." It would be a further two months before anyone heard anything more when, shortly before Christmas, Alderdice announced a call for evidence with an extremely short window of just three weeks, excluding the holiday period, ending in mid-January 2017. After long gaps of apparent inactivity, the party was suddenly aiming to complete the exercise at breakneck speed.

Dissatisfaction with lack of progress on BaME political representation had been growing steadily for some years. The party has failed to elect a visible minority MP at a general election since Dadabhai Naoroji became Liberal MP for Finsbury Central in 1892. Our party has never had a person of colour elected to the London assembly or its' previous incarnation the GLC. It's the same with the Welsh assembly and Scottish parliament. We have been overtaken by Plaid Cymru, the SNP and the Conservatives on these fronts. At the 2015 general election Ukip put up more BaME candidates and the Greens made a better pitch for ethnic minority votes. For Lib Dems, wearing equality on our sleeves and in our constitutional preambles did not bring about much visible change.

A common explanation for this continued failure is that Lib Dems have no safe seats. This may be true now but was a lot less true before the 2015 election. For instance, Clegg defended a pretty solid 15,000 majority. In fact Sheffield Hallam has never had a Lib Dem majority of less than 8,000 since the seat was won by Richard Allen in 1997. Many of the surviving eight men were defending large majorities. It was our

women MPs who were in more precariously marginal constituencies. Prior to the last election, we certainly had collection of 'safer' seats which the party were unlikely to lose, save for a Lembit Opik-type candidate.

It is undeniable that even the safest of Lib Dem seats require considerable local activity, often over several decades. However, if BaME hopefuls are unable to secure the best PPC opportunities when they arise it is incumbent on the party to better support BaME candidates in 'development seats' to make them genuinely winnable prospects. Yet there is not a single example of the party doing this. Urban and multicultural development seats are permanently in a state of under-development. Indeed, we failed to support the one BaME MP we had in modern times when Parmjit Singh Gill sought to defend his Leicester South by-election win at the 2005 general election.

Back in 2009, Nick Clegg told a Speakers Conference on under-representation that he would consider all-BaME shortlists if the party had not seen Black and Asian people elected as Lib Dem MPs by "the election after next". All it required was enabling secondary legislation, yet this failed to materialise under the coalition. Those with long memories recalled previous leaders talking about an 'election after next' mirage when the party would have MPs of colour.

There are some grounds for optimism. Amna Ahmad was selected in Sutton and Cheam in case of a snap election, and the 2016 spring conference diversity motion might make more difference than the elitist 'A-list' candidate leadership programme did for black and Asian hopefuls. Since being elected leader Clegg used his patronage to make some headway on visible ethnic minority representation in the Lords, but some individuals were better known for their cash donations to the party than policy expertise and they made little impression on the red benches.

After the party entered coalition in 2010 dissatisfaction about lack of progress on race and representation hardened. Our reputation suffered in government but perhaps no more than in BaME communities who were disproportionately impacted by austerity, as the Equality and Human Rights Commission watchdog has found. BaME voters, who had lent Clegg their vote in 2010, quickly turned against the party. Traditional BaME voters, who had lent Clegg their vote in 2010, quickly turned against the party.

LONG LASTING DAMAGE

Jo Swinson fronted coalition plans to hack a lump out of Equality Act by ditching the 'general duty', a move to junk the ambition of government to reduce

inequality through action by the state. Race equality ministers Andrew Stunell and Don Foster achieved nothing notable on this during their period in office. Lord McNally fronted legal aid cuts that hurt BaME victims hardest. Lynne Featherstone axed the socio-economic duty in the Equality Act. On race equality Lib Dem ministers bear huge responsibility for inflicting long lasting damage to the party's brand among ethnic minority communities.

The general impression within BaME communities was that the government had no interest in tackling racial disadvantage and their policies were actively making life harder. Party polling looking at BaME communities was limited but the results were alarming and demanded action. Action never came. Special advisers naively thought things would be better if BaME party activists just tried harder to sell the party's achievements in urban areas and delivered a few more leaflets.

A report I wrote for Operation Black Vote (OBV) on the 'power of the black vote' was released and covered as the top story in The Guardian. Within party HQ the reaction can best be described as 'that's nice dear'. Meanwhile Ed Miliband's office got in touch with OBV on the launch day to organise an urgent meeting.

Lib Dems produced a 'BaME Manifesto' ahead of the 2015 election without consultation with Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats (EMLD). It was a poor document which excluded the only genuine race equality policy the party actually had, a policy which came from the race equality taskforce led by Baroness Hussein-Ece and which was approved unanimously at federal conference in 2013. Ironically, Labour borrowed heavily from this for their own BaME manifesto. Party members met with Clegg's special advisers to discuss how the race equality taskforce report, approved by federal conference, could be taken forward in government. Nothing materialised from government.

A combination of this sidelining of race equality expertise in the party and negative actions by ministers in government was deeply depressing. Then in late November 2014 a thread on Lib Dem Voice (LDV) turned nasty. One regular LDV contributor, who turned out not to be a member, wrote that Africans "don't know what a toilet is." I called this out as racist. The thread developed into what can only be called a battle over the topic of racism between three members of colour and everyone else. No one who was white condemned the racist comment. I resigned my membership.

VICIOUS ATTACKS

What followed shocked me to the core. A thread on the Facebook group Alliance of Lib Dems quickly filled with vicious personal attacks against me. I was accused, completely without foundation, of being anti-white, homophobic, anti-trans, and an anti-Semite. There was not a shred of truth in any of these claims.

The first-ever article I wrote for LDV, in 2009, upbraided the party membership for launching angry personal attacks on BaME defectors like Chamali and Chandila Fernando, Norsheen Bhatti and Sajjad Karim. Instead of attacking them we should reflect on why those members left the party, I argued. As a former secretary in EMLD I learnt of many more stories of members of colour being treated badly. So much so that it has pretty much become the norm.

Some of the most highly-qualified professionals in certain fields have been told they are not experienced enough to seek political office.

My resignation, and the bitter aftermath, promoted EMLD to call a meeting of senior figures where the possibility of a 'Morrissey 2' looking at the experience of ethnic minorities was agreed. The move prompted me to re-join the party.

HQ came up with two possible chairs, Trevor Phillips and Baroness Floella Benjamin. Leading BaME activists in the party put forward two alternative names with long track records advising public authorities and companies on race equality in Linda Bellos and Professor Gus John. HQ rejected these suggestions. Eventually all parties were able to settle on a compromise in Lord Alderdice. His professional and Northern Ireland credentials were not in doubt but some remained concerned about whether he, as a white man, had the depth of knowledge about the dynamics of race and racism to do the job. One BaME member wrote on an online forum that as a party peer Alderdice was himself a beneficiary of the system that he was effectively being asked to investigate with regards to whether it treats members of colour differently to people like him.

Some sketchy terms of reference were produced, which failed to mention institutional and systemic discrimination. A delegation from EMLD met Alderdice and advised him that he should have two advisers with a solid background in race equality. Ethnic minority members wanted the party to back the review with the same commitment and resources as 'Morrissey 1'. They made clear that the timescale for taking evidence should span the spring conference of 2017, and that there should be evidence-taking sessions across the country. All these suggestions appear to have been ignored, raising fears that the Alderdice review will lack a depth of contributions from BaME members and risks also being bereft of serious review of existing studies into political representation and people of colour. So far Alderdice has been saddled with a ridiculously short timescale and scant resources, which suggests it is not being taken seriously enough.

Some ethnic minority members are investing hopes in the Alderdice review yet doubts remain over whether the party given its sufficient commitment to undertake a serious fact-finding exercise, equipped the review to also think deeply about solutions.

Anything less risks turning this into a quick bodge-job which will achieve little and disappoint many. If it turns out to be another missed opportunity which fails to take the party forward on race and representation the blame will rest with the party president, Baroness Sal Brinton, rather than Lord Alderdice.

Lester Holloway is a former Editor of the African and Caribbean newspaper New Nation, and is communications lead for the Runnymede Trust. He is a former Liberal Democrat councillor and former member of the party's race equality taskforce

TROUBLE IN J-TOWN

Terrorism, religious polarisation, and eye-watering corruption plague the stoic people of northern Nigeria, Rebeca Tinsley reports

The journey north from Abuja to the city of Jos is, sadly, representative of the challenges facing Nigerians. The streets in the capital are in excellent condition, with broad, tree-lined avenues and manicured central reservations. But beyond the metropolitan bubble inhabited by the political elite the roads quickly become treacherous, with potholes every few yards, requiring driving skills unknown in Europe.

We swerved violently and juddered to a halt so often on our five-hour trip that my colleague soon lost her British Airways breakfast.

We were on our way to Plateau state, an epicentre of what is diplomatically termed “ethnoreligious violence” by the NGO sector in Nigeria. During the worst years, 2010-14, an estimated 20,000 civilians were killed in the Jos area. However, the government has no reliable figures for the number of casualties, since until recently no one was willing to admit there was a security problem in the northern part of Africa’s most populous nation.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan called reports

of the kidnapping of the 273 Chibok girls a hoax, and a plot to scupper his re-election chances. In the words of one critic we met: “The insurgency has turned the north east into an ATM for every scoundrel politician and general wishing to steal from the government and international donors. Everyone’s become an expert on peace and reconciliation.”

Although the authorities claim the jihadist terrorist group Boko Haram (whose name means Western education is forbidden) has been “technically defeated”, both Muslim and non-Muslim communities continue to be attacked, looted and ambushed. Given the region’s violent reputation, we were relieved to encounter so many army and police checkpoints on our journey north – until our driver explained he was being shaken down for bribes, rather than scrutinised for homicidal tendencies.

Jos, or J-town, as the locals call it, is a city of 900,000 people, with equal numbers of Muslims and Christians. We visited neighbourhoods that had, until recently, been peaceful. From 2000 onward, Boko Haram suicide bombers appeared in market places, bus stations and churches. Now, it is unsafe



for Christians to wander into Muslim enclaves.

As a local journalist explained, “One wrong step and the situation explodes and gets out of control very fast.”

We met an imam and an Anglican pastor who bravely provide training projects that bring Muslims and Christians together. But they admit the violence has precipitated a worrying religious polarisation in both traditions. Fanaticism thrives in the wake of so much suffering and fear.

So do charlatans: on every corner there were posters advertising intense worship, miraculous healing and spiritual salvation at churches run by well-padded individuals whose eyes seem to be disconnected from their smiles. And faith is flaunted at every turn: The Life’s Fountain Bakery and the Ten Commandments Car Wash.

Accompanied by the imam’s sons, we wandering through a Muslim area where people still live in squalid, cave-like, mud-walled homes. Impassable to vehicles, the streets were open sewers, suitable as a location for a film set in Biblical times. Several houses and churches had scorched walls, a reminder of the Christian community that was ethnically cleansed with fire and bombs.

A journalist told us that in 2010 he and a colleague had set off to walk into a Muslim area to investigate reports of a growing disturbance. They split up, and

“The insurgency has turned the north east into an ATM for every scoundrel politician and general wishing to steal from the government and international donors”

while our reporter survived, shaken but unscathed, his friend’s body was found a couple of days later.

The same journalist explained that local government and state officials have been warned to stay out of some Muslim areas because their services, such as road paving, sanitation, schools, clinics, etc. were unwanted. (I would bet good money that the

Muslim women of these neighbourhoods might take a more benign view of these aspects of 21st century life).

Education is provided by Saudi-funded madrassas where boys memorise the Koran in Arabic, a language they do not understand. At some mosques, again funded by wealthy individuals from the Gulf, imams urge men to marry as many women as possible and to have at least eight children with each woman. When the men get fed up with their wives, they are reportedly told they may dump them, without any financial support, because Allah will provide. Evidently, the mosques don’t provide, as we saw when we visited an orphanage, run by Anglicans for the benefit of Muslim children.

At another orphanage, we found 33 girls sharing eight filthy mattresses in a stinking, insect-ridden hut without light or water. In the case of that benevolent





institution, money was being found to build a chapel, yet there was none for new bedding, or a regular delivery of water. God and indeed Allah both seemed to be moving in mysterious ways in Jos.

We met an Anglican pastor who told us that three years before, a Sunday morning service had been infiltrated by a Boko Haram suicide bomber. The jihadist had detonated his vest, taking a dozen worshippers with him and injuring many more. Yet, that evening the survivors were back amid the ruins, celebrating Evensong, just to prove they were unbeaten. In the words of the pastor, “We are stoic.”

Back in the capital, after another vomit-inducing journey, we listened as government officials and NGO staff explained how they were scaling up to cope with the expected famine in Borno state in the north east, where Boko Haram’s reign of terror has prevented farmers getting to their fields for years. The terrorists have retreated to the swamps around Lake Chad, they said. However, people from the region cautioned us that Boko Haram members have merely melted into the general population, biding their time.

By day, the sun beat down on the dusty, but well-ordered, Abuja streets where elegantly robed men and women strode with a sense of purpose not always found by your correspondent in her travels to Liberia, Chad and any number of East African nations. Enterprising individuals advertised their services by guerrilla spray painting on the high security walls surrounding offices and homes. “Roof repair” followed by a phone number; “Electrician,” “HIV+ man,” and “Gigolo.”

At night, the streets were illuminated by night clubs

and fried chicken emporia. There were frequent power cuts, but there were also water tanks, corrugated iron roofs, and traffic congestion from private vehicles, all signs of affluence still rare in many parts of the continent. However, the stuttering economy is reliant on crude oil exports at a time when prices are relatively low, and a separate insurgency in the Niger Delta threatens supplies.

Nigeria should be a wealthy country, but the legacy of decades of military dictatorship have corroded institutions. One morning, over an omelette swimming in grease, a journalist angrily counted off all the ways in which his country was still struggling to shrug off the bad habits ingrained while one general after another was in charge: “Secrecy, media self-censorship, incompetence, rigged elections, amateurism and corruption.” He paused. “And ridiculous, over-blown vanity projects that get abandoned half way through, when the money is stolen.”

There was consensus among those expatriates we spoke to: Nigerians are phenomenal at negotiating their way around officialdom and kleptomaniac stasis. They take delays and bureaucratic mendacity in their stride.

Yet, for those far from the capital, who have survived the insurgency, coping is doubly hard.

For some years, the small charity I founded, Network for Africa, has been successfully training people in northern Uganda to teach their peers techniques to manage post-traumatic stress disorder. We now hope to do the same in northern Nigeria.

Rebecca Tinsley founded Network for Africa www.Network4Africa.org

MORE UNITED, LESS REALISTIC

Michael Meadowcroft says Paddy Ashdown's More United initiative will serve only to drag people out of Liberal politics

I am always appreciative of political initiatives, particularly when they are founded on values with which I am greatly in sympathy. On that basis, I am instinctively predisposed to welcome Paddy Ashdown's latest project, More United. However, I will not be joining. I fear that over 50-plus years of Liberal politics I have grown weary of substitutes for the real thing.

The first flaw in such non-party groups is that they provide an escape route for those of worthy intentions, enabling them to feel good about politics without having to get involved in the commitment - often eventually a sacrificial commitment - in the direct political process.

Instead of diverting those who may well support liberal values into an inevitable dilution of those values, the task is, and has always been, to get them to see that expounding liberal values will be a far better way of achieving them.

Liberals have always demonstrated their political commitment to issues of principle which, more often than not, lose votes. The more votes an issue loses, the more enthusiastic Liberals are in support.

But when it comes to a popular issue, whether it is opposition to the Iraq invasion, support for taxing land values, industrial co-ownership, even electoral reform or identifying with the four million who signed the petition for a second EU referendum, we run like mad from consistently banging the drum - and recruiting on the basis of our policies and values.

All that stands between Liberals and success is the bizarre lack of confidence in Liberal values and their application to the current political strife. There is a huge gap in the promotion of the crucial answers to the serious malaise in western society and we ought to be filling it. Do not think that Teresa May's valiant but vain positioning of the Conservative party to occupy the 'centre ground' is aimed at Labour voters - it is targeting the support that we lost at last year's general election. And do not think that the current parliamentary weakness of the Liberal Democrats is set for all time.

In 1970 the Liberal party had fewer seats and votes than in 2015 but four years later, in February 1974, we polled almost 20%. That change was partly on the back of five by-election victories, and it could well be the same again now.

Any non-party but political movement for anti-conservative values is, of course, seductive but their past history is not at all encouraging in Britain.

More United is not the first time such an idea has been tried here. I recall the Radical Action Movement being launched in March 1968 with great waving of banners. David Steel and John Pardoe were among its founders and it did attract two Labour MPs, Peter

Jackson and Ben Whitaker. Its aims were laudable and apparently attractive but when its first test, in support of Chris Layton - another of the initial launch group and an excellent Liberal candidate for the Swindon by-election in October 1969 - ended with him polling a meagre 15% and, in effect, enabling a Conservative gain, nothing further was heard from the Movement.

Neither of the Labour MPs was from Labour heartlands, indeed they were both one-off Labour victories in 1966, and therein lies the fundamental problem in movements such as Radical Action and More United.

The Labour party is not a liberal party. It is fundamentally hegemonic and regards all working-class votes as its permanent electoral property and therefore believes that it is entitled to use every trick and stratagem to defeat any party that might challenge that essential control.

It cannot understand its demise in Scotland, and its wipe-out there has had no effect on its attitude to elections in England and Wales, and, not least, the attraction of Ukip to its traditional voters. And those of us who have successfully challenged Labour in its heartlands, as we did in Leeds in 1983, then met the full force of Labour manipulation of public funds and of supposed voluntary bodies in support of our Labour opponents.

Unfortunately, too many Liberal Democrats based in otherwise Conservative constituencies have only small, ineffective and malleable local Labour parties and are consequently naive about the nature of the party in industrial areas and in big cities. Alas, Labour in these areas will never embrace the More United philosophy. It has to be fought on the ground with every individual we can enlist.

So, all best wishes to Paddy but let us not be drawn into a cul-de-sac which is unlikely to recruit enough Labour sympathisers to threaten its knee jerk hegemonic tendencies. Paradoxically, by emasculating many of those whom we could hope to draw into the Liberal Democrats, More United is likely to diminish the challenge to Labour at the very moment when it is at its most vulnerable.

Michale Meadowcroft was Liberal MP for Leeds West 1983-87

FIRST EARTHQUAKE, THEN SLAVERY

Nepal's earthquakes have worsened an already dire situation for girls and young women at risk of trafficking into slavery and sex exploitation, says Margaret Lally

The International Labour Organisation estimates that 1.3m children are trafficked across the world – about 43% of those are trafficked for sexual exploitation and 25% for a mixture of both sexual and labour exploitation. Women and young girls make up the overwhelming majority of those trafficked for sexual exploitation. Sold, a powerful film produced by Childreach International relates the story of a young Nepalese girl, Lakshmi, who is trafficked into India.

The UN considers child trafficking (the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring and/or receipt” of a child) to be the third largest international criminal industry but it is also one of the world's most hidden crimes. Children do not have a voice; their families may also be powerless and government agencies often ineffectual.

Demand for cheap labour in the destination countries is a major driving force for trafficking but the lack of stable employment, secure income, limited education, poor infrastructure and cultural norms in the source countries are also drivers. Men are also trafficked but women and girls are most at risk because their lives are just less valued by their communities.

Nepal was highlighted in Sold because it has always been a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking, and the situation has dramatically worsened since the earthquakes. Figures are inevitably hard to come by but agencies working in the country reckoned that before 2015 some 12-20,000 girls and young women were being trafficked out of Nepal every year forced into domestic servitude and sexual slavery.

The earthquakes in 2015 resulted in children losing their parents and/or being displaced. Many families lost whatever was their means of livelihood. Initially the Home Ministry had estimated that this abhorrent crime had escalated by 300% after the earthquakes, with traffickers capitalising on the tragedy and increasing trafficking from Nepal to India. The majority of the increase was women and children being trafficked into sex slavery. (This estimate has since been questioned but there is no doubt that there has been a substantial increase in trafficking the last 18 months.)

Women from marginalised groups such as the Dalit caste may be particularly targeted. It has been estimated that 15% of girls are trafficked before they have even reached 15 – some could be as young as eight. The younger the girl the higher price she commands. Parents do not choose to sell their children but when they are desperately short of money to buy

absolute essentials the offer of good job in ‘the city’ for one of their children is very tempting (and Nepal has a culture of child labour) – particularly if it comes from a source they trust.

AWAITING HORRORS

Some young women choose to go, attracted by promises of interesting jobs, and do not realise the horrors that await them. But many young women and girls are just drugged and abducted.

Geographically trafficking is most prevalent in isolated rural communities where there are limited job opportunities, transport or access to other services, and everyone believes that there is a bright future in the city. These were also the areas most affected by the earthquakes.

Between Nepal and India there is a virtually open border of more than 1,000 miles with only 14 check points which Nepalese citizens (and their charges) do not need documents to cross. Studies have identified this as being possibly one of the busiest slave trafficking routes in the world. Once across the border it is easy for a child to disappear or be moved onto another country with forged papers. Some government officials are reportedly bribed to include false information in genuine Nepali passports including of age documents for child sex trafficking victims. Many will stay in India but the Middle East is also a favoured destination as well as other Asian countries. Some will even come to Europe.

Once there – the women and girls are trapped. Sold graphically describes the brutality experienced by Lakshmi. Repeatedly drugged and beaten to force her to submit to being regularly raped by the brothel's customers she is treated far worse than an animal. She and the other young women in the brothel were only allowed out under escort. Any attempt to escape is savagely punished. The traffickers coldly calculate where they can cause the most hurt without visibly damaging their commodity – the women are beaten on their feet or have chilli rubbed into private parts.

MAFIA NETWORK

The film highlights both the astonishing resilience of the young women but also the sheer hopelessness and stress of their situation. They are told their families now owe the traffickers an enormous debt which will take years to pay off. This adds to their misery as they know that their families need the money and if they escape they may not be necessarily welcomed back. Having been deceived into leaving their homes and had their hopes of a bright future destroyed they do not know where to turn to for help or who to trust.

The traffickers operate a mafia-like network.

One of the most disturbing features of *Sold* was the involvement of other women in trafficking – often enticing the girls away, running the brothels, helping to apprehend anyone who escaped.

Sometimes a police raid will successfully free women but most do not manage to get away. The end for them only come when they become too ill to work and generate money and then they get thrown onto the streets. Forced to have unprotected sex they are constantly at risk of STDs including HIV, and unsafe pregnancies. Their health undermined by poor food and living environments, violence and trauma. For women diagnosed with HIV there is stigma and rejection.

Sold focused on sex trafficking but many women and girls will end up as forced labour including construction sites and domestic servitude elsewhere. Those women are seen as possessions and still vulnerable to sexual violence. This, of course, also happens to men.

Internationally there has been limited success in prosecuting traffickers – convictions for trafficking have not kept pace with the reported increase in victims or even prosecutions. The US State Department annual report on trafficking report graded Nepal as Tier 2 noting that it had made significant efforts to eliminate the crime but it still did not meet minimum international standards. It does prosecute suspected traffickers but the law does not effectively define the prostitution of children as human trafficking and legislation is implemented inconsistently.

Civil society organisations have documented traffic related complicity by government officials. There is evidence of delay in bringing cases to court and lack of protection for the victims. Following the earthquakes in 2015 the government took some measures to address the particular vulnerabilities of women and children in earth quake affected areas, including running awareness raising programmes.

Tackling the root causes of poverty and embedding human rights as part of the culture of the country has to be the starting point.

NGOs are undertaking a range of initiatives to prevent trafficking, support the victims and advocate. Some organisations such as Childreach International and Childreach Nepal, and PHASE Nepal focus on enabling girls to go to school and building respect for the rights of women in the community. Some research shows that girls who are able to complete their schooling are less likely to be trafficked (although that could also mean their families have more income security).

Others will specifically target women in livelihood projects – for instance Family Planning Association Nepal provide micro loans to women to set up small business. They also provide loans for women who have survived trafficking. Some organisations will also use peer educators (including the relatively few trafficked women who manage to return safely) to educate girls and women on the danger of trafficking. 3 Angels will actively intercept girls being taken across the border, offer counselling and if possible reunite the girls with their family, or to take them to the facilities they have established - Women's Safe Haven - where they are provided with education and training.

NGOs are, however, unable to co-ordinate and

operate at the scale needed. For this horrific situation to change the government has to ensure individuals have greater financial security, everyone is able to access education and the rights of women are respected. There needs to be greater investment in creating job opportunities which are accessible to all. It also needs to increase law enforcement, including against government officials, whilst respecting rights of victims and offering them protection, and assisting them reintegrate into their communities. But Nepal is one of the world's remaining really poor countries and has just come through years of civil war and faces a number of barriers to development – it cannot do this by itself.

Neighbouring countries, particularly India may be able to help Nepal but they also need to do more themselves to combat trafficking – for instance, improving enforcement, establishing programmes to repatriate victims, and providing legal and safe routes for migration. This needs to be done within the framework of human rights.

Internationally there is a challenge to manage the demand for cheap labour which so quickly becomes cruel and exploitative.

MODERN SLAVERY

To be fair to Theresa May she has spoken out on this issue and introduced the UK Modern Slavery Act. Britain does have an independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland. It has increased both the number of prosecutions and achieved a greater conviction rate. But our immigration policies make it hard for people wanting to work to get here safely and the visa scheme leaves domestic workers vulnerable. After care for women who have been trafficked could be much improved and they need to be offered alternatives to deportation. Britain also needs to continue to invest in building the capacity of low income countries such as Nepal to both stimulate economic growth and more directly support the work of empowering and educating girls and women.

And what can we ourselves do? Well go along to see *Sold* if you can – it is a hard film to watch and you will not fail to be moved by it. It will be screened in 12 different venues across the UK and be followed by a panel discussion – <http://www.taughtnottrafficked.com/uk-screenings.html> We can also all think more about our buying habits which may encourage cheap exploitative labour, and consider supporting one of the charities working in these communities to combat trafficking.

Finally we must urge our parliamentarians to push this issue higher on the international agenda so that young women in Nepal can be assured of the freedom and safety most of us take for granted – and Lakshmi's miserable story does not continue to be repeated.

Margaret Lally is a member of Islington Liberal Democrats and has worked with charities in Nepal

GEORGIA'S DEMOCRACY FINDS ITS FEET

Kiron Reid reports on elections in a country where the European Union is seen as a bulwark of freedom

Georgia is at a crossroads, geographically, and politically. The country stands on the Black Sea between Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It has a long history as an independent Christian country but under the influence of and sometimes occupation by Persia, Ottoman Turkey and Russia.

Now the country is between the aggressive expansionist Russia of Putin and an ambition to join NATO and the EU. In October's general election the ruling Georgian Dream party was triumphant, defeating again the former government of the United National Movement. With 49% of the vote and a huge majority in Parliament (115 out of 150) the key question is whether the Georgian Dream government will use its political power to improve the lives of Georgians and encourage inclusive multi-party politics.

The opposition UNM has to decide whether they will work constructively - will members jump ship as many did after their previous, narrower, defeat - and will they reinvent themselves as an opposition out from under the shadow of Mikheil Saakashvili, the larger

than life former president who founded the UNM.

It is widely believed, and certainly true to an extent, that both main parties are controlled by powerful men who are not the elected leaders. In the case of Georgian Dream (GD) it is Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire - Georgia's richest man - who made it his mission to oust the populist reformer Saakashvili and founded the coalition against him to do just that.

Ivanishvili became prime minister but stepped down once his rival was ousted. He is certainly not hiding any political involvement - instead his political talk show took the road in each region for an 'interview with the regional media' on his self funded Georgian Dream TV whose equipment looked as good as the BBC's.

Yet the leaders of GD, young or mostly middle aged, give no impression of being people who do someone else's bidding; as is the national character they appeared independent and plain speaking.

GD had gone back to basics in the last election and relied on community and door step campaigning, in addition to the rallies, billboards and television



advertising that are standard.

In this election UNM tried to do the same, relying for voter contact entirely on doorstep campaigning plus billboards, the ubiquitous flyposting of all parties, and one huge national rally. They were one step behind from the start – fighting the last election.

Still I was tickled as to how on the far edge of Europe in a young democracy that politicians were going door to door, block to block, courtyard to courtyard doing the type of politics that Trevor Jones had pioneered in Liverpool while in Britain politicians have to rediscover it again.

UNM were behind at the start and other obstacles piled in their way. As with many parties when they have lost favour the leaders had not accepted how unpopular they became. In Britain we know of the once popular Eduard Shevardnadze being ousted by a charismatic young reformer in the Rose revolution. We know something of Saakashvili's government's fight to stamp out corruption. We then know of his disastrous war with Russia when Georgia's response to provocation was followed by the Russian military devastating swathes of the country. Even the air base near the Azerbaijan border in my area of work was bombed.

I didn't know that the reformist government lost touch, believed it was right and opponents were malicious, and cracked down heavily on genuine dissent. Many ordinary professional people explained that they had supported and were optimistic for the reformers but became disillusioned – especially once attempts to 'modernise' or 'privatise' led to corrupt seizing of private assets.

Past history was not the only obstacle for UNM. They believe that the state (through State Security police or through payment of local people via the authorities) was monitoring their supporters who would lose their jobs or benefits if they were seen to oppose the Government.

CLIMATE OF FEAR

Allegations of actual violence were greatly exaggerated – except for a very few serious incidents. But there was a climate of fear among all the opposition parties. The reality was actually less important than the perception. These are two areas where the Georgian political climate needs to be reformed. The employees of central and local Government have to beCOME impartial servants of the people. We met many professional public servants, and political leaders from the ruling party, who recognised the importance of pluralism. That has to be the norm. In perceived close election races there was a preponderance of 'interested citizens' in large groups outside polling stations – mostly paid by the ruling party - that could look intimidating. The air of intimidation must be removed. Yet one deputy mayor pointed out that Georgians are passionate people. And other locals believed what British observers thought looked like intimidation was just robust campaigning in Georgia.

I was gravely concerned for Georgian politics that

“Locals believed what British observers thought looked like intimidation was just robust campaigning in Georgia”

in such highly contested elections, the turnout was only 51%. A British embassy observer put the positive take that if people felt strongly and had wanted to protest against the government they would have turned out to do so.

More liberal reformist parties such as the Free Democrats or to some extent Nino Burjanadze's

Democratic Movement were able to get little traction amid the polarised two horse race and a proliferation of smaller parties. There was no significant movement towards what were slandered as 'pro-Russian' parties; one of them the conservative Alliance of Patriots was quite active and narrowly ended up in Parliament.

I saw just a little activity from Liberal International member, the Republicans, and a little more from the Labour Party - the two parties with the best logos. The new party State for People of opera singer Paata Burchuladze failed to make a breakthrough after a more radical coalition partner, Girchi, split.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) runs the elections through district and precinct election commissions. The CEC has a high profile, carried out more get out the vote activity than our election bodies do, and used the slogan "We guarantee your vote".

Constituency boundaries are redrawn before every election to ensure broadly equal electorates. While this caused administrative and personal confusion it does put the party squabbling in the UK into context. Voter education was left to NGOs and some independent media in minority Azeri areas, funded by the CEC or donors like USAID. It was clear to the OSCE election observation mission that the CEC worked independently and professionally. Despite many minor irregularities – and a few allegations of serious illegality – voting on the day was openly and fairly administered.

Georgians are fiercely independent and two wars with Russian backed separatists and Russian military in the last 25 years make speaking positively, publicly, about Russia difficult. Russian troops or the local militias regularly kidnap villagers on the 'Administrative Boundary Line' and hold them for ransom ('fines'). So the mainstream political parties all support 'Euro Atlantic integration' with twin pillars of joining the EU and NATO.

In Georgia the talk is all of Euro Atlantic vision. I was surprised that everywhere in Georgia NATO and the EU are inextricably linked – eventually an EU communications officer explained to me that it wasn't the EU that had a NATO / EU information office at the main Freedom Square, this was the government, likewise in every city and regional administration headquarters. For me NATO and the EU do not stand for the same values but for Georgian leaders they are bulwarks of freedom, prosperity and being European. Many people asked me why on earth Britain was leaving the EU.

The electoral system is designed to allow broad representation. There are 73 MPs elected for constituencies (with a second round between top two candidates if none gets 50% of the vote) and 77



through a country-wide party list, which limits voter choice and makes it hard for independent candidates to win.

TWO HORSE RACE

Party funding was generous and spread down to parties with small percentages in national and local elections. While the election often looked like a two horse race between the big players, the funding for small parties may have split the votes of those who did not support the government. A key challenge for GD is to be grown up and take the good ideas of the opposition – and give them credit where due – without trying to co-opt and integrate talented opposition politicians as Ivanishvili has tried to do.

There are bright principled politicians in both leading parties and others, all should have space to put forward ideas for the future.

Georgia has a very active media but it was mostly on social media that there seemed to be critical independent investigative journalism and that seemed self-censoring to an extent depending on who was paying for adverts.

Facebook was only one technique in the election but it was more an integral part than in any other election campaign that I have seen. Young challenger Akmamed Imamkuliev in Marneuli campaigned with the energy of a pop star; his supporters even produced a tribute video of their warrior on horseback with pop backing track that went viral on Facebook. He was slightly ahead in round one and lost in round two after a police crackdown on supporters accused of smashing up a polling station.

The Georgian electoral code has much content about election complaints along with regulation of finance - areas where the law in new democracies is more open

than in Britain. It was disappointing that the opposition parties decided not to use the complaints procedures. They used Facebook instead. Every time there was any alleged transgression by the other side, up the video would go on Facebook. They did make official complaints until the election didn't go the way they wanted on E-day.

Ivanishvili appears the James Bond baddie crossed with Richard Hammond but maybe he will let GD mature as a party and government now, independent of him. Saakashvili still has loyal followers but like his opposite number in Ukraine, Yuliya Tymoshenko, he seems to have no judgment as to when it is time to bow out.

Worse he is meddling in both Ukrainian and Georgian politics. Having been recruited as a reformer by Ukraine's president Poroshenko

to run Odessa – loyal against Russian and financial corruption – Saakashvili can't resist being the big fish and has denounced the president and launched his own party. Better that he becomes an elder statesman who can make his peace with political opponents.

It is down to the new MPs, the government of prime minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and the opposition figures to encourage a system where politicians solving problems is the norm. And Georgia can confidently solve its problems taking the help of European and North American friends, reinvigorating its place on the trade routes between west and east and north and south, and show that a peaceful prosperous democratic future is possible.

Kiron Reid is a member of the Liberator Collective and was a long term observer for the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission to Georgia



WAITING FOR SUPERMAN

The lure of corruption may be Donald Trump's undoing, says Christine Graf

What can be said about The Donald that hasn't been said? He's the ultimate, a twisted, distorted, exaggerated figure of an American, bloated with excess, no brake on his tongue, on his hands, on his ambitions. He's the cult of personality writ large, for whom otherwise reasonable people have fallen and fallen hard.

Ronald Reagan was the Teflon president - couldn't remember trading arms for hostages in the Iran-Contra scandal, so to Republicans it didn't really seem to matter after all. Trump, the Teflon candidate who could say anything and get away with it, is now the Teflon President-elect; promises made weeks ago have already slipped his mind.

Millions of voters expect that wall keeping out the Mexicans, expecting also the return of jobs, a revival of coal, steel, white dominance, prosperity, greatness. Half of the Carrier company's employees will keep their jobs at a significant cost to taxpayers because Trump saw a video of himself making the promise, otherwise he'd never have remembered it, so trivial to his mind was something like a promise to voters at one of the many rallies.

We hosted an otherwise reasonable friend just after the election, and in every discussion it became clear our friend favoured Trump. When we brought up Trump's plan to eliminate Obamacare with no plan to replace it, a situation that will leave people like our friend, who has a heart condition and would be left without insurance, he said: "You don't really believe he (Trump) would do that, do you?"

It was as if the hate-filled xenophobic rantings of the Trump campaign, the years of slandering Obama, the sorry record of not honouring commitments, not paying the people who had worked for him, did not mean anything. "Judge him by his actions not his words", said our friend, as if words don't have power. It took an impending presidency to deliver justice in a \$25m settlement to the defrauded students of Trump 'university'. The undocumented Polish workers who'd demolished the Bonwit building in New York years ago to make room for Trump Tower could not join a class action lawsuit to collect their pitiful \$4-5 an hour wages.

Commentators have been assessing Trump by the people he's chosen to surround himself with, starting with the bizarre choice of Steve Bannon, of Breitbart News, as his spokesman. Bannon is a white supremacist, an anti-Semite, and he was behind much of the hateful propaganda used against Hillary Clinton during the election. The effect of this still reverberates. Hate crimes are up all over the country; women wearing headscarves have been threatened and attacked.

How did Trump get this far? People were angry. For many, the gridlock in Washington, the lack of good jobs, the stagnation of the economy meant that it was

time to try someone outside the system, not one of the usual people, not a politician.

The mainstream media spent a year and a half being diverted, distracted, dismayed and finally appalled by Trump, but by then it was too late. Actor and director Rob Reiner pointed out that unlike his Republican opponents, Trump, being a celebrity, could call up TV talk shows and broadcast his opinions as often as he liked. Fact checkers admitted that there was something wrong with what Donald had to say, but the lies came too fast for anybody to cope with them. And then there were those who claimed that Hillary's emails were in some way equivalent.

What could bring Trump down? Even some dyed-in-the-wool conservatives, people like David Frum, George W Bush's former speechwriter, shudder at the thought of the corruption possible, probably inevitable, given Trump's business empire.

The US under Trump becomes a massive banana republic: as we write this, foreign diplomats are checking into Trump hotels, dining at Trump restaurants, reserving space for their families at Trump resorts. What a coincidence! And if they have some favour to ask of the new president? A National Public Radio story on 'Trump's Business Interests and Potential Conflicts', includes a long list of the Donald's holdings in the US and abroad.

If rash and imprudent phone calls to foreign heads of state who're not supposed to be on Donald's list won't jeopardise his presidency, the emoluments clause in the US constitution just might.

This clause was put in to prevent corruption. With Trump refusing to divest himself of his businesses, and his children, who are supposedly now in charge, sitting in on conferences with foreign leaders, conflict with the emoluments clause is inevitable.

The run-up to a Trump presidency is appalling to both left and right; the only people who seem happy about it are those who put him in this position, Trump voters, his favourites, many of them the uneducated whites who are ready to welcome their Superman, something of a saviour who will, they imagine, make America great again.

Christine Graf is Liberator's American correspondent

THE GLOBAL POLICEMAN GOES HOME

Pax Americana is ending with Donald Trump and several countries dangerously jostle to replace it, says Tom Arms

2017 is likely to go down in history as the beginning of the end of Pax Americana.

For 72 years the world has sheltered under the wings of the American eagle, after the exhausted British imperial lion dragged itself off the world stage. The result has been one of the longest periods of prolonged peace, prosperity and political advancement in world history.

The US created the United Nations; rebuilt a devastated Europe with the Marshall Plan; established NATO to defend Europe from Soviet aggression, pushed back the Chinese and Russian communists in Korea, protected Japan and the Philippines; provided billions of dollars in aid to help hundreds of nations emerging from centuries of colonialism and championed the cause of free trade which has led to unparalleled global growth.

Alright, it has not been perfect. The over-exuberant puppy of the first 20 years has been inevitably replaced with a hard-nosed cynicism. Vietnam marked the massively miscalculated transition. The rise of Jihadism has its roots in Washington's Middle East policy. And world growth has been at the expense of American manufacturing jobs. The world pie has grown, but America's slice of it - although still bigger than anyone else's - has shrunk from its postwar heyday.

Has it been worth it? Well, the American electorate clearly don't think so. They have voted in a president who wants to tear up trade agreements, build walls, impose tariffs, deport millions, end climate change agreements and shrink America's defensive umbrella.

Why should the rest of the world care? Is it just because we don't want the free ride to end?

No, because as flawed as it was, America was the best super power ever. Oh yes, it has become overpowering, arrogant and determined to protect American interests. Any and every country does that. But its foreign policy was built on a domestic base of representative democracy and a strong will to do the right thing.

Throughout history we have seen that the exit of a world power leads to uncertainty and war as the powers-in-waiting compete to take on the mantle of numero uno.

So who are the contenders? China and Russia are at the top of the list. Next door could be the European Union which is currently floundering in a post-Brexit sea. India - the world's largest democracy - could also be a contender. Turkey and Iran are also-rans. But who knows, the political uncertainties being created by Trump are creating opportunities for almost any country with the political will to exploit them.

China makes no secret of its ambitions. It believes that its top down authoritarian-style government is

superior to bottom up western democracies. For proof they hold up the example of their economic success. Then they point their finger at the self-destructive presidential campaign which America has just endured, and will continue to suffer from for some time.

CHINESE POWER

The Chinese are busily projecting their economic, political and growing military power. Africa is one example. The South China Sea is another. America's nuclear umbrella and 72,500 US troops in Asia are a significant deterrent to Chinese dreams.

However, historically China has never been a naval imperial power, and to fill American shoes it needs to find the will and the capability to project political and military influence beyond its Asian base.

The greatest strength of successful Chinese governments has been their ability to use the fuel of the world's largest population to power an unstoppable economic machine. Economic historians reckon that in the 17th century - before opium and Western guns took their toll - China was responsible for 45% of the world's GDP. This figure has only ever been briefly matched by Britain at the height of the industrial revolution and America in the immediate aftermath of World War Two.

China's most likely route to world power is through the commercial and banking corridors; ironic for a country that still pays lip service to the principles of communism.

That could quickly change if the Trump administration imposes threatened punitive tariffs and the Chinese economy starts to contract. The Communist Party's tenure is based on a simple contract with the Chinese people: they can continue their authoritarian rule as long as they deliver an improving standard of living. Should those benefits stop then Xi Jin Ping and co could easily find themselves swinging from a Shanghai lamppost. Faced with such a stark alternative, the party leadership could easily decide to turn more towards the military alternative.

Russia - the other major authoritarian wannabe - has always been more militarily minded. This is not surprising when you consider that the country's ancestors are a combination of Vikings and the Golden Horde of Genghis Khan.

The Russians, like the Chinese, have never had a representative democracy of any note. Its long and bloody history has been a succession of tyrants, autocrats, dictators and oligarchs, fuelled by a blind nationalism. Vladimir Putin is the 21st century version of this long line.

On top of that, its foreign policy has always been

based on protecting its borders by expansion through the projection of political and military power. Just ask the Poles, Moldovans, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns, Uzbeks, Iranians, Turks, Japanese, Koreans, Kazakhs.... They all have painful memories, and it is now clear that the Soviet Union was more Russian than communist.

The West seems to think that Russia's focus is on domination of central and Western Europe. If that is so, it is because the European powers are the biggest obstacle to their domination of the Middle East and Central Asia. In the 19th century, Tsarist efforts were focused on those areas and shifted westwards under Lenin and Stalin because of the justifiable fear of attack from Europe. Putin's intervention in Syria is a return to traditional Tsarist targets, which is unsurprising for a man who has assumed Tsarist trappings.

The economic failure of Putin's corrupt state capitalism has hindered him somewhat, but his willingness to compensate by flexing Russia's military power has won the respect of Donald Trump. Instead of trying to contain Russia, he talks of combining forces with the untrustworthy bear to fight ISIS at a time when the Jihadists appear to be on their knees.

The main democratic alternative as vacuum filler is the European Union. Brexit, however, has exposed the weakness of its political institutions and eliminated the member with Europe's longest and best-established democratic traditions, largest military and closest ties to the United States.

At the same time, Trump's threat to refuse military aid to any NATO member not spending at least 2% of its GDP on defence has created a minor panic attack among America's European allies. Just the possibility of losing the American shield has made them think more in terms of a European alternative to American protection.

To many in the Trump administration this is a desirable goal, but they should remember that he who pays the piper plays the tune. If Europe is expected to provide its own defence then the logical corollary will be less coordination between the Washington and Europe over foreign policy issues. Israel, for instance, could find its support base significantly eroded.

The idea of a separate European military structure is an old one. It was championed by the French in the 1950s and 60s. De Gaulle and most of his successors have never been happy with America supplanting what they regard as France's rightful dominant military role.

Germany's difficult history has meant it sidelined itself from the debate. So it was left to Britain to act as the link that kept America and Europe bound together and acted as the balancing pivot that prevented either German or French dominance. At the moment economic powerhouse Germany is in the ascendant, but if Europe is to play a bigger international role than it needs a unified military establishment.

France, with its nuclear arsenal, is best placed to play the defence role. This leaves the two European powerhouses competing for political supremacy and weakens the EU's political weight on the world stage while the internal jockeying is sorted.

In theory, India – the world's largest democracy – could be the democratic alternative to the authoritarianism of China or Russia. Its economy

is growing 1.5% a year faster than China's and its population is expected to overtake that of China sometime in the next 20 years.

BYZANTINE BUREAUCRACY

However, the country still has high illiteracy rates, some of the world's poorest areas, a byzantine bureaucracy, feuding political structures, unresolved religious conflicts, widespread corruption and an underdeveloped banking system. In short, a lot of work has to be done in India before its political establishment can talk about super power status.

Turkey and Iran were part of the old Persian Empire which dominated the Middle East and Central Asia from the Assyrians right up until relatively recent times. In fact, Iran was called Persia until 1935. Both countries occupy vital geostrategic positions. Turkey links Europe and Asia and provides the narrow sea connection between Russia, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. It also acts as a buffer between Russia and the oilfields of the Arab world. Iran links Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent to the oil-rich Persian Gulf and is itself rich in oil.

Both countries have governments with the political will to expand. The Iranian theocracy is driven by its determination to establish the dominance of the Shiite brand of Islam at the expense of the Sunnis in the American-supported Saudi Arabia and Gulf States. Less American support, more opportunities for Iran.

For his part, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to restore the glory days of the Ottoman Empire. Recently maps have appeared show Syrian Aleppo and Iraqi Mosul as part of a new improved Turkey. Turkish tanks sit in both northern Syria and northern Iraq. They have not seen much fighting but they occupy a significant slice of territory and Erdogan has made it clear that he wants a seat at any peace negotiations.

For this he has the support of Putin whose recently announced ceasefire has named Turkey and Iran as co-guarantors alongside Russia.

Turkey and Iran are the jokers, or wild cards, in this well-shuffled global deck of cards.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once wrote that the postwar world has come to take peace and prosperity for granted. The reality, he claims, is very different. Our shrunken, interconnected world constantly teeters on the edge of an abyss. It is only through the constant and unflagging efforts of thousands of diplomats, aid workers, military men, business people, even politicians, that we are prevented from slipping over the edge.

The key component that has kept us on terra firma has been the full involvement of America in world affairs buoyed by the cornerstones of US defensive alliances and support for free trade. The Trump administration threatens an American isolationism that has not been seen since the interwar years. They are tired of the thankless task of global policeman. So, America, rest in peace. I am afraid that the rest of the world will not.

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THE TRUMP I KNEW

Debra Storr tangled with Donald Trump a decade ago over a project in her constituency. How can liberals resist the politics he represents?

Over a decade ago, a real estate developer came to my attention. He was seeking to build a modest 250 bedroom hotel and a new golf course on a shooting estate just to the north of me. The big issue was the presence of a highly mobile 4,000 year old dune system was a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

A few months later the development proposals became public it had grown to a £300m project with two golf courses, a 400 bedroom hotel and an unspecified number of holiday houses.

I knew that as the then local councillor I was going to have to determine this application so I watched the proposal emerge with great interest. What was notable at this point was how quickly and vocally the local business community supported this and how great political support there was for the developer with the then first minister of Scotland, Jack McConnell (Labour) making Donald Trump into a Global Scot, a role for people promoting Scotland abroad.

I started to look closely into this celebrity businessman and quickly discovered a history of oiling wheels and using threats and lawsuits backed by his deep pockets, to bully his way with both local administrations to get to build what he wants and to clear people out of his path using eminent domain powers (like compulsory purchase).

By the time the application was submitted, the original £300m project expanded again to a £1bn one with a 460 bed hotel, 900 holiday apartments, 36 golf villas and a whole village of 500 open market residential properties and accommodation for 400 staff, in addition to the two golf courses, one of which was largely to be built on an enormous shifting sand dome. Contrary to the applicants puff, this wasn't threading a golf course through a landscape : this was large scale bulldozing and reconfiguration. "We have to stabilise the dunes to save them", was Trump's lie.

By the end of the following year, the application had been decided by Aberdeenshire Council, with seven councillors (including me) turning the application down. In an unprecedented move, the Scottish Government, under pressure from Trump and the Aberdeen business clique, called the application in and in the autumn of 2008 after a public local inquiry, granted the application with the destruction of the SSSI being permitted due to an overwhelming public interest.

There are three families living totally surrounded by the Menie estate. These families have been subject to systematic bullying and harassment, Trumps security goons even stopped one female resident in her car one evening by blocking her front and back in vehicles. They blocked me from leaving after visiting one of the residents. They stopped a female

lone horse rider using two vehicles with rooftop lights blazing. They tried to shut me up by reporting me to the Standards Commission but their complaints were roundly rejected.

But we saw and continue to see a pattern : promise what you need to and bully where you can to get your own way. Make those with power want to be your friend, and ignore the details of real people's lives.

But if I could see this bully as what he is, why couldn't others? Why were so many 'Blinded by the Bling'?

And so to a presidency. It seemed inconceivable that this showman could win the Republican nomination, much less the presidency. I sat with others in a lighthouse on the Aberdeenshire coast watching the results come in. Menie resident, David Milne was rather more articulate than me regarding the result: "It's quite scary at this point, I think things are going to get considerably worse. I think they're going to start throwing their weight around even more."

Trump likes to get his own way and he doesn't 'do' losing. He truly does think he is entitled: he boasts that he gets to do things no one else gets to do. And it's true. He bullies and bluffs, he flatters and he gets to do things that others say were impossible.

He understands the system, he has been playing money power with politicians for decades. He is as much as part of the political establishment as anyone. His interests are the same as the interests of Koch brothers, the Murdoch press and so forth. It's too easy to deride him as the man with 140 character policies. I'm not sure he cares about issues such as abortion : but he knows his base (and I use the word advisedly) support does, so he will pander to them.

I think he statements are calculated and calculating. He is not stupid. He will push boundaries.

He is appointing a collection of rich right wing ideologies that are intent on dismantling environmental and social protections. Everything he does will enable the rich to get richer and he frankly doesn't care about what happens to the rest.

It is terrifying and I found it hard to write this article : I've been living with this specimen disregarding the simplest aspects of humanity in his treatment of the Menie residents and deriding those who dare oppose him for a decade. I'm a "national disgrace, scoundrel and extremist".

And it would be comforting to deride it all as stupid Americans. But we have to remember that US 'democracy' is deeply flawed with voter registration designed to suppress turnout and an electoral college designed to favour the southern conservative states.

The majority do not support him, but it doesn't matter. He has power and, having subverted the Republicans once, he will happily do it again so the

Senate and Congress dance to his tune. We are all in for an appalling four years.

But we've fallen for the same tricks : a media hand in hand with big business is happy to promote an isolationist agenda to Make Britain Great Again - and the mess of Brexit.

The triumph of Trump - and Brexit - is the final success of modern neoliberalism.

The rich are persuaded they have achieved their success from their own endeavours, being smarter, more determined, more deserving than others.

The poor, and the gap is increasing, are seen and increasingly see themselves as undeserving: stupid, lazy, unable to change their circumstances.

Inequality is seen as necessary to reward the virtuous 'wealth generators' and prompt the poor to greater efforts. Wealth and power are used to strip away the safety nets and ladders that used to be regarded as the essential glue that held society together in favour of a raw capitalism where regulation is an evil and the establishment of monopolies is natural.

Democracy is subverted with people led to believe in 'the solution' and 'change', even when the solutions and change offered will work against the interests of the people voting for such.

The nice world of politics with a fight for 'the middle ground' around a broad consensus of decent public services underpinning an economy where benefits were shared has gone.

Arguments about a penny more or less in income tax are irrelevant in the face of kleptocrats pulling power and wealth to themselves; after all tax is for the little guys, the serious players ensure their wealth is shielded from such impertinences.

We need to recognise that 'nice liberalism' doesn't now cut it. These right wing kleptocrats don't do compromise. They believe that 'winner takes all' is just fine.

So where do we go? Firstly, we must preserve and enhance an honest independent media. Much damage is being done by a centralised popular press and for all the efforts of a few voices, they are drowned out by the voices of a few, mainly interested in circulation and advertising revenues not truth.

Campaigns like Donnachadh McCarthy's Stop Funding Hate have a part to play here, but so do we all in supporting honest and investigatory journalists wherever we find them.

Second, we must try everything we can do to resist the tide of xenophobia and protect vulnerable people. We need to resist those who want to drag people apart. And sometimes that means facing

up to our own latent racism and the casual blame culture.

Thirdly, we need to resist. Resist the voices that seek to divide and pander to the right wing ideologues and those that bolster the ever increasing commercialisation of public services. Having working in the public and private sector both can be inefficient but the causes of inefficiency are different.

Can liberalism reinvent itself to take a lead in this? I don't know. But I do know that a kinder form of capitalism will not defeat these kleptocrats and their ruthless control of the mass media. See you on the barricades - I'll bring green tea and scones.

Debra Storr was a Liberal Democrat councillor in Aberdeenshire but left in 2009 over the local party's support for Trump (Liberator 336)

Liberal



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A SENSE OF HISTORY

Alan Sherwell looks at the Journal of Liberal History's review of policy under the Coalition

The Journal of Liberal History special edition on the coalition's policy record is a welcome companion to the 2015 edition, which explored the wider political and organisational aspects of this historic endeavour. They have ensured that much that is important is on the record. Both contain views from a comprehensive cross section of party and non-party sources with relevant expertise and experience both inside and outside Government.

The one regrettable omission is the way our peers were treated. With half our MPs partially neutered through being in Government, the Lords could have helped broadcast a distinctive message but they never seemed to be used or encouraged to think that way. It is a pity that there is no contribution from a senior peer who was not a minister – their insight would have been invaluable. Peers outside Government were a massively underused resource.

There is much in the policy review that reinforces points in the earlier issue from a different perspective.

Nothing changes my view that we were right to go into coalition. I do not see how a party so keen on PR and with past leaders that had actually campaigned for balance of power could do anything else without a total loss of credibility, not to mention a general election six months down the line where we would have got stuffed.

Perhaps not as badly stuffed as 2015 but with a total loss of credibility and no positive successes nor breaks on Toryism to show for it. Indeed, even those writers who felt that many issues were seriously mishandled remain convinced that going into coalition was right even if, to some extent, this became “we must hang together otherwise we will surely hang separately”.

One of the most interesting aspects is that the policy review was wholly consistent with and essentially backed up the conclusions of the earlier more organisational one.

KEY DISASTER

There is agreement that tuition fees was a key disaster and NHS reorganisation was not a lot better but also that we were not good at getting our message across. There is also a very clear trend in the policy issue to argue that, at the beginning, we were too keen on unity because we needed to show a sceptical British public that coalition worked. Thus, when we came to see that differentiation was vital and changed approach half way through, it was too late. Of course, it is easy to argue that the reverse course would have been better but difficult to prove. Too much early differentiation could easily have led to the coalition breaking down which would have been seriously damaging to both parties but probably more us than them.

Did we get all we could out of the original

negotiations? As the smaller party, we were never going to get the majority of our contested agenda through. Had we had more MPs then we could have got more but, as things were, my conclusion from reading these issues is that we might have got different but not more except on certain important organisational issues.

Specifically, our ministers were strongly disadvantaged because they did not all have a dedicated special advisor. This significantly handicapped our ability to argue within departments where we did not have the lead minister. The second issue was that we got no compensation for the loss of ‘Short Money’, which massively handicapped our party organisation and thus our ability to promote what we were doing. It should have been far easier to tackle these shortcomings than it would have been to get any further major concessions on the government programme.

Those gains could have made a difference. The first volume rather confirms my view that our election strategy was wrong (and Vince Cable's comment in the latter one back this up).

In practice, that probably mattered little since, by that time, people simply weren't listening and that meant that it didn't matter what we said or how we said it. The Lab/SNP scare worked, making a dreadful situation worse but that was not a consequence of the coalition. Perhaps, with that additional resource, some mistakes in Government would have been avoided and some additional opportunities would have been taken. It is certainly the case that we would have been able to publicise what we were doing better.

Different authors express it in different ways and to different degrees but it is clear that there were two things that damaged the party seriously very early on - the Rose Garden and tuition fees.

I absolutely understand that it was vital that the coalition was shown to work to a sceptical Britain. Unfortunately, the Rose Garden became a symbol of how great it was to be in Government working with these nice Tories. The message needed to be that we have a hung parliament and a financial crisis so we are working with these guys - we don't like them much but it is the only thing where the maths works and it is in the national interest. Of course, this was a difficult balance but, as a number of the contributors confirm, the chumminess helped people see us as a Tory adjunct rather than a separate party arguing our principles in a situation where compromise was necessary.

It wasn't the tuition fees policy that damaged us (what was implemented was arguably better). It was the breach of trust. Many explanations were true but none overcame the fact that we presented something as an issue of principle, won an opt-out and then abandoned both anyway. These factors were central in losing our audience, making it difficult to get anyone to listen about the good things we did.

A key issue was management of coalition, party and media. Tom McNally says

CLEGG CUT OFF

Nick Clegg “did tend to cut himself off from what had gone before. In a way he had to learn his Liberalism. I don’t think that he had any historic feeling for the Party ... only once for instance did he assemble previous leaders ... I think [we] were weak on communication.” This is very telling as Tom too had to learn his Liberalism!

Bureaucracy matters. I have referred to ‘Short Money’ and Spads above. In any future coalition, all parties must have equal access to the Civil Service’s resources and adequate compensation for the loss of ‘Short Money’.

Getting the right Spads is another matter. Leaders naturally surround themselves with their own people and there is room for bright young things that have academic knowledge of policy areas.

That is not necessarily a problem but, when people who understand the party are marginalised, it is. Evan Harris describes a discussion on health with a senior adviser when the response to his concerns was essentially: “but it is a good idea”.

Technically, that might have been true but politically it wasn’t. I accept that our ministers were the guys on the ground and the decisions had to be their decisions alone. But it has to be possible to have wider consultations with party experts and interest groups. After all, while the ministers have the right and duty to decide, the rest of us had to try to sell the end product. Greater involvement and explanation makes that easier.

Discussions with the party weren’t well managed. For instance, advice on coalition itself was sought from European Liberal parties but not from UK Liberals who had worked in coalition in our nations and local authorities.

I am grateful to William Wallace for explaining Baroness Garden’s removal as a Lords whip. A senior peer had complained to me that this was done without consultation. He said Sue was very good at her job, which was key for the Lords leadership in managing their team. William makes a good case but the fact that it wasn’t cleared with the Lords leadership at the time demonstrates just how chaotically communication was managed.

There is one major and important disagreement between the articles. Nick Harvey argues that we should have had the number one or two minister in every department. William Wallace lends weight by explaining the difficulty of being the only, relatively junior, minister in a department.

John Pugh argues for fewer posts but effective control of selected departments, leaving us with more MPs free to be ‘distinctive’ - certainly loss of distinctiveness was a problem - but was that negotiable? For instance, I can’t see the Tories letting us have education. Nick would have avoided giving the Tories free rein anywhere, but would it have been feasible with fewer

“It is clear that there were two things that damaged the party seriously very early on - The Rose Garden and Tuition Fees”

MPs? Nick suggests using more Lords but does that sit well with trying to abolish them.

Looking at the policy achievements does not make this any easier to resolve. I think that Nick Harvey at defence and Jeremy Browne (at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office) did good jobs. However, their achievements were not particularly useful PR for the party. From

conversations with some senior RAF Officers I know Nick was seen as “a good thing” in military circles. Knowing that your ministers are seen as competent by experts able to judge is great but doesn’t win votes.

Other ministers (Sarah Teather, Jeremy Browne in Home Office mode) seemed to disappear without trace. In the end, the public impact of ministers seems to be more down to the style and nature of the lead minister rather than the topic and its importance to Lib Dems.

In that context, it is particularly disappointing that there is no policy review of the Department for Communities and Local Government. It seems to me that that is an area where much might have been delivered in terms of devolution of power to local authorities but, in fact, little was. I do not consider directly elected mayors to be either liberal or a devolution of power. My feeling is that this was not down to any lack of calibre on the part of our junior ministers but rather the nature of the secretary of state.

Eric Pickles started by making the right noises about localism but, in the end, there was no end product. It would have been good to have an article that confirmed my prejudices or challenged them.

Both these editions are a good read confirming much that is already part of the coalition mythology, providing insights, provoking thoughts. Making it clear where things could be improved in future and leaving room for further analysis.

Alan Sherwell is a former chair of the Federal Conference Committee and a former leader of Aylesbury Vale council

GET OVER THE LOSS

It's time for new thinking on internationalism after the referendum says Brexit supporter David Green

As we ponder the seismic political events of 2016, those of us wondering why liberalism has become a dirty word synonymous with arrogant and out of touch elites need look no further than the last “sore loser” edition of *Liberator* (*Liberator* 381) in which various contributors gave me to understand that I, a 1972-vintage Liberal who last summer had the temerity to campaign for Brexit as a right-wing, mendacious, xenophobic and populist cult. I fully expect the next edition of *Liberator* to blame me for Donald Trump as well.

One of *Liberator*'s declared aims is to act as “a forum for radical liberals in all parties and none” but what sort of liberalism featured in *Liberator* 381? Clearly the exclusive “thou shalt have no other credo but mine” sort; the sort that talks loudly in restaurants and believes that membership of a political party and patronage of the bloody awful *Guardian* newspaper somehow gives self-appointed keepers of the nation's conscience like us the right to lord it over voters identified in Nick Clegg's recent book as uneducated working class Northerners who voted ‘leave’; and finally, the sort that enables *Liberator* Collective member, David Grace, to declare “all liberals campaigned for the UK to stay in the EU”.

In an endeavour to make this preposterous assertion stick, David was obliged to draw a veil over Brexiteer and ex-Liberal Democrat MP Paul Keetch. Even so, he chose to ignore the 30% of Liberal Democrat voters who elected to leave, not to mention the Liberal Leave campaign run by some grass roots Liberal Democrats contemptuously discounted by *Liberator* 379 as “non-entities”. What these nobodies lacked in peerages they made up for with a closely argued and internationalist case against our remaining in the EU which is still available to view on their Twitter account. Then there was the Liberal Case for Leave published by the Adam Smith Institute and the Liberal Party, whose case against the EU is to be found in their on-line Spring 2016 newsletter.

As for the referendum campaign lies referred to by Michael Meadowcroft, these were deployed by both sides and all were challenged on social media and reality check websites, providing the ammunition that was used by hordes of journalists who were resolute in their pursuit of purveyors of dodgy statistics. Far more important, though, was the lie of omission, mis-selling of the worst possible kind, which has been a feature of the European project from the very beginning when it was realised that EU founder Jean Monnet's dream of a federated United States of Europe could only be achieved slowly and by stealth. The quest for “ever closer union” has always been a politicians', rather than a people's, project; the voters were never trusted with it.

I believe it is sometimes necessary for all Liberals to retire to the smallest room in the house and subject

the things they believe in to some stress testing. Just because you believe something to be, does not make it so. I could be wrong about a whole host of things – STV, a vocational Lords, mixed bathing and, yes, even Europe. Even though I campaigned to leave, every now and again I can catch glimpses of the vision of a US of E. and, whenever the opportunity arose last summer, I told people that, whatever I thought, I appreciated that there might be a case for a United Europe and that the Liberal Democrats would doubtless use the referendum to champion it. That they failed to do so remains a mystery to me.

MONNET DREAM

David Grace acknowledges this, not only in *Liberator* 381 but several months earlier in Issues 375 and 377, which would surely have given him and his *Liberator* chums the time to compile an inspiring and positive case for the EU and to project the Monnet Dream during the referendum campaign. Where was it, then?

Maybe everybody was told to keep shtum for fear of frightening the horses and upsetting the machinations of the political establishment who sought to replicate Harold Wilson's scam of 1975 with another in/out referendum, erroneously supposing that all they had to do was stage-manage a crisis meeting in Brussels, pretend they had achieved meaningful reform and then line up the Great and the Good from Obama to Beckham to persuade a two thirds majority to vote to remain, thereby dishing the Ukip and silencing all critics of the European project, which could then carry on as before. The enabling legislation and the pro EU campaign was badly crafted simply because it never occurred to the powers that be that they could ever lose. They completely overlooked the fact that today's voters are more educated, less deferential and trusting, better informed and more eclectic in their politics than they were 40 years ago, as is evidenced by the fact that the 65+ age group of voters who voted leave by nearly 2:1 in 2016 were the very same voters who as youngsters had voted 2:1 in favour in 1975.

A lot has been claimed about the 48% who voted to remain but many of those were either cowed into doing so by Project Fear or took the view of business secretary of the time Sajid Javid who wrote in the *Daily Mail* that, while the EU was failing, overblown and incapable of reform and that we should never have joined in the first place, on balance, we should stay. There was just no enthusiasm for the EU at all; at best it was portrayed as a necessary evil. If a recent YouGov poll is anything to go by, this appears to reflect the view of many remainers who, once the vote was declared, shrugged their shoulders and now just want the government to stop faffing around and get on with it.

David Grace asks what Liberal Democrat MPs are for. Well, presumably they have learnt from the tuition fees debacle and so, having supported David

Cameron's cunning plan to hold a referendum whose result the government (and by implication the Liberal Democrats in Parliament) promised to abide by, we can surely say with confidence that Liberal Democrats in both houses are not for using all manner of underhand tactics to frustrate what was resolved by popular vote.

The problem is, and for reasons totally beyond my comprehension, support for the European project is a Liberal Democrat article of faith. The following declaration is to be found in the Preamble to the Party Constitution: "Within the European Community, we affirm the values of federalism and integration." References to the Commonwealth, NATO and even the UN are nowhere to be found but, incredibly, Europe is there, as if carved in a tablet of stone. Why? Constitutions should be a timeless assertion of values and, even if the party resolves to be pro-EU, that's policy. Its inclusion in the constitution makes as much sense as referencing the League of Nations or Selective Employment Tax. Perhaps the reason it's there has something to do with that other longstanding Liberal Democrat fetish, federalism. Why are these so totemic? They are not intrinsically Liberal and you could argue that federalism in general and the EU in particular have spawned labyrinthine layers of government whose politicians and civil servants are remote from voters and so are supremely responsible for democracy's loss of traction and voter disengagement.

So, on the rare occasions when today's electorate does engage, we need to listen. What happened on 23 June was huge. It was as if California had voted to leave the USA. While the majority was greater in the 1975 referendum, the turnout was lower, and was held in an era when voter participation was usually much greater. That day last June, the political vibe was palpable, reminiscent of the 1970s, as voters queued to participate; people were phoning me up to ask how to vote as they had never done so in their lives before and the staff at my local polling station observed that they had never known anything like it. Whatever your point of view, what Liberal worthy of the description could possibly question the legitimacy of that result?

DODGY STATS

In the end, a clear majority of those who voted decided to have nothing more to do with the project to build a federated Union of European States with one border, one army, one currency and one government; the dodgy stats deployed by both sides were in the end to no avail; voters relied on their gut instinct which told them that a United Europe was now an idea whose time has gone, overtaken by events and advances in technology and now encumbered by a reducing and ageing population and a declining GDP and market share; their gut instinct prompted them to let go of the apron strings of Old Mother Europe, not because they were turning their backs on the 7% of the world's

"The enabling legislation and the pro EU campaign was badly crafted simply because it never occurred to the powers that be that they could ever lose"

population who belonged to the EU, but rather because they wanted to reach out to the 93% who were not. Everybody needs to accept that and move on.

What would Jean Monnet would have made of it all? He would probably have taken one look at the current state of the USA and decide that a United States of Large is no longer the way to go. He would eschew the artifice of continents in favour of something truly global. And he might conclude that the

Internet and the jumbo jet had in any case rendered geography in politics irrelevant.

And then he would look to liberal parties for the new thinking required to deliver something new, something truly international and inspiring. The important thing is that we should no longer be prepared to accept mediocrity in our politics, either at home or abroad. We don't tolerate waste or shoddy goods and services in our private lives, so why should we accept them in public life? Our international liaisons need to have purpose, we need to support them and even have pride in them, know what they do, how much progress they have made and what their goals are. By this measure, today's EU simply does not rate. So, some new thinking, please. A Global Organisation of Liberal Democracies, perhaps.

David Green is a member of the Liberal party in Southport

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**Global Poverty:
Deprivation,
Distribution, and
Development Since The
Cold War**
by Andy Sumner
Oxford University Press
2016

The first thing to say about Global Poverty is that it is really hard to read, but if you stick at it generates some challenging questions about the nature of global poverty. These include why there is still absolute poverty in a time of unparalleled economic growth, and why are most of the world's poor not in the world's poorest countries? There are also broader questions as to what types of economic development are linked to more or less equitable socio-economic outcomes and the impact globalisation on low skilled economies.

The book draws on a comprehensive combination of socio-economic theory and empirical evidence to address these questions. Its primary thesis is to argue for a structural theory of poverty and that addressing poverty is increasing a question of national distribution

It examines the shift in poverty since 1990 when approximately 90% of the world's poor people lived in what are termed low income countries (LICs) where the average income was barely above internationally recognised poverty lines. Since then the number of LICs has declined massively and there has been a commensurate increase in Lower Middle Income (LMI) and Upper Middle Income (UMI) countries.

The shift of populous countries into Middle Income Countries (MICs) has meant that the majority of the world's absolute poor live in MICs. When, over the next few years, three of the current LICs (Bangladesh, Kenya and Myanmar) graduate to MIC status there will be approximately 600m people in LICs – with nearly half of them in four countries while a billion people live in absolute poverty in MICs.

But none of these are countries where the majority of the population could be considered well off – the thresholds of gross national income per capita per year are: \$1,000 (LIC), \$4,000 (LMIC) and \$12,000 (UMIC).

The conundrum is that there has



REVIEWS

been notable economic growth since the end of the Cold War. Arguably (and this is thesis is challenged) economic growth is good for the poor as their incomes rise in line with the average but poverty has not reduced as much as might have been expected in MICs. Many people living in MICs are not income secure and could easily fall back into poverty – they do not form a stable consuming class. Left to their own devices, the book estimates, it would take about 100 years for them (or their families) to really move out of poverty.

In theory, however, MICs are increasingly close to being able to take their populations out of absolute poverty and arguably no longer need of international aid. But enormous constraints remain, particularly the MICs' capacity to undertake the structural changes required to make that happen. There is evidence that inequality rises during economic growth (although this is not consistently the case) and this skews the benefits of growth away from the poorest.

The author puts a lot of emphasis on the regressive impact of fossil-fuel subsidies which mainly benefit upper middle classes (its importance may have been over-emphasised). LICs which have not yet experienced high levels of economic growth do not seem to demonstrate such high levels of inequality though this is not to say that there are no rich people in those countries. Growth by itself will not reduce poverty in MICs because of the high levels of structural inequality. Paradoxically high and rising inequality will start to constrain growth and poverty reduction because of the slow expansion of a secure consuming class which pays taxes and demands good government in return. If inequality

not mediated during economic growth and structural change MICs face then face new kind of poverty trap. But this is not inevitable and could be avoided by more targeted domestic socio-economic policies and a reframing of international approach to aid.

The LICs, however, are beset by a range of factors, or poverty traps, which are going to be really hard to overcome. These include conflict, fragile infrastructure and governance and geographical positioning, as many of the LICs are landlocked reducing access to trade. Unfortunately limited attention is given to how these issues might be addressed although towards the end of the book there are some interesting proposals on how LICs might be supported to diversify their markets, manage their resources and promote good governance.

So is this book useful and to whom? The complexity of the arguments were hard to follow but the neat summaries at the end of each chapter helped a lot. I would say it is very useful for anyone working in international development. It questions traditional patterns of aid and revisits theories of how to combat poverty which have tended to focus on individual access to goods and services, and behaviours, and encourages theories of national distribution. It does not quite answer the question should we fund women's livelihood projects in India but does stimulate thoughts about what outcomes we might look for if we do.

Margaret Lally

Hillbilly Elegy
by JD Vance
WM Collins 2016.

This best-seller memoir is by a boy from Appalachia who defied

the odds and made good. Liberator readers who have done case work or canvassed in deprived areas of the UK, will find no revelations here. Hillbilly culture - chaotic and violent households, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of agency and opportunity, feuding clans – will be familiar.

Yet, it is a sign of how isolated from white trash and rust belt America the Democrats have become that Hillbilly Elegy is hailed as a handbook for the liberal American elite struggling to understand Trump's victory. What the author, and commentators, seem to miss is that few of the people described in the book bother to vote. Vance, who will likely be a Republican candidate in Ohio, places the blame for white trash failure on their culture, concluding they need to recognise their shortcomings, (appalling parenting, laziness, blaming others).

While that would help, he avoids criticising financial institutions for wrecking the system in 2008, or pushing mortgages and loans on people unlikely to repay. He has no solutions, not even obvious ones like using role models and mentors to show young people that with hard work and education (and moving elsewhere) they can live better lives.

The lack of data in Hillbilly Elegy will also frustrate some readers; it could have been woven into the narrative, if the author wished. Nor is it enough to avoid regrettable Hillbilly views on women and people of colour, as the author does, by claiming they have lost 'trust' in institutions such as impartial media sources. If they were mistrustful, they wouldn't buy so much rubbish on home shopping channels. What is certain is that their lives will be all the more dismal after four or eight years of Trump.

Rebecca Tinsley

You Say You Want a Revolution? Records and Rebels 1966-1970 Victoria and Albert Museum until 26 February 2017.

Shawn Levy's book Ready, Steady Go about 'Swinging London' finished with the words "You hadda be there. You are."

This exhibition takes a similar approach, and with some justice. It does not simply present historical artefacts but makes a case that the world of 1966-70 was a time of rapid social and cultural change that exerts a powerful influence even now.

Visitors are provided with headphones on which an appropriate soundtrack of The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks, Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and many others can be heard.

This is appropriate as the era is mainly remembered for its music (still pervasive and with many of its performers - even minor ones - still active), for its fashions and to a lesser extent films.

Some late-1960s concerns can now seem pretentious, but the era kicked away 'post-war Britain' and cleared the way for what followed.

The exhibition demonstrates how the first moves were made into the mainstream for multiculturalism, feminism, gay rights, relaxed sexual morals, environmental activism, even personal computing, and an anti-conformist attitude of "do your own thing" that is still with us.

All these things have of course developed in different ways but the exhibition seeks links from then to now and its easy to agree that something important happened that is still influential and matters.

Unlike some, I don't say that from nostalgia - I was 14 when the 1960s finished, so had only a child's view of most of it.

The exhibition sets out to ask: "How have the finished and unfinished revolutions of the late 1960s changed the way we live today and think about the future?"

It tells this story through a lot of artefacts associated with the Beatles - including many original song lyrics - clips of swinging London films like Smashing Time, snatches of the pirate Radio London, clothes, political tracts and even the opportunity to recline on bean bags to watch videos of Woodstock.

Indeed the only thing missing is television, which moved from oddity to household object in this era. Surely the styles of, say, The Avengers were also important to 1960s design?

Scattered throughout the exhibition are album sleeves from John Peel's collection. Who would

have thought that this arbiter of hip taste owned a record by Herman's Hermits?

Mark Smulian

Public Interest Design Practice Guidebook, SEED methodology, case studies and critical issues by Lisa M Abendroth and Bryan Bell (eds) Routledge 2015.

Public interest design seeks to involve the community in reaching its aspirations through architectural design. It would undoubtedly have been useful to have such a handbook when I attempted something of the kind as a councillor some years ago. The results were eccentric as I attempted to balance the aesthetic integrity of the architects with the views of the community and the budget available.

It is said that the angels complained to (the Judeo-Christian) God that he had created all of the animals, so they were to create one; they formed a committee and came up with the camel. You probably get the idea. There were two other faults, incompetence or worse of local government officers in overseeing the project, and defending it against constant scaling back on the budget. The silliest idea, with hindsight, was the water-course that ran through the building, but would later save it from further depredations of the lack of imagination in local government and has since been converted to storage.

So, there are two reasons why councillors and council groups in particular should be interested in this book. First because it gives them some practical insight as to how one aspect of community politics, as originally intended, might actually work, and second, because it gives them a range of case studies that might be meaningfully mined for inspiration.

The only disappointment I have with the book, is not the book itself, but the lack of interest that some architects and planners of my acquaintance showed in it. Doesn't that tell you something in itself? Put the book to good use.

Stewart Rayment

Monday

What a wonderful Christmas we had at Bonkers Hall! There was the usual glittering guest list, for the first time featuring the delightful Sarah Olney, the new MP for Richmond Park. (I gather she has a strong following amongst the deer.) There were also a number of former Liberal Democrat MPs who were defeated at the last general election and, to be honest, looked glad of a hot meal. Politics, as I have often observed, is a rough old game.

I was nursing a few scrapes and bruises at Christmas luncheon, having had the bright, as I thought it, idea of dressing up as Father Christmas and having myself lowered down the chimney of the Bonkers' Home for Well-Behaved Orphans the evening before. Unfortunately, I became stuck and it took some enthusiastic tugging on my boots from the young inmates to free me. As I separated myself from the pile of soot, one of them observed: "Chimbleys is awkward things, Lord B. You wants to leave 'em to the experts." Then the real Father Christmas turned up and was Rather Put Out.

Tuesday

The days between Christmas and the year's end are ones for hunkering down in the warm. I don't know what the weather has been like where you are, but here in Rutland we always have a white Christmas. In some years the wolves are driven down from the North of Rutland by the hard weather and the cottages in the village bar their shutters. It is then that the secret passage that leads from the Hall to the cellar of the Bonkers' Arms comes into its own.

This afternoon I took a favourite armchair in front of a roaring blaze and opened Clegg's Politics: Between the Extremes, which Freddie and Fiona kindly gave me for Christmas. When I woke the fire had burned low and it was time for dinner.

Wednesday

I remain convinced that he would have the pews removed from St Asquith's and make us all sing 'Shine, Jesus, Shine' if he were given half a chance, but I have to say that Farron is making a pretty good first of leading the Liberal Democrats. For far too long, our strategy was one of Not Upsetting The Voters: if only we kept quiet about what we believed and delivered lots and lots of Focuses, we were told, then power would be ours. Well it was for a while and that seemed to upset the voters even more, so where does leave this precious strategy?

Under Farron we have been unashamed in our Liberalism and, in particular, our support of the European Union. Nor have we been afraid to give the Fruitcakes one up the snoot when called for. This is the school of politics in which I was raised, and I seem to recall that we did tolerably well in those days.

Thursday

It is high time that I paid tribute to 'Dutch' Mulholland, our MP for Leeds North West, and his estimable campaign in favour of the British pub. The Bonkers' Arms is owned by the splendid firm of Smithson & Greaves, brewers of the gold-medal

Lord Bonkers' Diary

winning Northern Bitter, but not every hostelry is so fortunate. The Home for Well-Behaved Orphans is currently packed with the children of publicans whose parents have been forced to sell them because the companies that own our pubs are making it so hard to earn a living. While this has done wonders for the Home's darts team, it is no way to run an industry. All power to Dutch's elbow!

Friday

Those of us who lived through Leicestershire annexation of Rutland in 1973 vowed, when we had finally driven out the occupying forces, that it would never happen again. We looked at the possibility of building a wall or a fence, but the consensus that it would Spoil The View left us Rather Stumped.

Modesty forbids me to state who it was that hit upon the solution, but next year we shall be digging a ha-ha all around the county: an impenetrable, physical, deep, powerful, beautiful ha-ha. It will keep out invaders and, incidentally, keep in domestic staff.

And do you know the best thing about this ha-ha? We are going to make Leicestershire pay for it.

New Year's Eve

What with all the famous people dropping of the perch in 2016 I decided to take no risks today. I necked a bottle of the cordial sold by the Elves of Rockingham Forest before dinner and sat in the Library with my shotgun until I heard the clock of St Asquith's struck midnight. Only then did I join the Young People celebrating in the Blue Ballroom – 'Auld Lang Syne' and so forth. I am pleased to report that I felt quite well enough to lead the traditional conga down my drive to the Bonkers' Arms.

New Year's Day

Here we bring new water from the well so clear,
For to worship God with, this happy New Year.
Sing levy-dew, sing levy-dew, the water and the wine,

The seven bright gold wires and the bugles that do shine.

No, I don't understand a word of it either, but it is a traditional New Year carol and I have it sung by the village children here at the Hall every 1 January wolves not withstanding.

What does 2017 hold for the Liberal Democrats? It happens that I am well briefed on this: when I dropped in to give the Wise Woman of Wing her Christmas card, we shared a herbal tea in her garden while she scryed (it has been legal in Rutland for some years now). After thus consulting her crystal ball, the Wise Woman assured me that our beloved party can look forward to a year of growing success. And, believe me, she is Terribly Wise.

Incidentally, while we were out in the garden it started to spit, but when I suggested we go indoors she replied: "I'll do my scrying in the rain."

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