

liberator



- 🌟 Why I want to throw the party open - Vince Cable
- 🌟 Defeat the immigration paper - Caron Lindsay
- 🌟 Antisemitism, just one of Labour's woes - Tony Greaves

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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

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COMMENTARY

LEADER AS DISRUPTER

There is something missing from Vince Cable's suggested party reforms (see pages 8-9). It's also largely missing from the conference agenda at Brighton and, with one admittedly large exception, missing from the Liberal Democrats' attempts to engage with the public.

His main proposals are to create a free-of-charge supporter scheme with those who sign up eligible to vote in party leadership elections (though it would seem not in candidate selections).

He also wants to remove the time period required as a member before one can apply to be a candidate - a measure brought in to combat entryism in the mid-2000s - and for people outside parliament to be eligible to stand as leader.

What is absent from all this is anything to help in the foreseeable future with giving the party a clear political message about what sort of country it wants the UK to become.

Brexit is of course the large exception. The party has staked out a clear position, reasonably well-known.

But it has been unable to convert this into much more support than the 8% rating on which it has long been stuck, despite the pool of 16m Remain voters being an ample one in which to fish.

Voters have a rough idea of what sort of country the Tories, Labour, the Greens and Ukip want, but this remains vague for the Lib Dems.

What, if anything, would Cable's proposed reforms do about this?

Cable has taken the trouble to write an article in this Liberator which, rather than set out the precise mechanics of the changes - and proposed safeguards against misuse - makes a case for why the party cannot prosper if it carries on as usual.

The really contentious one will probably be a non-MP leader, since it would advertise that the party had fallen to an equivalent status with the Greens and Ukip. Comparisons with the SNP and Plaid Cymru's parliamentary group leaders are somewhat disingenuous since their actual leaders have other legislatures in which to sit.

It may be that some or all of these ideas have merit, but the rumoured all-member consultation followed by a special conference to endorse the package raises a number of issues.

Will Cable's three-point plan have its 'points' put to members individually or as a take-it-or-leave-it package?

If an all-member ballot is held, who will have what access to members to put opposing cases and how will they be chosen?

There is a vast imbalance between the media access of a Lib Dem leader (even now) and any other member.

Those with long memories will recall attempts to bounce the party by using the media to tell it that it risks its leader's humiliation and resignation unless it does as it's told.

Such tactics might be successful but Cable's entire reform package will be doomed unless the party willingly embraces it rather than feeling it was arm-twisted.

The unfortunate way in which these reforms crawled into the public domain over the summer has succeeded in focusing controversy over secrecy and suspicion, rather than about Cable actual proposals.

Arguments about those follow no obvious faultline, and this autumn may see some strange bedfellows.

Having made his case Cable deserves a fair hearing. So too do those who do not agree.

TIME TO GIVE OFFENCE

Vince Cable has said it is hard to articulate political ideas beyond Brexit and be heard, but the party has stumbled with an issue that could have cut through by being principled and controversial.

Rows are anticipated at Brighton over the immigration policy paper, which is emblematic of what is wrong. It's not clear who turned it from its original into what is proposed but it looks like a mistaken attempt to avoid offending anyone.

It's important to recognise there are some good ideas there, and the wilder claims of it being racist are unfair.

However, some of the language it uses is - to put it no higher - unfortunate and, as Caron Lindsay writes in this issue, it seeks to tinker with a system that should be discarded.

Some people will be offended if the Lib Dems boldly declared themselves to favour immigration - with necessary restraints - in an ageing society with skill shortages.

But to sound as though immigration is a necessary evil risks failing to connect with pro-immigration sentiment while leaving those opposed still unlikely to support the Lib Dems anyway.

So what if some voters are offended? People are offended by all kinds of things. The party will never make a clear statement on anything if it forever worries that someone somewhere will object.

The Lib Dems might prosper almost by accident given the state of the Tories and Labour, though they haven't yet. They are more likely to if they stake out some clear positions that might not be popular with everyone but will be popular with some significant proportion of the public that is already inclined their way.

RADICAL BULLETIN

OZARK MOUNTAIN DAREDEVILS

Never try to keep a secret if you want to build support and consent.

Vince Cable's abiding error through this summer has been to try to prepare a package of radical reforms to the party but to keep this under wraps in a secretive group - whimsically named Operation Ozark - ahead of what was fondly hoped to be a dramatic announcement commanding public attention.

This was always a rather dubious premise - that the public would be enthralled by changes to Lib Dem internal rules - and it ought to have been obvious that no such secrecy could be maintained.

The inevitable result is that bits leaked out in dribs and dabs causing suspicion, resentment and misunderstandings and overall created the impression that something was being plotted behind the party's back that would be thrust upon it.

Cable has been around long enough to recall the damage done to Paddy Ashdown by the belief that he was engaged in secret conspiracies with Tony Blair in the mid-1990s, yet this doomed attempt at secrecy persisted.

Parts of what Cable proposed appeared in *Liberator* 391, some in Mark Pack's *Lib Dem Newswire*, other bits on *Lib Dem Voice*.

Party committees got wind and president Sal Brinton insisted the Federal Board should be involved - which it eventually was on 4 September but only by an item listed on its agenda as 'for information'. The Federal People Development Committee also rightly insisted that there should be a consultation on creating a 'supporters' category.

Matters came to a head on 25 August when a 'senior source' leaked to the *Business Insider* website that Cable planned to announce reforms in a 7 September speech that would also include a statement that he would resign before 2022, although not immediately.

The choice of such an obscure outlet suggests this was done by someone in on the plot, since any opportunist leaker would surely have chosen the *Guardian*, *Independent* or *Times* as more likely to be interested and get noticed.

As other outlets picked up the story, any element of surprise Cable planned for his 7 September speech was lost and suspicion and anger were rife.

Cable should have been open from the start and sought to build trust and support around his proposed reforms.

His willingness to write an article explaining his position in this issue of *Liberator* is welcome, but the overall handling has created a controversy about secrecy rather than about the proposals themselves. That in turn means that when they are published they will be received with suspicion rather than open minds.

They appear - and this may change by the time this *Liberator* is out - to boil down to creating a 'supporters' category, allowing supporters some of the rights of members and allowing non-MPs to stand for leader.

The first of these ought hardly to be controversial, it makes better use of people inclined to support the party.

How controversial the second is depends on what degree of difference is maintained between members and supporters. There has surely - if only for financial reasons - to be some incentive to be a paying member rather than a supporter. How that boundary is fixed is a matter to debate, but if there isn't one who then selects candidates, makes policy and decides who runs the party and how?

The third is the most problematic, partly because it implies the current crop of MPs contains no-one of sufficient talent to succeed Cable, and partly because it surrenders the status the party has clung onto for a century of being a 'main party' and puts it on the same footing as the Greens and Ukip.

It's become well-known that advisers from the Canadian Liberals and France's *En Marche* have been involved in shaping Cable's views - an article about how *En Marche* works is in this *Liberator* - but has there been enough appreciation by the Ozark plotters of how different the political terrains are?

The Canadian Liberals are their country's natural party of government, having been in power or the main opposition for all but four of the past 144 years.

Ironically, the 'four' happened when they reached outside to a 'celebrity' leader, the writer Michael Ignatieff, who was such a disaster that they registered their only third place.

En Marche is the creation of a candidate in a presidential system. There may be things to learn from how it engages the grassroots but it is hard to see how such a movement could be created in the UK's parliamentary system.

Cable's intended reforms came too late for the agenda for Brighton and the party would look irresponsible were it to devote a spring conference three weeks before Brexit to such internal matters. A special conference in January has been floated but it begs the question: why the hurry?

There is some persuading for the Ozarks to do. The 'secrecy and drama' approach having failed it is possible these reforms could be strong-armed through on the basis of "Vince wants this" or he could try the old David Steel tactic of letting underlings brief the press that "the leader will be appallingly humiliated unless he gets his way". He could try packing the conference, though one member one vote makes that difficult.

Or he could try what should have happened in the first place and do some patient explaining and

persuading.

There is surely merit in at least some of what is proposed. But having created a controversy about secrecy rather than substance, Cable now needs to engage on what he proposes and why.

RUNNERS AND RIDERS

Who will stand to succeed Sal Brinton as Lib Dem president, who has served since 2015 and so done two terms.

The unopposed election of 2016 passed unnoticed but in 2014 Brinton faced challengers Daisy Cooper (who wanted to raise her profile in the party) and Liz Lynne (who had no need to do so).

Lynne has been little seen since but Cooper fought the marginal seat of St Albans at the last election, is ambitious and might want another crack at the role.

Also spoken of as a contender is English party chair Liz Leffman, who did well in the Witney by-election in 2016 though opinions differ as to her skills as a meeting chair, and one presidential task is to chair the Federal Board.

Another hat in the ring may be that of Mark Pack, who has amassed a huge range of contacts through his Lib Dem Newswire email. Pack though is a technical specialist in campaigns and technology and has been careful not to take sides in most controversies, a stance that would be difficult as president.

Whoever wins needs the time and money to travel the land eating indifferent food at constituency dinners, the patience to chair unwieldy committees and preferably the ability to tell the leader when he's wrong. Don't all rush.

DEMAND SUPPLIED

As ill-considered Lib Dem slogans go, 'Demand Better' is not as bad as the 2015 general election's

Unity, Stability Decency, (which sounded like some junta's justification for seizing power) or Nick Clegg's rapidly discarded Alarm Clock Britain, let alone October 1974's awful One More Heave. But did anyone really stop to think how it would be used?

Just imagine if this slogan is on the stage set at conference or any other event, where Vince Cable or an MP speaks.

The party leader with the words 'demand better' adjacent is a gift to satirists. So too is 'Liberal Democrats - demand better'. Putting the word 'we' before 'demand' would at least have made it clear this referred to the Lib Dems demanding something better, rather than that people might wish to demand something better than the Lib Dems.

It might work as 'Liberal Democrats demand better schools/ hospitals /topiary hedges' or whatever, but on its own the danger ought to be obvious, especially if local campaigners don't think before using it ("Lib Dem Councillor Bert Scroggins - demand better" etc).

Yet the party is led to believe that this slogan resulted from extensive deliberation by a group appointed to work out an overall message then find policies that best illustrate it.

Something similar happened once before and Liberator played a small role in helping to strangle that at birth (Liberator 239).

This was Paddy Ashdown's proposed Take Courage slogan of 1996, where a discreet call to a Guardian journalist ensured it was so thoroughly lampooned that it was never seen again.

'Take Courage' was well-known beer advertisement of the time and also implied that Liberal Democrat policies were so high risk that one needed courage to support them. Still it probably sounded good to whatever group of self-described communications

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experts thought it up.

The intended accompanying phrase 'We're Yellow' was also killed off, with that year's Liberal Revue adopting the strapline 'custard, urine and cowardice, we're yellow'.

THE SHAFTEd EX-MP MYSTERY

The 16 months saga of certain parts of the Liberal Democrats hierarchy being determined to exclude former Bradford East MP David Ward from the party continues with no end in sight (Liberator 388).

Ward was adopted to fight Bradford East last year - the seat he held from 2010-15 - but was then removed as candidate by Tim Farron after the Tory minister Eric Pickles asked a parliamentary question about comments Ward had made about Israel.

When it was pointed out that Farron had no power to sack a candidate, the chair of the English Candidates' Committee, Prue Bray, took responsibility.

The alleged reasons for Ward's sudden dismissal - without appeal - keep changing but turn on allegations of anti-Semitism and Middle East policy.

The Yorkshire and the Humber regional executive later appointed a working group to investigate the situation and its report was unanimously accepted by the regional executive and sent to those involved, which means the whole constitutional basis of Ward's removal is still being contested.

There is also the question of Ward's party membership. The party parachuted a candidate from Lancashire into Bradford East and Ward fought as an independent - saving his deposit when the official Lib Dem did not.

Ward's membership was inevitably suspended but he has applied to be re-admitted, with his application unanimously approved by his local association and endorsed, again unanimously, by the regional party.

To the astonishment of both, these decisions were rejected by the federal party, which means a further appeal is in progress.

Ward's friends say there is considerable doubt as to the legality of a number of the decisions taken against him and lawyers have been consulted.

The whole sorry business is centred on Ward's passionate support for the Palestinians and his trenchant criticisms of the Israeli government, not least driven by his visits to Gaza.

Accusations that his statements were anti-Semitic have been dismissed by, among others, the party officer who sacked him, and the legal departments of the BBC and Bradford Council (on which he sits as a Lib Dem, according to the council website).

The question is, therefore, why is there still a determination to keep Ward out of the Liberal Democrats, and who is driving this?

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

A mere 15 months since the 2017 general election, and nine months since its completion, the Liberal Democrats published a brief summary of their review of that campaign.

Anyone more closely interested has of course been able since last March to read a rather more extensive summary on the Liberator website (Liberator 389).

The governance review somehow gave the job of reviewing the general election to the Federal Audit

and Scrutiny Committee, a body set up for a wholly different purpose that lacked anyone with the relevant expertise.

This task eventually landed on Portsmouth's Gerald Vernon-Jackson who, with no resources, interviewed about 60 people and produced a warts and all report that offended those responsible for the warts.

The Federal Board 'noted' the report - while the English party executive was denied sight of it - and recommendations were then sent to various parties committees.

A summary finally saw the light of day in August, though with original's evidence and analysis reduced to bullet points.

This made the obvious point that not all of it could be published since there were things there that it would benefit rival parties to know.

Liberator took the same view, but here are some of the things we published that are mysteriously absent from the official version:

- * "It was not clear who was in charge. This was said across the Country, within HQ and from activists and candidates in many places. The range of people that were named as being in charge included The Chair of the Campaign Committee, the Chief Executive of the Party, the Party President, the Director of Communications, the Director of Campaigns and Election and the Leader's Head of Office."
- * "Volunteers, candidates and campaigners should be treated with respect by HQ staff and their views listened to. This was also a recommendation of the 2015 Review. Arrogance is corrosive and destructive."
- * "Feedback that staff in HQ who were below 'head of...' did not know what was going on and what they were meant to be doing or why."
- * "There was strong opposition to the content and particularly the photos used in some of the national direct mail. Strong feedback from some that this lost us some votes."

BOMBS AWAY

The Young Liberals have been busy launching their freshers campaign, but one of their signature policies - agreed only this summer - has been notably omitted from it.

This was the one on a poster that says: "Young Liberals call for 14.6 billion in emergency defence spending and transparency in existing spending. Reverse Tory attacks on our defences."

Yes, you did read that right. The party's youth wing might once have been in the forefront of campaigns against spending on arms but now wants more weapons.

According to the Government's UK Defence in Numbers publication, defence spending in 2016-17 was £35.3bn, so the YLs want an increase of 40%. Maybe it could come out of the higher education budget?

But those now running the YLs don't even have the courage of their own dubious convictions.

This defence pledge is notably absent from their freshers campaign, allegedly because it developed too recently for inclusion.

Surely it wasn't omitted because of its likely impact on recruitment efforts if the nation's students knew

what the YLs really believe in?

Meanwhile, there have been complaints from the YLs that the Federal Conference Committee took none of their proposed motions for the Brighton agenda. One was a call to concrete over the green belt - a policy that anyway has minimal relevance to housing provision - and another was on abortion.

While the latter motion was judged quite good, FCC preferred one submitted by Lib Dem Women. They urged the two bodies to collaborate on a joint motion, but the YLs declined.

NOISES OFF

The formation of the Liberal Democrat Campaign for Racial Equality (Liberator 390) to replace the disorderly Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats hasn't come a moment too soon to judge by the pronouncements of EMLD's former luminaries.

Ruwan Uduwera-Perera and Lester Holloway both left the party earlier this year, having played roles in the tortuous personal disputes that consumed EMLD.

Holloway joined Labour and has made the perplexing comment: "Labour actually have the first black party leader in Corbyn if you look at his politics", while Uduwera-Perera has joined the Scottish National Party as "as the only party in the Highlands fighting for the future of residents".

He has also accused Vince Cable of harbouring bigots - a remarkably offensive statement about someone who has mixed race children from his first marriage.

WORKING FROM HOME

It's normal for prospective parliamentary candidates to be told where their local party's office is, but not in the wacky world of Lewes (Liberator 388).

There are two separate disputes. One is between the suspended local party executive and a local member, which led to regional intervention.

The other is between PPC Kelly-Marie Blundell and those who wish to replace her.

Blundell asked Mike Watson, the regional official with the thankless task of overseeing Lewes, the whereabouts of the local party premises, which she hadn't been told.

Back came the reply that this was "just a print shop" where the phone line had been cut and it was also "not a postal address".

Who exactly will use this mysterious facility, and for what purpose? Watson concluded: "We all have to learn to operate out of our homes again."

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THROWING IT OPEN

A free ‘supporter’ status, no time restriction on applying as a candidate and a leader from outside Parliament?
Outlandish? Maybe, but Vince Cable wants all of them
in the Liberal Democrats

On 7 September I announced my thoughts on how we might grow the party in coming years.

The media, largely through guesswork has reported much of it, so there is no great surprise. And no one will be ‘bounced’ into sudden, controversial, decisions; I envisage a consultation at conference and, then, any consequent changes will take place through the party’s constitutional mechanisms. Nor do I intend this exercise to distract us from immediate political priorities – fighting Brexit; preparing for local elections in 2019; possibly a snap general election – but I do believe we should also be thinking long term.

Some people will say: “We are doing fine; why on earth does Cable want to shake things up?”

Well we are doing fine but not fine enough. After the string of very disappointing election results – parliamentary in 2015 and 2017; European in 2014; local and devolved government for much of the last decade we are reviving.

Since I took over the leadership I have been delighted by the string of local government successes, notably in May – the best results for 15 years - and the encouraging result in Lewisham East – our best against Labour since 2004.

ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE

I attach enormous importance to rebuilding our local government base and our campaigning capacity, as we are doing. But it will be a long, difficult, process. At parliamentary level, I expect further gains, but we are a long way off even contemplating the heady heights of 62 MPs we enjoyed in 2005, however committed our targeting and campaigning. Steady progress is not enough.

Snapshots of public opinion are not necessarily the best guide to real elections. But they do tell a clear story. After eight years of stagnation in single figures our poll ratings are – just – back in double figures. But this is at a time when confidence in the Government is low and the leadership of the Labour opposition is widely despised, even in Labour ranks. At the same time, around 40% of the electorate identify themselves with liberal values which we regard as our own. So far only a quarter of these would vote for us in a general election though a half or more are at least considering the possibility.

However, while we gradually rebuild trust and confidence there is a sense of panic amongst centre-ground voters (I use the phrase centre-ground loosely; I have always identified with the centre-left). They can see that Labour and Conservative parties are increasingly dominated by extreme factions. The Labour leader reflects the world-view of his entourage: the Stalinist wing of the microscopic Communist Party of Great Britain.



In the Conservative Party there is increasing arrogance and activity by the alt-right, and its opportunistic parvenus like Boris Johnson, as they confidently believe that their time has come. This polarisation comes at a critical time, and Brexit is both a cause and effect of it.

There is a temptation for many voters to think that, under the British voting system, they must support the lesser of two evils or they will let in the greater of two evils: a significant factor in our inability to make dramatic progress.

But this calculation is likely to be challenged by attempts to create a new political dynamic. The chatter around ‘new parties’ – which is likely to bear fruit in some form – partly reflects a naïve belief among some non-politicians that the French experience, with Macron, can be replicated in very different circumstances; but it also reflects the sense of despair amongst many worried people that ‘something must be done; something new’.

Added to that is the alienation of significant numbers of MPs and others from the Conservative and Labour parties: ‘one nation’ Conservatives and many Labour people, mainly social democrats but others too. There is a strong possibility that some will break away and try to operate independently. Many will seek private solutions to their conflicted consciences by retiring, running as mayors or busying themselves with select committees. But I think it likely that some will try to establish a new political grouping of some kind.

All this ferment may fizzle out (the Corbynites lose out; the Tories pull themselves together). But there is a potential – nightmare – scenario of a proliferation of groupings competing and us (and the Greens) for the same voters who are not tribal for either Labour or the Conservative party. And the frustrations of the disenfranchised middle-ground voters will simply grow.

I – and you – have two parallel tasks in this, uncertain, environment. The first is to make the Lib Dems the natural choice of this group of voters rather than one of several competing options.

To do this we have to start by recognising the way a lot of modern politics is done: online, interactive, impatient. And operating through broadly-based movements rather than narrower membership.

We often deride Labour’s Momentum but it has been very successful, and we should learn from it. We have been successful as a party in attracting members – now at a record level – but we should not delude ourselves; many new members see us as an effective anti-Brexit movement rather than a conventional party. Where this leads in terms of members versus supporters is already being debated in the party and I hope we shall see ourselves as an organisation which looks outward to attract and engage all who share our values.

There is some controversy around the idea of looking outside parliament for leadership. I am instinctively biased towards MPs since I have spent much of my adult life trying to get elected or re-elected to Parliament. And I know that the current crop of MPs has several outstanding potential leaders. But that will not always be the case and, in any event, political authority and respect is draining away from Parliament and its attractions as a career.

There is a wider point. We now choose top civil servants and governors of the Bank of England from a wider talent pool. Also, archbishops. Top football managers no longer have to be English, or Scots. Politics does not have to remain rooted in tradition; and successful parties will not be. I do not have simple answers to the practical questions around the changes I am recommending but what I am clear about is that simply doing what we have always done is not sensible.

The second task is for the competing options to work together rather than against each other. I have been talking to new or established rivals for what I would

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– nightmare –
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and us”*

regard as our political territory (local alliances with the Greens have proved controversial but I have enthusiastically supported them not least in my patch, with some success).

There is a view that we (and particularly I) should be communicating our values and policies more effectively and that, if we did, support would build rapidly. I have learnt over the last year just how difficult that is, however. The main news bulletins are not interested

unless our news is sensational or scandalous.

I don’t pretend for a moment that process and organisational changes are sufficient. Values and policies matter; I have either led or encouraged new thinking in areas like housing policy and homelessness, tech companies, corporate governance and tax reform. I am optimistic that we are winning the arguments around Brexit and the People’s Vote and will get some political credit in coming months.

FOURTH PARTY

But we need to do more. I am putting forward some ideas for reforming the way we operate. Parliament is no help. Since we are categorised as the ‘fourth party’ in the Commons, I am allowed to ask only one question in prime minister’s questions every four weeks and my colleagues are rarely called. By contrast the SNP are allowed at least two questions a week, despite scoring nearly 1.4m fewer votes than us at the last election.

Surveys tell us that a large swathe of the electorate have little idea what we stand for. And, even on the main issue of the day – Brexit – where we have a clear, distinct, well-articulated, policy the public is as likely to associate anti-Brexit views with Labour (despite its divisions into reverse and ‘constructive ambiguity’) as with us.

In many ways we are still paying the price of the 2015 and 2017 elections; fewer MPs make less noise, and media coverage is more difficult to secure. We have, of course, to keep trying and we do. The gradual improvement in our position suggests that this is gradually paying off.

But my proposals for a radical overhaul to open up the party into a free and inclusive movement; to let that movement decide who its leader should be from a broad pool of candidates; to empower it by giving members and supporters a say over campaigning priorities; and to make it easier for new members to stand for public office, are designed to give a shot in the arm to our progress. They are the first step to remaking the party in the public mind and making real strides back to fill the huge gap at the centre of British politics.

Vince Cable MP is leader of the Liberal Democrats

IT WON'T CUT IT AT THE HAIRDRESSER'S

Caron Lindsay says the immigration policy paper going to the Brighton conference is so flawed that it must be defeated

I went to the hairdresser recently. And along with some nice caramel and copper highlights, I was served up some casual racism.

Everyone in there loved Boris Johnson's comments about the burqa and the niqab and laughed along with his deeply offensive metaphors.

Just two days after the attack in Westminster I was told that Muslims didn't really help themselves. I pointed out that men rape and murder women every day of the week, but we never, rightly, say things like "men don't really help themselves".

I pointed out how Johnson's comments, playing to the extremist right, were not consequence free. No, it's not the fact that he's had a tiny bit of heat from his own party. It's the fact that every woman of colour, whether she is wearing a hijab or niqab or not, is more likely to be abused on the street as a result.

LOOK THEM IN THE EYE

I think that me taking on the arguments directly and robustly had an effect. At the very least it made them think. I looked them in the eye and told them they were wrong. In a very dignified and civilised way, but with confidence and assurance.

This is not something to be timid about. We have to tackle this sort of prejudice wherever we find it.

That's why I and others will be doing all we can to ensure that the migration policy paper coming to conference does not pass.

The motion is an exercise in embarrassed shuffling and mumbling. Every vaguely decent policy (and there are a few) comes with an plaintive "but it'll save us lots of money" caveat.

It does not compare well with the ideals of the preamble to our constitution:

Our responsibility for justice and liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries; we are committed to fight poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods and services.

There are two particular paragraphs, one in the motion and one in the policy paper, that have become the focal points for criticism.

The first is in the motion: "Our goal should be a positive, liberal consensus on immigration, partly by rebuilding people's trust in the system, and that this requires us to listen and engage with those who do link pressures on public services and housing to immigration and to reject the argument that merely labels such people as racist."

We should never pander to those who scapegoat immigrants as the cause of problems because they are wrong.

We should unequivocally argue about the benefits of immigration and show that the real failure is of

successive governments to adequately invest in said public services.

People are saying these things because they have had it drip fed to them over the years through the likes of Nigel Farage and the right wing press.

They were never subtle. They always said exactly what they meant. If we're going to properly break that down, we're going to have to raise our eyes from the ground, find our voices and tell a story of how great it is that people come and settle here and work and pay taxes and bring their skills and help turn our companies and institutions into centres of excellence.

When my husband had open heart surgery in 2016, it was an Italian expert in that obscure part of the heart who saved his life. It was his Greek registrar who saved his life again in the middle of a very traumatic night. It was the kindness and skill of the Italian intensive care nurse who helped him through the first difficult days. We need to make it as easy as we can for these people to be here and feel welcome here.

If the motion is bad enough, the policy paper's second paragraph is a pure horror: "However, migration today is not the peaceful, equitable, ordered guarantor of durable security that our constitution envisages. Fuelled by the failure of governments to spread economic prosperity widely, some people feel that their concerns about employment, housing, and social and welfare resources are somehow linked to immigration. There has been an alarming rise in hostility to all immigrants, including some British people settled here for a generation or more."

People think all sorts of nonsense. Some think the earth is flat. We don't go and give them rope in case they fall off the edge.

What we should be saying is that there is nothing wrong with feeling under pressure, that your housing is awful, that you don't have enough to make ends meet. There is nothing wrong with thinking that isn't fair. Because it isn't.

Linking that to immigrants and opining that they get everything while you have nothing is wrong, though. While we shouldn't necessarily blame those who have absorbed the Faragesque drip feeding, we need to challenge it.

We should be calling it out for what it is while making sure that there is enough investment in housing, public services and jobs to render that sort of divisive rhetoric ineffective.

If that means that some people don't vote for us, then we will just have to live with that.

Let me explore in some detail why we need to take a strong stand now. We are living in the most dangerous time I have ever known. Even the softest possible Brexit will punch us in the economic gut and the poorest will be hit hardest. Jobs and public investment

are under threat.

But when they can't blame the EU anymore, who will the Tories turn on next? Not them, for putting a lie on a bus, cheating, breaking electoral law and selling us a pig in a poke. No, it'll be someone significantly more vulnerable. Disabled people, perhaps. Or those with mental ill health. Or transgender people. Then workers for daring to demand such indulgences as

maternity leave, set working hours and the right not to be dismissed just because your employer got out of bed the wrong side and feels like taking it out on someone.

If this immigration paper is an indication of how we Liberal Democrats are going to move to protect these vulnerable groups, then we really do need to demand better.

Our current immigration system is horrible. People suffer needlessly as they try to navigate a hostile environment. The paper at best tinkers around the edges when we need to be dismantling it, burning it in a massive bonfire, encasing the ashes in lead and throwing them in the sea. We need to start again from scratch with a humane, compassionate and fair culture.

Don't get me wrong. There are some half decent policies in there – allowing seekers of sanctuary to work, for example or making it easier to bring your parents in. The abolition of the appalling income requirement for bringing in your spouse is welcome, too. Continuing the work that Vince did in Government, to enforce minimum wage legislation is a good thing. But a smattering of good stuff is not enough.

There are problems. While the abolition of the awful family income requirement is the least you would expect, why can't we just have a presumption that if you want to bring your partner in to the UK you can, unless there is some reason why it's a bad idea, for example if they are a danger to the public?

Leaving a spouse without recourse to public funds for five years is just wrong and discriminates against those on low incomes. If we agree that love is equal, we should not adopt policies which render it more difficult to live with the person you love if you are poor.

There is more emphasis on making immigrants conform to the expectations of some British people rather than all of us take the opportunity to learn from them. It's fine to expand English teaching but not so fine to imply that if only immigrants conformed to our way of life, things would be so much better. We aren't really supposed to be into conformity, after all.

We should be looking to reduce the exorbitant fees for everyone, not just disabled people. Imagine you have a family of five needing to renew leave to remain. We're talking about £8,000. If you are renewing a family and private life visa, there is every possibility you are doing a very low paid job. There is a system of fee waivers but they make hen's teeth look abundant. You basically have to prove you are destitute – and that means not being able to afford anywhere to live. But often they will have slapped bail conditions on

“What we needed was a document that loudly and proudly shouted that we were an enthusiastically pro-immigration party”

you tying you to a particular address. How are people supposed to resolve that conundrum?

We should have a path to citizenship for those who currently have no migration status. Many of them have been put in that situation by flawed Home Office decisions and it would only be fair to give them the chance to make their case. We were burned by the reaction to a similar policy in 2010 - but if we tell

people's stories, we can show this is fair.

POT OF FUDGE

What we needed was a document that loudly and proudly shouted that we were an enthusiastically pro-immigration party which put fairness and dignity and compassion at the heart of its policies. We had the chance to say up front that we wanted to create a system that inspired the confidence of everyone who used it and the organisations working to support them. You don't fight the fire of anti-immigrant prejudice with a bland pot of fudge that apologises for itself at every turn.

The paper will not inspire those people who left us during the coalition years because we compromised too far. Compromise in government as the junior partner in a coalition can be understandable. Doing it in opposition when we really need to make a distinctive mark is unwise.

This paper will not change the minds of the people I encountered in the hairdresser's because it does nothing to promote understanding of the realities of life for immigrants and bust the poisonous myths.

It is so flawed that I don't think it can be fixed by amendment. It must not pass in its present form. Be in the hall on Sunday at 11am. Put in a speaker's card. Let's make sure that we get rid of this paper and craft a policy we can be proud of.

Caron Lindsay is editor of Liberal Democrat Voice and a member of the Federal Board

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A MASS OF FAULTLINES

Antisemitism may exist in Labour but its just one of multiple internal conflicts that are driving it to fragmentation, says Tony Greaves

When the antisemitism row started it all seemed a bit like balancing angels on pinheads away with the fairies. Anyway why worry about a party I've been fighting all my life, led by a pretty hopeless man who seems to be living in the past?

But as it went on I became intrigued - is there really lots of antisemitism in the Labour Party? Or is it really about malevolent forces using it as a proxy issue to target Labour and/or Corbyn – or to divert attention from what's happening in the Middle East?

Jonathan Freedland wrote in the Guardian that you cannot call the idea of Israel racist but you can call actions of the Israeli state racist.

But can you? If someone thinks you are important enough (or just a Labour member) you will be accused of antisemitism anyway, a complaint will be made and publicised, and even if you have used words carefully they risk being ignored in a process of guilt by denunciation.

The statement in the three Jewish newspapers that a Corbyn-led government would pose “an existential threat to Jewish life in this country” was shocking – and evident nonsense. Unhelpful policies – possibly. A pro-Palestinian stance – probably. But a threat to the very existence here of Jewish communities, synagogues, families? Rubbish. Yet few dared challenge it head on as neither Corbyn nor Labour seemed capable of effective refutation.

RIVERS OF BLOOD

And we are told there are lots of Jewish families seriously thinking of moving to safer climes. (To Israel? Really?) But when the former chief rabbi Lord Sacks puts Corbyn's ill-advised off-the-cuff remarks of five years ago on a par with Enoch Powell's carefully written and blatantly racist 'Rivers of Blood' speech – fatuous though the comparison may be – should we be surprised about Jewish fears?

Central to the row is the Working Definition of Antisemitism produced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, academic 'experts' who 'represent' 31 countries. It's worth looking at what it actually says. They adopted it in 2016 as a “non legally binding working definition of antisemitism”. The core definition reads: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

Okay so far. This definition is followed “to guide the IHRA in its work” by the following: “Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against

any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for 'why things go wrong'. It...employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.”

This is followed by the 11 exemplifications. They are set out as: “Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere”, which “could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to” the list. As the waters start to get muddy (might, could, context, not limited to...) a question is how a 'working definition' to “guide the IHRA in its work” has now become a must-agree-with-no-changes for everyone else.

The main problems arise with the references to the state of Israel. In particular the example: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour” is a sentence packed full of arguability. The question is surely not: “Do you think the existence of the state of Israel (or by implication Zionism) is racist?” but “Is it antisemitic to argue that case?” The terms of the Israeli basic law and the recent decisions of the Israeli Parliament make it hard to argue that the state of Israel is not built upon assumptions and practices based on race or ethnicity.

A recent statement by seven 'Experts of the UK Delegation to the IHRA' on 7 August states: “Any 'modified' version of the IHRA definition that does not include all of its 11 examples is no longer the IHRA definition. Adding or removing language undermines the months of international diplomacy and academic rigour that enabled this definition to exist.”

Which raises an important question. Where does the authority for this statement come from? However well-meaning, does this body have the right in a democratic world to insist that their words, in every detail, must be accepted by everyone else without scrutiny and discussion? And does every racial or ethnic or cultural or religious or historic 'community' (here we encounter the underlying ambiguity in what Jewishness means) have the right to insist how they are to be treated?

This degree of identity politics would clearly not be practical if every such group demanded the same right. In a democratic world each society – and indeed each body within that society – must have the right to analyse, scrutinise and amend the rules that govern them. And surely there must be equivalence of treatment for all people? Or were the appalling horrors of the Holocaust so beyond anything else that has ever happened that Jews are a special case? One wonders if a similar declaration by self-appointed Islamic authorities on the nature of Islamophobia, for instance, would gain automatic acceptance in this way.

One example suggests that a contemporary example of antisemitism could be “applying double standards by requiring of [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation”.

Yet it’s at least arguable that Israel is able to get away with behaviour that for other states might result in massive condemnation and even sanctions. We can look at the prison camp of Gaza, or the occupied colony of the West Bank, which is still being actively developed on a separated ethnic/religious basis. Is it really antisemitic to despair at the way that the Jewish state (their words) is behaving after everything that Jews suffered under the Nazis and in the pogroms and discrimination through the ages?

So, back to the Labour party, what is really behind the current threats to its internal integrity? Corbyn’s alleged antisemitism first hit the headlines before the London elections in May. I have no doubt there was then an attempt in right-wing Jewish establishment circles to smear the Labour party, win votes for the Tories in Barnet, and stop the most marginal London borough falling to Labour.

Yet the Parliament Square demonstration against Corbyn was astonishing. It’s not clear how many people present were Labour members and how many were outside agitators, but the MPs and other senior Jewish members present are not fools. It is clear (which has amazed many of us) that a lot of Jewish Labour members experience views within the party and on party-linked social media that appear to them to be anti-Jew. In at least some cases like that of Peter Willsman, they seem to be just that. I also have no doubt that some anti-left sections of the Labour party (not least in Parliament) are using the dispute to try to weaken Corbyn. Most of them are not Jewish - they are mainly bandwagon jumpers rather than instigators – though people such as John Mann, a born agitator and plotter on the Labour right, are stirring the pot as actively as they can.

If there is anti-Jewish sentiment in the Labour party I don’t think it’s based all that much in traditional anti-imperialist pro-Palestinian circles. It’s the big elephant in the room that few want to talk about - it’s among those Muslim members who openly refer to the state of Israel as ‘the Jews’. The view that ‘the Jews’ are an enemy is widespread (though not unanimous) as a result of events in Palestine and coverage on satellite TV stations, but it’s the great unmentionable since the consequences for Labour of clamping down on Muslim members would be politically disastrous.

I do think that the controversy is partly a response to the growth in extent and strength of criticism of the state of Israel and what it is doing in the West Bank, in Gaza and indeed in Israel itself. Many supporters of Israel know it is wrong, they find it very hard to cope with, so they turn on critics for what they are, not what they say (though they use that as an excuse).

“It is clear (which has amazed many of us) that a lot of Jewish Labour members experience views within the party that appear to them to be anti-Jew”

The Israeli Government has been shaken by the reactions to the shooting of mainly peaceful demonstrators at the Gaza border. Even western TV stations have not been able to ignore or suppress the dramatic film coverage. It’s hard not to think that the antisemitism attacks on Corbyn by much of the press – fed by the Israeli propaganda machine – are not in part an attempt to camouflage and divert attention from the disgraceful behaviour of the Israeli Defence Force. Meanwhile

Israeli government resources – via their embassy – and research and campaign groups and the right-wing press are beavering away to dig up all possible smears (or legitimate facts according to taste) on vocal critics.

But here’s a crunch. Labour’s problems are made much worse by the party being factionalised in a way that sets section against section and leads people instinctively to regard other factions as traitors and enemies.

DECENT IDIOTS

It’s traditional and entrenched and it makes idiots out of decent people. So when these attacks happen the party finds it hard to deal with them. Longstanding and decent Palestinian-supporting Labour members now complain they are being smeared as antisemitic. I have no fondness for their party or their leader but what is happening is bad for us all.

We can see what is going on when Frank Field – never a friend of Liberals – at war with his party nationally over Europe, and claiming to be bullied by his local party who he has not met for half a year – says he might fight a by-election on antisemitism.

So where does this leave the question that journalists love to write about – is the Labour party breaking up?

The antisemitism row is just one of several fault-lines, including Brexit, Corbynites versus Blairites, modern identity politics versus traditional versions of equality, green economics versus any kind of growth, and of course personalities.

Most of the attacks on Corbyn come from centrists or right-wingers. But it’s difficult to cast the splits in traditional right versus left terms since they all overlap and often clash. Many ardent anti-Brexit campaigners are pro-Palestinian. Strongly pro-Brexit MPs like Kate Hoey and Mann are on the right (but hardly people we want to consort with!). As ever, Europe is the really dangerous issue for both main political parties. But Labour is heading for sectarian fragmentation, not a coherent new version of the SDP in which pro-Europeans lead an ideologically coherent break away (and are also cheerleaders for Israel).

Tony Greaves is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords

IRAQ AND THE POTTERY BARN RULE

The west helped break Iraq, but now IS still lurks in the shadows while corruption reigns in Kurdistan.

Rebecca Tinsley reports

When the US was on the verge of invading Iraq in 2003, Colin Powell cited the Pottery Barn rule, warning George W Bush, “You break it, you own it”. The other famous saying that should apply to Iraq is the Taliban taunt: “You may have the watches, but we have the time.”

The western powers have a reputation for declaring victory prematurely and then losing interest. The people of Iraq – Kurds, Arabs, Muslims, Christians and Yezidi - know that there are lingering pockets of Islamic State throughout their country. They fear the jihadists have only to hunker down and bide their time. Will our febrile politicians in Europe and North America pander to parochial voters, withdrawing from the Middle East as soon as possible? Is it any wonder so many Iraqis and Syrians are, reluctantly, leaving the region for good?

EYE-WATERINGLY CORRUPT

Yet, the continuing presence of violent Islamists, now shorn of their beards, is only one challenge facing the people of Iraqi Kurdistan. Under the noses of Western officials, the Kurdish Regional Government has established an eye-wateringly corrupt fiefdom, controlled by two tribal groups bent on self-enrichment on a staggering scale.

We embrace the Kurdistan Regional Government’s slogan, ‘The Other Iraq,’ because it suits us to think that, after decades of betrayal by the west, the Kurds have created a pluralist, tolerant democratic paradise.

Our recent guilt dates back to 1988 when we were silent as Saddam launched the Anfal campaign against the Kurds, killing 5,000 in the poison gas attack at Halabja, and another 200,000 through starvation, defoliating anywhere that Kurds could either hide or grow food.

(Tony Blair, who would later rally the nation to war by denouncing Saddam for his human rights abuses, did not even sign the Parliamentary Early Day Motion, tabled by one Jeremy Corbyn, condemning Saddam for Halabja).

“Iraqi officers selected the prettiest girls in each village and gave them to Middle Eastern leaders as presents,” a Kurdish property developer from Erbil tells me.

“I know for a fact that the Mubarak family were given Kurdish girls. They were never seen again. And our men were taken off to mass graves in the south.”

Saddam’s determination to eliminate the Kurds eventually led to John Major’s safe areas in what became autonomous Kurdistan. An aid worker from that time recalls: “The international community threw so much money at us, everyone in Kurdistan could have had a gold toilet seat.”

Having stirred up the locals to revolt against a weakened Saddam in 1991, George HW Bush lost interest in the region, abandoning hundreds of thousands to their grisly fate. But our collective guilt continued, and we averted our eyes while the Barzani and Talibani clans took turns carving up Kurdistan.

We also lionised the famed Kurdish militia, the Peshmerga, relying on them to fight the Baathists and more recently, IS.

Raunchy media reports about female peshmerga battalions diverted our attention from the Iraqi army’s vanishing act in the face of tiny numbers of IS at Mosul. So much for the millions of our tax pounds, dollars and euros used to ‘train’ them for years. And so much for the vast weapons depots of US-supplied arms and ammunition at Mosul which the Iraqi army left for IS, rather than destroying it as they retreated.

We also turned our backs while the Iranians in the south of Iraq, and the Turks in the north, sank their teeth into the nation’s stumbling post-war economy.

“Erdogan has bought our leaders,” claims a businessman from



Sulaimaniya. “Massoud Barzani [the president] signed a fifty-year oil deal with Turkey that’s a state secret. And Turkey has forty bases in Kurdistan, supposedly to hunt down the PKK [Turkey’s Kurdish militia].”

The businessman drove me through glorious mountain scenery to a valley where a few hundred PKK continue to hide. It had been attacked by the Turkish air force just the previous week, part of a regular pattern of aerial bombardment, hardly ever mentioned in the media.

“If the PKK leave, then IS will take their place,” the businessman says. “Anyway, the Turks own our economy, so the PKK and the bombing is the least of our problems. Our leaders get a kick back on all the Turkish goods coming into Kurdistan.”

The businessman explained that infrastructure and procurement contracts automatically go to the Barzani family who then subcontract to Turkish firms.

BURIED IN CONCRETE

“They do a rubbish job, these Turks, because they’re being given only a slice of the money allocated for the project. The rest is kept by the Barzanis. I despise Saddam, but only his family was corrupt. Everyone else followed the rules. If an engineer messed up on a project, or took a bribe, Saddam let it be known that the guy had been buried alive in concrete.” Consequently, Saddam-era roads and buildings “are still pretty good compared to the crap built now.”

The businessman took me to the hill-top memorial to the Barzani family; three enormous pavilions, with a restaurant large enough to feed more than a thousand people at a time. As we wandered around the manicured, emerald green lawns, we calculated how much precious water was being used on it, and how much electricity kept the buildings cool in summer and warm in winter. When we asked, we were told we were the only visitors to Kurdistan’s own little corner of North Korea that day.

About 150 kilometres to the west, toward the Tigris river and Syrian border, are the Plains of Nineveh. At Gaugamela, Alexander the Great defeated the much larger army of Darius III of Persia on its fertile fields in 331 BC; fragments of Assyrian antiquities still litter the ground. At Jirwan, we admired the world’s oldest aqueduct, covered in elaborate cuneiform inscriptions. However, no effort has been made

“Our team has trained Rwandan genocide orphans, Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone, and Joseph Kony’s former child soldiers. However, we have never encountered trauma on the scale gripping the Yezidi community”

to either protect these treasures or to create a tourist attraction. “Why would this government care?” asks my guide, a Kurdish history buff.

On the parched hills above the plain, the flames of oil wells flicker, and the tee-pee shaped temples of Iraq’s Yezidis dot the horizon. The Yezidis’ faith (in which a peacock is an angel) predates Judaism. Like the Jews, being a Yezidi is both a racial and religious identity. IS regarded the Yezidi as devil-worshippers, and deliberately targeted

them. When the jihadists attacked the town of Sinjar, thousands of Yezidis fled to Mount Sinjar where they were soon dying of starvation and exposure.

When Yezidi men were captured, they were slaughtered. However, IS forced girls to use their smart phones to contact their parents. Then their mothers and fathers watched while the girls were raped. As many as 6,000 girls were enslaved from 2014 until 2017, sold many times over, from one IS member to another, or openly in markets where some local Muslims took advantage of the chance to rape women who had once been their neighbours. When they became pregnant, some of the women’s babies were sent to IS families in Syria to be raised as future soldiers and suicide bombers. Other babies were cooked, and their mothers were forced to eat them. Please bear this in mind when European IS recruits who have returned home ask for our mercy.

My NGO’s team of psychotherapists went to the Yezidi’s massive internally displaced peoples’ camps, forty minutes’ drive from Duhok, to train survivors to support each other with trauma coping mechanisms.



Our team has trained Rwandan genocide orphans, Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone, and Joseph Kony's former child soldiers. However, we have never encountered trauma on the scale gripping the Yazidi community.

It is hard to assure the Yazidi they are now safe. Everyone I interviewed – Arabs, Kurds, Muslims, Christians – knows IS are laying low in their communities. Moreover, there is no justice: no one is being prosecuted for their genocidal crimes against the Yazidi. Nor do the Yazidi feel particularly welcome, despite having lived in the region for thousands of years. They doubt the sincerity of the Kurdish Regional Government's cheerful propaganda about diversity. And they have nowhere to which they can return. Their towns are still in ruins, and anyone who can get out of Iraq is doing so.

The Yazidis are acutely aware of another problem that the Western powers prefer not to confront: the border area between the Kurdish Regional Government and Iraq is still contested. Traveling around the Plain of Nineveh, we were stopped every five miles or so at either Peshmerga or Iraqi army checkpoints. In the Christian town of Telusqif, well inside Iraq, the Peshmerga were much in evidence. Neither side wishes to give up land, and the oil and gas beneath it. Hence Kirkuk and Mosul are still like the wild west. "The Iraqi government's rule does not extend beyond Baghdad's suburbs," I was told several times.

To add to the insecurity, the Barzani government held a non-binding independence referendum in September 2017, provoking a bust-up with Baghdad. When I asked about the vote, I was told: "The Germans think they're so clever because they know the result of their elections within a few hours. But that's nothing: we Kurds know our results three months before the polls open."

HORSE TRADING

After inconclusive national elections earlier this year, there has been much horse-trading, with various blocks seeking to co-opt either Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party or Talibani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. At the time of writing, the negotiations continue. However, until Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, (normalising the situation in the vital oil region of Kirkuk) is addressed, the future looks uncertain for Kurdistan.

And just to add to the excitement, the Turkish president is now in a position to hold Iraq to ransom: Erdogan's dam projects on the Tigris and Euphrates could allow him to deprive everyone downstream of their livelihood. Including the massive and



controversial Ilisu project currently near completion, Turkey has 22 dams on rivers that feed Iraq, the richest soil in the Middle East. Iran, which will also be affected, has condemned Turkey's "aggressive dam construction policies".

Reflecting on the potential water disputes, my Kurdish guide predicted disaster. But he also pointed out that Kurdistan could have been building its own dams in the meantime, collecting water while it is still flowing freely from Turkey. "But the government here doesn't care," he says with disgust.

What should we do? It would help if we kept holding the Iraqi and Kurdish authorities to their promises to deliver democracy, accountability, transparency and non-sectarian rule.

If you would like to help the Yazidis with practical support or in their quest for legal justice, please donate to the Free Yazidi Foundation www.freeyazidi.org

Rebecca Tinsley is director of Network for Africa

REVOLUTIONARY MOMENT

There is no guarantee that ‘Remain’ would win a second referendum and holding one could pave the way for revolution, says Andrew Duff

News that Gina Miller is to be given a key slot in the Brighton conference programme, coupled by the glaring lack of any motion on Brexit tabled by Vince Cable’s leadership, is cause for alarm.

Ms Miller is a lucky woman. But her assessment of the Brexit business is wrong.

She and other Remainers continue to campaign noisily for a second referendum. One may question the reasoning of the Lib Dem parliamentary party in both Commons and Lords who were guilty of actively promoting the ‘In/Out’ referendum in the first place. They abdicated parliament’s role, something Ms Miller was earlier rather against, by voting for Cameron’s EU Referendum Bill in 2015 without qualification.

Over the years, far too many Lib Dems have taken refuge in calling for referendums on Europe when they lost the capacity to argue for European unity within or without of the party.

But these same MPs and peers not only promoted the 2016 referendum but pledged to respect its outcome.

They now wish to renege on that pledge. They claim that a ‘people’s vote’ on the final deal once the consequences of Brexit are clear will settle Britain’s European question for good (a claim also made, of course, before the 2016 referendum).

Here they have another difficulty. The Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the future association agreement which Theresa May will table at Westminster for a ‘meaningful’ vote are not in truth the final deal.

They are an interim arrangement to see the country past Brexit day on 29 March and through a transition period until the final association treaty is concluded. That may be beyond the date of the next general election in May 2022.

As the Chequers agreement and White Paper evince, the details of the interim package on offer are highly complicated. Submitting the terms and conditions of the Article 50 negotiations to a popular vote would be fraudulent.

A referendum would be unlikely to elucidate the pros and cons of the Facilitated Customs Arrangement, the future of the City of London or the Irish backstop protocol. Rather, the hapless voter would face exactly the same dilemma as the lily-livered parliamentarians – namely, a crude and invidious choice between the government’s Brexit deal and the cliff edge.

Ms Miller and Co make two gigantic misjudgements. The first is that, in the event of a referendum rejecting the Barnier package, the EU would be prepared to open up a new negotiation under Article 50, or to suspend Article 50 until the Brits sort themselves out.

Having offered Cameron one new settlement for

Britain in 2016 and May another in 2018, toleration of the British will be at an end. There will be no third negotiation. So what would be the referendum question? And on which side would Lib Dems be campaigning?

The second big mistake is to assume that the Remainers would ‘win’ a second referendum no matter the question. Opinion polls suggest that the outcome would be just as close as the first: certainly the assumption that Remain would win handsomely and settle the business of Britain’s place in Europe is an arrogant one, not supported by the facts.

I fear that the argument on the streets would be about nationalism, xenophobia and democratic betrayal. The pound would tank. The fragile UK constitution would be put under further immense strain, with the certainty that parliament at Westminster would again emerge emasculated and its political parties split asunder. The nation would end up even more divided in terms of social class, generation and province. A tight result either way could even pitch the country into a revolutionary situation.

The good news for the Brighton conference is that there is now no time in any event to organise a referendum before 29 March. The EU leaders are readying themselves to confirm that they will not postpone Brexit merely to let the Brits indulge in another crazy referendum.

Liberal Democrats and Labour should accept the inevitable and either support or abstain on May’s package deal, taking what pleasure they can from the division of the Tory party.

Once Brexit is done, serious negotiations for the association agreement will get under way. Then a new political party in Britain could organise itself to fight at the election in 2022 on the twin platform of Proportional Representation for the House of Commons and re-accession to the European Union. A modern European party for a modern European country, at last.

Andrew Duff is a former MEP and president of Eastern Region Liberal Democrats

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PUBLIC SWINGS BEHIND ‘REMAIN’

Polling evidence shows increasing opposition to the damaging option of Brexit, all the more reason to press for a referendum on the terms, says Naomi Smith

As we approached the 2015 general election, my fears of a Liberal Democrat wipe out grew.

I was then chair of the Social Liberal Forum, and along with many good colleagues, had been urging the party leadership during Coalition to put much more policy and principled distance between us and the Conservatives.

Journalists would regularly call me for intelligence about what Nick Clegg might make a red line in any new coalition, and my stock answer was generally that the chance of us returning sufficient MPs to be king maker, were zero to none. But one question that kept cropping up concerned me – and that was why Nick Clegg wasn't ruling out supporting a referendum on Europe?

As early as February 2008, Clegg was taking a lead in normalising the prospect of an in-out referendum on Europe. Up to that point, the party's approach had been to incrementally gain popular support for further European integration.

UNNECESSARILY RECKLESS

The new approach was to bet the whole farm, which seemed unnecessarily reckless. That year, when the Conservatives threatened to call for a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, Clegg said the Lib Dems would instead seek to amend the European Union Amendment Bill to include a referendum on whether Britain should stay in the EU at all. He said at the time, "I am inviting the Labour and Conservative parties to join with me in calling for the referendum that will settle Britain's European future, once and for all: an in-out referendum."

We can only assume he was sufficiently confident that such a referendum would be easily won, or lacking in an understanding of the electorate's scepticism of Europe, or both. Election night 2015 came and went, with results far worse than even I had feared. A few months later, Cameron inevitably called the referendum on Britain's membership of the EU. I'm very much a Charles Kennedy liberal, joining the party while he was leader and I was a first year university student. His internationalism was inspiring and in his speech to the party conference in 2013, he reminded us that as liberals, Europe is part of our DNA, and that for too long when campaigning we translated that as "Do Not Acknowledge Europe" because it didn't help us win votes.

He spoke of his own regret at having all too often given in to that concern. He felt guilty that more politicians in recent years hadn't made a positive case for Europe. I agreed, and was deeply concerned that any referendum on Europe would be lost.

At that time I had a good permanent job in management accountancy. Politics had always been a voluntary extra curricular pastime. But now a referendum on EU membership had been called, the stakes were too high. I had to try and help – I didn't want to wake up the day after the vote and not be able to say that I had done everything I possibly could to keep us in Europe.

So I walked away from my secure job, to take up a six month contract helping to campaign for Remain. I am now at Best for Britain, the only Remain organisation that has always had a sole mission to stop Brexit.

Last month, Best for Britain and Hope Not Hate released seat by seat analysis based on a Multi Level Regression Post Stratification model (MRP) that shows the country is moving ever closer to wanting to stay in the EU. MRP is the only model that accurately predicted the outcome of the 2017 snap general election. It showed 341 (54%) constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales now have a majority in favour of Remain, up from 229 (36%). The more voters learn about what Brexit actually means, the more they support staying in the EU with our current deal.

The analysis was based on YouGov polling of a total of 15,000 people across June and July, before and after the Chequers deal.

MRP is a statistical technique that delivers more accurate and granular estimates of public opinion than traditional methods at market research agencies. It does this by combining raw polling data with more information, in this case detailed constituency-level population information from the census and British Election Study.

The more information the more accurate your estimates, as you can weight your poll by more variables - for example ethnicity - that are more relevant such as the 2015 general election vote choice. The MRP work done before the 2017 election correctly predicted the outcome of the hung Parliament, with traditional polling companies famously coming up short again, despite having misread the 2016 vote in the UK and Trump's victory in the US.

OPINION SHIFTED

Well over half of constituencies are now remain. Modelling of the 632 seats in England, Scotland and Wales showed that in 2016, 229 were Remain and 403 were Leave seats. Our analysis shows that public opinion in 112 seats has shifted.

When looking at the Best for Britain data on the 12 held Lib Dem seats, all of them have had swings away from Leave. Almost all our held seats favours Remain, and even Eastbourne has seen a 6.3 point swing away

from Leave making it now 48.6% in favour of Remain. The biggest swings are in Norman Lamb's seat of North Norfolk, and in Tom Brake's Carshalton and Wallington constituency: both have moved almost eight points in favour of Remain, and Brake's seat has switched from being a majority Leave seat in 2016 to now being 51.3% in favour of Remain.

Jo Swinson's seat of Dunbartonshire East is the 17th most pro Remain seat in the country now, at 76.8% in favour. In our top 10 target seats that span the length and breadth of the UK, there is a similar picture. All have shifted in favour of Remain with Andrew George's former seat of St Ives having switched from Leave to Remain. For the good of the country and the party, Lib Dem MPs must do what Charles Kennedy wished he had done more often – to make the positive case for our role within the EU.

While Vince Cable, Layla Moran and Tom Brake have been vocal anti-Brexit champions, some of our

“Some of our MPs have been too quiet. This data shows they have nothing to lose and everything to gain from being unashamedly pro-European”

MPs have been too quiet. This data shows they have nothing to lose and everything to gain from being unashamedly pro-European.

Before the Withdrawal Agreement Implementation Bill is voted on in the Commons this autumn, Liberal Democrat MPs must find their voice, back a people's vote

with the option to Remain, and make the positive case for Britain's place in the EU.

Let us not have the same regrets that Charles Kennedy did. I'm refusing to give up, and so should they. MPs must be encouraged to vote down the government's deal in the autumn, and then vote for a people's vote with an option to remain. With just two more big heaves we can stop Brexit.

Naomi Smith is a co-host of the award nominated Remainiacs podcast and chief operating officer at Best for Britain.

For free membership see: www.bestforbritain.org/join

Constituency	Would vote Remain 2018	Would vote Leave 2018	Voted Remain 2016	Voted Leave 2016	Point Change between 2016 & 2018 in favour of Remain	Party Held By	Majority	Swing Vulnerability/ Needed
Held Seats								
Orkney & Shetland	64.7%	35.3%	59.7%	40.3%	5.0	Lib Dem	4,563	-9.80%
Twickenham	69.2%	30.8%	66.3%	33.7%	2.9	Lib Dem	9,762	-7.36%
Bath	71.2%	28.8%	68.3%	31.7%	2.8	Lib Dem	5,694	-5.74%
Dunbartonshire East	76.8%	23.2%	73.3%	26.7%	3.5	Lib Dem	5,339	-5.15%
Norfolk North	49.4%	50.6%	41.7%	58.3%	7.6	Lib Dem	3,512	-3.36%
Kingston & Surbiton	64.0%	36.0%	58.4%	41.6%	5.6	Lib Dem	4,124	-3.32%
Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross	56.8%	43.2%	50.6%	49.4%	6.3	Lib Dem	2,044	-3.31%
Edinburgh West	72.8%	27.2%	71.2%	28.8%	1.6	Lib Dem	2,988	-2.83%
Eastbourne	48.6%	51.4%	42.4%	57.6%	6.3	Lib Dem	1,609	-1.40%
Carshalton & Wallington	51.3%	48.7%	43.7%	56.3%	7.6	Lib Dem	1,369	-1.35%
Westmorland & Lonsdale	55.6%	44.4%	52.5%	47.5%	3.0	Lib Dem	777	-0.75%
Oxford West & Abingdon	65.8%	34.2%	61.8%	38.2%	3.9	Lib Dem	816	-0.68%
Top Ten Targets								
Fife North East	65.3%	34.7%	61.9%	38.1%	3.4	SNP	-2	0.00%
Richmond Park	74.0%	26.0%	72.3%	27.7%	1.7	Con	-45	0.04%
Ceredigion	57.7%	42.3%	54.6%	45.4%	3.0	Plaid Cymru	-104	0.13%
St Ives	51.5%	48.5%	44.9%	55.1%	6.6	Con	-312	0.30%
Sheffield Hallam	68.3%	31.7%	64.1%	35.9%	4.2	Lab	-2,125	1.86%
Cheltenham	62.2%	37.8%	57.2%	42.8%	5.0	Con	-2,569	2.25%
Devon North	47.3%	52.7%	43.0%	57.0%	4.3	Con	-4,332	3.89%
Cheadle	60.3%	39.7%	57.3%	42.7%	2.9	Con	-4,507	4.13%
Leeds North West	68.4%	31.6%	64.6%	35.4%	3.8	Lab	-4,224	4.56%
Lewes	53.8%	46.2%	53.0%	47.0%	0.8	Con	-5,508	5.08%

BREXIT'S THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

If our democracy is to be restored to full health, then populist assumptions about Brexit must be challenged, says Paul Hindley

This year marks the centenary of when most women and working class men received the right to vote under David Lloyd George's government in 1918. It is 100 years since Britain became a liberal democracy. For the first time in British history, the vast majority of adult citizens had a say over who governed them. The final inequalities between the voting rights of men and women were swept away 10 years later.

2018 therefore marks two important landmarks in British political history. While the roots of our democracy may stretch back two or more centuries; mass popular democracy is a relatively recent occurrence in the history of a country that stretches back millennia.

Some would rightly argue that even in 2018, Britain is not a complete democracy. The House of Lords has not seen a real election in 700 years; while the voting system in the House of Commons isn't fit for the 20th century, let alone the 21st.

UNDERMINING DEMOCRACY

A century on from the birth of modern British liberal democracy, it is being tested like never before due to Brexit. The Referendum in June 2016 resulted in a narrow majority of people voting to leave the European Union. Brexit supporters see the Leave vote as being a great triumph of democracy, their opportunity to 'take back control'. However far from advancing British democracy and British sovereignty, in reality Brexit is undermining both.

Firstly, let's examine the Eurosceptic claim that the EU is "undemocratic". Far from being an authoritarian, anti-democratic super-state, the EU is one of the most democratic international organisations in the world.

Every European citizen has the ability to vote in elections to the European Parliament every five years. Almost 400m people are entitled to vote in these elections. This is the second biggest electorate on the planet, after India. Every vote cast in European Parliament elections uses proportional representation (either a party list system or STV).

The European Council is made up of the leaders of each member state, who each have their own domestic democratic mandate. The Council of Ministers (also called the Council of the European Union) comprises ministers from the democratically elected governments of each member state across a range of policy areas.

Even the European Commission, which has been the focal point of hatred from Eurosceptics for many decades, is not without democratic accountability. The European Parliament must approve the appointment of the commissioners and has the power to dismiss the entire commission if it wishes to. In comparison,

the British Parliament does not have the power to approve the appointment of the members of the prime minister's cabinet.

Sovereignty was a major issue in the Brexit Referendum campaign. However yet again Brexiteers are nothing if not inconsistent.

They seem to have no problem with Britain 'giving up' some of its sovereignty to the United Nations, NATO, the OECD, the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organisation. The only major difference between these examples of Britain pooling its sovereignty and the EU, is that the EU has an aspect of real democratic accountability in the form of European Elections. In other words, by leaving the EU, the democratic sovereignty that the British people have over globalisation will be reduced. No one has ever been given a vote over who should represent Britain in the UN General Assembly or who should sit on the board of the IMF.

Beyond general points about democratic sovereignty, Brexiteers seem to fail to understand the nature of sovereignty in the 21st century. Climate change, the Internet, global transnational corporations, unstable financial markets, global tax evasion, big data companies and hostile cyber-attacks are severely undermining the sovereignty of all nation states.

The EU is one of the only bodies that can effectively address these problems. Twenty eight nations pooling their sovereignty can achieve much more on the global stage than one nation ever could by itself. Far from undermining national sovereignty, the EU enhances and amplifies sovereignty at the international level.

The EU has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle global climate change, not least with the Paris Agreement signed in 2016. The EU has been an essential guardian of the rights of tens of millions of workers across an entire continent. In an age where economic globalisation is gradually chipping away at workers' rights and social rights, the EU has become an international defender of them. Even the big data internet giants are not beyond the reach of the EU. In August 2016, Apple was ordered by the EU to pay €13bn worth of back taxes. In June 2017, Google was fined more than €2bn by the EU for abusing its search engine market dominance.

When it comes to the global issues facing the 21st century, the EU is an essential vehicle for dealing with them. While the notion of 'Global Britain' may be a fantasy, the EU has the economic and diplomatic weight of a superpower, being comparable to that of America. Britain's diplomatic and economic clout, along with its international sovereignty have been greatly enhanced through its membership of the EU. Brexit therefore represents an undermining of British democracy and sovereignty on the international stage.

The biggest threat to liberal democracy that has arisen with Brexit is the divisive populist narrative that has grown alongside it. Populists argue that the will of the majority is sacrosanct and cannot be disputed. They confuse democracy for majoritarianism.

Liberals since the days of John Stuart Mill have warned against the 'tyranny of the majority'. Any society that only listens to majority points of view and refuses to listen to alternative minority points of view ceases to be a democracy.

Democracy is about much more than just voting. It is about scrutinising those in power, offering alternatives, freely campaigning for those alternatives and active participation.

Could you imagine how absurd it would be if Labour won an election and then the Conservative opposition converted to socialism en masse? Equally, could you imagine how absurd it would be if Remain had won the Referendum and Nigel Farage and Ukip suddenly became pro-Europeans in order to defend 'the will of the people'. Brexiters would never surrender their political ambitions so easily, so why should Remainers?

Populism is the shadow of tyranny. The notion that leading Remainers (and even impartial judges) could be seen to be "enemies of the people" is one that echoes the rhetoric of the 1930s.

From Venezuela to Turkey, populism is becoming increasingly authoritarian. Populism if left unchecked will always endanger liberal values. Liberalism seeks to uphold the rights, liberties and welfare of every individual within a society, not just those of the majority group or those who win a majority of the votes. Blind adherence to populist majoritarianism naturally undermines the very foundation on which any liberal democratic society is built.

No one currently knows what the final Brexit deal will look like. People had even less of an idea when they came to vote on Brexit in 2016. This is why a 'People's Vote' on the final Brexit deal is so essential. It would give democratic legitimacy to an outcome that will impact Britain for generations to come. In full possession of the facts, the people may decide that it is in their best interests to stay inside the EU.

So much has happened since 2016 that the people should be entitled to rubber-stamp the final Brexit deal or to choose to remain in the EU after all. The fact that Vote Leave cheated by breaking the official spending limit further undermines the democratic mandate on which Brexit rests and perhaps the very social contract on which British democracy rests. This reason alone justifies the need for a People's Vote.

HATE MONGERS

Brexit has given political succour to the hate mongers of the world from Donald Trump to Steve Bannon to Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini. The world since 2016 has become crueller, more nationalistic and more illiberal; this is the worst time for Britain to be leaving the EU. Britain twice in the last century fought to defend liberty and democracy in Europe. We have

"The biggest threat to liberal democracy that has arisen with Brexit is the divisive populist narrative that has grown alongside it"

a moral obligation to ensure that the flame of liberal democracy continues to burn on a continent where it has been extinguished on several occasions in the past by the rise of nationalism.

While the future of European democracy currently appears to be secure, the future of liberal democracy

is not. Hungary's populist demagogue, Viktor Orbán delights in his opposition to liberal democracy favouring instead what he calls "illiberal democracy" and all the xenophobia that comes along with it. If democracy loses its liberal component and is allowed to be perverted by populists and nationalists, then the liberal values of liberty, tolerance and minority rights are likely to be curtailed as well.

As the culture war becomes a global phenomenon, Britain's future hangs in the balance. The forces that Brexit is enabling do not have Britain's national interests at heart. They are nationalistic, protectionist, insular and hateful. There is no future for a Britain that isn't an open, tolerant, internationalist and liberal democracy.

Populist nationalists from Washington to Moscow want to undermine the western liberal democratic order that has sustained peace across most of Europe for seven decades. Bannon and his fellow travellers are trying to establish a new international consensus based on populist nationalism. Their common enemy is the European Union.

The EU offers a vision of a united, free and equal world that flies in the face of the right wing nationalists who have taken power in America, Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Turkey and Russia. When dark clouds are starting to gather over the continent again, will Britain side with its closest allies and remain committed to the project of a peaceful and united Europe or will we once again appease the rise of hate?

Our liberal democracy is coming under strain like never before in its 100 year history. The forces unleashed by Brexit threaten the nature of our democracy and our international sovereignty. Brexit fundamentalists are eroding the values of liberal democracy through populist majoritarianism and by allying with illiberal right wing nationalists abroad. All the while, Britain's ability to be an effective global actor is being severely hindered.

If our democracy is to be restored to full health, then populist assumptions about Brexit need to be challenged and the people need to be given the final say on the Brexit deal. Progressives should also re-double their efforts to deliver social justice and economic security, especially to those struggling communities that voted for Brexit.

Hope is the antidote to nationalist fear. In these dark times, Britain should seek to lead Europe, not leave it, the nature of democracy at home and abroad may depend upon it.

NOT QUITE SO BOTTOM UP IN FRANCE

France's LREM is a political party organised on radically different lines to any in the UK. As the Liberal Democrats look at different models, what are the lessons here?

Marianne Magnin explains how it works

Emmanuel Macron, the eighth President of the Fifth Republic of France, might appear young by his predecessors' standards, having just reached 40 with only six years in politics.

His meteoric ascent is only rivalled by his own electoral machine. Launched on 6 April 2016 in Macron's native town of Amiens, En Marche ! (EM!) since renamed La République En Marche (LaREM / LREM / LRM / REM) - is still a toddler, but a toddler with superpowers.

Macron has gained the reputation of doing things his very own way. It is not lost that EM! bears the same initials as Emmanuel Macron.

Though he briefly was a member of the Socialist Party between 2006-09, Macron has never believed in traditional political parties. The binary landscape that had been prevailing for decades between the two presidential parties (Liberator 384) would soon be reduced to shreds.

EM! emerged as a nationwide initiative to gather the views of thousands of citizens through door-to-door surveys conducted by 4,000 volunteers thereby providing not only the content for profiling a programme closer to the French electorate but also the ground for future campaigns.

POLITICALLY DISENFRANCHISED

Macron's timing and engagement methodology were spot on to mobilise France's politically disenfranchised: a direct conversation between a leader and citizens, whose resentment towards elites and establishment could be channelled towards constructive action rather than boycotting democratic mechanisms.

LaREM's charter of values remains faithful to its origins: its very first sentence states that the movement's ambition is to bring French people back at the centre of the political life. The charter is also ingrained with the notions of objectivity and change: people brought together by the shared will to face reality to better transform it. That call to action is embedded in the movement's name itself: a translation for En Marche is On the Move.

Today LaREM claims more than 400,000 subscribers. It remains however difficult to assess which portion is made up of members in the sense of a political party as it is free to join.

Some subscribers especially at the inception of the movement and in the heat of 2017 campaign, would have entered their details for the sake of receiving the newsletter and monitoring other regular

communications sent by this political UFO.

In the name of Macron's claim of being neither from the left nor the right but beyond traditional political delineations, it is also compatible to subscribe to LaREM whilst being a member from another party.

After the presidential and legislative elections wrapped up in June 2017, EM! was asked by the now President of France to mutate from an association to a political party.

Following a short consultation process, which some argued was too short and not that democratic, En Marche! was renamed La République En Marche in August 2017, registered as a political party under the French electoral law and given a charter of values and full statutes.

The attention to terminology remains insofar as LaREM is careful not to call itself a party but a movement, and for its participants to be named adherents rather than members.

Beyond cosmetics, what lies beneath? The 2017 statutes define the object of LaREM as a republican, progressive, lay European political movement whose aim is to provide a new thinking and action framework within the realm of French political life.

Put into action, it for instance looks like this:

- * Gender equality is reflected in the almost equal (53/47) split between male and female LaREM MPs.
- * Macron's positions on Europe are materially affirmed and symbolically staged both nationally and amongst EU28.
- * The transition towards a more sustainable and solidarity-led society saw the ministerial appointment of one of the most vocal French environmental activists, Nicolas Hulot, who had refused a governmental position under the previous three presidents
- * Dialogue across a wide net of representatives was the corner stone of the reform to the much needed labour legislation

The movement is very much seen as a vehicle for explaining and reporting on the governmental action, with regular communications towards its large database. This role somehow compensates for the rarefied public engagements scheduled by Macron, whose wish is to restore the presidential function in opposition to Sarkozy's omnipresent presidency and Hollande's banal presidency.

Local committees in that context represent the

foundation of the party. Set up geographically on the initiative of Adherents or Executive Officers, they offer a space for expression and action at the discretion of each adherent. Each committee is free to organise themselves as they wish in compliance with LaREM status. Experimentation is promoted. As of July 2018 there are 3,842 committees spread across the world, which have organised more than 100,000 events.

Territorial Referents are the link between Local Committees and national bodies. They are nominated by the Executive Committee for two years, and cannot fulfil a parliamentary mandate at the same time or stand more than twice in a same territory. They feedback local issues upwards, coordinate local committees, steer political activities, monitor adherence to the charter of values and statutes and organise electoral campaigns. Like other political roles in the party, they cannot be paid.

All Adherents together form the Convention. Beyond discussing the general direction of the party, each Adherent represents one ballot when it comes to approving statutes and to dissolving the party.

The Convention is held on the request of the Executive Committee at least once every three years, or if at least two third of Adherents call for it.

For any direct consultation with the Adherents, a question to be raised to the Executive Committee requires at least 20% of the Adherents. Alternatively the Executive Committee can consult all Adherents electronically.

The Executive Committee sets the agenda of the Convention. The Council is the internal parliament, assembling MPs, territorial representatives (including territorial referents), 25% of drawn Adherents and up to 15 members assigned by the Executive Committee. The mandate lasts three years and cannot be re-conducted.

This assembly decides on the party direction, elects and monitors the Executive Committee as well as Executive Officers.

The Executive Committee is renewed every three years. It is made up of ca 30 members, 20 being elected by the Council, 10 suggested by the Executive Officer, in addition to the general delegates themselves and the national treasurer.

None of them is paid and none can sit more than three mandates. The committee meets on the invitation of the Executive Officer, Executive Committee or of at least two-thirds of the Council. It monitors the orientations set by the Convention and the Council, nominates members of the Ethics Committee, rules pre-electoral activities, appoints Territorial Referents, select candidates, decides on budget considerations. It meets at least twelve times a year.

The Council can elect up to three Executive Officers, whose mandate is limited to two terms of three years. They cannot at the same time be either president or

“LaREM emerged out of the vision of a leader, who in the early stages of his presidential journey firmly set on his own terms”

prime minister.

The current and sole general delegate is Christophe Castaner, a faithful lieutenant to Macron during the presidential campaign, who joined Édouard Philippe’s government as Secretary of State for Parliamentary Relations and as one of its spokespeople. Castaner previously stood as a

Socialist Party MP. He effectively heads LaREM party.

The National Treasurer, the Territorial Assembly, the Ethics Committee and the Conflicts Commission further support the party.

LaREM emerged out of the vision of a leader, who in the early stages of his presidential journey firmly set on his own terms the directional, semantic and organisational dimensions of the movement.

Some argue that this DNA informs the current party settings, with a democratic deficit masquerading as a participatory political model. Others analyse that DNA as a necessity motivated by the urgency to revolutionise France political system on the verge of collapse, confronted by the vacuity of the two domineering but out of touch parties (Parti Socialiste, Les Républicains) and the aggressive nature of extremist parties (Front National, Les Insoumis).

IRON FIST

Time proved Macron’s iron fist right in his challenge to the political status quo and conquest of power.

While Macron pushes ahead with his flotilla of reforms, winds are no longer that favourable. As of 22 August, only 14% of surveyed people had a satisfactory opinion of the President’s actions versus 54% who expressed a negative view, despite the euphoria of France’s football team’s new trophy. One-third did think that it was still too early to make a judgment. However 80% found Macron authoritarian and only 28% believed that he could bring French people together¹.

Time will tell if Macron’s movement continues to meet the scrutiny of French citizens in their aspirations to be at the centre of the political debate and decision making.

The next French electoral test will be 2019 European elections, a central theme to LaREM set of values.

Marianne Magnin was 2017 Mouvement Démocrate parliamentary candidate for the Northern Europe constituency. She is a member of MoDem Federal Executive Committee Abroad and of Westminster & City of London Liberal Democrats

POLARISED BRITAIN IN A POLARISED WORLD

It's time the UK lost its great power delusions and adapted to an international role that better fits it, says Trevor Smith

The world is going tribal as nation states turn in on themselves. Simultaneously, they seek to present stronger versions of their image abroad while, paradoxically, often experiencing intense intra-tribal rivalries at home. Things are changing and too often for the worse.

Until a few years ago, optimists could point to the social democracies of Scandinavia and Holland as examples of how the future would likely pan out. Now these exemplars have also fallen prey to the atavistic forces that are ubiquitously at work and gaining in strength.

Globalisation, especially in the rapidity of universal communications via the blogosphere, continues to shape the destiny of the world, sometimes laudably but too often undesirably, and especially in ways which threaten democracy and the maintenance of peace.

The UK has not escaped these developments. In *Liberator* 391 I traced the erosion of representative parliamentary democracy over the past half century and more.

Now, I want to move away from that essentially domestic introspection to examine how we see our place in the global firmament and what steps could be taken to improve it for the better from a Liberal point of view.

NOSTALGIC PRISM

The tribalisation within Britain is largely inter-generational. The older section of the population, and particularly those of pensionable age and above, tend to see the world and the UK's position in it through a very nostalgic prism. This is a very mid-1950s perspective when the memories of an extensive British Empire – indicated by the world map coloured largely in pink – were still vivid and imperial residues still around.

It's the Mrs Dale's Diary view of overseas affairs so to speak (the Diary was a regular weekday BBC radio programme): complacent, bourgeois, suburban, narrow and self-satisfied in every way.

The feeling was immensely strong and hardly dented by the national humiliation brought on by the misguided Anglo-French invasion of Suez in 1956. This paradigmatic viewpoint carried on almost completely undisturbed and Britain remained a major world military power, or so it was fondly imagined, to intervene in affairs or not as it wished. T

he Vietnam War, so wisely avoided by Harold Wilson despite enormous US pressure to join in, enhanced this attitude; we could choose when to intervene. It remains a strong force today. Indeed, the UK and many NATO allies are seriously considering increasing defence spending at Donald Trump's urging because of growing Russian and Chinese adventurism.

If Brexit eventuates these calls will likely grow stronger as Britain isolates itself more and more. The MoD, not unexpectedly, vociferously agitates for more defence spending.

But, thankfully, this viewpoint is no longer as powerful as once it was and younger generations are much more reserved and sceptical about Britain's role. Perhaps most poignant is the fact that the army cannot recruit its full (though historically less) complement despite greater attempts - including the absurd contracting-out to privatised recruiters. The case for Trident is also now much less popular. Support for keeping the missiles is growing considerably weaker and opposition to them has attracted the influential support of Field Marshall Lord Bramall – in my experience, the one very powerful intellect among the military 'top brass'.

Then there is the other strong contributory factor in the continuing policy failures of the MoD. Successive medium-term reviews have proven short-lived and have had to be swiftly abandoned. There also remains the perennial problems associated with the MoD's deficient procurement procedures: cost over-runs are routine, time schedules cannot be adhered to, the wrong equipment is often selected, enormous sums have been paid to an endless trail of management consultants and private contractors to improve standards, but all to little or no avail.

Added to all this are the recent widespread revelations about Britain's complicity in the rendition and torture, by the US and others, of Iraqi and other Middle Eastern prisoners following the ludicrous invasion of Iraq by George W Bush which, of course, was aided and abetted by Tony Blair and his foreign secretary, Jack Straw.

These came soon after the findings of the lengthy Saville Inquiry that detailed the extensive wrongdoings of the army in the Bloody Sunday uprising of January 1972 in Derry. This inquiry lasted twelve years (1998-2010) and cost officially £195m though other estimates put the total nearer £400m. Indeed, the Iraq and Derry events are but all-of-a-piece with other revelations of British forces' atrocities.

These occurred in the late 1940s Malayan Emergency, which was followed by the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya during the 1950s and then by the struggles against EOKA in Cyprus in the 1960s. War Office and MoD records were shredded to cover-up what happened over these three post-war decades, which in itself speaks volumes. Saville had to be set-up in all its fullness because previous inquiries, most notably and notoriously that of the previous Lord Chief Justice Widgery, were total whitewashes.

Against what received public opinion hoped was the case, it is clear that British troops have behaved no

differently from other invaders and occupying armies in all theatres including, most unfortunately, UN Peace Keepers.

The devolution of government powers to Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh, together with growing regional sentiments in England, has had a considerable effect in fostering a multitude of tribalisms within the UK. These, in turn, have resonance both within the UK and abroad as the apparent disunity is perceived. It should not be allowed to continue and urgently needs attention though there is little evidence it is likely to be addressed any time soon.

One of the complications is that political leaders of the stature required appear to be completely absent. The situation may have to deteriorate further for them to appear but this, of course, carries the very severe risk of attracting dictatorial figures which is not what is needed. The UK stands perilously close to where it was being positioned in the 1930s when a National Government was formed under Ramsay Macdonald to tackle the depression and counter the Fascist activities of Oswald Moseley and his ilk.

Essential to bringing about a Britain more confident with itself, both domestically and abroad, is the cultivation of a more modest appreciation of its international position.

We should cease to aspire to maintain an 'independent' nuclear arms capacity which is far too costly and largely irrelevant. The defence forces now need to be re-organised to cope with the new features of warfare, including the extensive use of drones and computerised incursions into national security.

Similarly, overseas dependencies should cease to cause gratuitous offence. The status of the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar, for example, should be re-negotiated with Argentina and Spain respectively along the lines of what happened with Hong Kong: the UK should be allowed 100 year leases which on expiration would revert these two territories to their more natural homelands. Not having to be on stand-by to defend the Falklands would permit huge savings.

Closer to home is the enduring problem of the island of Ireland north and south which has again been thrust to the fore with Brexit. Ulster's economic relationships with GB, the Republic, the EU and North America are very complex but vital to its prosperity. Of much greater salience is the bald fact that the political situation is becoming unsustainable. The north voted in the referendum to Remain in the EU, though the largest party, the DUP, wants to Leave. As Unionism morphed into Paisleyism, its DUP mouthpiece became totally atavistic including opposing abortion and gay marriage. Stormont, the NI regional assembly, remains suspended leaving the DUP's only effective political function to shore-up the minority government of Theresa May. The overall political impasse is temporary as will be that which will succeed it and so it will go on.

In the light of this prospect Northern Ireland must be rendered a more viable polity than it is now. A better future might lie in a condominium-style arrangement that would allow for a largely independent NI guaranteed and accountable to both London and Dublin and thus better equipped to deal with its own affairs.

The only other likely option is a lengthy, very disorderly, bloody and strife-prone struggle leading

to all-Ireland unification – a process all but the most extreme Republicans would not want.

The position of the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council remains a problem that cannot be dealt with separately by the UK in isolation but has to await a proper reform of the UN constitution which, of course, may never happen.

INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

A well reconstituted EU would have made it easier for France and the UK to yield up their seats to allow for formal EU representation but that is now a near-improbability. Apart from institutional inertia, there is no obvious logical reason for the UK occupying a permanent seat; indeed, should permanent seats be retained at all? But that's a topic for another time.

As I also argued in *Liberator* 391, the cartel-ridden character of the monopoly capitalism bequeathed by Thatcherism needs drastically to be reformed. When and where appropriate public ownership should be considered as an option, but more importantly the competitive forces of the free market should be given their head to help improve Britain's economic performance – and particularly its productivity.

By the same token, corporate governance across the board must be made to place ethical considerations way above the greedy impulses that have been allowed to predominate among senior executives. Recourse to tax havens, directors' remuneration too often unrelated to actual performance, lax, lazy and ineffectual auditing are all very plain to see. Moreover, the endemic weakness of regulatory agencies, coupled with the virtual absence of any criminal prosecutions of senior directors in the financial sector – especially bankers – for blatant malfeasance are glaring faults in a situation that has been allowed to get totally out of hand.

A much-reformed UK would discover for itself a new and significant world role. To achieve this, the UK doesn't need a Centre Party, as some are calling for. A Centre Party's Sat-Nav would be determined by the extremes of other parties heaving up a botched average of policies, being neither one thing nor another. What is needed is the creation of a Progressive Party to advocate the sort of programmes I have been outlining.

A much-reformed UK would discover for itself a new, modest but significant world role. Exciting though this is to conjure, the likelihood of all or any of it happening is very low. The configuration and parlous state of our erstwhile governing institutions and the latent inertia of our native culture conspire to make for prolonged further drift.

Trevor Smith is a Lib Dem life peer. His memoirs *Workhouse to Westminster* are reviewed in this issue by Michael Meadowcroft

MALAYSIA TURNS A CORNER

One party rule ended in Malaysia this year with an opposition rout of the former ruling party. Marisa Regina Fernando explains what happened

May 9 will never be the same again for Malaysians. On May 9, 2018, Malaysians voted in the country's its fourteenth general election. All Malaysians had was hope, and hope turned out to be all that was needed. Hope for a change, hope for a better future for our children and hope for a better future for our beloved nation.

In the days leading to the election, many people attended rallies including many young voters and mothers. As someone quite aptly said, when mothers start going to rallies, you know that something is very wrong. Candidates representing Pakatan Harapan proved to be more competent, courageous, and championed the people's rights versus the typical Barisan Nasional candidates whom many Malaysians were getting tired of.

The main parties that contested in the elections were the then ruling coalition party, Barisan Nasional (UMNO-MCA-MIC), Parti Se-Islam Malaysia (PAS) and Pakatan Harapan.

NEW COALITION

This is a new coalition between the opposition parties, Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) led by Dato Seri Dr. Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, wife of former deputy prime minister Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Pribumi a new party formed by Malaysia's former prime minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Democratic Action Party (DAP).

Mahathir, who was Malaysia's longest serving prime minister, had defected from UMNO under the Barisan Nasional. In a bid to save Malaysia. Anwar the de-facto opposition leader had agreed to reconcile with Mahathir in a strategy to win the election with Mahathir leading the opposition coalition.

What began with mere hope had caused the mighty Barisan Nasional to fall in a democratic and most peaceful way. The election was indeed Malaysia's most significant since achieving independence. It was an outstanding and historic election victory ending more than 60 years of rule by the Barisan Nasional party. This was Malaysia's first transition of power since



gaining independence from the British in 1957.

Mahathir, who led the opposition party, had successfully defeated his one-time protégé, the incumbent, Datuk Seri Najib Razak whom he himself had put into

power in 2009 and it was during his rule that Malaysia was riddled by various allegations of cronyism, corruption, abuse of power and the One Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal.

As the votes were being counted and tallied, Malaysians had begun rejoicing as more and more seats were being won by Pakatan Harapan. Everyone was closely monitoring the results. Mahathir had declared victory before the official results were announced once Pakatan Harapan had surpassed the 112 threshold needed to form the next government. The ruling party, Barisan Nasional managed 79 seats and Pakatan Harapan 122.

As opposition party flags danced in the air, people of all ages and races from across the country had started to gather to celebrate the results. People were ecstatic, there were loud cheers and jubilant tears of happiness and Malaysians proudly sang our national anthem. Our faith in the system had finally been restored. The people's voices had finally been heard!

The result of this election was due to the strength of peoples' power. Everyone had gone to the ballot boxes to make a change. Malaysians were united and had come together to save their nation in the most peaceful and democratic manner. It was euphoric and amazing to witness the might of Malaysians and to be a part of history.

The political change has given Malaysians a voice. On 10 May Mahathir was sworn in as the seventh prime minister. The new government, led for the second time by 92-year-old Mahathir and his new Cabinet are striving to keep their promises. The previous government is not sparing them. They are scrutinising every act and decision and waiting for mistakes to be made despite not performing satisfactorily when they were in power.

Nevertheless, Malaysians are happy and are giving the new government the chance to implement its election manifestos. Already we have seen the appointment of able ministers in the new government's pledge to serve the people well.

A lot has changed in the Malaysian political scenario in the first 100 days. The appointment of the first female deputy prime minister, Dato' Seri Dr. Wan Azizah is ground-breaking. She had proven her strength and capabilities in leading the opposition party while Anwar was incarcerated. She had laboured with party leaders and successfully held PKR together while fighting for reforms, justice and democracy.

HISTORIC EVENT

Yet another historic event was on 16 May when Anwar Ibrahim was granted a royal pardon. Mahathir kept his word and sought this immediately upon winning the elections. The pardon brought back many memories of what had transpired since 1998 when he was sacked as deputy prime minister. That was the

“Numerous sacrifices were made by many since then leading to this new dawn”

start of the struggle for reform and democracy, the legal battles that ensued, the trumped up charges against him and the political assassinations he faced. The vision of riot police trucks lined up the streets just outside the

court together with riot police armed with baton and shields, the black marias, heavy police presence and blaring sirens accompanying him to and out of court from prison, Datin Seri Wan Azizah going in and out of court as Anwar's cases were being heard with their at that time very young children, including the brilliant Nurul Izzah, now a member of Parliament, and the unforgettable and spirited 'reformasi' (reforms) chants by supporters that greeted Anwar Ibrahim and the legal defence team before and after each hearing. My late father, Christopher Fernando was one of Anwar's counsel. He did not live to see these historic events as he passed on 10 years ago. Nevertheless his tireless efforts, the challenges he had to face and ultimately the defence put up were not in vain in light of the pardon which expunged all Anwar's previous convictions with immediate effect.

Undoubtedly, numerous sacrifices were made by many since then leading to this new dawn. Their struggles and fight for democracy, justice and reforms have paved the way to this new era. The whole experience has been greatly inspiring and surreal. I never thought I would witness this day and the way the events have extraordinarily unfolded. No amount of fear and intimidation could stop the people this time.

Being led by the new government the first 100 days has been most encouraging and refreshing. We now have a solid cabinet which is backed by various institutions led by able and credible leaders.

The Pakatan Harapan government is committed to fighting corruption, reforming government agencies, the judiciary, the police and abolishing laws which are oppressive. They are also taking steps to rectify Malaysia's reputation and to regain investor confidence.

Mahathir has been working very hard and he has succeeded in bringing about significant changes and uniting Malaysians. While the government has a lot more to do and repair, we are headed in the right direction.

Marisa Regina Fernando is a lawyer and has represented the former deputy prime minister

IT'S FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

If bosses want to avoid public hostility or a Labour nationalisation, it's time to revisit Liberal ideas about democratic control of companies, says William Tranby

The High Pay Centre reported in 2017 that the average FTSE 100 boss now earns more than £1,000 an hour, meaning they will pass the UK average salary of £28,200 by around midday on Wednesday. The think tank said that after enjoying rapid earnings growth in recent years, leading bosses now typically earn 129 times more than their employees.

This statistic is just one feature of the widening gap between the top 1% and the 99% in this country, and in most other leading nations.

Modest reforms suggested by Vince Cable during his time as business secretary requiring remuneration reports to be voted on by shareholders at company AGMs has had little impact on the rate of pay increases for executive directors, while Theresa May's promise to put worker representatives on boards has been quietly forgotten while she makes a complete mess of Brexit.

Labour's knee-jerk reaction to this will be to either nationalise whole industries or bring in 1970s-style pay restraint policies.

But surely widening those involved in company decision-making is what Liberal Democrats should be calling for?

A company AGM is currently only for shareholders. While some institutional shareholders such as municipal pension funds are increasingly using their strength, organised by advisory companies like PIRC, to challenge remuneration policies and the ethics of some business practices, they are still in a minority when votes are counted.

Surely it is now time for stakeholders like company employees, supply chain contractors, and consumers to have some power at AGMs?

It is normally the case that the bigger you are the later you pay your invoices, but give a company's suppliers a vote on how quickly they are paid, alongside the votes of consumers and company employees, and this could revolutionise the cashflow for smaller companies.

Action to clean up child exploitation practices in supply chains would be more urgently pursued if a company's wider stakeholders had a meaningful say at the AGM.

There may also be a need for decisions about the distribution of profits to be widened or kept in check by changes to company law.

A profitable company can use its profits in a number of ways - reduce its debt, increase its investment in research and development, training or new equipment, distribute some of the profits as dividends to shareholders, buy back its own shares to increase share value, or lavish big bonuses on its directors.

Most companies will choose a combination of these,

but the decisions are taken by the executive board members who have an immediate interest in some of these options.

There is no evidence that the so-called independent non-executive members serving on remuneration committees have anything but the interests of the executive directors in mind when they draw up the company's bonus pay policies.

As bonuses are often paid as share options it is in the interest of directors to boost share prices in the short term by whatever means are at their disposal. The rapacious acquisition policies of some companies financed from borrowing will usually boost company turnover, and in the short to medium term will boost share prices, but any turndown in demand will quickly expose such companies to the unsustainability of their debts. This is why government as well as stakeholders need to impose limits on how profits are used.

Most investment managers will check the dividend cover to see how sustainable a company is. Dividend cover of two or more demonstrates that the profits generated in one tax year could sustain the dividends paid out twice over. Dividend cover of less than 1.5 should start raising questions.

Any company that keeps raising dividends while raising its debt and/or raising directors' bonuses needs to be held in check, either by a change in company law to set limits on such practices, or by using an extended stakeholder franchise at company AGMs to make such decisions there.

While I am calling for interventions into the way companies are regulated I am not denying the important part that private sector companies play in sustaining our current economic model. Since Steve Webb's important pension reforms, it is increasingly clear that future private pensions, in addition to the simplified state pension entitlement, are an essential ingredient in securing the older generations' right to a decent quality of life.

So, for the private pension industry to succeed, a good supply of successful companies paying sustainable dividends over the long term is needed. I do not believe any of the changes I am advocating would do anything to inhibit the success of those responsible companies who run themselves well already.

However, a change to the culture of companies is essential if the gross inequality of rewards in the private sector is to be arrested, and if the siren calls for nationalisation are to be avoided.

William Tranby is a member of the Liberator Collective

**Liberalism,
The Life of an Idea**
by Edmund Fawcett
Princeton 2nd edition
2018 £22.00

Back in 2016 when reviewing Fawcett's *Liberalism*, I wrote: "This is a brilliant book; if you have one book on Liberalism in your library, for the time being, this should be it" (*Liberator* 381).

At the time, the barbarian was already at the door, Britain, once thought a bastion of liberal democracy, had narrowly voted to leave the European Union, but could we seriously believe that it would get much worse with the election of Donald Trump in the United States?

It was as if in a lack of confidence in the West, electorates had opted for suicide. Luckily the line has held, though shaken, in France and Germany. In the wake of this, like all good polemics, Fawcett has brought us a second edition, addressing the dilemmas of the 21st century in more detail than he first treated it.

I have not revisited Fawcett's historical account of Liberalism having no reason to believe it has changed. Suffice to say, it accounts for liberal democracy or liberal internationalism in the context of Liberalisms per se.

As Ruggiero pointed out, the sum total of liberalism has never been found solely in parties that call themselves or identify themselves as Liberal. For example, like it or not, Margaret Thatcher was an economic liberal but a political Conservative, and there are far worse conservatives than her behind the Neoliberal agenda.

For a fuller account of the Neoliberal position I'd commend the works of David Harvey (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, OUP 2005, a Marxian perspective) and Daniel Stedman Jones (*Masters of the Universe*, Princeton 2012) both of which could also do with a second edition to bring them up to at least the abject failure of the Neoliberal experiment in 2008, if not beyond.

Unfortunately, as Fawcett points out, there has been no substantial switch from those

failed Neoliberal policies and Liberal Democrats in Coalition have much to blame themselves for in this, especially in the field of education, whatever their attempts to ameliorate the overall situation as a minor partner.

Probably better there than not is all that can be said. However, this reiterates the need for Liberals to read books like this. Adam Smith was quite clear that the market, best suited to many things, could not be relied on in the fields of education and social welfare; around 250 years have not proved otherwise.

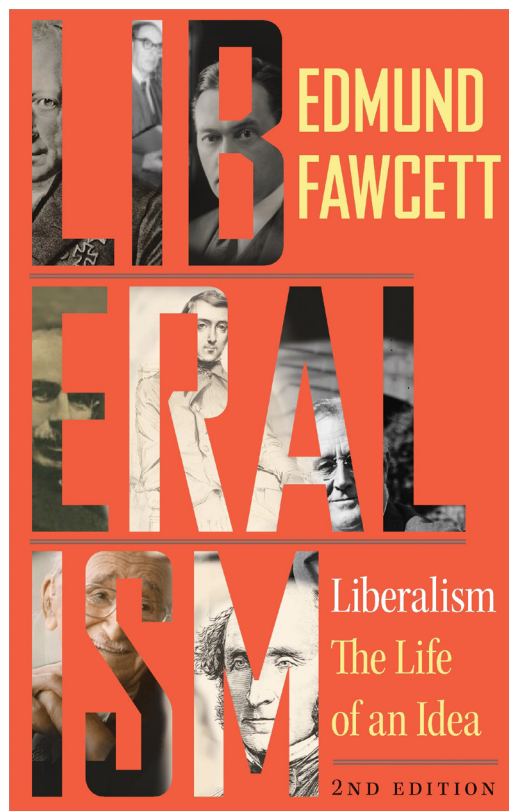
To the meat of the issue. Fawcett's first edition kind of petered out after 1989; there was a brief coda of just over 13 pages for Liberal dreams for the 21st century. Now extended to include nightmares, these run to just over 76 pages. I don't need to recount these events, but of particular use is a balanced assessment of the European Union, warts and all, with certain ironies concerning the role of British Conservatives in the creation of the single market, the extension of the EU into eastern Europe and the free movement of people. Identity is probably less of a problem for most than Fawcett seems to think. We are not rootless cosmopolitans; I am a Maldonian, an Essexman (as opposed to Essex Man), English, British and European. I could comfortably extend that to a world citizen if the polity was there; cut us and we bleed the same blood.

An old friend, Stafford Challis, once said to me that one of the reasons for the demise of Liberalism after the First World War was the loss of many of the generation that would take up the banner on the fields of Flanders.

But there you are; we've been there before and one of the greatest strengths of Liberalism is its optimism. Political problems will always be there, as one is dealt with another comes to take its place – there is not a utopia out there that we might someday reach, still less an Arcadia to return to. As he moves between Liberalism and liberal democracy, Fawcett might stress more that we are not alone in the political dialogue.

For a century Liberals per se, have for the most part been minor players in the UK; some of the faults of liberal democracy come down to illiberal players in the dialogue, or those whose partial adoption of Liberal principals is coloured by another ideology. Some of its achievements have come from liberals outside of that tradition. The struggle goes on, and always will.

If you have one book on Liberalism and this is it, buy the second edition; if you don't have it,



race straight down to your nearest independent bookseller, either way, you will not be disappointed and will be better equipped to face the battles ahead of us.

Stewart Rayment

Workhouse to Westminster by Trevor Smith Caper Press 2018. £13.99

In recent years Trevor Smith has been a frequent contributor to *Liberator*, often espousing causes, albeit in well-honed phrases, that ran counter to the views of many *Liberator* readers. Now, in his eighties, his memoirs provide some clues as to his motivations.

I first met Trevor Smith in 1970 when I was recruited by Pratap Chitnis to the staff of the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust (JRSST) (now the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust) the non-charitable trust alongside the two charitable and very Quaker Rowntree trusts. It paid tax on its income so that it could focus on financing political campaigns and organisations, including the Liberal party. Trevor was already a researcher with the Acton Society Trust which had been established in 1948 as the ‘think tank’ arm of the JRSST. This was essentially the toy of trustee, Ted Goodman who, as Trevor Smith says, was a “philosopher manqué” who had been pushed into estate agency by his father.

During my five years on the JRSST staff, and thus often in contact with Trevor Smith, who had just been appointed as its research director, I tended to regard him as a rather pretentious and highfalutin academic Liberal totally unlike myself who was at the real coal face as leader of the Leeds City Council Liberal Group battling with Labour hegemony and tough election contests.

Trevor’s memoirs give a very different picture with a wartime primary education continually interrupted by being moved between local day schools and appalling boarding schools to avoid German bombs and to enable the family just about to survive financially. How he managed to achieve any educational progress is a miracle.

Trevor gained entry to the London

School of Economics where despite spending much time organising the Liberal society and getting involved in the student Liberal movement nationally, he graduated with a 2:1 degree. Immediately after graduating he was embroiled in Liberal politics as the candidate for Lewisham West at the 1959 election. His 10.8% vote would have been regarded as a triumph at last year’s election.

His other significant involvement was with the New Orbits group of young liberals who set about assisting Jo Grimond’s efforts to fill the policy vacuum that had beset the party for years. After a positive programme of debate and consultation within the Young Liberals and liberal students a substantial report was published. The group eventually produced 18 further policy booklets.

After a brief interval in advertising Trevor embarked upon an academic career, initially at Exeter University. He progressed up the academic ladder until in September 1991 he bravely took on the vice-Chancellorship of the University of Ulster. He retired in 1999, having been made a Liberal Democrat life peer in 1997.

The memoirs set out the difficulties he faced in Northern Ireland and his work for the party’s parliamentary party in the Lords. It is, I believe, legitimate to criticise Trevor’s 40-year absence from the electoral battle. An instinctive Liberal with the skills and talents he demonstrated in his early twenties could have played a significant role in the party and may well have prevented some of the strategic errors he criticised so vehemently in recent years.

Trevor also relates the involvement of some JRSST trustees, particularly Richard Rowntree, in the Thorpe affair. Richard was owed a considerable sum by Peter Bessell and negotiated with Bessell to forego the debt if he would return to England to testify in the Thorpe trial. Richard was on the point of flying to California to speak to Bessell when he telephoned to say that he had just made a media statement committing to coming back for the trial.

Trevor twice states that Pratap Chitnis, the famed agent at the Orpington by-election, was sacked as the head of the Liberal Party

Organisation by Jeremy Thorpe in 1969. In fact, though there is no doubt that Thorpe wanted to sack him, he had no power to do so and the party officers of the day would not have allowed him to do so. Pratap, in fact, resigned and almost immediately became the chief executive of JRSST.

There are a number of infelicities in the book and it would have benefited from an external editor but these are minor flaws in an otherwise highly readable memoir of the last sixty years in Liberal politics and Irish affairs.

Michael Meadowcroft

The New Working Class, how to win hearts, minds and votes by Claire Ainsley Policy Press 2018

I was lucky enough to grow up in a town where there was still a very small residual working class Liberal vote – the fishermen; they were growing old and their industry was in decline, but they clung to the politics of their youth. Ainsley reminds us that there is still a significant working class vote and that while it has transformed, it can still make the difference to a party winning or losing an election.

Liberalism, once the natural home of the working class vote, has consistently failed to meet the expectations of the working class – if Dilke had succeeded Gladstone instead of Rosebery things might have been different, but he couldn’t keep his trousers up.

In the face of ambivalence, the trades unions set up the Labour party, and the rest is history. Since the Second World War, it is safe to say that Liberal politicians who courted the working class have been treated with suspicion, even demonisation – an element of jealousy perhaps from those happy to trundle along in leafy suburbia or the shires.

There was a critical point, perhaps when the Labour party was described by the more reasonable Italian Communists as an infantile disorder; when urban Liberals were striving to meet the needs and aspirations of the communities of most of our large cities, we briefly took more than 20% of the working class vote (Goodman & Heath, 2017).

But the party preferred to stab them in the back, always after the quick fix rather than the proper application of community politics. Blair was not the answer, and as aspirations were not met the working class increasingly did not vote. But hey, isn't the Labour party now led by the very people who were betraying working class values back in the 1980s and 1990s, and look where that got us (not without help elsewhere) – Brexit.

Ainsley identifies four core values: family, fairness, hard work and decency, and then sets out to identify policies that meet these aspirations. Employment rights, indeed a re-evaluation of the dignity of work are pretty fundamental to people typically working in service sectors, retail, hospitality and care. They are living off low to middle incomes are much more multi-ethnic and diverse than the usual stereotypes allow.

Ainsley is executive director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and previously worked for the T&GWU (I'm much happier with unions telling us what they are about rather than being a brand name). One doesn't sense that she is specifically talking to Liberal Democrats, but they are debating some of the core issues that she addresses in Brighton so pick up this book and see if it can hone some of your debating skills.

When you get back, roll you sleeves up and get your hands dirty; there's the damage of at least 30-40 years to be redressed.

Stewart Rayment

What Makes a Terrorist? **by Alan B. Krueger** **Princeton University** **Press 2018 £22**

Terrorists, like revolutionaries, tend to come not from the impoverished masses but from the middle class, and usually have an above-average level of education.

This was the shock central finding of Alan B. Krueger's *What Makes a Terrorist* when it was published a decade ago, thus challenging the widely-held assumption that poverty is the root cause of terrorism.

A 10th anniversary edition of the book has now appeared, with

the addition of a new Prologue, in which Professor Krueger points out that despite the high level of publicity surrounding terrorist attacks, the risk of being a victim of such an outrage is minimal and has not increased since 2008, notwithstanding blanket coverage of incidents in the media, including social media. In the 15 years between 9/11 and 2016, for example, 123 Americans were killed in terrorist attacks, whereas 240,000 were murdered.

The main body of this book comprises three lectures that Krueger, Bendheim Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at Princeton, gave at the London School of Economics, snappily entitled *Who Becomes a Terrorist? Where does Terror Emerge? and What Does Terror Accomplish?*

As a regular commentator in mainstream media in the United States, the author is adept at explaining things in layman's terms, while sacrificing none of his academic rigour. The unique quality of his work rests on the fact that he approaches the subject from the perspective of an economist (statistics and all, though there is only one mind-boggling equation to daunt the non-specialist). He draws on useful examples, not least from Iraq and the Basque Country, as evidence to support his theories and certain quantifiable patterns do emerge. While most of us may find it impossible to imagine a situation in which we would deliberately kill random people in an act of violence, probably sacrificing our own lives, it is maybe useful to understand why some youths - and they are overwhelmingly young men - do and what they hope to achieve.

Anger about a situation of poverty and injustice, such as the plight of the Palestinians in Gaza, can be a motive, even if the perpetrators are not poor themselves. But I found particularly intriguing Professor Krueger's assertion that there is a correlation between the origin of terrorists and the lack of civil liberties in that country. So although there is probably still substance to the argument that reducing poverty and injustice could reduce the incentives for terrorism, improving civil liberties and good governance could be at least as effective. Egypt and Saudi Arabia, please take note.

Jonathan Fryer

Stories of the Law and How It's Broken **by The Secret Barrister** **Macmillan £16.99**

"If the criminal justice system were the NHS, it would never be off the front pages." That was the Secret Barrister's motivation in writing this book, and the reason for a crowdfunding campaign that saw a copy sent to every MP.

You might have heard politicians claiming "we have one of the most expensive criminal justice systems in the world", but did you know that the entire Crown Prosecution Service budget is eclipsed by the annual cost of subsidised TV licences for the over-75s? The recent flurry of collapsed rape trials hints at a concerning reality.

This book is a frank, witty and furious assessment of a criminal justice system at breaking point. The system's failings are brilliantly illustrated with examples taken from the Secret Barrister's own cases; desperately sad, darkly comic and often outrageously unjust. This honest and accurate account offers an understanding of what really goes on in our criminal courts.

Tabloid myths about legal aid 'fat cats' and 'out-of-touch judges' handing down 'soft sentences' are explored and dispelled. "How can you defend someone you think is guilty?" "Why do they wear wigs?" and other popular questions are answered.

This book comes at a time when the criminal bar is under immense strain. Four years ago, for the first time in history, criminal barristers refused to work in protest. Earlier this year, we did it again. Despite the popular misconception of a legal aid gravy train, many barristers are leaving crime for better functioning, privately funded areas of law. Among those of us who remain, in robing rooms across the country, this book inspires a sense of vindication, catharsis and pride; one of ours is telling it like it is.

Peter Gilmour

Monday

At a reception thrown by some Central American ambassador or other I come across my old friends Freddie and Fiona. "Vince won't be leader for ever," they tell me, "and he's been thinking about who should succeed him." I learn that the ideal candidate will be someone who was not an MP during the Coalition years, is strongly against Brexit, a woman and from a minority ethnic background.

"Layla Moran fits that bill tolerably well," I observe. "She would be perfect but for one thing," I am told. "What's that?" "She's a Liberal Democrat MP."

Tuesday

There is a cottage that I make available to the party so that overworked headquarters staff can enjoy some rest and recuperation. After a stay in Rutland they return to the fray refreshed and ready to redouble their efforts – and if they do not then they are packed off to the Home for Distressed Canvassers in Herne Bay, from which they are occasionally allowed out if the lady in the library promises to Keep An Eye On Them.

For the past few days said cottage has been occupied by a fellow charged with thinking up a new slogan for the party. Despite my urging, he has insisted on continuing to work. When I call on him this morning I find he has covered the walls with words written on those yellow sticky notes. 'Radical,' they say. 'Moderate.' 'Firm.' 'Fair.' 'Green.' 'Centrist.' 'Fluffy Kittens.' 'Free Cake.'

I drag him off to the Bonkers' Arms for a stiffener. When I return from the bar I find him staring intently at a beer mat. "That's left over from an old Smithson & Greaves advertising campaign," I tell him. "Demand Bitter.' That was their slogan." His face lights up, he pockets the mat, drains his pint and asks for a lift to the station.

Wednesday

I read this morning that Vince Cable intends to bring back supporters of our party. I say "bring back" because I well remember the days when we Liberal Party activists would be accompanied by people clad in bobble hats and scarves and carrying rattles, all of them in party colours. They would cheer one's every effort and often pass supportive comments such as "A great piece of canvassing by the Rutland peer there, Ron" or "The councillor's passed him the bundle of leaflets and they've gone straight through the letterboxes." (Occasionally one would hear less obliging opinions such as "You'll win nothing with Young Liberals" or "For me he's delivered that too well".) I once asked a supporter, after we had lost a Kesteven County Council by-election by a distance, what he got from it. "We've had a great day out," he replied, "and this is our cup final."

Thursday

Did you see that the Duke of Rutland has been asking actors to work for nothing? Not exactly cricket, is it? Every artiste appearing in the Bonkers Hall pageant this autumn, which will re-enact that fine actor Roger Livesey's victory in the 1985 Brecon and Radnor by-election, will be paid at full Equity rates.

I am not one to pass on gossip, but I heard a most interesting story in the Bonkers' Arms this evening. A tradesman was making deliveries to the Duke's home Belvoir Castle – you may know it: it commands the

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surrounding countryside in rather a flashy way – when he lost control of his white van and careered towards the castle's walls. Fearing the worst, he covered his face and prepared for impact. Which Never Came. It turned out that the walls were as flimsy as anything and he had driven straight through them without coming to any harm.

Now, I am not suggesting for a moment that the Duke of Rutland is so poor that he is secretly selling the stones of his castle to the building trade and replacing them with cardboard, but shouldn't

he come forward and clear the matter up?

Friday

Like many landowners, I have built a narrow-gauge railway to carry produce and fertiliser about my estate. Some years ago I hit upon the happy idea of allowing the Well-Behaved Orphans to run it for me. This morning, having business with Matron, I decided to take the train and see what sort of a fist they are making of it.

The train I intended to catch was cancelled and the one after it was delayed because of "lineside equipment failure in the Kitchen Garden area". Not only that: despite having shelled out a tidy sum for a ticket, I was obliged to stand the whole way to the Orphanage. If one little girl had not tipped me the wink that it was cheaper to buy a ticket as far as Home Farm and then buy another one from there to my destination, I should have paid even more. Yet when I complained the Orphans assured me that they had closely studied how the privatised railways are run and copied them in every detail.

That set me to thinking: should I bid for the Thameslink franchise? I know Matron has strong views on bedtimes and coal smuts, but the Well-Behaved Orphans can hardly make a worse fist of it than the mob running it now.

Saturday

To the Royal Opera House, Oakham. The first Lady Bonkers was a great Wagnerian, and when I returned from business at the House would often greet me in the guise of Brünnhilde – "Hojotoho! Hojotoho! Heiaha! Heiaha!" and so forth.

The evening's entertainment is Benjamin Britten's 'Darren Grimes', which tells the story of a Suffolk fisherman who wins the bad opinion of his fellows and takes up politics as a career instead. There he falls into bad company and is fined £20,000 by the Electoral Commission before putting to sea in his boat and never being seen again. There is a lesson there that I trust all Young Liberals will take to heart.

Sunday

Driving along the lanes to inspect some property in a distant village, I encounter Alfred the carthorse trudging in the opposite direction. I surmise he has been delivering Focus.

Endeavouring to strike up a conversation, I say: "I hear Gina Miller doesn't want to be leader of the Liberal Democrats." "I've not heard of her," replies Alfred "is she a party member?" "No." "Well," he returns, "that's just as well then, isn't it?"

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