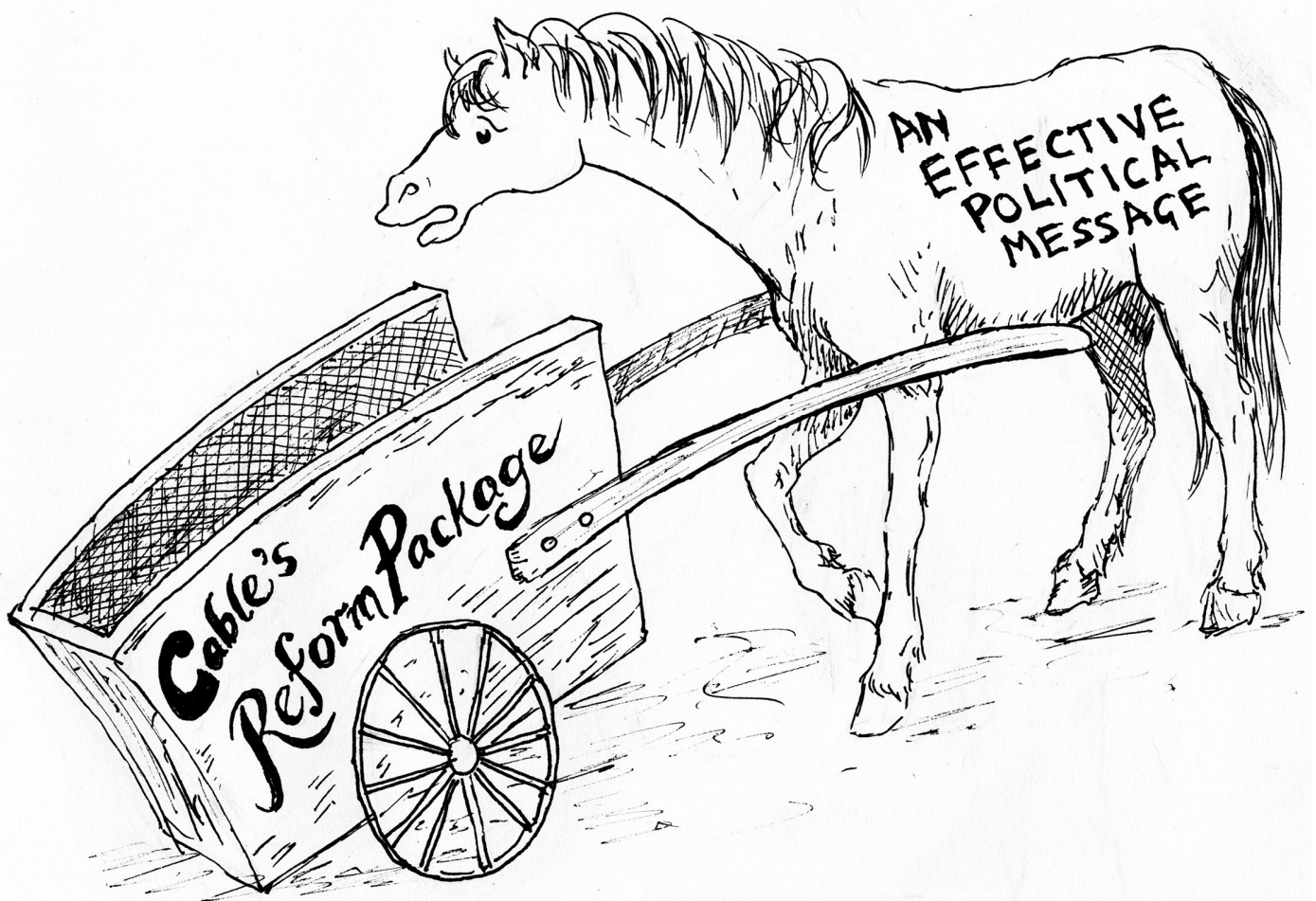


# liberator



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# COMMENTARY

## TANKS AND TANKING

News that Labour MP Chuka Umunna will be grossly overpaid to head a new think tank would look only like another snout in the trough were it not for the persistent speculation that he is the most likely figure to break away from Labour and found a new centrist party.

His think tank Progressive Centre UK lists only a Matthew Laza as its other founder and as of early November had published only Ummuna's founding statement.

There are already ample tanks in which those thus inclined can think, which suggests this isn't a think tank at all but the forerunner of Umunna's new party and thus a more serious move than it might appear.

Those with very long memories may recall that before founding the SDP Roy Jenkins and his associates set up a think tank called the Radical Centre for Democratic Studies, which was briefly used as their vehicle then never heard of again.

It's unlikely that Umunna or anyone else would form a new party before Brexit - since it would complicate assembling anti-Brexit parliamentary votes - but they might afterwards, so how should the Liberal Democrat react?

Not by panic and not by striking some poor deal.

A centrist party is not the same as a liberal one, and a party based largely on its members' dislike of other parties they once supported is unlikely to have any long term appeal.

Such a party might gain a sudden boost on launch, but it's important not to be intimidated by this and not to repeat the errors of 37 years ago by seeking an immediate electoral alliance at any price.

The best way to strangle such an enterprise at birth would be for the Lib Dems to leave it with little space because they have the better political messages and are saying clearly what is wrong (and not just with Brexit) and what sort of country they want to see.

The political space is there between a floundering and divided, but essentially very right-wing and authoritarian, Tory party and a Labour party led by a man who has not had a new thought in 50 years and hasn't a liberal bone in his body.

Instead, a few weeks prior to Brexit, the Liberal Democrats will spend a chunk of their spring conference debating internal reforms borne of the presence of an entire swarm of bees in Vince Cable's bonnet.

His proposed creation of a supporters' category is not really contentious.

The rest is: allowing supporters to vote for leader and be consulted on policy, to let new members immediately become candidates and let non-MPs stand for leader.

Even Cable's most loyal advocates seem unable to explain how any of this would achieve anything significant.

The party's most obvious problem is that it has nothing to say to the public apart from about Brexit and has failed to convey any vision of what it seeks to achieve.

Cable's reforms are a form of displacement activity, irrelevant to putting this right.

Obviously it would be desirable for the Lib Dems not to have a new party as a competitor and to attract the bulk of those who might join such an enterprise.

How though do Cable's ideas help? The party has had new members coming out of its ears since 2015 and there is no obvious impediment to those who wish to join.

Others prefer just to be supporters and formalising this to allow, for example, for easier communications would be perfectly sensible.

But is it seriously maintained that some large number of people wish to become supporters but only if they are 'consulted' on policy and can occasionally vote for the leader?

Again, suppose there is a lot of money around to back a new centrist party and that many people would be understandably seduced by the novelty of this.

Would they be un-seduced by the prospect of the rather limited privileges Cable proposes to confer on Lib Dem supporters?

It's fair enough that Cable has pointed to his difficulty in getting heard in the media (*Liberator* 392) but it tends to be that the media listens when politicians say interesting and controversial things.

Although the party has policy by the yard it has not communicated any clear ideas about itself in the way that, say, Paddy Ashdown did with 1p on income tax for education, or Charles Kennedy did on Iraq. Cable's reforms have little bearing on filling this void.

Cable's final proposition - of non-MPs standing for leader - is a pointless gimmick that would set up a perpetual destructive tension between the actual leader and whoever was the day-to-day leader in Parliament, not least as the latter would be where the media directed its attention.

The nearest the party has been to a non-MP leader was Nick Clegg - in Parliament only two years beforehand - and the lack of experience and judgement he showed is hardly a happy precedent.

# RADICAL BULLETIN

## BETTER PART OF VALOUR

The Liberal Democrat Federal Board is not a body noted for its rebelliousness or hostility to the party establishment.

Members therefore somewhat surprised themselves when over two meetings in October they partly dismembered Vince Cable's reforms.

Cable has pressed for the creation of a supporters' scheme, for consultations with supporters on policy and campaigns, allowing them to vote in leadership elections, reducing the time needed to be a member before becoming a candidate and allowing non-MPs to stand as leader (Liberator 392).

These ideas have been put forward as the way to equip the Lib Dems to meet the challenge of any newly-formed centrist party, though the FB - like much of the party - remained baffled as the relevance of all but the first to this objective.

Two consultations were carried out with members, one an online survey and the other an invitation to submit written comments.

It's unclear how, if at all, the latter were collated and used. But the FB was given results from the former, which were rather mixed despite the farrago of blatantly leading questions involved.

These were spun heavily where the results did not suit Cable, but Liberator understands they showed:

- \* 76% of respondents were in favour of creating the supporters' scheme;
- \* 51% favoured allowing supporters to vote in leadership elections;
- \* 48% would be happy to give supporters the right to vote (whatever is meant by that) on policies and priorities;
- \* 55% were open to "removing the time barrier" for candidates under certain conditions;
- \* 45% felt the leadership should be open to non-MPs.

As the FB was quick to spot this was hardly overwhelming other than for the supporters scheme.

They had before them calls for an all-member ballot on the proposals and a special conference in January to endorse them.

Cable hurriedly withdrew the latter idea, it being self-evident there was no majority on the board for dragging activists to a conference in mid-winter.

Indeed there had been protests from councillors about this eating into local election campaign time.

The idea of a postal ballot was defeated by 10 votes to nine, with members unamused to see Cable's staffer Mike Tuffrey appearing to take down the names of those impertinent enough to oppose the leader.

Not the least of the problems with this ballot would

have been how to conduct it and what questions would be asked.

Would it be on the whole package, or item-by-item? Would there be statements for and against, and if so who would be chosen to write the 'against' ones and by whom?

Cable supporters then argued that an 'indicative poll', whatever that is, was needed to maintain momentum, though since there is little momentum outside a tight circle round Cable this seemed of little consequence.

It now appears that constitutional amendments needed to give effect to Cable's proposals will go to spring conference, putting the party in the embarrassing position of carrying out a through examination of its own navel just before Brexit.

This session cannot be held prior to the advertised start - since people have already made travel and accommodation arrangements - nor afterwards as it would create the dire spectacle of the hall emptying as soon as the leader's speech ended.

How this will go is anyone's guess. One of those permitted to see some survey results noted: "The survey results were spun very heavily as showing huge majority support for the proposals. This can't be substantiated. At best it's a tiny majority in favour. Nowhere near the two-thirds required for constitutional amendments at a conference vote."

FB members considered their meeting polite in tone, though Cable appeared angry about losing the indicative poll vote "acting as though we'd slaughtered his first born and eaten it", as one put it.

Another concession wrung by the FB was that Cable's assorted informal 'Operation Ozark' advisory groups would be shut down and replaced by formal party bodies.

This means "they can be told to bog off if anyone tries to instruct us now the power on this is clearly within the elected, democratic structures", as one member said.

Implementation of the supporters scheme will go ahead in the winter led by the Federal People Development Committee.

The little-known operations committee (which comprises the chairs of federal committees, state party chairs, the president, chief executive and relevant directors), will liaise where co-operation is needed and report to the FB.

The upshot of all this is that a few weeks before Brexit the party will use its main public platform for a bout of introspection for purposes that remain obscure even to those who support some or all of Cable's ideas.

## BOOM TO BUST

Had the special conference gone ahead, who would have met the £80,000-odd cost involved?

Not the party surely, which cannot afford it. But

rumours persist of a generous donor who would have done.

Some say this would have come from one of the profusion of eccentric millionaires who last year formed anti-Brexit centrist micro-parties of which they became the self-appointed leaders.

What they would have wanted in return for their money is a matter for conjecture.

Donors though may be thin on the ground to judge by the financial wave that engulfed Lib Dem HQ in late October, which moved within a few weeks from serious consideration of recruiting to additional posts to seeking to make about 20 of the 80 staff redundant.

Liberator's enquires suggest a threefold problem - donor 'fatigue' after three years of two general elections and a referendum, poor income from conferences and an unexpected hole in membership income.

The latter is understood to have handsomely exceeded forecasts in the first half of the year, leading to an assumption that it would do so in the third quarter.

It turned out though both that the third quarter forecast had been wildly optimistic and that, while renewal rates were healthy, the amount paid by each renewing member was less so.

This meant a forecast excess of about 8% on membership income became an 8% shortfall.

On its own this might have been problematic but not catastrophic but it followed on from losses on both conferences this year.

The spring and autumn conferences are intended to together break even - the days having gone when lost of commercial organisation would pay huge sums to exhibit and attend.

Southport proved a more expensive venue than York, while for the autumn registrations were healthy but exhibitors scant and major sponsor Bloomberg pulled out at the last minute (as it is thought to have done from the other party conferences) leaving a large hole against a forecast that some Federal Conference Committee members think were unrealistic anyway.

Since the party's chief executive, head of membership and chair of the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee all took office after the budgets and forecast in question were drawn up, there is a scarcity of people around to blame.

Questions are being asked both about what happened and why the party is continuing to pay Canadian political consultants while jobs are going in headquarters.

Some will again question the need for spring conference, or at least its scale - indeed a threat to the event was repelled a few years ago.

The conference is enshrined in the constitution as part of the policy making process agreed at the Liberal/SDP merger in 1988.

Scrapping it to save money would need a constitutional amendment and so, er, a conference.

## WHEN IN A HOLE

As mounting panic seized the leadership in the run-up to the immigration debate at Brighton, they turned improbably to those who had most trenchantly disagreed with them to dig them from an excavation of their own making.

They also accepted an amendment that home

affairs spokesperson Ed Davey had previously told parliamentarians was "unhelpful".

Criticism of the immigration policy (Liberator 392) came from both those who thought that a failure to take a bold stance on the issue was bad politics, and those who thought the content was illiberal and only inched cautiously beyond the positions of past governments.

It became obvious over the summer that a head of steam was building to either refer back or defeat the paper.

Davey thus turned to the Liberal Democrat Seekers of Sanctuary - which had been unhappy with the original - to rescue him.

It submitted possibly the longest amendment ever put to the Federal Conference Committee and which set some sort of record even in its eventual truncated form.

Their amendment substantially improved the section on refugee issues, but not even that could save the paper on its own.

Davey was forced to accept an amendment - known as amendment two - from Cheadle's Richard Flowers making it clearer that immigrants were not responsible for social and financial problems for which they are often blamed.

He also accepted amendments to enable all eligible UK residents to acquire British citizenship and one to improve provision on LGBT rights in immigration cases.

Davey resisted only an amendment to allow spouses to join partners in the UK without any prohibition on seeking state support, on which he was defeated anyway.

Parliamentarians had previously received a message urging them into the hall to support the original

## **Liberal Revue - from the vaults!**

**The Liberal Revue can now be enjoyed again online at: <https://tinyurl.com/ya2w6l7d> or by searching on "Liberal Revue" on YouTube.com**

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**An archive of Liberal Revue scripts, programmes and recordings has been lodged in the National Liberal Club library**

wording of the motion.

Davey sung the praises of both it and the supporting policy paper. His message admitted: "However, there is a real danger that the motion won't pass. As you may be aware, it has come under attack from some party members who believe it is insufficiently liberal. There has been a lot of hyperbolic language about it online, such as the absurd claims that it is 'less liberal than Michael Howard' and 'a motion with which Ukip would have little to quarrel'."

Horror of horrors, the paper might get referred back, in which case "it is likely that the new policy paper will be heavily influenced by members who have consistently argued for policies proven to be unpopular even among liberal voters".

Interestingly, Davey said there were two amendments that were "unhelpful". These were the one he ultimately unsuccessfully opposed about spouse's recourse to public funds, and Flowers' amendment about making in clear that immigrants were not to blame for problems suffered by natives, or as Davey put it: "[it] would remove the part of the motion about listening and engaging with people".

Two days later Davey accepted Flowers' wording, implying he had done the sums and expected to lose.

The panic was further illustrated by the movers of a worthwhile but uncontentious motion the previous day on 'restoring the rights of the Windrush generation' being told Davey would speak in their support if they spoke in support of the original immigration motion.

Those behind the Windrush motion were perfectly well aware it would pass overwhelmingly and so declined this kind offer.

## TRADERS AMBUSHED

Free market fans Liberal Reform had a surprise with their amendment for the Britain in the World motion at Brighton that called for the promotion of free trade.

It appeared to be passing uncontested with no one having spoken against it until former MP Martin Horwood, summing up on the motion, laid into it as sounding like something Jacob Rees-Mogg would support.

It fell by only two votes, aided by MPs who appeared to have been whipped to vote against it.



*The Liberator banner gets an airing on the People's Vote march on 20 October  
From left: Margaret Lally, Peter Johnson, Claire Tyler, David Grace and Harriet Sherlock*

## RATHER A LOT OF SITUATIONS VACANT

The new party disciplinary process was adopted at Brighton, shorn of some of the objectionable features that saw it referred back at Southport (Liberator 389).

How though are the multitude of posts it creates to be filled? The motion called for a pool of "no less than" 40 adjudicators and 15 investigators, each of whom will have to undergo an approval process and may not sit on any regional, state or federal party committee.

Are there in fact 55 people around with appropriate expertise and without other disqualifying commitments? If not, the long grass beckons once more.

## DIVERSE MOTIVES

An unfortunate row has broken out that has seen former Lib Dem head of diversity Adrian Hyyrilainen-Trett resign for personal reasons.

This role is part of the Federal People Development Committee and is intended to encourage diversity initiatives.

The resignation followed a dispute arising from an email exchange between Hyyrilainen-Trett and Rod Lynch, chair of the recently-created Liberal Democrat Campaign for Racial Equality, aspects of which the latter objected to.

It was sparked off by LDCRE's intention to hold a recruitment drive among ethnic minority communities to find at least 3,000 new Lib Dem members.

Hyyrilainen-Trett suggested this exercise needed his agreement to proceed, but others felt the head of diversity role was a co-ordinating rather than supervisory one and he simply needed to be informed

of LDCRE's plans.

Lynch wanted LDCRE to lead on the recruitment as the obvious body to promote the party among ethnic communities, but Hyyrilainen-Trett has argued that responsibility for such recruitment should be embedded across the party and not lie solely with a very new specified associated organisation whose predecessor - Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats - had been widely considered ineffective.

There have also been some concerns about wording employed by Hyyrilainen-Trett about which LDCRE declined to comment. The outcome for party diversity work remains to be seen

## **IN THE PINK**

The annual Pink News awards saw Vince Cable give a heartfelt speech on the appalling treatment LGBT asylum seekers experience in the UK.

He then went on to present the prize for the best TV programme which turned out to be A Very English Scandal.

Thus the audience was treated to the leader of the Lib Dems presenting an award to a programme about one of his predecessors trying and failing to commit a murder.

Still, Cable seemed to enjoy it, especially when director Stephen Fears finished his acceptance speech by declaring "Bollocks to Brexit".

## **FURRY FIEND**

Few noticed that former Winchester MP and erstwhile self-described 'rising star' Mark Oaten has finally left the Liberal Democrats, an event reported only by the Hampshire Chronicle. Oaten claimed to be disillusioned with all parties, though possibly not as disillusioned as the Lib

Dems became with him after the 2006 scandal over the exposure of his unusual hobby.

Oaten now works for the Fur Trade Federation, a position unlikely to enhance most Lib Dems' opinion of him (slogan Fur For Fun and Fashion).

Oaten's autobiography 'Screwing Up' (as opposed to 'furring up') said: "Things went downhill when the small band of idiots that run the Liberator magazine decided to write nasty pieces about me." Not as nasty as the rest of the press later did.

There is though traffic in the other direction. It's welcome back to former Liberator editor Paul Hannon, who has rejoined the Lib Dems, now in Pembrokeshire, after joining Labour when Tony Blair became leader. Hannon was involved with Liberator during the late 1970s.

## **SOUND OF SILENCE**

A 'quiet room' is provided at conference for the benefit of those who want to be, well, quiet. Think of it as the opposite of the Glee Club.

Anyone using it prior to the conference rally might have been surprised to find an entire choir rehearsing in it prior to that evening's proceedings.

## **LONE RANGER**

Welsh Lib Dem leader Jane Dodds ended her speech to conference by talking about the "epidemic of loneliness" in Wales. This was unfortunate given that Kirsty Williams must be quite lonely in the Welsh Assembly as the sole Lib Dem.

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# REVERSE DOUBLE

## The Immigration debate at Brighton showed the party both morally and politically wrong, says Natasha Chapman

In September, the Liberal Democrat conference debated a motion “A Fair Deal for Everyone: Prosperity and Dignity in Migration” which was heavily criticised and debated in the run-up.

How fierce the debate got can especially be seen on Liberal Democrat Voice, where it was the subject of at least eight articles (three defending the motion, with the others condemning it or calling for improvements). As the daughter of an Asian immigrant whose family fled to the UK from Idi Amin’s regime in Uganda, immigration is a political topic I do not have the luxury of approaching as a casual observer.

The paper appears to have suffered from a phenomenon we have unfortunately seen before, with the party’s welfare motion in 2017, where a policy working group sat down to work out progressive policy but was too frightened of upsetting the Daily Mail to propose anything that could make too much of a difference in improving people’s lives.

Even the tone of the motion was heavily criticised for seeming apologetic, rather than proud, of seeking to improve the lives of migrants and for appearing to try to appease the ‘legitimate concerns’ crowd.

Detailed arguments regarding the proposals can easily be found online, so I am reluctant to rework that ground. However, that five very different amendments made it to the conference debate speaks volumes about how much the motion and supporting policy paper failed to say.

Of the five (on LGBT+ rights, the cost of visas, not pandering to racism, income restriction for foreign spouses and one from Liberal Democrat Seekers of Sanctuary), just two (on racism and income) had any speeches against them and only one (on income) was actually opposed by the party leadership.

All the amendments passed, with overwhelming support, and they did greatly improve the motion, but the experience has left many, myself included, disappointed that we couldn’t do better.

Sadly, the attempt to reference back and improve the motion was blocked by the ever more corybantic Tim Farron, who emotively, charismatically and completely erroneously presented failure to pass this motion, right there and then, as a vote to somehow prevent the party campaigning or voting to protect the most vulnerable at all. This of course, came as something of a surprise to followers of Farron’s stellar record of campaigning strictly in adherence to party policy.

One issue surrounding this debate left a bad taste in my mouth. Several prominent party BAME colleagues told me there had been attempts by the leadership to pressure them into speaking in favour of the motion, despite their insistence that they didn’t want to do so because they felt it was poor. I was furious to learn that elements of the leadership wanted to use these well-respected members’ non-whiteness to lend credibility to their proposals. This behaviour was

disgusting, and I would not blame these members if they decided to walk away from the party.

People often talk about the ‘Overton window’ of which ideas are considered mainstream or extreme and how the actions and rhetoric of political leaders and campaigners shifts that window.

When right-wing politicians make statements blaming society’s ills on immigrants and minority religious or ethnic groups - instead of unapologetically debunking these arguments - the responses of some on the left and far too many liberals, has been to suggest that while they don’t entirely agree, it is important to listen to the racists because they have some “legitimate concerns”.

I vividly recall Gordon Brown adhering to this crooked philosophy in 2010 by attacking us on our migration policies from the right. Far from defeating racism and xenophobia, this approach has only encouraged it to fester and grow. After all, if even left wing and liberal people are calling the concerns of those who don’t like foreigners legitimate, they must surely have a point?

But they don’t have a point, their concerns aren’t legitimate (no matter how sincerely-held) and their hatred and fear are not justified.

We know this and there is a wealth of independent, peer-reviewed evidence to support this. We know that the areas with the most negative attitudes towards immigration are those which experience the lowest levels of immigration. We are at around 10% in the polls and are deluded if we think jumping onto the already overcrowded bandwagon of immigrant-bashing will win us any additional support.

People who hate immigrants won’t vote for us anyway, and they aren’t stupid enough to be fooled by us pretending to think the way they do. Conversely, opinion polling has shown that those who might consider voting for us tend to have more positive attitudes to immigration.

When we know that the demonisation and scapegoating of immigrants is based on lies and the harm it does, it is our duty to challenge and fight.

As Caron Lindsay said during her debate speech, if someone believes the Earth is flat the appropriate response isn’t to give them rope in case they fall off the edge. If something is wrong we shouldn’t go along with it and if we’re liberals we shouldn’t compromise on either rhetoric or actions regarding universal human dignity.

---

Natasha Chapman is chair of Lincoln, Sleaford and North Hykeham Liberal Democrats



# DEMAND BETTER THAN THIS

## The Lib Dems can't go on being diverted from their political tasks by internal reforms and financial squalls, says Sarah Green

On the 7 September, Vince Cable launched his vision for a more open, inclusive party at an old, private members club in London. Those struggling to watch online didn't miss much as by that point the details of Vince's proposals to reform the Liberal Democrats had been leaked to the media. However, throughout the summer what we now know was code-named 'Project Ozark' had been a closely guarded secret.

Vince isn't the first party leader to find the democratic structures of the party inconvenient. But I've yet to fully understand why the federal committees needed to be kept in the dark for as long as they were.

The proposals are bold, interesting and some are worth exploring. All Vince and his team achieved with such secrecy was to foster suspicion and distrust with those who were persuadable. They might have even advocated for his reforms had he taken the trouble to bring them on board.

Preparations for autumn conference were disrupted as all-member surveys were sent out, consultation sessions hastily organised and Lib Dems invited to obsess about internal party process. Of course, the leader has every right to want to push through their vision. They are after all elected to lead and show vision. Unless they were unopposed and didn't have to persuade anyone of their vision.

The consultation on the proposed party reforms has now concluded. The Federal Board decided against holding the all-member ballot Vince had wanted and he withdrew his request for a special conference. The reforms will instead go to spring conference in York in the usual way. The one uncontroversial element - the supporters scheme - will launch early next year and whether to extend the right to vote for leader to these supporters will also be voted on at spring conference.

An elegant solution has therefore been found that keeps the leader's reforms on the table while avoiding the spectacle (and price tag) of a navel-gazing special conference. The party machine can now turn its attention back to where it belongs: stopping Brexit, preparing for local elections next May and planning for the possibility of another referendum or snap general election in 2019.

Or at least, that's what should have happened. Instead, an all-staff meeting called at HQ on 31 October revealed that up to 25% of them are being made redundant. The party committees were oblivious that a hole in the party finances existed that required such drastic action and were informed in a webinar hours after the meeting.

The reasons reported in the media include "fatigue amongst donors" and "less membership income received than expected". That is code for the forecasts

for membership income being over ambitious and major donors not seeing us as an attractive investment right now.

It runs counter to the narrative the Liberal Democrats have been peddling the past few years about being a growing party with a record membership, winning local by-elections up and down the country.

But this isn't a fiction. We are a growing party, we did reach record membership levels and we are winning local by-elections week in, week out. There has been no major electoral or political calamity that explains the need to make a quarter of staff redundant just before Christmas. This is management cock-up, plain and simple.

As the federal committees have shown in dealing with Vince's reforms, they are capable of asking robust questions, demanding answers and finding workable solutions. They must now insist on proper scrutiny and accountability.

All political parties in this country have been distracted by internal trauma and crisis these past few months. Scarcely a day goes by without a story about the chaos within the Conservatives and Labour. The SNP have their own internal trauma to deal with as Alex Salmond, arguably one of the best political strategists of his generation, turns his considerable firepower on his own side in response to accusations of sexual misconduct. Plaid Cymru spent the summer engaged in a leadership election.

And the Liberal Democrat leader decided to throw all his energy into tinkering with who can stand and vote for leader of the party. Brexit is such a runaway train hurtling towards the country that the entire political class is engaging in displacement activity.

It has to stop. Let's be quite clear, the party machinery was distracted by the leader's vanity project for most of the summer. This current financial crisis is a catastrophic failure of management. We have to call time on amateur hour. Our new party slogan is Demand Better. Perhaps it is time the party did just that.

---

Sarah Green is a member of the Liberator Collective

# DAMNED FROM THE START

The Liberal Democrats' new foreign policy paper is riddled with flaws, hardly surprising when the whole policy process has become unworkable and prey to special interests, says Paul Reynolds

At the Liberal Democrats' conference in Brighton, a motion was passed commending the party's new foreign policy, as in a policy paper 'Britain's Place in the World'.

This paper was the result of nearly three years work, undertaken by a working group at the behest of the party's Federal Policy Committee; the standard route for party policymaking.

Notwithstanding the passing of the motion accompanying it, the paper has been subject to very heavy criticism by some of the party's most eminent figures. I stepped into the fray too, with a 20-page analysis including suggestions for significant improvement, wearing my Federal International Relations Committee hat.

## HORRIBLY WRONG

Reading the paper, it is obvious that something went horribly wrong. The paper does not provide a useful critical analysis of existing UK foreign policy and neither does it set out by contrast a different approach. It does make some recommendations, but these are largely disconnected from the rest of the document and are either embarrassingly trivial or strangely absent of justification in the text. It is clear the report has not been stress-tested.

Britain's Place in the World is a compelling argument for policymaking system reform for one very good reason; it was well-planned, had plenty of time, the policy working group committee was populated by a wide variety of party members with expertise, and it took evidence from relevant organisations and specialists. In other words, in terms of procedures and personnel, it was exemplary. It represents a wider system failure rather than a failure of individuals.

The paper contains many of the policymaking problems typically found in Liberal Democrat papers, but in this case they have almost all come together in one report.

First, there is no definition of the 'foreign policy problem' the party is attempting to address. Being somewhat unfocused on addressing what we see as the problems, has led to a lack of clarity over what we would do differently in government. Indeed, extracting the policy changes the party would put in place from the report is not easy at all, and importantly there is no attempt to describe current UK foreign policy. It is difficult to glean exactly what we disagree with, which is an odd approach for an opposition party.

This absence of problem-definition has also led to a structure which makes a focus on what we would do differently rather tortuous. The report's structure, dividing 'The World We're In' versus 'The World We

Want to Build' not only makes it hard to say what we would do differently, it has neo-colonial overtones. This is because the brave new world we wish to build lies within sovereign nations, whose populations or governments may, unsurprisingly, have an opinion of their own.

This structure also suffers from an absence of timeframe. Is the policy a set of principles to be applied in future foreign policy issues over a 60 year period? If so, then referring to present day conflicts or problems may not be necessary. A shorter timeframe would necessitate a deeper look at specific regions and countries. The paper is silent on such matters - is it general principles only or are we setting out policy for the next 3-5 years?

In the latter case probably the major global development is China's Belt and Road initiative, and maritime 'silk road', which have been creating a swathe of Chinese influence through Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey to the Mediterranean, taking in some GCC countries and the Horn of Africa. China and Russia are being brought closer together as a result.

These are important tectonic shifts in the global balance, and are central to UK foreign policy making over the next decade for the UK and the EU. However strangely little attention is afforded it in the new foreign policy report.

There are many other important developments which the party's new policy might be expected to usefully address. These include Iran and the JCPOA, the end of quantitative easing, the rise of protectionism, the Yemen war, US debt and the US petrodollar, Brexit, the fallout from Chinese influence in south-east Asia and Africa, the consequences of a Russian 'victory' in Syria and a Western 'defeat' in Iraq and Afghanistan, the arms trade, the 'proxification' of war, and many other issues that will be with us for at least the next three to five years.

Perhaps surprisingly The World We're In section pays scant attention to such matters.

A fair explanation for this apparent neglect might be found in the list of policy priorities and the goals described. They are summarised as:

- i) promotion of gender equality
- ii) addressing climate change and the environment
- iii) extending and protecting human rights
- iv) reducing economic inequality
- v) improving access to information and communications technology.

These are linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). However the report purports to be an updated foreign policy statement.

MDGs are important, but international development goals are not foreign policy; primarily since they exclude the pursuit of the UK's (or EU's or western) self interest. A foreign policy which circumvents the concept of the UK's interests and those of its allies is not a foreign policy. A foreign policy includes international development policy but also includes UK defence, economic, diplomatic, environmental, global governance, human rights and migration policy among others.

Proposals for explicit changes specifically in foreign policy represent the weakest part of the report, whereas they should be the strongest.

Proposals include making 1,000 or more agreements with mobile phone companies worldwide so UK citizens receive text messages about UK embassies on arrival in foreign countries.

They also include the UK spending vast sums developing IT, fast internet and artificial intelligence capacity in poorer countries, without making reference to why such countries fall behind in the first place, or whether direct investment of aid funds in IT infrastructure is the best way of achieving such aims.

The report seems ignorant of the telecomms and IT sectors in the developing world; quite a shortcoming in a policy committing billions of pounds of UK taxpayers' money.

There is a proposal for a pan-governmental cabinet committee on international affairs,. However, there has been such a thing for over 100 years. It was recently (mis)renamed the National Security Council, a change made with the approval of the Lib Dems in Coalition.

Nine extra non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council are proposed, but there is no proper explanation as to why and what problem this change addresses.

A proposal is made that senior staffing at the Foreign Office should be 50/50 male female. This is an admirable goal to be pursued (the FCO is the worst offender) but it is implied that this is a policy to be applied across government.

It is therefore a public administration matter not a foreign policy one. In any case it is also implied that it is to be summarily implemented. Is this achieved by firing senior males because of their gender, or by hiring hundreds of additional senior females, in which case what will it cost and what will they do?

Despite gender equality internationally at the top of the list, proposals for achieving it are largely absent. In particular the report seems to forget that countries where gender equality goals might be pursued are sovereign. Any major project to meet the report's ambitions (not just village level) would require the consent of the host government, and thus proposals are meaningless if this issue is not addressed.

Finally the report, by contrast to its MDG focus, seems very hawkish on military matters, seeing Libya as a successful humanitarian intervention by the UK and apparently regretting that we did not go to war with Russia in Syria on responsibility to protect grounds. The report argues for focusing UK forces almost exclusively on R2P-justified attacks around the world.

The reality is that most of these policy ideas have simply not been thought through or stress-tested, rather than being misguided.

I have absolutely no doubt that some ambassadors or high commissioners in London from 'emerging market' countries, would describe in language less polite than 'neo-colonialism' the absence of recognition of their sovereignty, the glossing over of domestic regulatory frames for IT investments for example, plus unexplained proposals for changes to the UN Security Council, and the idea of frequent R2P-justified attacks on countries.

## SYSTEM FAILURE

The system failure to which I refer is reinforced by my own experience as a past member of several Liberal Democrat Policy Working Groups, where similar problems resulted.

The brief, usually very broad, and the interpretation of the brief, are where the many problems begin. If the group doesn't start with, or arrive at, a definition of the problems with current government policy it is supposed to be addressing, then its work is likely to be unfocused and drift off into people's hobby horses or supply side interests rather than focus on public policy. If there are no initial hypotheses about the nature of the obstacles or the policy changes one might envisage, then research is likely to be unfocused.

This systemic difficulty is very clear on examination of many past policy papers, and has frequently led to long lists of sometimes random recommendations where the trivial are intermingled with the far-reaching, and many obvious problems with existing government policy are overlooked.

This method of deliberations is another systemic flaw. First, it is not clear if members are lay 'representatives' of parts of the party, or experts in the subject matter. The latter is at least nominally the basis of recruitment to the groups, but the former is the basis of a process that emulates the 'taking evidence' approach of parliamentary select committees.

Taking evidence from organisations can be difficult in the pursuit of public policy, if such organisations send along public affairs or marketing officers merely lobbying over the superiority of their 'products' or activities.

Without problem-definition, the absence of robust lines of enquiry from such working groups further weakens the usefulness of the evidence-taking approach.

These Policy Working Groups do not apply conflicts of interest rules, and in my own experience not everyone on these groups is pursuing public policy.

Some have careers and CVs to enhance, and others are pursuing supply side interests. The latter is very common. The laborious nature of the groups' research system typically leads to a decline in attendance over their one or two years life. Those with motives other than public policy can easily sit out the meetings until there are only a handful attending, and ensure their sectional aims are met in the final report.

The proper response to the Britain's Place in the World is not just to recast the policy paper, addressing these criticisms. It should be to overhaul the policymaking process itself. This would be the best outcome for the party, and its credibility.

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Professor Paul Reynolds is a member of the Liberal Democrat Federal International Relations Committee

# MODERATELY IMMODERATE

It's both wrong and pointless to be moderate about deprivation when the Lib Dems have the policies needed if only they realised, says Richard Kemp

Since Vince Cable launched his ideas about a new supporters' group; what it might do and the suggestion that we should make a wider appeal to the 'moderates of the UK' I have thought about what he said and what that might mean in practice. I have also travelled to London, Cambridge, Taunton and parts of the Liverpool City Region to think about what that might mean.

I have looked with interest both at what Vince has had to say about our party and a way forward but also at the reaction to it. I welcome the discussion and agree with much of the analysis in the document that the party produced for conference.

I love the idea of a supporters' group which brings together the many people who help us but, for whatever reason, do not want to be part of a party. An informal grouping can ensure that we get proper feedback when we make policies and campaign, and partly cement their relationship with us. Of course, I would prefer them to become members but if they cannot let us go for a different model for them.

## ALARMING AND NAIVE

Two things I do disagree with. Firstly, the idea that people can quickly become candidates and then elected is alarming and naive. In a recent blog I talked about the hard work of being a councillor, MP or even committed activist. People need not only to know that before they stand but also 'feel' what is required. Already more than 30% of people who become councillors only serve one term, if that. They don't realise the stress and strains.

Speed is not the answer to this. If we want more people to stand we must become better at providing support for people who will have difficulty in fulfilling an elected role; people from minority groups, parents with children, the disabled and others.

The sad fact is that our party, like all others, throws people in at the deep end and doesn't help people to swim.

I won't spend much time on the idea of our leader not being a parliamentarian. It's just a bonkers notion. Similarly, the idea that anyone can vote for who should be our candidates is tosh. There are ways in which we can and should involve more people in both policy making and candidate choosing but having members not having the final vote is not one of them.

My major disagreement, however, is with the concept of being a moderate. My ambition has always to act moderately but to think and campaign radically.

What do I mean by that? Well behaving moderately is behaving liberally. I am appalled by the way that many people these days too easily slag off their opponents even the ones in their own party. I am appalled by the echo chambers of Twitter and other

parts of the social media.

Really nasty stuff gets said and then disseminated. Many Twitter accounts exist in a fact free zone with whole histories being created from a tissue of lies and then promulgated.

Many people I know have left social media behind. Some watch it but don't participate. Cyber bullying has become a way of life that some of us endure from our political opponents on a regular basis. Some politicians shy away from face-to-face meetings; public meetings and the numbers of hustings at election time has massively shrunk. Without such primary contact arguments become unhinged, partisan, devoid of humour and fact.

I'm no shrinking violet in the council chamber or anywhere but humour is a better tool than invective and I always try to be courteous, factual and polite as I propose positions. The football metaphor, "Play the ball not the man", is the methodology that I try to use.

But where I cannot be moderate is in the policies and programmes that I and our party espouse. I haven't spent 51 years in the party, 36 of them as a councillor in a deprived city and 23 years as a councillor in a deprived ward, because I believe that moderate ways forward will solve the problems that I see daily.

I am a radical liberal. I believe that all the evidence we have indicates that the only way to mend a broken society, and our society is broken, is to rebuild it sector by sector, area by area from the bottom up.

Our society, but certainly the great cities of the north, are suffering because whole cities, communities and individuals have become powerless. The great and the good make decisions in Westminster and Whitehall; in corporate board rooms around the world or in well meaning but remote non-profit organisations which are often poorly informed and usually not focussed on real needs and practical solutions. Too many people are now left behind and while letting people have more money is an important step, letting them have more control of their lives is equally important (yes, I know that the two do often go together).

Let me just give four examples from my past and present.

Almost 40 years ago I established the largest housing cooperative programme in western Europe when I was chair of Liverpool's housing committee. Today there are more than 40 housing co-ops in the city with better designed, better run and more sustainable communities than anything that was provided by council housing or social landlords. People maximise their involvement in the key decisions about their home and community.

Today I serve on the board of one of the subsidiaries of Churches, Charities and Local Authorities, which provides a first-class investment service for

a better return on capital than entirely private organisations.

It pays its staff well for their skills but not opulently as they look after more than £8.5bn of assets. Greed does not have to be the key motivator for the people behind financial decisions.

At the other end of the scale I keep my savings, such as they are, in both a building society and Lodge Lane Credit Union. In both cases they provide as a good a return or better for my savings than banks and again do so without paying vast salaries. Any 'profit' is returned to the communities that the staff work in, live in and support.

I buy a lot of food at the farmers market in my ward. Erica and I buy our food and other supplies wherever possible in local shops and markets where any profit made recycles around the local community and where shop and stall keepers both know their customers and care for them as part of the community.

You might say that there are small things but if we all did them they would become big things. They indicate that other ways are possible than creating 'bigness' and remoteness. The fact that I subscribe to neither the loony left or the loony right does not make me a moderate. I am a radical liberal and proud of it.

So, what can we do about it?

Well firstly we have to look at our policies and realise how good they are were we prepared to talk about them enough; disseminate them enough and live them enough.

I am doing a series of articles on my blog about the radical policies which we have agreed at recent party conferences. The ones on housing, health and education that we have passed this year are especially good. Look at my conclusions (at [Richardkemp.wordpress.com](http://Richardkemp.wordpress.com)) and you might think I have radicalised them a bit. That is true, but basically I have added little to the policy asks but have tried to explain them in a way that means something to people who are not policy nerds.

Secondly, we need to pull the themes out of our policies and show the golden threads of liberalism which flow through them. Bottom up policies; returning decision making to people; fighting bureaucracy; fighting greed; fighting environmental devastation; fighting nationalistic isolationism. All these things can be seen in so many parts of our policy but when we join the dots up we do in such a bland and boring way that I doubt even a majority of our conference delegates read the stuff that comes out of the party sausage machine. We need to write and speak about things in a way that appeals not to the leader writer of the Guardian but to men and women in the pub.

## **FAR ANGRIER**

Thirdly, we need to be far angrier and more emotive about what is happening to our communities; country and world.

*“I haven't spent 51 years in the party, 36 of them as a councillor in a deprived city, because I believe that moderate ways forward will solve the problems that I see daily”*

I just cannot be moderate about the number of children in this country who live in poverty. These kids are not statistics they are disasters. I cannot be moderate about the disparity between rich and poor in this country. I cannot be moderate about the fact that I am desperately worried about the way climate change will wreck the lives of my grandchildren and everyone else's grandchildren. I cannot be moderate about the fact that after six decades of housing improvement standards are once again slipping.

Fourthly we must move ourselves away from a concept that we are a part of the soggy centre of British politics. We are not somewhere between Labour Left and Tory Right. This party is on an entirely different plane. We are the only party that does not seek power for ourselves but would act as the facilitators of a transfer of power back to the people.

Labour and Tory alike hate this. They use different words but basically, they are both satisfied with the fact that we live in the most centralised state in western Europe. That's because they want the power for themselves.

Lastly, we need to convert these four ideas, which are complementary, into a great liberal crusade. People do not join us because they worry whether we are moderate or centrist enough. They don't join us because they don't have any clear idea of our vision for society; of our anger and of our passion. In political campaign terms we say we are “here all year not just at election time”. That is what we need to do more of. We are a crusade or we are a sideline; we are a force for major change or we are a non-entity.

The people of the UK are tired of conventional politics. Only the Lib Dems can bring our campaigning zeal to bear to bring to us parents who are tired of their children being in education factories; communities that are wrecked by decisions made by a remote government that doesn't care; 30 year-olds who have to wait for mum and dad to die before getting money for a house; commuters paying a fortune to travel like sardines into our cities, that there is a better way.

If our party is prepared to take on society's vested interest then we will find that we do not speak for 8, 9 or 10% of the electorate but for 50% and more. We must break the power of Westminster and Whitehall we must set the people of the UK free.

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Richard Kemp is leader of the Liberal Democrats on Liverpool City Council

# STILL OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MIND

Despite recent funding increases mental health services remain shamefully inadequate, especially for the young, says Claire Tyler

Mental health has rocketed up the political and public agenda in recent times, but despite its increased salience, and the recent Budget announcement, the Government has failed to come up with a properly resourced, rounded and long term plan to address a growing crisis – one that addresses prevention and early intervention as well as immediate need.

Demand for mental health services has increased dramatically. In the last five years the number of patients accessing them has risen by a third. Nowhere is this increase in demand as clear as with children and young people.

Recently, Action for Children reported that 1 in 3 children and young people suffer from some kind of mental health issue. This is a significant increase from the 1 in 10 found in 2004. Alarming, the number of children attending A&E has doubled in the past eight years, a clear sign that efforts of prevention and early intervention are failing.

While demand for mental health services has been increasing across the board, many services have stagnated or been cut, resulting in diminishing access. There has long been talk about achieving “parity of esteem” between mental and physical health as enshrined in the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, including a vaguely worded pledge in the NHS’s Five Year Forward View to achieve parity by 2020 and now talk of a “disproportionate” £2bn of the additional £20 bn by 2023-24 for the NHS going to mental health services.

## YEARS OF NEGLECT

In reality, due to years of chronic underinvestment and neglect, coverage of services and waiting times are miles from what would be acceptable for physical health. While the £2bn is certainly significant compared with the total £12bn a year currently spend on mental health, independent commentators have estimated that it is only half what would be needed to achieve any sense of parity with physical health. So despite the recent headlines, we still have a long way to go.

So what is the basic problem? Firstly, in recent times, certain headline grabbing specialist areas of the mental health system have been prioritised ahead of others, leaving the backbone core services, including both community mental health and crisis teams, desperately under resourced.

The result is highly erratic service coverage, long wait times, long distances to get care, and arbitrary thresholds that often exclude the most vulnerable. This puts more pressure on the whole health system by increasing attendances at A&E for cases that could have been prevented.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health, of which I am an active member, recently released a hard-hitting interim progress report on the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health (FYFV-MH). It found that people severely affected by mental illness must often jump through multiple hoops to get treatment at a time when they are at their most vulnerable. In one startling case, a patient was recommended by his GP to lie to the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Service for anxiety and depression, in order to get any treatment at all. Too often it was found that “those who are the sickest often wait the longest to get help”.

The effects have been particularly troubling for children and young people’s services. While demand for these services has risen, access to treatment trails far behind. Of children and young people affected, only a quarter can access the help they need from the NHS. As referrals increase, far too many are prevented from accessing mental health services because they were not yet considered ill enough. Shockingly, these rejections have included people who experienced abuse and have shown signs of self-harm. When young people are finally taken seriously, too often they are added to long waiting lists or sent out of area (sometimes hundreds of miles away) for care – both of which can exacerbate their conditions.

Particularly alarming for many families has been the inadequate, and in some areas, non-existent, provision of crisis care for children and young people even though we know that half of mental ill health begins before the age of 14.

This was brought into sharp relief by the BBC’s Panorama recent programme Kids in Crisis which catalogued harrowing examples of young people who were self-harming or experiencing suicidal thoughts being unable to access urgent support when they needed it, often outside of typical 9-5 office hours and weekends. According to Freedom of Information requests, 1.5m young people with mental health problems in England are being let down by not giving them access to the 24/7 support they need.

While the Budget announcement of new mental health crisis centres providing support in every A&E unit in England is undoubtedly welcome, it is very unclear how these services will be tailored to meet the needs of children, how they will link in with existing community based services, the timescale for roll out or whether the resources will be ring-fenced so they can only be spent on mental health crisis centres and how Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will be held accountable for delivery. There is a long history of similar announcements simply not being followed through and the money being diverted elsewhere in the health service.

Mental health services are particularly dependent on a strong workforce. Unfortunately, staff shortages have been on the rise too. The King's Fund describes workforce shortages as the biggest challenge to delivering the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health. Nationally, around a tenth of all posts in specialist mental health services in England are vacant. The Royal College of Nursing found that vacancy rates for mental health nurses ranged from 8% in the North East to 25% in London. The number of consultant child and adolescent psychiatrists has fallen by 7% in last four years. And those figures don't include the current exodus from the NHS caused by Brexit.

Government's current goals for children's mental health are embarrassingly low. The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health aims for 35% of children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition to get NHS treatment by 2020, leaving a terrifying 65% without help. This would never be tolerated for a physical health condition.

Last December the Government released a Green Paper titled Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision. The paper significantly lacked the ambition young people deserve, and contained glaring and, to my mind, unacceptable omissions.

For one, the paper focussed almost exclusively on interventions through schools, and totally neglected children outside of traditional school environments. Children in care are disproportionately likely to suffer from mental health problems: almost half have a diagnosable mental health disorder. Almost two-thirds of children are in care because of abuse or neglect, and nine in ten children who have been abused develop a mental health disorder before adulthood. There was also a noticeable lack of focus on early years and social care. Moreover, its focus on school based teams would increase pressure on the teaching workforce without additional resources or proper training.

The current long timeframes involved in implementing the Government's Green Paper proposals will leave hundreds of thousands of children and young people without the care they need over the next few years. Rolling out the plans to only "a fifth to a quarter of the country by 2022-23" - an extraordinarily low ambition - is almost beyond belief. It will be interesting to see whether any of the £2bn announced in the Budget will be sent in this direction.

Meanwhile, a quarter of cash strapped local authorities have had to cut services for young people's mental health, including community based early intervention, school based resilience programmes and counselling for the particularly vulnerable. Needless to say this is entirely counter-productive - we will only get a grip on the children's mental health crisis if we prioritise early intervention and prevention.

On staffing too the Government response to date been totally insufficient. To give just one example, the Stepping Forward plan committed an additional 8,100 posts for mental health nurses and midwives by 2021. Yet there has been an increase of only 365 mental health nurses in NHS trusts between March 2017 and March 2018, which leads to a seemingly impossible task of needing to recruit an additional 7,735 nurses in just three years.

Having painted a pretty bleak picture it's important to say that there are solutions if only the political will can be found and delivery is taken seriously. The APPG's report sets out some critical recommendations, particularly around strengthening core services and implementing a significant expansion 24/7 crisis care for adults and children. Of course, funding will play a central role in addressing this crisis. For too long money for the mental health has been diverted to physical health, and money for key core services have been redirected to new services.

## FASHIONS IN FUNDING

With rapidly changing political tides, this money must be ring-fenced to protect against fashions in funding and to help service providers plan future services. We must also put in place a strong and clear mental health investment standard - including for children's services - that clearly sets out the service standards that all CCGs must meet. These standards must have the teeth necessary to drive reform: including clear sanctions if CCGs they fail meet these standards or divert the money elsewhere.

In terms of services, we need to strengthen both urgent crisis care and prevention and early intervention - it's both/and rather than either/or. As demand for services continues to grow, the only way we will be able to cope is if we stem future demand.

We must introduce 24-hour services including mental health liaison teams in all hospitals and ensure that physical and mental health care is fully integrated. We need accessible 24-hour service provision for everyone in the country, adult or child, either by an onsite dedicated liaison psychiatry service in every hospital, or via in-reach from a community service. This must include integrated in- and out-patient services for patients with long term conditions which meet the needs of the more complex patients. We should also ensure that all GPs receive core mental health training, and that primary care can effectively diagnose and treat mental health to help reduce the stigma within the NHS workforce.

Of course the long term solutions are not about 'sticking plaster'. There is so much more that can be done at community level to build resilience to help prevent mental health issues escalating, above all starting early in the life cycle. The Mental Health Policy Commission's Report, Investing in a Resilient Generation: Making the Case for a Mentally Prosperous Nation, contained many great examples of supporting families, workplaces, and communities to build a resilient generation for the future. This is where some of the mental health funding should go in a truly joined up, long term, mental health strategy.

We are expecting the Government's long term NHS plan before Christmas. No doubt it will contain more detail on how the Budget announcements will be taken forward.

Our task is to hold the Government's feet to the fire on delivering a long term strategy that makes good mental health a fundamental building block of a healthy and productive society, not a Cinderella service for people falling through the net.

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

# CHURCHILL WOULD HAVE VOTED REMAIN

## The wartime leader's own speeches may it clear he was no eurosceptic, says Graham Bishop

Winston Churchill has often been voted the most important/influential Briton ever. I was surprised to read claims that Churchill was a Eurosceptic, so I read through all his four great 'European' speeches from 1946 to 1949. They were carefully prepared as a historic record of his views, delivered at grand events amid great ceremony and designed to achieve impact: they certainly did.

Read Felix Klos's short book Churchill on Europe with its brilliant account of the build-up, and response afterwards, to the 1946 Zurich speech. Klos then chronicles how the reaction inspired Churchill onwards to the founding of what is now the European Movement at his Albert Hall speech – given beneath the banner Europe Arise.

Having read the speeches and considered the way the world was changing around him, I have no doubt that Churchill would have voted to Remain In the European Union (EU) – but of course no-one can ever know now.

However, he was one of the EU's 'founding fathers' and its values represent the fulfilment of his life's work. Moreover, he approved of our 1961 application to join a Community where the first sentence of its founding treaty made clear that its over-arching political aim - "ever-closer union amongst the peoples of Europe" - went far wider than merely a 'common market'.

In the darkest days of 1940, Churchill had proposed a complete union between Great Britain and his beloved France. After the terrible consequences of what he called the Thirty Years War (1914-45), what should Britain and France do to tackle the 'German Problem'?

His answer was clear – initially, he wanted France to take the lead in helping Germany to re-join the European family.

During the period spanned by these speeches, the Soviet Union – the direct predecessor state of Putin's Russia – had just acquired the atomic bomb, and occupied by force the eastern part of Europe – eerily echoed by Putin's current machinations.

As he watched the empire unravel – epitomised by Indian independence in 1947 – his views evolved as events unfolded around him. How else would a statesman of his experience react to a new situation? He had experienced the vicissitudes of the highest offices for more than a third of a century – in contrast to the handful of years of our current and recent leadership.

In 1948, the breadth of his vision was laid out at The Hague: "Mutual aid in the economic field and joint military defence must inevitably be accompanied step by step with a parallel policy of closer political unity." In the last of these speeches, he made his views on the UK's role crystal clear: "Britain is an integral part of Europe, and we mean to play our part in the revival of her prosperity and greatness."

He had already founded the European Movement in 1947, tasking it "to create this body of public interest and public support is one of the main tasks of the European Movement... It must now build up a vast body of popular support..." In the centre of the task was the Charter of Human Rights – agreed in 1951.

His founding values of the importance of law and justice for citizens – in a peaceful world – were recognised in the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union: "for over six decades [having] contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe". Churchill wanted 'Europe' to be a project of the people, not a project only of the governments – inherently the 'elite'.

Some have taken a few comments scattered across the decades of his work and tried to argue that Churchill would have been a eurosceptic. Reading these set-piece speeches – dramatic and graphic as they are – quickly gave the lie to such suggestions.

Former prime minister Edward Heath delivered the most powerful rebuttal in 1996: "I knew Winston Churchill, I worked with him, I stayed with him at his home at Chartwell and I have read his speeches many times. I can assure you that Winston Churchill was no eurosceptic."

Anyone who feels that the clearly-stated views of the most influential-ever Briton are worth considering should read his speeches and consider the changing circumstances in which they were delivered.

I did – and now have no doubt that Churchill would have urged us to stretch every sinew to make sure the British public have their voice heard on the outcome of Brexit talks through a democratic People's Vote to remain in the EU.

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Graham Bishop is vice-chair, European Movement (UK)



# AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE, CONTEMPORARY-STYLE

## Trevor Smith sees Nick Clegg as a natural fit at Facebook

The appointment of Nick Clegg to help promote a more favourable public image for Facebook at a reported salary of more than £1m plus benefits is but the latest stage of an effortlessly successful but very episodic life; to say “career” would be misleading as it would imply some kind of recognisable pathway.

He is bright enough in his way, but quite without direction unlike his brighter wife who is highly focused and thus much cleverer.

Clegg’s earliest lucky break came when he worked as a special adviser for Leon Brittan in Brussels. The Westland helicopter debacle in 1987 prompted Michael Heseltine’s abrupt resignation from the Thatcher cabinet and led to the consequent dispatch of Brittan to be an EU Commissioner.

Brittan took a shine to Clegg and wanted to help him into politics. He knew that Clegg would not join the Conservatives because of the party’s ambivalent attitude to Europe. Brittan approached Paddy Ashdown who helped Clegg become an MEP in 1995. Ashdown later facilitated his transfer to get elected MP for the then Lib Dem-held seat of Sheffield Hallam.

Charles Kennedy was forced to step down as Lib Dem Leader and was followed briefly by Ming Campbell. Clegg then stood successfully for the leadership in 2007. After the inconclusive general election in 2010 he spent the ensuing five years as deputy-prime minister in the Coalition led by David Cameron. It was indeed a meteoric rise.

In government, however, he achieved little for his party, concentrating too much on enjoying the benefits that accompany the trappings of office and too little on leading the Lib Dems.

In 2012 I branded him in *Liberator* as “a cork bobbing on the water”. Not surprisingly, the outcome at the 2015 general election was calamitous with Lib Dem reduced from 57 MPs eight. Cameron soon arranged for the EU referendum that opted to Leave after which Theresa May became prime minister. Equally fatefully, she called a General Election in 2017 which produced a minority government that also lost Clegg his seat.

In the aftermath Clegg wrote a couple of self-regarding books, became a radio broadcaster and newspaper columnist while joining with other parliamentary has-beens in opposing Brexit; their efforts may well have been counter-productive.

Then, all of a sudden, having previously been critical of the multi-social media corporates, he blithely succumbed to join Facebook and moves to California. This seeming volte-face, attracted much, mainly adverse, media comment. Ashdown, with all his misplaced patronage long since spent, vainly and pathetically urged his erstwhile protégé not to neglect Liberal values, as if Clegg had ever seriously espoused them!

Clegg has only ever pursued the advancement of Clegg in the six languages at his disposal. He is but one of the spectacular symptoms of what ailed parliamentary democracy in the UK. In former times, not that long ago in fact, those who would become leading parliamentarians usually contested one or two hopeless seats in their late twenties/early thirties, before successfully entering the Commons a year or two later. They would be enlisted into the junior ministerial echelons in their mid-forties, and then move up the hierarchy to a full post in the cabinet over the next decade. The most successful would take over at Number 10 in their sixties, enter the Lords in their seventies and compose their memoirs before expiring in their eighties.

All changed: cabinet posts and even the premiership became mainly mid-career appointments leading on to the agglomeration of excessively well-remunerated posts to see them through to retirement.

Leading examples include John Major, Peter Mandelson, George Osborne and especially Tony Blair, all of whom acquired vast fortunes advising all kinds of regimes, banks, other financial services and multi-national conglomerates, which have often included some of the very worst examples of these categories. So far, in comparison, Clegg has some way to go to catch up but he likely won’t precisely because he’s never carried out a real job and he’ll get rumbled. At least, now, he’ll be able to send his children to fee-paying schools.

Things have changed again. Jeremy Corbyn, who languished for long on the back benches, became leader of the opposition in his sixties, while May is a true representative of the earlier type of political/parliamentary career.

What next? A parliamentary career is not what it was: the pay is poor, the workload horrendous and much public policy is effectively dictated by the smallish number of cartelised corporations which severely diminishes Parliament’s role.

Not surprisingly, the overall quality of MPs had nose-dived. Sir Nicholas Clegg’s excursions encapsulate much of what has happened.

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Trevor Smith is a Liberal Democrat life peer

# TAKING BACK THE EMPTIES

## Ample empty and under used property exist to solve the housing crisis without concreting green belts, says Kiron Reid

There is an obsession among Labour, the trades unions, the construction industry, related PR firms, Radio 4 and many Liberal Democrats with building on the Green Belt.

This is an ideological and inversely snobbish obsession for some, and a pure commercial motivation for others. Yet there are many obviously true statements about what is causing a homes crisis that are ignored by Governments of every shade and that don't fit with the Labour Party or the free for all of 'Young Liberals' or the self-beating up of radio presenters who feel guilty because they live in nice areas.

There are more empty properties than there is housing need. There are more empty properties in the north and Midlands and Wales than there are those in housing need. But even in London and the richer cities if you walk around any borough you will find plenty of derelict buildings that could be converted and plenty of residential buildings that are not occupied or under-occupied.

### PAROCHIAL OPPOSITION

Not everyone can live where they want to, that is simply a fact, and I've never understood the mentality of the builders, their lobbyists and ideologues whose response to people wanting to keep a nice place is to attack them for opposing development that will change the character of a place. At the same time, as Mark Smulian pointed out in *Liberator* 390, local parochial opposition to any development hinders meeting genuine housing need; it also wastes lots of resources on bureaucracy and lawyers.

An obsession with house prices by the same media and professionals who claim to want to end the housing crisis just exacerbates the problem – more supply should reduce prices but builders sitting on sites for the last ten years, because of 'market conditions' has artificially helped keep prices high.

As explained in *Liberator* 390, the drip release of houses by big builders keeps prices high also. I don't think a land value tax hitting all landowners or a flood of new housing would be helpful when the demand (due to affordability) would not be there, but builders have had huge amounts of public subsidy and failed to deliver. A decade to recover from the economic crash has given them enough time to deliver.

There is no shortage of building. Travel anywhere and you will see houses being built in every town and city and on the outskirts of most villages. This has been the same for more than 10 years – new building has filled in many brownfield and greenfield sites in the countryside. Executive houses and 'luxury' flats have been built in town and cities but none are for people on low incomes who want to buy or who are struggling to afford to rent their own home.

Executive mansions are great for the revenue base

of councils and hopefully the residents will also use local services. But they don't help people struggling to get somewhere to live and the hypocrisy of councils and builders in favour of Green Belt and park or open space development is staggering.

Tory and Labour councils alike are as keen on easy expensive development on the Green Belt, less keen on renovation, restoring difficult buildings, and as is fairly pointed out Liberal Democrats unfortunately often take a parochial stand that damages credibility.

I entirely support different policies in different circumstances but not when they are always anti change. In my own city, Liverpool, tiny expensive flats proliferate while historic buildings are demolished and many more crumbling under Labour and the previous Liberal Democrat councils.

The Help to Buy programme pushes prices up. It subsidises comrades in the big business building industry. Help to Buy was introduced with wide support for the best of intentions. But a large part of what it does is drive up prices artificially.

Nice new three bed homes in Birkenhead from £130,000 do not provide for families on low incomes. Pre-Labour's credit bubble, the traditional two and a half times income mortgage would require a £50,000 salary to pay that back. Even with a government loan for 20%, the 80% mortgage required for a two bed (£82,500 of £110,000) is well above any living wage let alone minimum or starting graduate wages for many couples.

Have students caused the housing crisis? Or rather, have Government backed student maintenance loans inadvertently caused the housing crisis?

Students are paying, on borrowed money, rents for one room that a couple might pay for a one or two bedroom flat. The student rent on some Liverpool houses is more than double what a family could pay to rent a house. The university market and status-driven expansion of university students has helped price many people out of living in established residential areas of our towns and cities.

While the new flats have often been built on previously non-residential sites, the profiteering on houses and the development of student accommodation to the exclusion of most other types is leaving our town and city centres unbalanced residentially.

It is a truism to say that not everyone needs a degree and that students don't need to live in luxury. The training need for the construction industry might be assuaged by giving large loans for skilled technical trainees – in building and utilities and infrastructure – to have courses and live in luxury. Again there must be a middle way between our out-of-control student pampering system and the much less student comfort-focused (but as increasingly 'market' / 'customer' focused) systems I see in the former Communist countries.

Government tax and incentives policy should prioritise the restoration and conversion of derelict, empty and outdated buildings. There are enough derelict buildings to convert or empty homes to bring back in to use to end the housing crisis. If every empty church – and every unsustainable closed pub in a depopulated inner city area – were converted to residential then many families could have new homes.

The financial incentives to bring empty properties into use should make it a ‘no brainer’. Costs for landlords have been driven up significantly by increased regulation – much in the name of safeguarding tenants, councils cracking down on bad landlords, or sensible banking processes. Whether this bureaucracy and cost achieves the stated aims of political campaigners is debateable. That it actually increases costs for those renting is undeniable. (I declare an interest as a small landlord – I rent out two flats that I used to live in. I haven’t yet passed the cost of our Labour city Mayor’s landlord tax onto rent but will have to in future as my regulation driven costs increase significantly.) The full council tax on second homes that Lib Dems in rural areas long campaigned for, and on empty properties, provides a stick that catches many ordinary people who have saved and invested wisely while at the same time long term empties still sit empty. The tax system should make it financially worthwhile for owners to bring properties back in to use for sale or rent.

Financial incentives should encourage everyone with a spare room they don’t need to let a room or two at a low rent to those who need them. Carrots are needed more than sticks to change our attitude to housing. It is fair and reasonable to encourage better use of the rooms in houses and flats available whether for private owners, rented or social tenants subsidised by the taxpayer. When there is a housing crisis everyone having their own two bed flat or rattling around in a three, four or five bedroom house is not reasonable. In other countries it is still normal for extended families to live together in large houses, often subdivided into apartments for different parts of the family.

## FORMER COMMUNISTS

In Ukraine and other former Communist countries that I visit it is normal for a family of four (including three generations) to live in a one bed apartment. While many families have houses, and couples with a child may have their own apartment, there is usually much better use of space than here. That is sometimes by necessity but once again there must a middle way between our excesses of wasted space, and cramped conditions, that can end a social problem that has lasted for far too long.

Margaret Thatcher introduced the ‘rent a room’ tax relief. A home owner, tax payer, could let out a room in their house where they were living tax free up to a level of then £2,000. This was well publicised and helps to provide accommodation while giving people a small extra income. The crisis now needs bigger solutions and we should do this on a much grander

*“Executive houses and ‘luxury’ flats have been built in town and cities but none are for people on low incomes”*

scale with both a money and a charitable incentive to rent rooms. A much greater tax relief or amount of money that can be kept by any occupier if they let a room out, whether an owner, private or social tenant. This scheme should be widely publicised as the original rent a room scheme was. In fact for this tax year the limit has increased to £7,500 from

£4,250 in 2015/16. A good start, though I wasn’t aware of it. Does it matter if some wealthy owners of large homes get a bit of cash back if it helps solve a pressing social need? Letting out rooms used to be a common way for owners who had a house but were cash poor to get an income – is it bureaucracy that has hit this or our more affluent lives?

Letting out rooms shouldn’t only apply to home owners. For private tenants some simplified scheme requiring but assuming the permission of owners and mortgage lenders should be introduced, and for tenants of social landlords a similar assumed permission but with priority to those waiting on its lists, and a strong presumption that the licence ends when the tenant changes.

These officially sanctioned sub-lets could not give the tenancy rights that regular tenancy does – that would not be fair on those waiting for a regular tenancy, or on owners / landlords – but it should be a financial win for everyone. For non-home owners the schemes could even be tweaked so that a little of the extra money coming in goes to the owner / landlord or housing provider (helping cover their costs and insurance etc.), everyone is a winner.

Faith, Hope and Charity. The best scheme I’ve read about to help people afford rents is also a way to help combat loneliness among older people. As BBC Politics reported 24 December 2017: “Meet the housemates with the 68 year age gap. Florence (95) met her housemate Alexandra (27) through a scheme to tackle loneliness.” This is a great way to use genuine spare bedrooms and help people match companionship and cheap housing.

We should be hearing much more about this and authorities, ‘civil society’ and ‘voluntary’ groups should be working together to make more of this a reality.

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Kiron Reid is a member of the Liberator Collective

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**Cambodia Once Again Will Stun the World**  
by Sam Rainsy  
Editions Balland  
2018 €15

The title of Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy's new book reflects the boundless optimism that the man himself displays, despite the many hard knocks he has received over the years and his involuntary status of political exile.

I guess the allusion in the title is to the golden era of Angkor, where, at the start of the 12th century, an estimated one million people lived around the temple complex, which would make it the largest conurbation of its time. But for most people, of course, Cambodia entered their consciousness when the genocidal crimes of the Khmer Rouge (1975-79) came to light. Though a sizeable majority of the population today are too young to have any direct experience of the horrors of the concentration camps and killing fields, the trauma endures, barely alleviated by the kleptocratic nature of the regime of prime minister Hun Sen.

The PM, his family and cronies have amassed great fortunes over recent decades while most Cambodians suffer a standard of living that is among the lowest in South East Asia, and much of the country's environment has been ravaged.

Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party won 90% of the seats in last month's general election, which was widely denounced by foreign governments as a sham.

Sam Rainsy's National Rescue Party was excluded, having been forcibly "dissolved" by the authorities last year, though he pursues his political agenda in exile through the newly-created Cambodia National Rescue Movement.

This book, in a series



# REVIEWS

of sometimes sketchy, very short passages, gives some pointers to the sort of society he would like to see in a putative Cambodian renaissance, based on the rule of law, an end to corruption and full civil rights. As a devout Buddhist, he is forgiving towards his political enemies, even if they do not return the courtesy, and he is prepared to work with any outside country, including China, to build the nation he envisages.

This is not entirely pie-in-the-sky, as Sam Rainsy in the 1990s was minister of finance in the government of Norodom Ranariddh (which was overthrown in a coup in 1997) and he has excellent international contacts, not least through the Liberal International. But for the time being, he is an outcast, admired (often in secret) by millions of his compatriots, denounced by Hun Sen, and sadly unlikely to be able to flesh out the bones of his vision for a new Cambodia any time soon.

Jonathan Fryer

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**The London Lover**  
by Clancy Sigal  
Bloomsbury 2018 £20

It is easy to imagine a shouty, pushy Yank being adored by the bohemian London left of the 50s - especially a Yank with the highest award an exile can carry in with him at the time: a Macarthy Era Victim Badge.

Clancy Sigal, who died in Los Angeles last year aged 91, arrived in London via Paris in 1957 before kicking himself out in the 80s. This is his account of those years. It is a reminder of how aspirational those times were.

Flattened post-war minds and cities marched towards a bright new future and in Sigal's case through a maze of political cliques and personal cul-de-sacs. One minute he is helping David Owen resuscitate a cardiac arrest in the stalls at the Lyric Hammersmith, (Owen tells him to stop holding the sick man's hand, "Idiot! he doesn't need that - go and ring 999") the

next he's holding the doors open to his flat for use as a crash pad by fugitives from RD Laing's Philadelphia Association therapy gulag. (Clancy must still be frightened of the man because he makes no mention that his 1976 US book detailing the Kingsley Hall goings-on was threatened with a libel action by this "brawling, drunken foul-mouthed Scot". 'Zone of the Interior' was eventually published in the UK in 2005.)

Sigal's four year relationship with Doris Lessing is well-known (he appears as 'Saul Green' in *The Golden Notebook*) and took place at a time when 'free love' was just a glint in an unborn hippy's eye. Perhaps less known is how protective he was of Doris.

Ralph Milliband, ever the chancer and just like his sons, was told "no" by Sigal when he asked to take her out. And any expectation of consciousness-raising dialectics with exiled African nationalists who called in at the Lessing house were dashed when the opening conversational gambit was "When I walk in the door, you walk out, boy. Understand?" (Harry Nkumbula when in London for talks on the Zambian independence constitution in 1960) or "You are an upstart. Skiddoo" (Joshua Nkomo).



Poor Clancy; he even once put his hand on Princess Margaret's knee and was met, after a very brief royal moment, with a look that could have executed. No-one can have told him of the protocol required before you tried it on with the Queen's sister. Apparently this involved touching the knee of a particular equerry first and then, and only then, after he had reported on you and your 'qualities' to the Princess, could there be any chance of a quiet glance instead of a glacial glare.

If you do get to read this engaging tale of the 'engaged New Reasoners' then keep an eye out for one, Melville Hardiment, a man of his time. Luckily for him (and his membership of the Labour Party) this time is not now.

Melville had a rabid lust for words and young women - in the case of the latter, the younger the better. His D-Day poem, *A Man of Few Words*, quoted by Sigal in full, is war poetry stripped of all the bourgeois sentiments of a Wilfred Blunt or the evasive mysticisms of Isaac Rosenberg. It is a poem right on target. For a while it was quite well known and anthologised for the 'O' Level curriculum, but is now unfairly neglected.

So is Clancy Sigal's own first book *Weekend in Dinlock*, the main subject of which, was a gritty miner called Len Doherty. Len wrote for Lawrence & Wishart those books that fed the New Reasoners' appetite for stories from the proletariat. He is to-day just as unfairly neglected. The Left reads books with quinoa not coal in them now. As Clancy tells us, when he and some hyper-active demonstrators watch themselves on the telly being beaten up by bobbies, "The world has noticed. And then it is over."

Jim Pennington

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## **Open Left: the future of progressive politics by Andrew Gamble Policy Network 2018**

Currently there are many calls for a centrist coalition in Britain or even for a new progressive party to bring some common sense into politics thereby combating the extremist tendencies around issues such as Brexit and immigration.

These political extremes are spreading throughout western democracies, partly fuelled by those with vested interests. Back in 2004, when eastern European countries joined the EU, a gamble was taken that western values would spread eastwards but it was acknowledged that the reverse could happen leading to a battle against the challenges of corruption and nationalism. Inevitably, in a free Europe, both have happened to some extent.

So, Professor Andrew Gamble's new book is timely, especially given the talk of political party realignment before the next general election.

Gamble believes that the place to start a new progressive project leading to a coalition is with an open left, his book being the result of seminars and discussions. This progressive project is not just for centre left socialists but also for liberals and environmentalists; instead of arguing over which party is the most progressive there is a need for a coming together.

Across Europe there has been a bleak outlook for the centre left since the 2008 crash with the challenges and dilemmas mainly focussed on security, economy, welfare and democracy. The book is structured around these four areas, focussing on Britain as the main example.

After WWII the US helped the countries of Europe (although Keynesian economics were pushed aside) but in the 1970s restructuring led to US foreign policy rebuilding the international order according to its own national interests. Now, when a new restructuring of international order is needed, Trump is eschewing multilateralism which is essential for progressive politics.

Democracy seems to be in retreat globally after decades of progress. Russia, Turkey and some EU members have become more authoritarian, fuelled by populist nationalism. Politicians are not trusted and states have become less able to solve problems.

An open left needs to work towards strengthening multilateral organisations including those concerned with the environment and nuclear proliferation. It is committed to an open international multilateral order, no longer western-centric but still rule-

based and cooperative, with progressive parties in each nation encouraging their populations to realise that their security depends upon engagement with the world rather than erecting barriers. Economic nationalism is now winning much support so "How can sovereignty and interdependence be reconciled?"

An open left needs policies for the national, regional, and global levels. [Those who are against the EU often think they are fighting globalisation, yet several authors including myself think that regionalisation is actually in part a protection from globalisation.]

So what would a new progressive project look like? Gamble acknowledges 'centre left' can be seen as an old-fashioned position and out of touch. It may seem as though it focuses on industries that used to be rather than the modern global economy. So, an 'open left' needs a multilateral international order no longer focused on western democracies, as well as "an inclusive and sustainable economy, a remodelled welfare state, and a renewed democracy".

A coalition is needed to unite progressive voices – old and young, all classes, cross-party and no party. "There is a very substantial party of progress in Britain as there is throughout Europe. The challenge is to forge the alliances to unite it under one banner."

Gamble believes an open left is the first step including: a national vision of what is wrong and how to put it right ; a leadership that can be trusted to be honest and competent; mutual dependence between capitalist economies and the welfare state; a PR electoral system which will represent more people via coalitions; a renewed democracy.

Interestingly he also discusses 'associate membership' of the EU which is something I would also expect to happen in the longer term within a two-tier EU (note that this is more than a Ukrainian-style 'association agreement'). He is also clear that the EU must avoid Balkanisation and inevitably will need to be more like a great power to survive in today's world.

Throughout the book Gamble compares and explains various opposing policies as being the main driving forces within politics. Corruption and self-interest are

attributed to authoritarian systems rather than democracies. However, as someone who has watched so-called 'illiberal' democracies around the Black Sea for many years, it is difficult not to compare some aspects of our current 'liberal' democracy with more authoritarian governments.

Still, Gamble is right to focus on policy, with his main message being that it is time for the supporters of progressive politics to unite. If in doubt read the 121 pages of the book, which can be read online free of charge at <https://policynetwork.org/publications/books/open-left/>

Carol Weaver

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## Europe Since 1989 a history by Philipp Ther Princeton 2018 £20.00

Isn't it typical that the smaller minds of these islands choose to turn their back on Europe just when a decent textbook on the recent of some its parts becomes available?

The book is at its best on Germany and eastern Europe, with which the author is most familiar, less so on the rest. Because it is not our specific story, some of the economics can be heavy going, but worth the challenge, especially in understanding different courses of action that were taken in response to the 2008 crisis, particularly since British governments have yet to learn. Keynesian solutions have fared better.

One of the great strengths of this book is that its author has a close personal relationship with the events that he chronicles. In this, history is not centrally 'great' men and women, but the masses who experience the consequences. Typically, 'Europe' is not as widely covered as the name suggests, focussing primarily on eastern Europe – as acceded to the EU, and Ukraine and Russia, which didn't, and their interplay with Germany and the EU. Ther is German, and from his youth, travelled and made friends in eastern Europe.

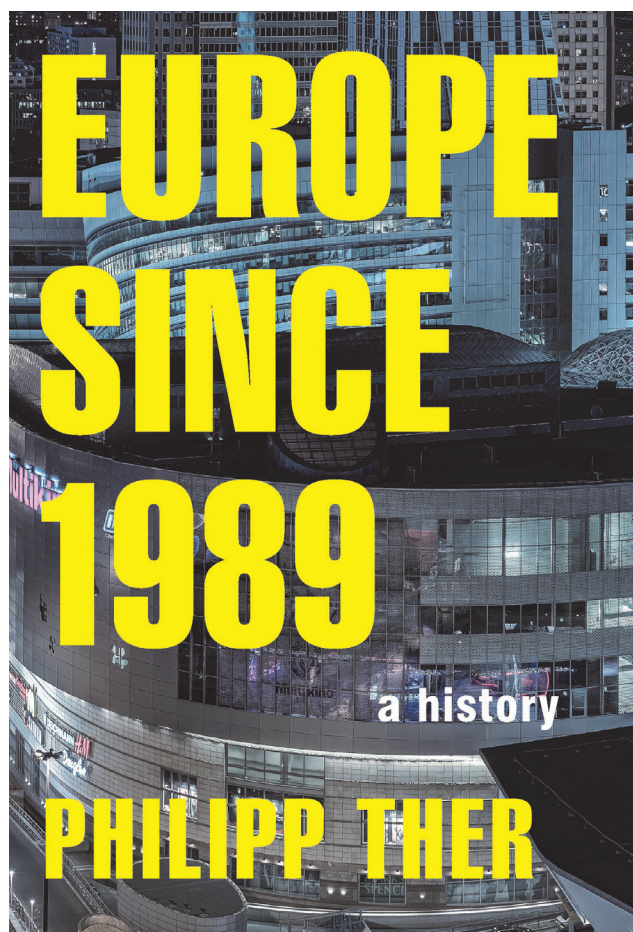
Much of his analysis is economic history; he is critical of neoliberalism (who isn't, economic ideas have their time, and those of

neoliberalism have passed?)

He says that there is an illusion of prosperity in post-Communist Europe, that while the same goods may be available as in the west, fewer can afford them. A fifth of the post-Communist population is richer, but two-fifths are poorer. Ther would attribute the rise of populists, Orbán in Hungary for example, to the bubble that burst. I would add that Orbán's convergence of left-right ideologies in the Hungarian context is not new – one might recall the Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Párt, better known as the Scythe Cross, and Nyilaskeresztes Párt – Hungarista Mozgalom, the Arrow Cross Party, of Ferenc Szálasi. Despite their anti-Communist rhetoric, the militia of the Arrow Cross was so heavily infiltrated by the Communist underground, as to be unreliable in the siege of Budapest in 1944-45; they literally changed sides. The convergence of left and right in populism is dangerous.

The 2008 crash has resonated across the continent since; at the time, I said it was a ten-year haul, at least, whatever lies politicians and the media chose to spin. Although xenophobia was not new, it heightened as immigration was a response to the recession.

Ther does not say (if it is known) what the percentage of the 200,000 leaving Latvia, or the 300,000 leaving Lithuania were Russian? Russian imperialism becomes more of a factor with the accession of Putin – his claim to be protector of Russians everywhere (recalling that Russian populations were seeded in countries formerly occupied within the Soviet Union alongside expulsions of the indigenous peoples, the Crimea Tartars for example). A Russian associate in Latvia chooses to trade from that country because it is both his home and perceptibly freer, but



retains loyalties to Russia and its former Communism. I don't know how typical this is, but is certainly a problem for the Baltic states with their predatory neighbour.

After the opening up Russia's oil and gas reserves to western investment, Putin has brought them back under state control. Intimidation was a common method with both investors and oligarchs. Doing business in Russia requires access at a personal level with policy makers. The system breeds corruption and exacerbates the rich-poor divide, kept in check by populism and high spending on social policies. The occupation of parts of Ukraine has brought sanctions from the west alongside falls in oil prices, challenging for such policies. But Ukraine runs deep in the Russian political psyche; where does it stand with the west?

Southern Europe is less familiar to Ther, but perhaps bore the worst impact of the 2008 crash and subsequent euro crisis. Inequities in tax systems or outright tax avoidance by the wealthy added to the problems. Ther argues that the statistics for living standards in Greece and Italy show that the neoliberal order weakens the very social resources that it

depends on. Lower incomes, rising unemployment, and reduced social benefits inhibit the mobility and flexibility of people in Southern Europe.

The situation calls for a reform package extending beyond the ten points of the Washington Consensus or the current IMF programmes. Just as Mario Monti in Italy found limitations to what neoliberalism and deregulation could achieve, Ther predicts that the methods of the EU and IMF in Greece will fail, basing this on German experience post reunification. There is discussion of Germany's Hartz IV social policies in this context. But, the warning – populists... can only be debunked if the dialectic between technocracy and populism is broken. The traditional parties must recast the term 'reform' in a positive light and use it to develop visions for the future. But the future lies... with the younger generation and its prospects. And these were far more promising after 1989 than now. Sooner or later, Ther predicts, the social hardship in southern Europe will impact on the wealthier EU countries.

Are the wealthier European countries and their traditional political parties getting their act together and developing policies towards meeting these challenges or are they just muddling along?

Nick Clegg's Garden Lecture (interLib May 2017) showed some grasp of the problems, but not solutions. Guy Verhofstadt (interLib February 2017) was perhaps clearer on those structurally in the EU, but I don't sense the transformation into social policy being clearly thought out.

What is particularly exciting in this paperback edition is the new preface by Ther. The English language edition came out just after Brexit (having originally been published in German in 2014) and before Trump.

Ther now takes the opportunity to visit those events and doesn't mince words. Disparities between east and west in the EU remain, but are diminishing; the EU is basically working, although at the electoral level, in the east in particular, it is the right-wing populists who benefit. Is this a reversion to type if you consider the pre-Communist era? Too many people lack the means to thrive under a neoliberal

order (which wasn't meant for them anyway) so it is time to restore some equilibrium in the economic system. So far as the UK is concerned this is primarily a battle to be won in the Conservative party (one would hope, at least that Liberals and Labour have woken up to their senses). While this book won't win any arguments in the short term, it does equip you for the coming struggle.

A brief note on Latvian immigration, which as said, was severe in the wake of the 2008 crisis. While canvassing in May's elections, I came upon a small Latvian community, spread over a number of flats in one street. They ranged from old to young – some would have been infants under Communist imperialism and all had been in the UK for some time - probably in the wake of 2008-09. They did not vote – they were simply not accustomed to voting - even in Latvia, and did not understand the process. Similarly, with Lithuanians - if they followed any-thing in the British news, it was football; some were engaged about Brexit, but not at a deep level. The Liberal Democrats were, naturally, targeting EU voters, (a significant number in our target ward) and I hope I persuaded them to vote, if not for me. From Ther we have a better understanding of why.

Stewart Rayment

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## **Humanity by Ai Weiwei edited by Larry Warsh Princeton 2018 £9.99**

At first sight, unpacking this book, I thought that it might be a Little Red Book for today – the Quotations of Chairman Mao Tse-tung (now Mao Zedong, or as Mae West put it, Mousey Tongue). The obvious similarity is the scale of the books, but also the

pithy quotations, by which you can re-educate yourself in Ai Weiwei thought (the chairman is consigned to the attic here, and is probably regarded as an infantile disorder or left deviationism in the Peoples' Republic these days).

First and foremost, the Little Blue Book is about toleration, the fine Whig principle that needs reasserting in its evangelical sense. The need for this stemming from the refugee crisis, particularly as observed by Ai Weiwei in Lesbos in 2016, but it goes on. Ai Weiwei was himself born a refugee, his father was a victim of Mao's Cultural Revolution, leading to the family's internal exile. Outspoken, in word and deed through his art, Ai Weiwei has constantly been subjected to state harassment and oppression throughout his career, though my impression is that he is not, himself, an enemy of China, rather he wants to straighten a few things out, Here, he wants to straighten a few things out with the global community.

Larry Warsh has done a great job in putting this collection together. It starts with an ending: My conclusion is we are one humanity. If anyone is being hurt, we are all being hurt. If anyone has joy, that's our joy. It closes with a call to action: Indifference does not liberate us, but instead cuts us off from reality. Make some space for these aphorisms in your focuses over the coming year, spread the word.

Stewart Rayment

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## Monday

To the Bonkers' Arms, where I join the regulars in setting the world to rights. We note that Vince Cable has announced he is open to the idea of changing the name of the Liberal Democrats: but what if he is looking at things, as our American cousins would have it, backasswards? What if it is Vince Cable's name that is the one that should be changed?

We proceed to suggest a range of names he might be called instead. I elect myself secretary of the meeting and endeavour to record them on the back of a Smithson & Greaves beermat. Here is the list, though I will not swear to have captured them all: Vince Fibre-Optic, Mabel Cable, Vince Thrust, Prince Vince, Father Ibadulla, Wild Willy Birkenshaw, Rear Admiral Tufty Blenkiron, Chief Rabbi O'Toole, The Widow Ganderpoke, Zsa Zsa Poltergeist, Binky Balderstone, Bingo Edmeades, Armitage the Musical Seal, Tufty Snellgrove, Peggy Inverarity and her Harmonica Rascalettes, The Very Revd Gonville French-Beytagh, Farmer Swarbrook, Queen Salote of Tonga, Oscar Mild, Mad Jock Racionzer. I have every confidence that a winning name is in there somewhere.

## Tuesday

A recent issue of The Shetland Times has been drawn to my attention. In it our own Tavish Scott celebrates the fact that those islands will no longer be shown on weather maps and the like in a box. All I can say is that he must be a singularly unobservant fellow, as that box is not figment of a cartographer's imagination but a thing of bricks and mortar. It was Jo Grimond who ordered it to be built: he wanted to protect Shetland's fishing grounds, discourage Viking raids and keep out canvassers from other parties. Much of the donkey work was undertaken by his wife Laura, with the young Jim Wallace making the tea. I sincerely hope Scott does not intend to undo Jo's work by having the Shetland Box taken down. What will be next? Adrian Sanders' wall?

## Wednesday

Today is Halloween, when ghosts and demons walk abroad and the streets of Oakham are thronged with the sheeted figures of defeated candidates from long-forgotten by-elections. The Revd Hughes, very wisely, takes the day off and bars the shutters at the Vicarage.

The Well-Behaved Orphans, being little horrors themselves, always demand a scary bedtime story from me on this night. I decide to call their bluff this year by reading them the most frightening thing I know: the 2017 general election results in constituencies that the Liberal Democrats won as recently as 2010.

How they squeal with frightened glee when I give the figures for Truro & Falmouth and Redcar! I am halfway through Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey when Matron hurriedly announces that it is my bedtime and sends me back to the Hall. I hope I don't have nightmares.

## Thursday

Have you come across these new mobile telephones? They are Terribly Clever – you do not have to wait for someone to bring you the apparatus before you can have a conversation. This morning I receive a tearful call from Great George Street: it transpires that redundancies are in the air because the party's finances are looking a distinctly unhealthy shade of green. I promise my caller

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and her friends that I will ensure they are given beds at the Home for Distressed Canvassers in Herne Bay, but I wonder if the time has not come for more radical measures. Given the straits in which Clegg's grand strategy have left the Liberal Democrats, should we be paying rent on expensive Westminster headquarters in the first place? Should we not move to somewhere which would not cost half as much? Somewhere like, purely for example, Rutland?

There are plenty of little-used outbuildings

at the Hall which could easily be converted for use by the party. Equally, I am sure the horses would have no objection to sharing their quarters with our press officers (provided they do not eat the hay). And Meadowcroft has just offered to give Freddie and Fiona desk space in his potting shed if they help him with the compost heap when needed.

## Friday

Sad news from Somerset: Sir Paddy Ashplant is unwell. I still recall with pleasure our first meeting, at Bonkers House in Belgrave Square, which I shared in these diaries when he stood down as Liberal Democrat leader:

"Shortly preceded by a stun grenade and an impressive quantity of smoke, he had burst in through the French windows. After I had picked myself off the floor, dusted down the butler and pointed out that he probably wanted the embassy next door, he was all apologies. This, I reflected even then, was the sort of chap one could do with on one's side in a closely fought by-election."

As they so often do, the passing years proved the rightness of my judgement.

This afternoon I wandered into St Asquith's and said a prayer for Paddy. Let us hope he is soon restored to rude health.

## Saturday

Were you on that march for a 'people's vote' in London the other week? What fun it was! The only fly in the ointment was that the sheer numbers who turned out made progress desperately slow. I was therefore pleased that I had decided to come in a motorised bath chair painted in British racing green and equipped with a two-tone horn. That certainly scattered the laggards!

So much did I enjoy the day that I staged my own march here this morning. The village folk turned out for in force, as did my staff and tenants. (The latter's rents fall due on Lady Day, incidentally.) After two laps of the village and an excursion into my deer park, we assembled outside the Bonkers' Arms. I gave an address on the importance of European unity and the threat posed by imports of cheap, chlorine-washed pork pies from America, before handing over to young Farron. After a decent interval of several minutes, I dived inside the pub for a fortifying pint of Smithson & Greaves Northern Bitter.

## Sunday

The Revd Hughes gives it both barrels at St Asquith's this morning: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." I turn to my neighbour in the pew and remark: "Fella's expectin' a hard Brexit."

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