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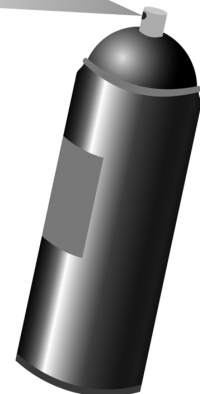
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## LIBERATOR

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

🌱 welcomes written contributions on relevant topics, up to 1800 words

We reserve the right to shorten, alter or omit any material.

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# COMMENTARY

## A WALK IN THE DARK

For the Liberal Democrats to have helped facilitate the December general election is a gamble.

Put simply, is the party more powerful with 20 MPs in a hung parliament than it was from 2005-10 with 63 in a parliament with a large majority for another party?

The Lib Dems could end up with many more seats but without the ability to do much, or with an advance but back in the 2010 position of being asked to form a coalition or agree some confidence and supply arrangement.

Has that been thought through this time? Jo Swinson has been right to rule out working with Boris Johnson or Jeremy Corbyn since neither is trustworthy and both come with high negatives among parts of the public.

That though is not the same thing as ruling our working with their parties under a different leader.

In 2010 it quickly became embarrassingly clear that the Conservatives had assumed they might have to form a coalition and had prepared in detail, while the Lib Dems had not and negotiated it by the seat of Nick Clegg's pants, with disastrous consequences.

Whatever the party says in public it must be hoped that some small group somewhere is discreetly going through scenarios for another hung parliament.

At least no-one will be able to accuse the Lib Dems of lacking clarity in this election, with the Stop Brexit slogan to the fore.

This again is something of a gamble but surely a justified one. The Lib Dems will be the only major party - at least in England - fishing in the 48% Remain pool, while the Conservatives and Brexit Party are obviously on the other side and Labour does not know which side it is on.

Getting even into the mid-30 per cents could tip a lot of seats the Lib Dems' way if Remain voters are prepared to vote tactically.

Part of the push behind this has been the determined effort to convince the public that the party can win big and so is not a wasted vote. While the constant references in speeches by parliamentarians and party officers at Bournemouth to "our next prime minister Jo Swinson" sounded faintly comical in their obvious 'on message' nature this helps bridge a credibility gap.

That in turn will make the campaign rather different from previous ones. The Remain message may lose votes in parts of the West Country where the party had many seats until 2015. The loss of votes may though not be all that large given the good local election results there in May, and obviously even Leave areas have Remain supporters within them.

But even if it is a substantial loss, there comes a time when parties have to choose sides and it would be impossible for the Lib Dems to go into this election - as the party did some previous ones - trying to avoid the subject of Europe or to equivocate over it.

That means the party is targeting what in past elections would have been considered hopeless prospects (Kensington, Finchley and Golders Green, for example) and probably not some more traditional hopeful places.

What will the Lib Dems be talking about apart from Brexit - which leads into the question of what they will talk about after Brexit is settled one way or the other?

At the time of writing no manifesto has been published and Swinson has only been leader for a few months - the entire period dominated by Brexit - and so has had little opportunity to set out her stall.

Her conference speech was about two-thirds devoted to Brexit and related matters with the rest raising the environment, knife crime and mental health. All worthwhile topics, but does the party have anything imaginative to say to people simply worried about living standards and declining public services?

Maybe the manifesto will clarify this, but it doesn't feel as though the party has had much to say on anything except Brexit for a long time, and while that stance has served it well in the short term it won't always serve it well.

The last thing the Lib Dems need is any candidate to be tripped up on television by a member of the public asking "what you going to do about X" only to met with an attempt to turn the question back into a Brexit issue because the Lib Dem concerned does not know the answer because the party hasn't really anything to say.

For the first time since February 1974 canvassers will spend most of their time in darkness and cold trying to interest voters, and this time far from the lights being out they will be blazing on Christmas trees, with the upcoming festivity far more likely to command public interest.

Cutting through the dark and cold with voters reluctant to open the door would be difficult at any time but with the current public exasperation with politics even more so.

The best of luck to all readers who are standing.

# RADICAL BULLETIN

## INDECENT HASTE

Why the rush to get a new Liberal Democrat chief executive? With a general election in the offing and with a new party president due to be elected, word was still sent to Nick Harvey that he had to leave.

No reason was given beyond that under the Jo Swinson regime his face did not fit.

Harvey, former MP for North Devon, offered to stay until the end of the year to cover a possible election and any notice period a new arrival might have. This was refused.

In what looks to have been a crude ploy to undermine Harvey, unfriendly elements expressed confected outrage that he had repeated in the party's Ad Lib magazine a joke he had told at the Paddy Ashdown memorial drink last January and which appeared in *Liberator* 394 without comment from anyone.

As *Liberator* said then: "Nick Harvey recalled an occasion when he was being measured for a suit by an attractive woman who had just got around to his inside leg.

"At that exact moment his trousers began to vibrate violently. It proved to be his pager with a message from Ashdown: 'Drop everything, come at once'."

This was clearly a mildly ribald joke told against himself and its unlikely it really had Swinson or anyone else reaching for their smelling salts.

But Harvey's enemies made an issue of it in the summer and it mysteriously resurfaced in the *Times* just before he was given his marching orders.

Thus the party found itself looking at entering a potential general election with a new chief executive only recently in place. Surely it would at least be someone with some knowledge of the party? And surely the appointment would be made only once a new president was in post, since the president is the chief executive's line manager? No on both counts.

The advertisement for the post went out with a very short period for responses during party conference in September. So short indeed that many assumed Swinson had some favoured applicant in her back pocket. But she didn't.

Six panels were appointed to interview applicants that represented various interests in the party: federal committees, the parliamentary party, local government, nations and regions, staff, specified associated organisations.

Their composition sounds rather slapdash with one peer told to join a panel at a few minutes' notice.

Presidential contenders Christine Jardine and Mark Pack were on the panels representing the parliamentary parties and federal committees respectively, but had no special status despite being the people who might end up managing the successful applicant.

Many panellists' preferred candidate was party activist Tilly McAuliffe, a publishing industry executive. Indeed some of those who had been on the panels had the impression McAuliffe's appointment would be announced in the last week of September.

That instead passed in silence. While McAuliffe had substantial support this wasn't overwhelming, which effectively meant that with different panels having reached different conclusions the powers that be were free to appoint whichever applicant they pleased.

The reasons for McAuliffe not being chosen remain unclear but nothing happened until late on the evening of 14 October when an official party statement said the job had gone to Mike Dixon.

It described him as chief executive of the charity Addaction, as indeed he was, and he has also been assistant chief executive of Citizens Advice. But the statement foolishly omitted his extensive background in the Labour party.

Surely if a former Lib Dem MP was going to be removed and replaced with someone who was - at least previously - a Labour supporter it would be sensible to admit this and perhaps even make a virtue of Dixon's political move?

Instead the official statement appeared to assume that nobody in the party knew how to use LinkedIn.

Allow *Liberator* to help. Dixon's own LinkedIn profile says that in 2009-10 he was at the "Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, senior adviser to the head of policy, 10 Downing Street" and spent 2009-09 as "special adviser to the secretary of state, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs", one Hilary Benn.

The previous year he was a "member of the advisors council to the National Economic Committee chaired by the prime minister", while the year before that found him as a spad at the Department for Education and Skills.

That is certainly a serious CV in politics and the voluntary sector equipping him for the job, and Dixon's political views must have changed.

But why did the party seek to hide something that anyone with an internet connection can find in seconds?

## AND THEN THERE WERE TWO

For most of the past year there were two people openly running for party president - Mark Pack and Richard Kemp - and since neither could really be described as a party establishment figure there were questions as to when a candidate from the parliamentary party would emerge.

While Pack had an active campaign at Bournemouth, Kemp did not and soon after announced his withdrawal due to a family illness.

There followed a period in which half the party appeared to be standing, with Jo Hayes, Lizzie Jewkes,



Adrian Hyyrilainen-Trett and Catherine Finney seeking nominations - all of whom had about as much chance of winning as they had of being proclaimed the next Dalai Lama.

All four failed to raise the 200 nominations needed, although Hyyrilainen-Trett and Hayes are understood to have got about 120 backers each, Jewkes - best known for originating the raised income tax thresholds policy - started very late and got a few dozen. Finney, best known for heckling Jo Swinson at Bournemouth over the Philip Lee defection, also got a few dozen but according to the local paper has now resigned from being a councillor in Chelmsford over the issue.

It looked as though a serious alternative candidate had emerged in Prue Bray, English candidates chair.

But not two weeks after announcing her candidacy she stood down citing pressure of work on the candidates chair in an election run-up - a rather odd reason given the election run-up had also been in progress a fortnight earlier.

The parliamentary party's 'stop Pack' candidate then duly emerged in the person of Christine Jardine, MP for Edinburgh West.

Nothing in the party constitution says the president has to be a parliamentarian, though they all have been and MPs and peers see the post as their preserve. The president is supposed to chair the Federal Executive, be the ill-defined "principal public representative of the party" and have an inexhaustible appetite for the fare served at constituency dinners.

As Gordon Lishman argued in *Liberator* 397, the job has several incompatible parts and ought to be split up.

Will whoever wins this time have the guts to call for their own job to be changed like this? Don't bet on it.

## PORTS IN A STORM

Receiving defecting MPs from other parties is welcome and, except in the case of Philip Lee, so far uncontroversial.

The problem is they have to be found somewhere to stand since their present seats are unlikely to be winnable as Lib Dems and they will have some understandable reluctance to campaign against former colleagues.

Thus varying degrees of pressure have been applied to incumbent PPCs to stand aside to accommodate defectors in places that offer at least an outside chance of winning.

Some have been fairly uncontroversial with Luciana Berger going to Finchley and Golders Green and Angela Smith to Altrincham and Sale West, neither of them normally thought winnable before.

Lee is crossing the border from his Bracknell seat to take on arch-Leaver John Redwood in Wokingham while Jonathan Fryer vacated Cities of London and Westminster South in favour of Chuka Ummuna. This again was not previously anyone's idea of winnable and given the prevalence of impregnable blocks of luxury flats it's not an easy place in which to campaign.

This meant that the Lib Dem candidate for Streatham Helen Thompson, having stood down for Ummuna, then had to stand up again and resume being candidate, a fate similar to that of Richard Kemp in Liverpool Wavertree, where Berger was first going to re-stand but then did not.

With Sarah Wollaston in a seat winnable as a Lib Dem, Antoinette Sandbach sticking to her constituency and Heidi Allen is retiring from parliament, that left Sam Gyimah.

He was Tory MP for Surrey East, an area as blue as they come, and joined the Lib Dems during conference.

Some thought the only realistic berth for him was Putney, a Tory-Labour marginal but with Lib Dem hopes for the first time due to a huge a remain vote.

That though has only just selected local activist Sue Wixley, who refused to be bullied into standing down for Gyimah.

He was thus found a berth in Kensington where the candidate had been Rabina Khan, who was made communities adviser to Lords leader Dick Newby, a post that appeared to have been created for her.

Finding seats for actual defectors is problem enough but difficult too for those who haven't got around to it.

Canterbury Liberal Democrats had their candidate selection stopped on HQ orders without explanation.

Later enquiries suggested this was because Labour MP Rosie Duffield, who has trouble with Corbynistas in the seat, might defect. The whole thing then had to be unfrozen when she didn't.

## WHEN IN A HOLE

The old adage that one should not continue digging when in a subterranean cavity clearly escaped Kirsten Johnson, the now very ex-Lib Dem candidate for North Devon.

After her excruciating radio interview with *The World This Weekend*, word came from on high that Johnson might wish to consider opportunities elsewhere.

A flavour of the interview is provided by her observations, related to Brexit, that North Devon was "98% white", that residents "don't travel a lot" and were not "exposed to people from other countries". These caused predictable offence, and insulting local voters is rarely a sound tactic.

She appeared to link Brexit and hate crime and when pressed said: "I didn't mean to mean that it has anything to do with it all. I was just saying that when I speak to people I am hearing comments to me, it refers to race. You've got me in a corner here."

Asked again she said: "I'm saying that because of the um..." before drying up.

Johnson was chosen after North Devon reluctantly accepted an all women shortlist, reluctant because it had no local approved female candidates.

After Johnson's fiasco it asked to have this designation removed and when it was not appealed successfully to the Federal Appeals Panel.

Its notice seeking new candidates carried a mysterious reference to the need for applicants to show "show humility and lack bombast".

## WHAT'S IN A NAME

A large crowd of Liberal Democrats turned out for the funeral of Steve Hitchins, the former leader of Islington Council, who died suddenly in September. A lighter moment arose when the congregation discovered the officiating cleric was, er, the Reverend Shuttleworth.

# LIBERALISM AFTER BREXIT

However Brexit gets settled, the Liberal Democrats must focus on applying their values to democracy, social and economic justice, constitutional reform and internationalism, says Bernard Greaves

By the end of the coalition government the distinctive identity of the Liberal Democrats as the embodiment of the Liberal tradition of political thought and action had become lost.

It was not only in the minds of the public, but to a considerable extent amongst party members themselves. The consequence was electoral defeat on an unprecedented scale and a collapse in membership.

The party now has a very distinct identity: the one party unequivocally opposed to Brexit. Over two-thirds of its members have joined since May 2015, a growth driven both equally by that very firm stance and by the shambolic state of the Conservative and Labour parties.

Those factors alone are not enough to define the identity of the Liberal Democrats. In a post-Brexit political landscape they will quickly fade into irrelevance. Indeed questions have been raised as to whether some of our new members really are liberal at all, particularly those joining from other parties. Freeing themselves from the culture of their previous parties and from shackles of party discipline opens them up to embracing a new culture in the Liberal Democrats. That culture stems from a tradition of Liberal thought that they may know precious little about.

We need to seize the opportunity to ensure they, and those joining us who have never before belonged to a party, learn about that heritage and its relevance to today's world.

What defines the Liberal Democrats is that it is a party of radical reform grounded since the days of Lloyd George on the centre left of politics and rooted in the tradition of Liberal thought represented by John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton, LT Hobhouse, Jo Grimond, Nancy Seear and community politics.

It is a tradition rooted in fundamental values of liberalism, committed to an open, tolerant, diverse and democratic society that enables individuals to develop their potential in the manner they choose through their participation in the communities to which they belong.

## UNIVERSAL LIBERALISM

Liberal values are universal. They are not relative or culturally specific. They are to be aspired to, strived and campaigned for, and where possible implemented in all societies, countries and communities. That does

not mean that Liberal values have no history. They have developed through time through the efforts of individual liberals and Liberal political parties. They are still developing today.

Liberals uphold those values even in circumstances where we can do little or nothing to advance them. In all societies, even under the most repressive regimes, some individuals and groups speak out for freedom and campaign for basic human rights. Liberals speak up for their rights and seek to protect their lives and wellbeing, even when it is politically inconvenient to do so.

*“Liberals do not see communities as an unalloyed good. They accept the inevitability of living within communities and the benefits of doing so, but they want to see liberal communities”*

The objective of liberalism is to create a liberal society. The measure to which a society is liberal is through the experience of individuals. Collective experience, whether it be loyalty to the nation and nationalism, or the solidarity of the working classes, or any other manifestation of group identity and loyalty, exists only so far as it is experienced by the individuals who comprise those groups.

Liberalism values each individual equally. It aims to enable and encourage all individuals to fulfil their own potential in the way they choose. People have an immense capacity for self-direction, self-cultivation, self-understanding and creativity. We are all different. We have different loyalties, different ideas of self, different abilities, different aims and objectives and make different choices. Liberalism values and promotes the diversity individual freedom brings to society.

Individuals cannot survive on their own. We are all born into, live and die within groups, many of which are stable enough to be called communities. They are essentials for our existence, our survival and our wellbeing. We all belong to many communities. They vary in nature, size and their significance to individuals. They include communities of residence, neighbourhood, geographical location, and nationality; of faith, religion or lack of it, of culture language and history; of work, trade or profession; of friendship, recreation, intellectual pursuits, the arts or sport; of exclusion, discrimination, vulnerability or victimisation; and of campaigning, social activism or politics.

The most immediate community is the family, often the most strongly felt, the nature and quality of its

structure and relationships powerfully influencing feelings of happiness, security, wellbeing and personal significance.

Some communities are latent, emerging only as a result of threat, some are informal and unstructured, some have loose frameworks, some are highly organised and some are constituted political authorities with defined powers existing within a legal framework.

Communities bring great benefits to their members but also dangers. The benefits are not just emotional – a sense of support and community – but also practical. Functioning communities can help their members in ways rarely captured by conventional economics – from shepherding natural resources to finding jobs and providing childcare. But communities can also be oppressive and destructive of individuality. Indeed as Elinor Ostrom pointed out, one of the conditions for successful community management of resources is maintaining clear boundaries of who is and who is not entitled to participate in enjoying those resources.

For that reason, Liberals do not see communities as an unalloyed good. They accept the inevitability of living within communities and the benefits of doing so, but they want to see liberal communities.

Liberal communities can be characterised quite easily. To the extent that they have internal organisation, that organisation is broadly democratic, recognises the equal standing of all individuals, upholds their individual rights, including respecting their privacy, safeguards minorities and promotes diversity. Any collective decision-making is open, transparent, information is shared and individuals are free to say whatever they want in open debate, with dissent being respected.

Liberals also tend towards formality especially in more powerful communities – that the rules they follow and impose should be ascertainable, open and contestable, and that decision-making procedures should be fair and accessible.

Liberalism is also a style of how different communities relate to one another. Liberalism values diversity but upholds rights. The basic principle is the same as that which lies at the heart of federalism, that groups do not encroach on one another's legitimate spheres of interest, but that they can take an interest in protecting fundamental rights across boundaries.

But differences and conflicts should be resolved as far as possible by discussion, persuasion, debate, negotiation, mediation and compromise, only by litigation and legal enforcement in the last resort, and never by arbitrary authoritarian imposition.

In the 1970s the Liberal Party recognised a new imperative, to prevent environmental degradation threatening the very survival of humanity. All species, including humans, and natural systems are interdependent, supporting one another in an ecological balance in which diversity promotes survival and uniformity tends towards extinction. Human consumption of natural resources is putting that balance at risk.

Above all, climate change has the potential to destroy human life, either directly or indirectly through war and conflict. Even before that happens, climate change poses another risk, a threat to the liberty Liberals uphold, since, if we do nothing about it now while we can act freely, a time will come when authoritarians

will claim that the only way to prevent further degradation is greatly to extend state control over individual lives.

## HARD CONSTRAINT

It follows that environmental considerations, and especially climate change, put a hard constraint on everything else we do. Economic growth, for example, is desirable only so long as it is environmentally sustainable. Exponential growth in the consumption of resources and in the discarding of waste, such as greenhouse gases and plastics, is not sustainable. Economic growth as conventionally measured cannot safely be safely maintained.

Liberalism is not concerned only with procedures and processes, even if liberals sometimes give that impression. It is concerned with improving the quality of life of all individuals. Quality of life is the product of the wealth we create, the nature of that wealth and how it is distributed. Wealth is more than the accumulation of money and possessions. It includes social infrastructure and the quality of the physical environment, both natural and created.

As JS Mill said it is not limited to “things of which the utility ... consist(s) in ministering to inclinations” but also includes “things which are chiefly useful as tending to raise the character of human beings”. That means above all knowledge, science, culture and the arts.

Mill looked forward to a time “in which, whilst no one is poor, no one desires to be richer, nor has reason to fear being thrust back by the efforts of others to push themselves forward.” That might be a utopian hope, but one should not rule out the possibility that in the richest societies people are beginning to tire of the endless and unsatisfying pursuit of possessions.

Thus the first tenet of Liberal economics is the central issue of politics is to define our political, social, cultural and environmental objectives. Economic activity is the mechanism for achieving them, not an end in itself.

In translating Liberal values into practice four inter-related policy themes arise:

- \* Democracy, which includes political rights, civil liberties and the rule of law.
- \* Social and economic justice, which includes environmental sustainability.
- \* Constitutional reform.
- \* Internationalism.

After more than a decade when the party's policy has been dominated by the short term pragmatism of what might be achieved through coalition, now is the time to focus on developing those themes into long term strategic policy objectives.

They could not be more relevant in addressing the alienation of vast numbers of people from politics, the constipation of our over centralised political structures, leaving them incapable of addressing issues of almost any kind effectively, not least gross inequalities in society in Britain and around the world and the threats of environmental catastrophe.

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Bernard Greaves has written about Liberalism and community politics for more than 50 and is co-author with David Howarth of *Towards a Liberal Future*, available from the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors.



# ANOTHER CAPITALISM IS POSSIBLE

Liberal Democrats should seize the moment to argue for universal basic income, workers' co-ops and social rights, says Paul Hindley

The reinvention of the capitalist economy has been the central mission of British liberal politics for over a century.

This task must be at the heart of the Liberal Democrats, especially once the current Brexit crisis is resolved one way or another.

Social liberalism is the epitome of a left-wing capitalist tradition, which is distinct from both socialism and right-wing forms of capitalism.

It balances the freedom of the individual, an open market economy, internationalism and democracy with substantial amounts of social welfare provision and sufficient workers' rights, jobs and public services. It not only seeks to free the individual from poverty, unemployment, hardship and inequality, but seeks to save capitalism from itself.

Through the great master John Maynard Keynes, we developed an understanding of the importance of economic management, to maintain high animal spirits in the economy and stimulate growth and employment in times of economic downturns.

## GIANT EVILS

William Beveridge is rightly credited with being the father of the modern British welfare state. Beveridge designed a comprehensive welfare system which would tackle and attempt to eliminate hardships caused by disease and illness, unemployment, old age and a lack of education amongst other 'giant evils'.

Beveridge's ideas built on the earlier achievements of the radical Liberal chancellor David Lloyd George; redistributing wealth to pay for (among other welfare reforms) old age pensions, unemployment relief and national health insurance.

The Liberal Party of Jo Grimond in the 1950s and 1960s strongly supported worker-owned cooperatives and co-determination between bosses and workers in industry.

Grimond even dabbled with the occasional post-capitalist concept (such as syndicalism). Liberals also facilitated the first widespread council house building programme, as well as enshrining the first workers' rights protections into law.

Keynes and Beveridge remade the capitalist world. Their ideas shaped the consensus that emerged after the Second World War informing liberal and social democratic politics across Western Europe and North America. Keynes' economic ideas underpinned the first generation of Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the economic strategies of national governments which strived for full employment.

Whereas the 'Beveridge model' has become international shorthand for a comprehensive universal

welfare state as outlined in the Beveridge Report, it can be argued that more than anyone else, the ideas of these two men, both of whom were British Liberal Party members, were responsible for the intellectual framework of the post-war socio-economic consensus.

Keynes and Beveridge demonstrated a real-world public policy and social justice response to the economic crises and the social hardships caused by unrestrained capitalism. In the UK, the Keynes-Beveridge consensus delivered record low levels of unemployment and across Western Europe substantial growth rates following the Second World War coupled with unprecedented amounts of state support and social welfare provision.

Thus, they proved wrong the assertions of socialists that capitalism is an inherent incurable evil and of right-wing capitalists who believed that capitalism unburdened by the state would work effectively to distribute wealth and deliver just outcomes. The left-wing capitalist tradition of Keynes, Beveridge, Lloyd George and Grimond has been the bane of Leninists and Hayekians alike. Condemnations of contemporary capitalism are not without justification or foundation. Modern day neoliberal capitalism has led to vast inequality, deprivation and alienation within the economy and wider society. From the wholesale privatisation of public assets, to the crushing of workers' rights, to austerity policies to slash back welfare and public services; all the while advocating tax cuts for the rich, big business friendly regulatory regimes and turning a blind eye to the abuse of economic power by multinational corporations.

The lesson of the 20th century is that capitalism can be socially reformed. The Keynes-Beveridge national economic model was the most successful in human history simultaneously delivering social justice, full employment, high growth rates and international open markets, while upholding the principles of liberal democracy.

Through vision, determination, a strong commitment to ethics, a belief in the power of big ideas and practical public policy a new radical progressive capitalism can emerge.

Whereas the socialists and anarchists of the anti-globalist left state "another world is possible"; the response of social liberals is that another capitalism as possible.

The aim of the Liberal Democrats following the resolution of Brexit must be to remake capitalism both nationally and internationally. Keynes and Beveridge achieved just this at a time when the Liberal Party had less than two dozen seats in the House of Commons.



## LYING AROUND

In the 1982 preface to *Capitalism and Freedom*, Milton Friedman wrote “Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When the crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable”.

Both Friedrich von Hayek and Friedman ensured that there were plenty of neoliberal ideas ‘lying around’. Hayek and Friedman began their counter-offensive against the Keynes-Beveridge consensus with a meeting of influential right-wing economists from multiple countries at Mont Pelerin in 1947. Neoliberalism has also been propagated by free market think tanks (such as the Institute of Economic Affairs) and branches of academia (such as the economics department of the University of Chicago). These ideas were picked-up by the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, as well as their successors.

The crises of the Great Depression and the Second World War gave rise to the Keynes-Beveridge consensus, while the stagflation crisis of the 1970s forged the Hayek-Friedman consensus. Hayek and Friedman won the battle of ideas in the 1980s, just as Keynes and Beveridge had won the battle of ideas in the 1940s.

We do not have to wait for the crisis of neoliberal capitalism, it is already here and all around us since the crisis of austerity and the North Atlantic financial crisis of 2007-09, although for some communities, like British seaside towns and coalmining villages, there has been in a state of crisis since the 1980s. Social liberalism has the philosophical range to solve these crises. Where our old ideas are lacking, we must develop new big ideas to fairly distribute wealth, power, opportunity and ownership.

The dual aim of a new social liberal capitalism (which the Liberal Democrats must spearhead) would be to end ‘precarity’ in the economy and to defeat climate change.

These are two new giant evils and no doubt if Beveridge was alive today, he would be proposing economic public policy responses to tackle them. We must slay these new giant evils, while ensuring that the old giant evils remain dead or that they are defeated once and for all.

Which policies should the Liberal Democrats advocate to forge a new progressive capitalism? A universal basic income between £70-£100 a week is an essential step to ending economic ‘precarity’. There could be nothing more radical than divorcing income from work. The Liberal Democrats have already committed to trialling the universal basic income, this must be a priority in the general election campaign.

Secondly, following Labour and many US progressive Democrats, the party should support a comprehensive Green New Deal. This would stimulate growth and job creation, while establishing the necessary green infrastructure and renewable technologies needed to combat climate change and end the climate emergency.

Thirdly, the party needs to oppose simultaneously both neoliberal privatisation and state socialist nationalisation. British Liberals have long supported mutual and employee forms of ownership and economic

democracy. Workers in national-based companies that employ less than 100 people should have a right to vote to become a workers’ cooperative. In addition, a new law should be passed requiring at least one-third of board members of all national-based companies to be comprised of employee representatives. The party should also advance mutual forms of ownership in relation to key infrastructure, such as supporting rail cooperatives and mutual companies in the running of rail franchises, supporting local energy cooperatives as well as mutual water providers.

## DEMOCRATISING WEALTH

Modern day Liberal Democrats need to rediscover the radical tradition of democratising wealth. This is something that the Oxford academic Stuart White has focused extensively on in his research. The party should support the paying out of a regular social dividend to all UK citizens from a sovereign wealth fund capitalised by wealth taxes, especially land value taxes and public assets. Such an idea was developed in the work of the Nobel economics laureate James Meade.

Finally, the party should support a Social Rights Act. This is something that I proposed in *Four Go In Search of Big Ideas* published by SLF in 2018 (*Liberator* 389).

This would enshrine essential socio-economic rights into law, such as the right to be paid a liveable wage, a right to secure terms of employment, a right to food, a right to a habitable standard of housing and a right to a sufficient level of social security to combat the economic difficulties caused by old age, unemployment and disability. Such a Social Rights Act would significantly address economic ‘precarity’.

Moving forward, the Liberal Democrats must remain resolute in their opposition to Brexit, pledging to revoke Article 50 and should Britain leave the European Union, pledging to re-join the EU and our fellow European nations. The current political crisis has shown the British constitution to be weak and prone to the wishes of demagogues and even authoritarians. That is why the party must support a constitutional convention to develop a codified constitution to uphold Britain’s liberal democracy and the institutions which it is based upon. Other political reforms are equally vital, such as the introduction of proportional representation and elections to the House of Lords.

However, it is not just enough to stop or reverse Brexit and radically reform the British political settlement, we also require a radical and imaginative approach to reforming capitalism in a way that would address the insecurities, inequalities and hardships that are central to the capitalist economy in the twenty-first century.

Another capitalism is possible, and the Liberal Democrats inspired by the social liberal titans of the past must seek to create it. Neoliberal capitalism will not last forever. We should be ready to build a new social liberal capitalist consensus to resolve the inevitable future crises of neoliberalism. Social liberals must once again win the battle of ideas; Keynes, Beveridge, Lloyd George and Grimond can show us the way.

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Paul Hindley is a Liberal Democrat activist, a member of the Social Liberal Forum Council and a PhD student at Lancaster University

# ANSWERING TO A HIGHER AUTHORITY

Tim Farron chose to join a notably hardline Christian group, and then wondered why his views were wildly incompatible with being Lib Dem leader. Liz Barker seeks answers in his new book

In *Liberator* 385 about my efforts in 2015 to persuade Tim Farron that his explanation of his stance on gay sex was unconvincing and that were he to fail to address the matter it would come back with a vengeance in the general election.

My advice was ignored and he duly became impaled on the topic for crucial weeks of the campaign. Ever since I have wondered why got himself into such an untenable position. Given the subtitle of this book, which opens with media questions about his religious views, it should supply the answer.

There are few confessions, mostly about dodgy musical taste. His childhood growing up in Lancashire is rattled through with lots of local colour and an absence of any significant personal detail. His dad gets barely a mention, while pastor Brian Maiden, who persuaded Tim to leave his mainstream Anglican church and join Parr Street Independent Evangelical church because its teaching was “clear, biblical and inspiring”, is ever present.

In 1986 impressed by the dedication of Liberal campaigners, including Neva Orrell, to his community he joins the Union of Liberal Students (ULS) at college.

Inspired by David Penhaligon’s practical politics, he chose to join the Liberals, citing a contrast between social liberalism with the classic liberalism of Adam Smith. Conveniently that leads him straight Mill’s the famous passage in *On Liberty*: “In this age, the mere example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric.”

## STRANGELY STRUCTURED

This, in this strangely structured book, is a crucial set up for the tale of martyrdom which is to unfold. Tim explains that in 1988 he came across books left by a Christian couple and after a few weeks reading he concludes: “It’s now clear to me that the only thing the Gospels cannot be is myth. They’re a hoax, or a big mistake, or they’re true.”

Armed with that certainty Tim goes off to university in Newcastle, where fellow members of the Christian Union question his involvement in politics. This neatly sets up the running theme of his book: “The view that Liberalism and Christianity are incompatible arises from two developments. One is the rise in religious illiteracy, and the other is the increasingly dangerous tendency of liberals across the Western world to be

tolerant of everything apart from those things they disagree with. I’ve described this latter development as ‘liberalism eating itself.’”

This is not an original thought. It is merely the latest such assertion, advanced by members of faith groups such as Evangelical Christians and some Catholics, who oppose social progress especially in areas such as women’s reproductive rights and LGBT+ equality.

It is a deliberate, consistent strategy of presenting Christians as victims of a secular liberal elite. To see just how perverse this can be read any speech on abortion by Lord Alton. Once you recognise the common phrases you will see it cropping up repeatedly - for example in religious freedom bills across the USA, because like many a false argument it depends on widespread repetition to achieve any credence.

In Tim’s case his initial mistake is to argue that because the birth of Liberalism relied upon the input of Christians, today when Liberal beliefs are at odds with those of some Christian denominations the fault must lie with Liberals who have abandoned their basic philosophy.

Rather conveniently he fails to mention that in the 19th century the Christians who established the Liberal party were fighting for social progress, whereas he has chosen to join an evangelical church which preaches the narrowest interpretation of the Bible and thereby sets its members firmly against inclusive social progress.

According to his church website their beliefs include: women cannot be pastors or elders of the church, and this includes a ban on trans women; traditional biblical sexual ethics must be upheld; same-sex marriages cannot be performed or blessed; Christians who struggle with sexual temptation should be ‘prayerfully fostered’ within the church.

It is unclear whether the latter would include conversion therapy “reparative” treatment of gay, lesbian, bi and trans members of their church seeking to “save” them through prayer, Bible study and counselling.

While it may not be the most ultra-conservative faith group, the church which he chose to join adheres to a strict, fundamentalist literal interpretation of scripture, and it refuses to work with other denomination like Churches Together, because they contain “false prophets” who speak but do not adhere to the word of God.

Throughout the book he maintains his flawed premise by talking about Christians, never drawing a distinction between the severe, authoritarian form

to which he willingly subscribes, and the many more liberal interpretations of Christianity.

That allows him space for a torrent of sweeping statements and half-truths: “My experience of being scrutinized because of my Christian faith and treated as an oddity (at best) for being, at the same time an orthodox Christian and a liberal, may be a small example of liberalism’s growing tendency not to be terribly liberal.”

Never once does it occur to Tim that he attracts criticism, which many other church-going Christian politicians do not, because he chose to join a denomination whose interpretation of the Bible is fundamentally at odds with his professed political beliefs.

His story of his ascent to become leader, and his rapid descent, is shot through with highly questionable assertions. He rightly states that he became president because of his ability to tell jokes and deliver strong speeches at conference along with a reputation as a hardworking campaigner.

He is very critical of the communications aspects of the coalition (starting from the Rose Garden press conference with Clegg and Cameron looking as though they had just won the national lottery), and some of the policies including the tuition fees reverse, the bedroom tax and the Health and Social Care Act.

Tim is careful to deny that his positioning on these issues and “rabble rousing” speeches were all part of his campaign to become leader, but to colleagues who were having to make or defend tough choices in government it looked like insufferable grandstanding.

His claim that he did not decide to run for leader until Clegg stepped down as Leader in 2015 is somewhat incredible. He had an active leadership campaign team and appeared to use his position as president over four years, and his close cooperation with LDHQ, as a prelude to his leadership campaign. He does not list the group of “about 10” people (apart from Ben Rich) who first met at a hotel in Kendal in July 2013 to plan his leadership campaign.

Almost everyone who canvassed for the party in the 2017 general election campaign met people expressing concern, and often astonishment, over his belief that gay sex was sinful.

Tim’s defence that he refused to say whether it was or not did not last long in the campaign because refusal to answer confirmed that this was his view.

When he briefly denied that this was the case, then he came across as shaky and untrustworthy. HQ’s briefing during the 2017 general election campaign was that he always voted the right way on these equality issues in spite of his evident views about what was ‘sinful’.

## SINFUL STATEMENTS

But this was simply not the case. Claims were made about him that he had voted for same sex marriage. He at least admits in the book that he didn’t (he voted to allow the Bill to be debated, but he avoided the vote to make it law). After the election, he admitted that he had not been telling the truth when he had briefly claimed that he did not believe that gay sex was sinful. But during the campaign his shifty statements did not square with the party’s attempt to present itself as ‘open, tolerant and united’.

Party members, including members of LGBT+ Lib Dems did their best to remain loyal by saying as little as possible and pointing out that despite Tim’s apparent belief the party’s policy on LGBT and equality issues remained as strong as ever.

But the public wasn’t buying it, and neither were many of our own members, and there was nothing in the rest of his leadership to compensate.

Tim tries to make much of the success of the 12 Lib Dems elected in 2017 (as opposed to eight in 2015) but fails really to address why once free of coalition the party did not return a number of MPs closer to the pre-coalition level of 62. The party’s share of the vote actually fell in 2017 from 7.9% to 7.4% which was the lowest level achieved since the 1950s.

Five of the nine Lib Dem MPs at the start of the election lost their seats. The party’s few gains owed most to Scotland’s opposition to both Brexit and a second independence referendum and to the tenacity of local campaigns by (mostly) returning MPs. The facts hardly justify his claim of the 2017 campaign: “This had been a good result”, given he admits the party had aimed to win “at least 40 seats”.

After the election Tim was told by Lords leader Dick Newby that peers thought he should stand down.

Tim states that these were friends of Chris Rennard who had it in for him. The truth is that in the Lords group, most of whom had been very active in seats across the country, all but a handful of his friends realised that if he continued the party would never recover.

Given the scale of the disaster, I would like to think that party has worked out that just because someone can make a good conference speech and will join in any campaign, they do not have what it takes to be a good leader. I fear that we haven’t done so yet.

Tim Farron repeatedly asserts “I am a Liberal to my fingertips.” The evidence in this book exposes that for the hubris that it is. The book gives few clues to why he dug himself into impossible position, but it does say a lot about where he thinks his future lies.

The relationship between Liberalism and faith is a subject which has been, and should continue to be, debated as through societal, scientific and technological change.

This book is a missed opportunity to examine how a kid from a 1970s northern council estate could make liberalism relevant and meaningful to those communities. That question, and the role of Liberals and faith communities in the answer, remain to be written.

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Liz Barker is a Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords  
*A Better Ambition, Confessions of a Faithful Liberal.* By Tim Farron. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. 2019



# ARMY DREAMERS

The west's counter-insurgency strategy sees the UK and its allies are pouring money into the questionably effective armed forces of repressive governments, says Rebecca Tinsley

Since 9/11, Western nations have been training soldiers and police in places where Al Qaeda, Islamic State and their offshoots are active.

As jihadists re-surface in the Levant following America's withdrawal, local security services are putting their training to the test. Does it deliver value for money, and should it be categorised as overseas aid?

Britain's development spending is being increasingly given to countries because of their geopolitical military and economic value, rather than the effectiveness of the aid. The UK maintains its commitment to give 0.7% of GDP in aid partly because it includes some training programmes for foreign security services. In addition, the promotion of British commercial interests is a Foreign Office objective, often wrapped up in a humanitarian assistance jargon.

Last year, the FCO and Ministry of Defence jointly published an International Defence Engagement Strategy articulating its objectives as, "the use of our people and assets to prevent conflict, build stability and gain influence," as well as "promoting our prosperity."

It continues: "MoD works closely with diplomatic and economic partners in Government to ensure the success of the UK as a trading nation. Defence-related industry support to exports generates trade and enables partners."

An aim repeated throughout the document is building relationships to influence foreign governments.

## BRUTAL EXPULSION

How successful has the UK been at influencing the generals in Pakistan or the Saudi royal family? Did Britain shift the values of the Myanmar security

services while the UK was training its soldiers? Whitehall suspended the project when Myanmar's brutal expulsion of the Rohingya attracted too much attention.

Beginning in 2017, the UK spent £400,000 "strengthening the capacity of the Sudanese armed forces to improve governance and accountability and to generate greater respect for the rule of law." (Oddly, £285,000 of that £400,000 went on English lessons). The aim was to "gain access, insight and influence to (and across all levels of) the Sudanese armed forces."

The project was suspended after systematic violence fed public outrage, leading to the eventual overthrow of the authorities whom the UK believed it would influence.

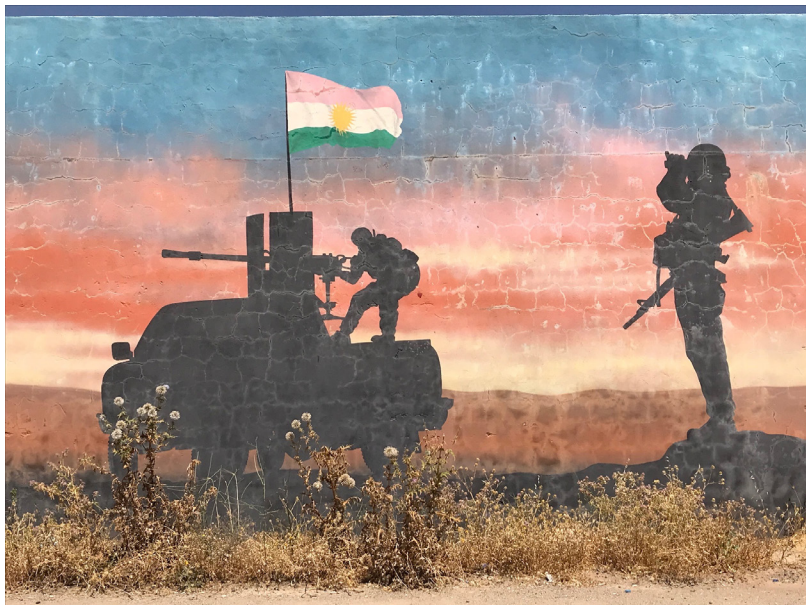
Soldiers in authoritarian regimes would undoubtedly benefit from UK training. However, the evidence is that unless the local elite generals and politicians share the values and objectives being taught, they do not take the projects seriously. The Oxford Research Group interviewed British service people who provided counter-insurgency military training in various African countries. The soldiers complained that the projects were questionable while national leaders did not necessarily share the stated UK objectives.

In Kenya, for instance, British trainers found that cooks had been press ganged into attending sessions to make up the numbers. There was no record of who had been trained or what impact the training made. Were the Kenyan authorities going through the motions, knowing direct cash aid would follow if they accepted the British offer of training?

UK soldiers expressed frustration that it was up to them personally to make the projects meaningful. There was little institutional change or even interest on the part of the beneficiary nations. The UK's approach "lacked clarity" and "operated in a political vacuum," to quote British soldiers interviewed.

They complained that they were unable to tackle the underlying roots of Islamist radicalisation. In Mali, for instance, the UK was not "exerting much pressure on the government in Bamako to introduce structural reforms that might remove some of the factors that are weakening the armed forces."

Local troops in Mali, Nigeria and Kenya who confront Islamist jihadists face danger daily. Often, they are under-trained, under-equipped and not paid regularly. British armed forces could contribute enormously to their effectiveness. But that would require the beneficiary governments ("our partners") to care about the project or the underlying causes of radicalisation. In the case of



Nigeria, where Boko Haram jihadists control four out of the ten zones in Borno state, the army is reluctant to concede its counterinsurgency policy is failing.

Former foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt implicitly admitted as much when he visited northern Nigeria in May 2019. Touring a region decimated by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa, Hunt said the UK was considering increasing help to the Nigerian army. But, “the deciding factor is the willingness of the Nigerian government and the Nigerian army to work closely with us...They have to want our help.”

Last year, the House of Commons sub-committee on the Independent Commission for Aid Implementation examined the training done under the auspices of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. It ranked the programme, which has an annual budget of £1bn, amber-red, meaning it was unimpressed. It concluded that, “training is effective if skills gaps are the constraint on performance,” rather than “political barriers or conflicting objectives.”

In Mali, the committee found the British trainers had no control over who was trained, who they were or what happened afterwards. Some Malian soldiers received the same training more than once.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the programme was deliberately presented to local people as the work of their own rulers, in an effort to bolster the credibility of those governments. No one was fooled, however, because “quick impact projects were prone to corruption and elite capture,” as the committee found. Why did the programmes continue? The policy was “partly political and partly based on the expectation that the UK could win influence through engagement.”

This problem is not exclusively a British one. US taxpayers might well ask why 60,000 Iraqi security services, who had been trained, armed and equipped at a cost of \$25 bn, ran away from Mosul in 2014, leaving their weapons behind, when they were attacked by only 1,500 Islamic State fighters?

Western allies increasingly rely on African armies to fight the war on terror. For instance, Uganda has troops in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and the Central African Republic, where offshoots of Islamic State and Al Qaeda are active.

## TERRORIST ATTACKS

It may be a good idea to pay Africans to fight the West’s wars on their own territory, but it has consequences, quite apart from the subsequent terrorist attacks on Ugandan and Kenyan citizens.

In 2012, a leaked UN report blamed Uganda for supporting the murderous M23 terror group in the DRC, smuggling minerals and contributing to five million civilian deaths there since 1998. Uganda threatened to withdraw its troops from Somalia unless Western donors immediately disowned the report, which they

*“Unless the local elite generals and politicians share the values and objectives being taught, they do not take the projects seriously”*

did.

By boosting Uganda’s security services, it is also less likely that citizens will be able to challenge the ruling regime. According to the academics David Anderson and Jonathan Fisher, “In the last decade, the Ugandan security forces have become a central player in the regime’s building of an entrenched semi-authoritarian polity in the country. Armed units close to the president have secured and now fully control oil fields in western Uganda at Museveni’s command.”

Other repressive regimes supply troops for peacekeeping missions in places the West does not wish to send its soldiers. By doing so, these countries absolve themselves of criticism for their domestic human rights records, corruption, nepotism or economic mismanagement.

The US withdrawal from northern Syria gives a green light to the resurgent Islamic State in the Levant. Without the allied presence in the region, and facing poorly motivated and trained Iraqi security services, IS is already terrorising northern Iraq. The Pentagon’s inspector general estimates I.S has 18,000 fighters there. This summer IS took credit for burning thousands of acres of wheat and barley. There were more than 100 IS attacks in Iraq in the first three weeks of September alone. In north east Syria, there were 430 IS attacks between April and August this year. Your correspondent witnessed the destruction of a Peshmerga arms depot in northern Iraq in July 2018.

IS attacks security services, and Kurdish businesspeople interviewed for this article said local companies faced mafia-like extortion and threats from jihadists.

The Christian, Yezidi, Kurdish and Shia populations have little doubt they will resume their genocidal campaign. The Western allies approach to counterinsurgency matters more than ever.

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Rebecca Tinsley is the founder of Waging Peace: [www.WagingPeace.info](http://www.WagingPeace.info)





# UKRAINE'S COMEDIAN IS NO COMIC

## As America's impeachment hearings centre on President Trump's relations with Ukraine's comedian president, Kiron Reid looks at how the latter got elected

Ukraine's April presidential election made headlines around the world because of the landslide election of 'comedian' Vladimir Zelenskyi, and the totally peaceful transfer of power.

Zelenskyi is still an unknown political commodity, but his party has since made history again by taking outright control of parliament, the first time any party has done this.

He has great hopes pinned on him. Early signs are that Zelenskyi will bring people together and accelerate reform in a way that outgoing president Petro Poroshenko could not manage.

Zelenskyi's mostly young activists are idealistic and optimistic. They want economic development and fair chances. While behind the throne lurk dubious henchmen, oligarchs and money. Not to mention Vladimir Putin's small nasty war that has killed 13,000 people. People are impatient for change – often contradictory changes.

So, reasons to be cheerful? This comic is no Trump or Boris, this man is serious, a real star, a successful (and wealthy) businessman, but still we know little about what he believes or stands for.

### COMEDY TROUPE

Zelenskyi started as a comedian but he is a highly successful comic actor who owns the production company, Kvartal 95 – name of the comedy troupe that made him famous across the former Soviet Union. He is best known abroad for 'Servant of the People', where he plays an innocent schoolteacher who chance is elected president as people vote for a break from corrupt politics. He rose to prominence as an alternative comic in the post Soviet days, a bit like the Al Murray, David Badiel, Herring & Lee generation in the UK.

He is no highly educated liberal intellectual like Al Murray. His family-friendly films are loved by babushkas and young people alike – a bit Python, but not a Michael Palin, more a Rowan Atkinson image turned political activist like Tony Robinson.

As a star he is akin to one of the great US comic actors, perhaps an Eddie Murphy, Mike Myers or Jim Carey. Highly notable is that the new president is a first language Russian speaker from a post-Soviet industrial city. This screws Putin's Russian nationalist narrative. His election victories – from personality, and protest voting against the incumbent / establishment – gained majority support from nearly every part of the country except some parts of pro-Russian south east, and more nationalistic west.

Part of the mythology is that Zelenskyi's victory was won via the internet and without big money. The political and media analysts for the OSCE election observation missions showed that television is still the most important media in Ukraine. The volume of Zelenskyi billboard, poster, television and internet advertising was huge. Even if very cheap, the volume still required a lot of money. True mythology is that there was no physical campaign. Except offices to coordinate volunteers, Sluha Narodu (Servant of the People) party won the presidential election with no ground war.

It was the most surreal election I have ever seen. I was a long term election observer from February to May in Chernihiv, north of Kyiv, east of Chernobyl. In this historic region which my team covered, the winner, unlike previous presidents Petro Poroshenko, Yuliya Tymoshenko and local challenger Oleh Lyashko, did not visit. After round one defeat the incumbent's campaigners stopped (our region one of few where former President Tymoshenko did better; her team ran a technically brilliant campaign in the rural districts around Bakhmach). There was no election campaign to observe at all.

How could the incumbent lose in a system where the people in power control jobs and patronage and people are afraid to not vote for the winning side in case they or their children lose their job?

People were desperate for change and voted for it. The incumbent ran his campaign against his main rival – Orange revolution leader Yuliya Tymoshenko – and too late saw the real chance of the new man winning. Three weeks out I still thought that Zelenskyi would not win because conservative older voters would in the end pick the safe choice; the administrative/ party/politician/oligarch machines would get the vote out; the coffee loving youngsters who liked the TV star would not get off their bean bags to vote.

They did, and the babushkas voted for the nice young man off the television, so did many in the west who want a western European-facing Ukraine, in the east who want peace and a roll back on nationalist language policies, and every taxi driver I talked to who had served in the war and blamed Poroshenko for not stopping a war only Putin can stop. Poroshenko's Solidarnist bloc concentrated on the man as statesman, a role that many European and North American leaders acknowledge he has performed well.

There were many allegations of illegality, and much practice outside the spirit of the law. A lot of dodgy money swimming around, but a lot less than in previous elections and it didn't influence the result.

There were 39 candidates who paid a €79,000



deposit - the vast majority did not campaign. So called technical candidates were put up to split the other sides' votes and give an advantage in the party nominated elections commissions that run the elections.

There were so many technical candidates that they cancelled each other out and the commissions mostly ran the elections professionally and in a collegial fashion.

The Government was keen to show the outside world that this would be a genuine free and fair election. Administratively it was and it became clear that mass abuses of the past by the main parties was not happening this time. Voters were not bought. The President's sense of fair play handed an opportunity for people to realise they could freely vote against him. Also deployed against Poroshenko was the TV channel of oligarch Kolomoisky that did not pretend to be at all impartial. (Billionaire Victor Pinchuk's channel was neutral, while multi-billionaire Rinat Akhmetov and fugitive oligarch Dmytro Firtash's channels leaned towards the pro-Russian state opposition block spin off candidate).

Of 1.7bn hrynia officially spent by candidates, 67% was on mass media according to declarations to the Central Election Commission. Poroshenko spent more than €8m on media in round one.

The lack of independent journalism is a huge problem. In many newspapers political content is only covered if paid for – the same with the financially struggling local and regional press in Georgia and North Macedonia. In the south east regions, next to the war zone, many people get their news from Russian language sources and believe the Russian propaganda.

Policies designed to increase use of Ukrainian by promoting it over Russian even in majority Russian speaking areas have ensured that Putin propaganda has more fertile ground to spread - unbelievable given that 95% is obviously untrue. Unfortunately people who dislike their political leaders seem keen to believe the parts that they agree with.

One side effect of the wholesale change in Ukraine was that some genuine reformers and hard working MPs lost their seats as well.

## **BLOODY WAR**

There is a small bloody war in the far south east of the country occupied by Russian controlled terrorists and Russian troops. Ukrainian soldiers are killed and injured every few days. Civilians are killed as sides fire at each other and 100 Ukrainians are held as political prisoners (hostages).

Putin toned down the war before election day to embarrass Poroshenko, then turned the war on again when Zelenskyi was elected - gift to a new president he refused to congratulate. The British, Americans and Canadians are active in training Ukrainian forces and contrary to propaganda spread by Russia's far left and far right stooges in Europe they are not fighting the Russian occupiers.

Disappointingly the illiberal old order of Opposition Platform for Life polled well in the south east and are the main opposition, but with only 13%. At one point the new candidate against the establishment was likely to be pop star Svyatoslav Vakarchuk, front man of Ukraine's most popular band, Okean Elzy.

Vakarchuk did not stand and formed his Holos (Voice) party, late. It gained 20 seats.

Older reformist parties were swept away. Anatoliy Hrytsenko, former defence minister and leader of ALDE member Civic Position earlier in the year did a deal with mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovyi. The latter leader of Christian Democrat-like Samopomich ('Self Reliance') backed Hrytsenko for president. They ran against each other in the parliamentaries and both disappeared.

Boris Johnson has repeated the consistent British line of total support for Ukraine, while undermining stability in Europe, and making our political car crash headline news in Ukraine.

This cannot be an easy time to be a British diplomat. The UK Embassy in Kyiv is highly active and has increased its work across the country, to all major cities and regions. UK programmes include Active Citizens - training for young people to take action in their own communities - and support citizen journalism, especially on fact checking.

The man of the people's right hand, Chief of staff Andriy Bohdan, is the lawyer of oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky. Kolomoisky helped stem Kremlin unrest in the major city of Dnipro but was in self-imposed exile since the collapse of his Privat Bank at great cost to the public. He has now returned.

Zelenskyi has picked a political fight with mayor of Kyiv, famous boxer, Vitaliy Klitschko. It begins to look as if the new administration is settling political scores.

Many of the candidates for Zelenskyi, now MPs, were linked to his business, many others are new to politics. The whole parliamentary party was sent to a special university crash course on government and economics.

Putin goaded the new president by announcing it would be easier for Ukrainians to gain Russian citizenship. Zelenskyi issued an inspired rebuff saying that Ukraine would give citizenship to freedom loving Russians. Judicial reform is a longstanding demand to ensure rule of law, and stability for business. Reformers want wholesale replacement of existing judges, which interferes with judicial independence. The many local and regional judges I've met are as educated and professional as judges anywhere. The failure of high level political / oligarchic and killing of journalist and activist cases is a very real concern.

I first went to Ukraine five years ago when Poroshenko was elected in a landslide.

Returning each year I see many improvements in the country and that many people have a good quality of life, though utility prices are high and many, especially pensioners, have very little money.

Poroshenko did not expect to be a war president, and Ukraine was saved as a state under his tenure. Millions of Ukrainians have invested their hopes in the TV star and gave him a huge mandate to carry out major reforms. Zelenskyi has the chance to make history again

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Kiron Reid is a member of the Liberator Collective and spent four months in Ukraine as a professional election observer and volunteer university professor

# WOULD YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?

## Ryan Mercer looks at how Liberal Democrat employment practices shape up against what the party preaches

Do the Liberal Democrats believe workers should be paid a good salary with reasonable hours of work and an appropriate working environment?

I like to think we do. Our party has consistently supported legislation to improve the rights of workers. In recent history, we're particularly proud of the introduction of shared-parental leave by Liberal Democrat ministers in Government.

It stands to reason, that if we believe these things, then the party itself should aspire to be a good employer. This means that party staff at all levels should be paid a fair wage, treated with respect, and less experienced staff given close support and the opportunity to develop rewarding careers.

The party recruits a wide range of staff at different levels in different ways. The federal party hires staff, often based at HQ, but sometimes out in the field. MPs hire assistants and caseworkers to support them in their duties. Local parties hire campaign organisers and SAOs such as ALDC hire staff to support their various programmes. Some staff can be hired jointly between these different organisations, and others take on part time roles in combination with other areas of the party to form a full-time role.

### NO CONSISTENCY

These different parts of the party have no consistent pay scale and no consistent employment practices. This is understandable for a party where each element has a great deal of autonomy and freedom and where the needs and capabilities vary enormously. It is therefore impossible to generalise as to how good an employer the party is. However there are no minimum standards of employment practices applied consistency across all level of the party.

Looking at various job websites, at any given time you'll see a number of Liberal Democrat roles that vary wildly. Recently advertised jobs include: (per annum, pro-rata unless specified)

- \* York Liberal Democrats, Campaigns Intern, minimum wage
- \* West Berkshire and Newbury, Local Party Organiser, £10 an hour
- \* Lib Dem HQ, Selections Administrator, £10.55 an hour
- \* Chippenham Liberal Democrats, Local Party Organiser, £17,000 - £20,000
- \* Jane Dodds MP, Caseworker, £19,641 - £28,404
- \* Westminster & City of London, Campaigns Organiser, £20,000
- \* Jane Dodds MP, Parliamentary Assistant, £23,750 - £35,308

- \* Lib Dem HQ, Campaigns Manager, £26,000 - £32,000
- \* ALDC, Development Officer, £26,317 - £31,371
- \* Lambeth Liberal Democrats, Campaigns Organiser, £30,000
- \* Lib Dem HQ, Deputy Head of Membership and Engagement, £32,000 - £36,000

This list represents a range of lower to mid-level roles in the party with a wide range of party bodies as the employer. Some of these roles are advertised as full time, some part time, some permanent others short term contracts. Some of these roles are London based, others in much cheaper parts of the country. It's also difficult to determine the level of responsibility involved in a role from relatively sparse and vague job descriptions.

If we start with the field campaigns roles, whether they are interns, organisers or managers are often doing quite similar jobs in similar circumstances.

These staff are working for or with local parties, organising different elements of the campaigns, whether that be designing literature, organising campaigning sessions of volunteers and undertaking various logistical tasks with elections. Some will also be assigned as the legal election agent, responsible for the legal compliance of the campaign they are running.

While these roles will have regular advertised hours of work, the volume of evening and weekend work can add up drastically. Staff who are extremely committed to the success of the party will be wanting to do all they can to contribute to this success.

A former organiser told me: "I earned about 18k... but often worked evenings and weekends, and often felt like if I worked it out on an hourly basis, it wouldn't be national minimum wage. Some would say the evenings and weekends were voluntary but when your workload demands it, then it's not really voluntary."

For the most part, these staff will be working remotely or in small offices as the sole or one of a small team of staff. Those hired by HQ will be responsible to a line manager in London, distant but at least regularly available on the end of phone. Those hired by local parties will often be managed by a local party volunteer member, often someone without experience working for the party in a similar role.

This issue has become more acute over time with the hollowing out of party resources from 2010 onwards, prior to which local campaign organisers were more likely to be part line managed by regional campaigns officers.

With most salaries advertised below £25,000 these positions will often attract young graduates, often

as their first full time job role, eager for their first step on a career in politics. Some reflections by those who have worked in these roles included:

“I think it’s quite common for entry level staff to inadvertently be taken advantage of.... Young people starting out are less aware of their rights and less likely to speak up for themselves.”

“I remember being told by one local party officer that it was a good thing when we were hiring a new organiser to work alongside me, because he was a fresh graduate from Scotland who wouldn’t know anyone so wouldn’t have a life here.”

“[My local party chair told me:] When we heard you were young, we knew you’d be lonely. When we heard you were female, we knew you’d be depressed.”

Given the level of responsibility and lack of support available to local party staff, the question must be asked; is it appropriate for local parties to be hiring low-paid, inexperienced, entry level candidates for highly autonomous or minimally supported positions? Alternately, does the party need more resource at perhaps a regional level, to provide the line management and support to these staff?

While it can be a positive experience giving young people a range of responsibilities and opportunities early in their career, it also carries considerable risk. While a campaign may save a few thousand pounds hiring at a slightly lower level, this needs to be weighed against our values as an employer and whether a more experienced staff member would be a worth a small additional investment.

MPs, MEPs, AMs and even council groups receive pots of public money which enable them to hire a staff to support them in the performance of their various duties. MPs and MEPs can decide exactly how they structure their personal staff from this budget.

For the UK Parliament, rules tightened a little after the expenses scandal with IPSA setting out broad job descriptions, conditions and pay bands. Despite this, each MP’s office resembles a small business with its own unique structure and dynamics.

Lib Dem MPs tend to advertise these roles as the full pay-band, which cover a huge range of potential salaries and levels. Most staff spoken for this article claim that were hired at near the bottom of these huge bands, with little prospect of progression within their role once hired.

One improvement in recent years is the move away from unpaid interns. Following a campaign by Young Liberals, and the defeat of many MPs in 2015, the number of Lib Dem MPs taking on unpaid interns for extended durations has reduced considerably.

Parliamentary staff usually fall into two broad categories, caseworkers and political/parliamentary assistants or researchers.

Caseworkers tend to be consistency-based staff, who assist or act on behalf of the MP in helping answer correspondence and taking up issues raised by constituents with the relevant authorities. The range of casework in a typical MP’s office is

*“Given the level of responsibility and lack of support available to local party staff, the question must be asked; is it appropriate for local parties to be hiring low-paid, inexperienced, entry level candidates for highly autonomous or minimally supported positions?”*

enormous, covering personal immigration cases, mental health, homelessness and complaints against public services.

## VICTIM SUPPORT

One former caseworker (me) took a role with an MP at the age of 22. With virtually no specific training or prior experience, I contributed to the provision of an open-door service, where constituents could drop by the office to talk to a caseworker to get help. In that time I worked with people on the verge of deportation, people who

had serious mental health conditions and people with a history of violence. On one occasion, I had to comfort a 14-year-old girl who had been sexually assaulted and somehow forgotten about by victim support. This work was incredibly rewarding, but I cannot pretend I was remotely prepared or equipped for it.

Westminster-based researchers and assistants tend to have more opportunities for training from the House of Commons library services, but these staff are also more likely to feel overworked. With MPs often staying at Parliament late into the night, staff can feel pressured work far beyond their contracted hours to ensure their MPs are prepared. Some former Lib Dem MPs have been known to treat their Westminster staff particularly poorly, with one particularly known for going through half a dozen researchers in a single year.

Senior party officials and staff interviewed for this piece reported similar but more minor employment issues at HQ, but that significant improvements have been made over time. Nevertheless, HQ roles are paid less than corresponding roles in the Labour Party, large third sector organisations and the civil service, with staff regularly working far beyond their contracted hours. Another concern is the rise in the number of very temporary roles, with potential staff turned off by the insecurity of an initial contract of just a few months (as in the case of the recently advertised campaign manager positions).

It is well recognised that the fundraising environment which that party works within can be challenging, with a lot of pressure to deliver impactful campaigns on deeply constrained budgets. However, that reality doesn’t change the dependence that staff have on their pay for their livelihood and wellbeing.

This article covers the tip of the iceberg of a huge issue for how we organise and manage our party. There are many more personal stories and perspectives that couldn’t be fit into this piece. It has barely covered the question of the supply chain of staff coming through at each level nor attempted to make significant recommendations for how we could change as a party.

It is essential in the upcoming elections of federal, regional and local party officials, members give consideration to how the people they elect will grapple with these issues.

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Ryan Mercer was the Liberal Democrat candidate in Putney at the 2017 general election.



# GETTING CREATIVE

A new organisation has formed to promote the creative industries in the Liberal Democrats and vice versa.

Iain McCallum explains

The Lib Dem Creative Network (LDCN) came into being just after the 2017 general election in 2017 when a group of like-minded 'Creative Lib Dems' found their paths crossing. We shared a fear for the future of the creative industries post-Brexit and a desire to communicate key party messages in innovative ways.

LDCN was founded by Jane Bonham Carter and organisers include Tim Clement-Jones, Christine Jardine and Tilly McAuliffe,

Among its members are people who work across the creative industries including intellectual property, artificial intelligence, the performing arts, TV production, media, PR, books and magazine publishing and design.

The core group of eight have worked together ever since, and have been delighted to see our numbers expand as an increasing band of creatives from all walks and skillsets has learned of our work and joined.

In simplest terms the Network does what it says on the tin: it provides a forum where creativity can flourish and the effects of Brexit can be discussed, addressed and most crucially acted upon.

The most important message that drives us is that we must never forget that the creative industries contribute some £9.6m to the UK economy every hour. They also outperform the rest of the economy, growing three times as fast. They provide the bedrock to the social and cultural life of the country. As a group we believe that creativity is vital to our wellbeing, our future and the future of our children.

Conservative government and Brexit are both threats to our global leadership in creativity.

This is what motivates our group to make noise and draw attention to the damage that is being done and will continue unless positive action is taken.

Let's face it – supporting and protecting this indispensable and vibrant sector is of mega-importance to the economy and to the UK's sense of itself and our place in the global landscape.

As Lib Dems we are the only party championing creators and their industries in the face of Brexit. Without our creatives and their priceless contribution to the very fabric of our national identity we will be a far poorer nation and a destination less likely to attract the volume of foreign visitors who are so vital to our economic growth.

We generate a programme of projects and campaigns to disseminate our messages, create PR and publicity opportunities to support core Lib Dem policy and help with ever-important fundraising.

It is fun too. We have collaborated with photographer Wolfgang Tilmans, courted celebrity ambassadors, staged for two years a party during conference and pondered the creation of Arty Bird (watch this space).

The list goes on.

What is key is that our numbers are growing as our message is more widely heard and understood. We regularly host 'getting to know you' drinks events which have attracted a wide demographic all of whom have brought their belief and passion for the arts and creative industries to share and inspire future activity.

Now, as we face another general election it really is time for us to move things up a gear. Anyone who sympathises with our LDCN aims and is passionate about, or works in, the creative industries can join for free.

We want to make sure this time round that we make still more impact through ambitious communications designed to spotlight precisely what we have to celebrate but equally what we stand to lose.

At LDCN we think big. We are ambitious. But we know we need to push this ambition up a fair few notches so that our contribution to a successful Lib Dem election campaign registers with the all-important electorate.

Our door is always open and we want to hear from anyone who thinks all this sounds like a good idea and that they might just have a magic ingredient to add to the recipe we are cooking up.

Our members have the opportunity to meet other members and with relevant Parliamentarians, to network, exchange ideas and help create projects which will harness the enormous creative talent we have amongst our supporters...

It has been an exciting journey so far and it is about to get all the more exciting. It is our chance to help safeguard the future of the creative industries and the future of our place as a global leader in the spectrum of talents in which we shine.

Big, bold, bright approaches are what we require to implement. Please – don't sit on any ideas you may have or be afraid to share them. We want to hear from you, listen to your thoughts and act on them. Right now the creative industries need you and, to use the age-old phrase your country needs you too.

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Iain McCallum is a founding member of LDCN  
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# HEATHROW'S FORGOTTEN PROBLEM

It's not just a question of a third runway, what can be done about Heathrow's immigration centres, asks Margaret Lally

On 25 June 2018 (ironically World Environment Day) Parliament finally voted for a third runway at Heathrow. Liberal Democrats have opposed this, and it was a key plank for winning the Richmond by-election.

Rightly there has been significant concern about the impact local residents and the environment. But an issue which has not received any attention is the fate of the two existing Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) Colebrook and Harmondsworth which are in the area proposed for the new runway. The Home Office's current plan is that the existing centres are closed (good) and replaced by one large IRC of up to 1,000 places (bad)

The UK detains more people for immigration purposes than any other European country excluding Russia. It's a brutal, arbitrary system. People are often detained without notice, particularly when they go to report at police stations. Many who are detained are not removed because their case is still going through the process; some are detained for very long times because the Home Office has not managed to get all the paperwork in place.

Being detained is very traumatic particularly for individuals who had already been detained in the places they fled. They came to the UK expecting to be treated fairly and with dignity - not to be arbitrarily imprisoned for committing no crime.

Vulnerable people, particularly those with mental health issues, find detention particularly difficult. In 2018 there were 233 incidents of self-harm that required medical attention in Harmondsworth and Colnbrook. The Institute of Race Relations found Harmondsworth one of the deadliest places to be detained. There have been well documented cases of people being abused in these centres which are primarily ran by private agencies with little judicial oversight.

The Liberal Democrat policy on detention is relatively clear and includes:

- \* Ending unlimited detention and a time limit of 28 days.
- \* Judicial oversight of detention
- \* No detention of vulnerable individuals
- \* Greater investment in community based alternatives to detention which appear to have been successful in other countries.
- \* 8 of the existing 10 detention centres to be closed

So where do we stand on the new IRC? This is complex. First off, the new IRC is alongside the third runway, then there is the wider question of where do we stand on new IRCs?

I am writing this on the assumption that the UK

cannot accommodate everyone who comes into this country and the integrity of the asylum system rests on the basis that people who do not have a legitimate claim cannot stay. I respect that not everyone shares that view. Assuming we accept that removals will happen, we must ensure it is done in the most humane and effective way.

If the system was working properly IRCs might not be required - certainly not the number we currently have. There would be more legal and safe routes for individuals to come and stay in the UK. People who were entitled to refugee status would have their claims dealt with quickly and fairly; more cases would get a positive decision first time round rather than on appeal (and possibly detained in the meantime). The transparent fairness of the process might mean that more people were accepting that they could not stay after they had lost their case. But in any event effective community based alternatives to detention would prepare people for removal both psychologically and practically (paperwork pulled together, vaccinations etc.).

The reality, of course, is different particularly for those who are not asylum seekers. There would still be more people wanting to come to the UK than could be allowed in. Individuals who have taken terrible risks and spent large sums of money to come to the UK will resist when told they have to go.

IRCs may still be required albeit not in such large numbers. Already fewer people are now being held thanks in part to campaigns against detention as well as government cuts.

It is Lib Dem policy that we have 80% fewer IRCs. Closing and not replacing two large centres at Heathrow might seem a good start, and would release substantial funds for alternatives. On the other hand, if people do need to be removed then having a small, well run and accountable IRC near one of the main airports might make sense to avoid long journeys just before being putting on a flight. There are, for course, short stay facilities for immigrants in the airport. However, this accommodation would not be suitable if people need to stay longer than 24 hours, and the short stay facilities are of extremely poor quality and need to be rebuilt.

We are now in general election mode. Brexit is a key issue but we must use the opportunity to put forward our policy for a humane and fair immigration system which includes drastically reducing the number of detention places and ensuring the remaining ones are properly run. Heathrow will be an issue locally and perhaps nationally. Let's use the opportunity to talk about the options for the IRCs.

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Margaret Lally is member of Islington Liberal Democrats

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**My Road from Saigon**  
**by Brian Staley**  
**Conrad Press 2019**  
**(available for pre-order)**

Brian Staley's memoir includes his activities during the Vietnam War but what will be of most interest to Liberator readers is his account of the Jeremy Thorpe-infused scandal at the National Liberal Club in 1976-77 - something which was of particular interest to the Liberal Party, because at the time, the club was its landlord.

The most complete accounts of this colourful tale remain a two-page Private Eye exposé in 1978, and a BBC Panorama special, unrepeated since 1980. Staley - who confirms he was the principal source for both narratives - presents his story here.

In brief, "His Holiness the Prince de Chabris" (actually an alias for Canadian con-man George Marks) claimed to be a fabulously wealthy millionaire and Liberal Party donor; and after a fulsome introduction to the ailing club by Thorpe, he offered to buy it up, just as it was on the brink of bankruptcy.

In fact, 'George de Chabris' was broke, fleeing creditors from a Cayman Islands embezzlement scheme that had gone wrong. While he never actually bought the club, he spent nine months running it as if he owned it, asset-stripping it of valuable artworks, books, furniture and cash, before fleeing to Miami on the proceeds, where he enjoyed a prosperous retirement until his death in 2001. Staley, an NLC member who had been hired by 'de Chabris' as the Club's membership director, had a ringside seat on a scandal which has been something of a taboo in Liberal circles ever since.

Both the National Liberal Club and the Liberal Party (which shared premises and assorted officeholders) turned a blind eye: Even after 'de Chabris' was exposed as an imposter on the front page of The Times, he remained in post for another six months. The Thorpe scandal had already broken, the Lib-Lab Pact was ongoing, and the NLC scandal seemed an embarrassing sideshow.

The NLC, founded by Gladstone to be an accessible, inclusive version of a traditional London club, affordable for Liberal rank-



# REVIEWS

and-file activists, was going through a phase of being run by a reactionary clique that managed to combine incompetence, snobbery and secretiveness, who preferred dealing with a con-man to facing awkward questions.

And as Staley's account demonstrates, there was considerable overlap with the Thorpe saga, as key participants such as Cyril Smith, John Le Mesurier (not the actor), George Deakin and Philip Watkins all played their part. Staley certainly doesn't pull his punches, and directly accuses Watkins, the amiable, well-regarded treasurer of the Liberal Party, of having been a crook.

While Staley cries "establishment cover-up" throughout this book, the evidence presented is actually much more consistent with the nature of the wider Thorpe cover-up - not some carefully-concocted conspiracy, but simply a succession of missed opportunities, as various middle-ranking officials proved reluctant to rock the boat, and preferred to look the other way in the hope that things would all blow over.

Staley - who came to the club as a committed Liberal and had been a Liberal Party press officer - unfolds a dark tale of embezzlement, incompetence, threats and paedophilia. (It should be noted that his experiences with the Liberals in the 1970s formed the backdrop of his sworn testimony as an eyewitness before the ongoing Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.)

This is not an account which could have been published until a few years ago - its accusations are so direct that it would doubtless have prompted several libel actions if published in the lifetimes of those accused. In particular, Thorpe's well-known litigiousness ensured that until his death in 2014, every published account of his downfall was framed around a painfully-laboured emphasis on his acquittal,

even when setting out some mind-bogglingly incriminating evidence; and the posthumous 2016 publication of John Preston's non-fiction novel A Very English Scandal was actually the first book-length account that dropped any pretence of Thorpe's innocence on incitement to murder.

The long-overdue appearance of Staley's memoir ensures that many previously-missing pieces of the puzzle have finally reached print. It is not a neutral account, but it is all the more powerful for it.

The book's final chapters deal with Staley's political activity in more recent years. Unsurprisingly, after the wounding Thorpe saga, Staley withdrew from politics for a time - but re-emerged in the 1990s, firstly as a Lib Dem local party chair in Kent, and then as a councillor in Canterbury. It was through this, and his work with local party colleagues such as Peter Carroll, that Staley became one of the leading lights of the campaign for Gurkha veterans' rights. It culminated in a 2009 vote that ended up being the first time in the history of the Liberal Democrats that the party had passed its own motion in the House of Commons. Although celebrities such as Joanna Lumley provided an energetic public face for the campaign, Staley describes here the behind-the-scenes machinations, and the remaining challenges.

Overall, this memoir describes the dashed optimism of an idealistic Liberal, still enthused by the Grimond-era vision of a classless, collaborative society. Staley admits to many failures, including far more defeats than victories. But coming away from this memoir, you can't help but admire his integrity and persistence.

Seth Thevoz



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## Judging Religion: a dialogue for our time by John Holroyd Silverwood Books.

Any political party which seeks to govern needs to be able to understand and to manage the privileged space which religion still holds in UK public life. It has status within the constitution and protection in law to discriminate against women and same sex couples. In other parts of the world, religion endorses male supremacy, undermines the values of social justice and gender equality and restricts women's access to public life.

One response to this are the new atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and the late Christopher Hitchens who advocate that superstition, religion and irrationalism should not be tolerated, but countered, criticised and exposed by rational argument wherever their influence arises in government, education or politics.

This approach clearly has achieved some traction – just note the number of books that they have collectively sold and media influence and punditry achieved.

What this does demonstrate is that we live in a society where opinions are formed, decisions are regularly made about religion and that there pretty entrenched positions.

The media frequently report on religious issues from a low base of knowledge, which often – in my view – reflects a societal lack of religious literacy and informed public discourse. Media depictions of Islam regularly verge on Islamophobic and according to the British Social Attitudes survey in 2018 more than half the population state they have no religion.

Religious organisations which do not represent the broad base of their faith are regularly set up against each other by the media – either through ignorance of the range of perspectives available or to create the maximum conflict and controversy.

John Holroyd - a philosophy teacher and lecturer - has written a book which invites the reader to engage with an ethical appraisal of religion as it is practiced today. He states that he writes in the belief that it is an important debate

and claims that the free exchange of ideas and experience between people of differing views and commitments can, with practise, generate more heat than light. More pointedly he argues that mistaken judgements about religion can cause real harm.

At the heart of this book is the exploration of the question how can we fairly evaluate the ethical character of religions. It focuses mainly but not exclusively on Christianity and Islam, being critical of them in many respects. In my view the chapters on Islam are some of the most academically wide-ranging and rigorous; particularly around how primary sources support the treatment of women and violence.

He guides us through carefully reasoned thinking – what is religion, what is an ethical judgement, what is its purpose and status? Holroyd then examines religion within a variety of global perspectives as they respond to a range of large scale ethical challenges with political and complex profiles – the Holocaust, US civil rights movement, liberation theology movement in South America and the role of religion in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948. He also looks at elements of religious practice and life including mental health, prayer, meditation and mission and evangelising. None of these are new subjects for ethical discussion but Holroyd handles them thoughtfully and with a critical eye.

This is a clever book and very readable. It provides a simple, clear journey through some complicated and controversial philosophical concepts and historical perspective around religion. It does have moments of school textbook about it, particularly when describing the thought of various philosophers but I suspect that is where this book may find a substantial audience. However, it deserves a much wider mainstream readership among those who take public discourse seriously.

Susan Simmonds

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## Club Government by Seth Thevoz IB Tauris

The marketing blurb for Seth Thevoz's excellent tome reads: "The phenomenon of 'Club Government'

in the mid-nineteenth century, when many of the functions of government were alleged to have taken place behind closed doors, in the secretive clubs of London's St. James's district, has not been adequately historicised.

"Despite 'Club Government' being referenced in most major political histories of the period, it is a topic which has never before enjoyed a full-length study."

Quite. This will come to no surprise to anyone who thinks most real Government takes place out of sight, in dimly-lit rooms, when certainly it used to be obscured by clouds of aromatic cigar smoke accompanied by excellent port.

Our political masters never liked excessive attention being paid to their decision-making process, any more than they do today. Indeed, it is one of the most important purposes of the modern Liberal Democrats to tear down the carefully-erected curtains of obfuscation and let a little light in.

Little wonder, then, that historian and passionate Liberal Seth Thevoz – a man for whom a good cigar and a glass of port are dear friends, and the only man in captivity ever to make wearing a fedora look good – chose to make the clubs of the mid-19th century his PhD topic, and thenceforth transformed it into a thoroughly entertaining book.

The copious reference notes reveal its genesis as a carefully sourced study, and that will delight other historians. The rest of us political tragi-comics will just enjoy the read.

Thevoz's research is commendably thorough. Making use of previously-sealed club archives, this work of political history, social history, sociology and quantitative approaches to history seeks to deepen our understanding of the distinctive and novel ways in which British political culture evolved in this period.

The book concludes that historians have hugely underestimated the extent of club influence on 'high politics' in Westminster, and though the reputation of clubs for intervening in elections was exaggerated, the culture and secrecy involved in gentleman's clubs had a huge impact on Britain and the British Empire.

And let it be whispered abroad ... it still does.

It's an easy and educative

read from someone who not only researches (and then writes) well, but whose understanding of what drives politicians to do what they do is weaved throughout the book. I suspect we will hear more from Dr Thevoz, and not just in academia.

Steve Yolland

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## Nein by Paddy Ashdown William Collins 2018

Soldier, diplomat and politician would be enough careers for most people but Paddy Ashdown had a late fourth one as a military historian and in his last book he makes the case that the anti-Nazi resistance in Germany was a more serious proposition than is often thought.

He does not look at individual acts of resistance, admirable though futile as those were, but at the well-organised resisters at the top of the German army.

These were men who in some cases were disillusioned Nazis, others were clear-sighted soldiers who thought Germany should not have started a war and when it happened knew it could not win.

Being in the army, the only semi-independent institution in Nazi Germany, they alone were in a position to do something about Hitler.

At the centre of it all was Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the army intelligence service the Abwehr, to whom Winston Churchill paid an oblique post-war tribute.

Ashdown traces how the anti-Hitler plotters were thwarted before the war by British appearers. Each time they expected Hitler to provoke the British into threatening war - so giving the generals an excuse to act - the British instead appeased him.

By the time Britain declared war they assumed Hitler would overreach himself into something so disastrous for Germany that they could remove him. Instead his military campaigns against the Low Countries and France were astonishing successes, so they could not.

During the war the allies insistence that Germany surrender unconditionally regardless of who ruled it also hampered the plotters who wanted to be able to present themselves as overthrowing Hitler to bring peace.



Attempts to assassinate Hitler continued to be hatched within the Wehrmacht through the war but were stymied usually by ill-luck up to the failed generals' plot in 1944, after which Canaris and other plotters were executed.

The book also makes sense of two puzzling wartime incidents. Why did the British insist - in the face of the Czech resistance's justified fears of civilian reprisals - on assassinating the senior Nazi Heydrich in Bohemia? Ashdown's answer is that Heydrich was too close to moving against Canaris.

Ashdown also explains why Spain never entered the war on the Axis side. Canaris, who had close links there, convinced Franco that if he did the British navy would seize the Canary Islands.

Canaris' plotters though were successful in another respect. Ashdown has assembled evidence that, thanks to spy rings with radios safely in Switzerland, Canaris and his associates were able to feed highly accurate information about German plans to the allies. Often these were not believed but once they were the information was priceless.

By the time of the generals' plot the anti-Hitler resistance was highly organised, involved thousands of people and even had a new government lined up.

How on earth was this possible in a country riddled with Gestapo

and SS officers? Ashdown has a surprising answer: cock-up. For all its image of pervasive power Himmler's security apparatus simply missed what was going on in the army.

Anti-Nazi activity in Germany was, Ashdown shows, extensive and at several points almost effective, but its actual value turned out to lie in the readiness of senior officers to pass information to the allies.

Mark Smulian

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## Hidden London Exhibition London Transport Museum

The tiled station entrance is shabby and overgrown. The doors open into an abandoned ticket office, surrounded by the growl of tube trains.

Aldwych station is to close, announces a poster, alongside plans of the station made in 1906 and 1907, with precise, delicate lines and ornate lettering.

While numerous photos, items, posters, artwork and technical drawings are on show, the museum's masterstroke has been to recreate the grimy, industrial world of the London Underground.

Notices are dirty, torn and held in place with gaffer tape. Old wiring runs along walls made rough with layers of torn-off posters. Coffee cups and hard hats lie discarded.



After descending a dim, grey stairwell (again, an accurate reconstruction), the lower floor seems quiet – then a tube train roars overhead, a familiar, realistic sound.

Wandering these gloomy passages, visitors can discover how spaces become disused and what happens to them.

Abandoned tunnels have had many uses, including growing food, first mooted in the 1930s. Tunnels in Highgate provide a haven for bats; less welcome railway fauna has included mosquitos during the Second World War.

Up to 100,000 people a night sheltered in the underground during the war (some slept on the tracks), and items and photos show how they lived and entertained themselves. Improvements to living conditions include a washroom hopper and a “sewage ejector system”.

Winston Churchill’s bunker has been recreated, including a dining table with menu cards, and you can use the switchboard.

Later, the tunnels provided a temporary home to those arriving from the Caribbean aboard the *Windrush*.

Many have worked in the Underground, including at a secret aircraft factory, staffed mainly by women, as well as maintenance workers, engineers, rat-catchers and “fluffers” who clean the tracks at night.

Flooding from the Thames was a major concern and films, objects and signs tell the stories of floodgates, which were protected by armed guards.

The tube has often featured in films, and you can sit on a slatted wooden bench to admire film posters and watch clips.

Recent photographs – including of works at Bank station and a sorry-looking Euston station building awaiting demolition – shows how change to underground spaces continues to this day.

Hidden London opens at London Transport Museum runs until January 2021. Tickets are £18 and include general museum admission for a year.

Christy Lawrance

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## The Yorkshire Yellow Book 2019 Beecroft Publications 2019

This book is a series of essays on the issue of Yorkshire Devolution. There’s a lot to enjoy here, particularly those essays which describe the development of Yorkshire’s distinctive identity, through its unique geography, its long history of international trade (and consequential immigration), and its diverse opportunities for industry and production.

The ‘Yorkshire in Numbers’ piece gives plenty of ammunition for the argument that a region with a similar population and GDP to Scotland has a right to exercise many of the same powers. The ‘Britain’s first Eurozone’ piece relates how a group of owners of cafe-bars and independent fashion/lifestyle boutiques had the imagination to exercise powers that are already available, in this case for them to accept payment in euros as well as pounds.

However, several of the essays espouse some glorious aspect of Yorkshire or describe a particular issue on which they want government to act, like improving public transport, developing the arts or nurturing and supporting the many thousands of young people - some very vulnerable - who come to the universities in Yorkshire, and then say in the last few paragraphs “oh, and by the way, devolution would be great way to get this done”, without revealing any detail of how they think such devolution would work.

One of the problems with the book is that whilst it contains interesting and often original ideas, it is also muddled and contains errors of fact. For people steeped in politics – and let’s face it the book will largely be read by them – to be told in the introduction that Gordon Brown was prime minister in 2004 when the North East referendum took place is not a way to instil confidence. Treating this referendum as a serious attempt to consult people on devolution is also misleading, when the proposition on offer was for an elected regional assembly without any real power.

That referendum was almost the last act in the then Labour Government’s programme of

democratic reform, during which there was the experiment of appointed regional chambers, with members drawn from local government and civil society, which exercised scrutiny over regional services, appointed representatives to the EU Committee of the Regions and liaised with/lobbied the EU on regional funding.

Labour trailed the prospect of further reform of the House of Lords, voting reform and serious devolution to the English regions and many of us in local government at that time were working hard to make it happen when they abruptly lost interest.

It seems to your reviewers that if you are going to put the case for devolution, then you need to know what sort of devolution you want.

Within these essays several suggestions are made, but really only Michael Meadowcroft and Ian MacFadyen make a wholehearted plea for a Yorkshire parliament or assembly along the lines of those in Wales or Scotland. Several people seem to be quite happy to settle for small changes as ‘a step in the right direction’.

Given the dog’s breakfast of local government reorganisation in England, past experience would suggest that a first step will probably be the last one for a very long time!

As for the argument that a mayor for Yorkshire would be real devolution, surely the whole idea of concentrating such power in the hands of one individual is anathema to Liberal Democrats?

Thankfully, the book closes with a resounding Lib Dem piece entitled ‘Marks of a Liberal Yorkshire’ by Kamran Hussein, current candidate for Leeds North West.

Ruth Coleman-Taylor  
and Mick Taylor



## Monday

This is usually a quiet time of year in Rutland. There is nothing to hear but the chatter of hamwees massing on the telegraph wires before they fly south for the winter (or are they wheways returning from the Arctic?), the swish swish of Meadowcroft's broom as he sweeps up the fallen leaves and his grumbling when he has to put back the sundial in my walled garden. This year, however, is very different. As soon as the general election was called I had the Green Ballroom readied for action. Banks of telephones were installed along with the very latest electric computers, and the room is now dominated by a map of Rutland Water and its shores – pretty WAAFS and Wrens push little models of destroyers and fighter planes across it. Meanwhile, the Well-Behaved Orphans have been carefully measured to see what depth of snowdrift would prevent them from delivering leaflets. The balloon may have only just gone up, but we are ready for action.

## Tuesday

When Jo Gloria Swanson tipped me the wink that we would be parading newly converted Conservative MPs to the Liberal Democrat Conference, I naturally decided to join the fun. I hired a van from Oakham's leading Chinese laundry and bade a brace of gamekeepers join me; we motored up to Town and lay in wait outside the Carlton Club. In the middle of the afternoon a red-faced character sporting an Eton tie stumbled down the steps. I thumbed through Jane's Conservative MPs and identified him as fair quarry. The gamekeepers moved in, and when he proved resistant to their orders a tap on the napper with an orchard doughty rendered him more pliable. He was bundled into the van and buckled inside the large wicker hamper with which it had come equipped. Thus arranged, we pointed the bonnet for Bournemouth.

## Wednesday

Never mind Bournemouth: the talk of the Bonkers' Arms when I call in this morning is the rumour that Boris Johnson is to desert Uxbridge and stand for Rutland and Melton instead. One regular tells me the prime minister is already known to have fathered children from Essendine to Whissendine; another has it on good authority that he has been taking technology lessons in the red-light district of Uppingham; a third tells me Johnson has given the address of the crime correspondent of the High Leicestershire Radical to a school friend so he can have him beaten up. By the time I return to the pub this evening it has been settled by the regulars that this rumour is what the young people call 'fake news'.

## Thursday

Back to events in Bournemouth. Really, Jo might have told me that the Tory MPs she was after had to want to join the Liberal Democrats. Such a change in policy to something altogether softer should have been debated amongst the membership before it was enacted. I do hope this will not prove typical of her leadership. My plans fell flat in any case: when I returned to my hotel room to fetch the aforementioned Tory MP so I could drag him on to the conference stage, I found he had fashioned a rope from the bedclothes and made his exit through the window. Anyway, tomorrow morning I set off on an election tour of the country and will not see Rutland again for a whole week.

# Lord Bonkers' Diary

Back to the Hall at last after my tour – this electioneering business is hard work and this time is proving deeply confusing. First I went to Buckingham – a place that always reminds me of an amusing limerick told to me by Herbert Gladstone – and found Stephen Dorrell knocking on doors. He was for many years Conservative MP for Loughborough and our paths crossed from time to time, so naturally I engaged in some good-natured chivvying about the shortcomings of the

Tory view of the world. Blow me down if he didn't turn out to be the Liberal Democrat candidate! Then I visited Finchley and ran into Luciana Berger. I demanded to know why she wasn't in Liverpool and added some salty comments on the leadership of the Labour Party... It all proved rather embarrassing. I shall draw a veil over my encounter with Sam Gyimah in Kensington.

## Friday

I enjoyed Uxbridge, particularly the crowd of mothers and children I found hammering on the door of the Conservative campaign headquarters. Down in Devon I ran into the Attorney General and found his theatrical mien puzzlingly familiar. It was only this morning that I remembered where I had seen him before: he was playing the rear end of a cow in *Aladdin* at the Alhambra, Bideford. Then I travelled to Witham in Essex, where the sitting Conservative offered me a lift in her sleigh and some Turkish delight. I insisted on being set down so I could catch the Green Line bus instead. In Somerset I tipped the local urchins sixpence apiece to follow Jacob Rees-Mogg around, point at him and double up with laughter. Eventually his Nanny chased them off and I ran too – you know what Nannies are. Passing through Leeds I bought Richard Burgon a colouring book, before spending a day with our own Tim Farron canvassing the mint cake workers of Kendal. I am pleased to report he has a considerable following amongst them. Then it was Scotland for a night at my house Brig o'Dread, before I finished my tour delivering leaflets in Orkney for Alistair Carmichael. I was dispatched to the islands of Papa Westray and Papa Lazarou.

## Saturday

I snatch some respite from the fray and take a walk by the shores of Rutland Water. Who should I find in one of the hides but that keen birdwatcher and leading MEP Sheila Ritchie? She kindly explains that what I have always taken to be hamwees are in fact wheways and that what I have always taken to be wheways are in fact hamwees. Or was it the other way round? Whatever the case, I enjoyed our chat and was pleased to offer her a nip from my flask of that most prized of Highland malts, Auld Johnston.

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