

Chapter 1: In the beginning...

Mr Gladstone was prime minister on four occasions, yet there is no record of him ever having once deliver a 'Focus' leaflet. How on earth did the Liberals win (even after bribery was made illegal)? One grassroots campaign weapon of choice was the song. The trick was to choose a well-known song of the day and provide new words to get your message across.

THE LAND

(Words: unknown

Tune: Marching Through Georgia; Henry Clay Work)

Sound the call for freedom boys, and sound it far and wide,
March along to victory for God is on our side,
While the voice of Nature thunders o'er the rising tide,
"God gave the land to the people!"

Chorus:

The land, the land, 'twas God who made the land,
The land, the land, the ground on which we stand,
Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hand?
God made the land for the people.

Hark the sound is spreading from the East and from the West,
Why should we work hard and let the landlords take the best?
Make them pay their taxes on the land just like the rest,
The land was meant for the people

repeat chorus

Clear the way for liberty, the land must all be free,
Liberals will not falter from the fight, tho' stern it be,
'Til the flag we love so well will fly from sea to sea
O'er the land that is free for the people

repeat chorus

The army now is marching on, the battle to begin.
The standard now is raised on high to face the battle din,
We'll never cease from fighting 'til victory we win,
And the land is free for the people

repeat chorus

Historical note — Despite being seen as the Liberal Anthem, the words for this song actually come from the Georgists, followers of Henry George, an American political thinker whose seminal work 'Progress and Poverty' (1879) expounded the theory of land value taxation ('the one tax'). Liberals adopted the song in the two general elections of 1910, following the rejection by the House of Lords of Lloyd George's 1909 People's Budget, which proposed a tax on land. The original tune (with different words) was composed for the Union side in the American Civil War, and to this day is loathed in the Deep South. You can find a detailed history of the song (including historical audio files) at: www.andrewwhitehead.net/the-land-song.html