

the Hartington/Granville leadership in the period 1875–80 and of the difficulties Gladstone found in leading the party after 1880, particularly in the realm of foreign affairs. Kimberley is especially interesting on the response of Britain to the rise of Germany, where he was inclined to take a much more vigorous line than the rest of the government in confronting the Germans over their colonial ambitions.

The House of Lords was where Kimberley operated – a topic which, I believe, is a much-neglected part of Victorian studies. The *Journal* throws several interesting sidelights on the Lords. In 1869, there were probably over 160 Liberal peers (p. 236) but after the gradual loss of support among the aristocracy over Irish land reform and the split over Home Rule, the Liberal strength in the Lords dwindled to around forty, only half of whom were present at the meeting at Spencer House in 1897 to elect Kimberley as their leader (p. 445). No wonder Lord Rosebery felt he lacked support as prime minister.

This is a well-produced work with a substantial array of 1447 footnotes to assist in explanation or further detail (plus a further forty-five for the memoir), including cross-referencing to the Gladstone Diaries where relevant. Some further help could have been given on foreign affairs in the early part of the book but, as the editors get into the rhythm of the work, they become sure-footed guides in the main period of domestic interest. Kimberley has not had a full biography but, taken together with the extracts from his correspondence, also edited by John Powell,³ we are beginning to see a fuller picture of the contribution he made to the Liberal front bench. The *Journal* is well worth the study but does require some prior knowledge of the main events of the period.

Notes:

- 1 She may have been less happy – see John Powell (ed): *Liberal by Principle* (The Historians Press, 1996).
- 2 Ethel Drus (ed): *A Journal of Events during the Gladstone Ministry 1868–74* (1958).
- 3 Powell, *Liberal by Principle*.

recognition from his participation in the then popular radio show, *The Brains' Trust*. The broadcast was not a great success; Samuel not only overran his allotted fifteen minutes but was cut off before he reached the end of his talk, due to a misunderstanding with the producer over the pre-arranged signal for ending the broadcast. Given this, it is perhaps a matter of some relief that the broadcast does not feature on the tape!

However, the omission of Lord Samuel does highlight the major weakness of this otherwise enjoyable and useful collection. Although extracts from forty-two broadcasts are included, and the tape runs to almost three hours, many of the most famous or significant broadcasts are missing. The collection is also heavily weighted towards the 1990s, with twenty-three of the forty-two broadcasts included dating from 1991 or later.

Nonetheless, there are enough for the interested viewers to see for themselves some of the changes in the construction and use of broadcasts since 1951. Many of the early ones – including the first on the tape from Labour in 1951 – show a relatively naïve approach to the TV medium, with interviews where the interviewee, rather than looking at the interviewer, immediately turns to the camera on speaking. Nonetheless, from very early on many of the broadcasts were slickly – for their day – packaged.

One of the four political broadcasts from the 1950s included on the tape is Labour's from September 1959, which was a very polished piece masterminded by Anthony Wedgwood Benn (as he then called himself). As he himself later said, 'I was the Peter Mandelson – Bryan Gould of the 1959 election. I fought a brilliant campaign and lost.' Based on the format of the then popular BBC programme *Tonight* the broadcast had the appearance of a current affairs programme. It provoked the Conservatives to broadcast a reply, filmed in the same studio and revealing some of the tricks used by Labour.² This was the first election

Politics on TV

Party Political Broadcasts: The Greatest Hits

(Politico's Publishing; VHS, 169 minutes)

Reviewed by Mark Pack

The eagle-eyed pedant may be a little confused by the start of this videotape. It announces that in 1953 Harold Macmillan starred in the first official party political broadcast, and then goes straight into a Labour broadcast from 1951. In fact, 1951 saw the first political broadcasts during a general election (often called party election broadcasts, or PEBs) whilst 1953 saw the first broadcasts outside election time (often called party political broadcasts, or PPBs).¹

The BBC had been pressing for political broadcasts to be used during the 1950 election, but initially met hostility from politicians. The very first political broadcast, either PEB or PPB, was eventually seen on

15 October 1951, and featured the former Liberal Home Secretary Lord Samuel. An eighty-one year old peer, he made a rather odd choice for this leading role, although he had a certain degree of

in which the audience for TV PEBs was larger than that for PEBs on radio.

The other 1950s broadcasts included are Labour's first from October 1951, Hugh Gaitskill's call for the Prime Minister to resign over Suez (November 1956) and the first broadcast outside election time, by the Conservatives in May 1953. This had an opening line unlikely to be considered an audience-grabber nowadays: 'Good evening. I'm Bill Deedes, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Ashford.'

The 1960s are not represented on the tape, which means that, *inter alia*, viewers are deprived of Harold Wilson's debut with the autocue in 1963, which soon became standard equipment. Also missing is the dramatic opening to the 1966 Liberal broadcast, which featured silhouettes of Ludovic Kennedy and Harold Wilson. The 1970 election saw major innovations in the format of broadcasts by the Conservatives, as they started using carefully shot and edited footage to produce lively, 'newsreel' style films.

These innovative broadcasts are not featured on the tape, although it does include the rather bizarre University Challenge-style Labour broadcast from March 1970. This had teams answering questions on topics such as whether or not pensioners were better off after six years of Labour. Also present is the Jimmy Saville – Jeremy Thorpe double act from April 1972. Apart from its unfortunate reminder of 1970s clothes styles, it also illustrates how hostile questioning used to be welcomed, rather than viewed as something to be carefully spun out of existence. Included amongst those allowed to question Thorpe was a member of the Monday Club's Executive, who attacked the Young Liberals for their support of direct action.

The rest of the 1970s is well represented, with Conservative, Labour and Liberal broadcasts from February 1974 and two Conservative broadcasts from April 1979. Sadly missing, though, is the famous May 1978 Saatchi's broadcast – which was

also their first public advertising for the party – that showed Britain 'going backwards' under Labour and had been preceded by a taster newspaper advertising campaign.

Only one broadcast from the first half of the 1980s is included, the Alliance's of May 1983; however, the broadcasts of the time showed little innovation or creative spark. Of the late 1980s we have both a humorous Tory broadcast of April 1986, along with one of the famous John Cleese PPBs. Rather than his broadcast explaining PR, the tape includes his April 1987 effort, which was a highly articulate plea for moderation in politics. Although it had plenty of jokes and smart visual gimmicks, at heart it is a carefully argued piece of political philosophy, and serves as a reminder that complicated arguments can still be put over, even in modern politics.

The 1987 election is represented by one broadcast from each of the main parties, including Rosie Barnes and rabbit from the Alliance, and Labour's 'Kinnock – the movie.'³ The Conservative broadcast contains an extended sequence – over two and a half minutes – of pictures and backing music, with no talking or voice-over. At the time, this was the longest such sequence, with music provided by Andrew Lloyd-Webber, and pictures of Mrs Thatcher as international political leader. Two of the shots stand out particularly Thatcher and Helmut Kohl getting into 'his and hers' tanks, and another of Mrs Thatcher standing rather meekly by as Richard Branson waves enthusiastically to the crowds. The other two 1980s broadcasts included are Glenda Jackson in the conservatory with her plants (August 1987) and the Green Party's broadcast for the European elections (June 1989).

From the 1990s, there is John Major's broadcast on the Gulf War (January 1991), along with four from the general election of 1992, including the famous 'Jennifer's ear' broadcast on the health service. Six broadcasts are included for the period between the 1992 and 1997 elections,

including one from the SNP, and the Natural Law Party's broadcast for the European elections of June 1994. The 1997 election is generously covered with eleven broadcasts, including SNP, Liberal and UK Independence Party, though not even for 1997 is any broadcast from Plaid Cymru included. Most striking about these broadcasts is that up to and including 1992, Labour's broadcasts regularly feature the problems of poverty amongst pensioners, but those on the tape since then are notable for their relative neglect of this issue. The final broadcast is William Hague's apology for the Conservatives from October 1997.

The tape is rather a lucky-dip collection of political broadcasts, with many of the most famous, important or interesting ones missing. However, credit should be given for the effort of putting together such a tape – and one which, moreover, both provides good value for money and has plenty to please both the casual viewer and the interested amateur or professional student of politics.

Notes:

- 1 Political broadcasts on radio predated those on TV by several decades, having started in the 1920s.
- 2 Although this broadcast still exists, at least in parts, this early example of TV rebuttal is regrettably not included on the tape.
- 3 Curiously, the version included is not the more famous one, which in place of the nearly-obligatory screen saying 'Vote Labour' ended with a plea to vote for Kinnock. This is probably the only party political to have so ended with a plea to vote for a leader rather than their party.

PPBs: The Greatest Hits

is available from Politico's (8 Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RZ) for the special discounted price of £15.99 (normal price £19.99) for subscribers to the *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*.

To order, use the leaflet included with this issue.