

to do with the rural and historical origins of many of the liberal sister parties and its comparative under-representation in urban, metropolitan areas. This means also that metropolitan issues are not sufficiently well addressed by the party at European level, although its positions on asylum, immigration and gay rights are strong ones overall.

The top three issues in the ELDR manifesto for the June Euro elections were the economy, the environment and civil liberties. This chimes precisely with British Liberal priorities. The point we have reached, therefore, after nearly forty years of close cooperation with the various sister parties across Europe, is one where British Liberals feel comfortable and positive – and, while ELDR/ALDE is a broader church than the British party, we can look forward to the future with confidence that liberal values as we understand them and policies deriving from those values will continue to prevail.

In the question and answer session following the speeches, two salient points were quickly raised. The first was that when these questions were first becoming important in the late 1970s–early 1980s, the risk for British Liberals was that we would be swamped by the much larger groups of the French centrists under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and, to a lesser degree, the German FDP. That problem has been remedied by the growth in representation that the Liberal Democrats have achieved in European elections under proportional representation and by the decline in French liberal numbers – indeed, a decline mirrored across much of southern Europe. The other point was that in all countries there has been considerable political flux, with parties undergoing great changes internally, sometimes splitting and re-forming, or with one faction or philosophy

coming to dominate. The United Kingdom has not been immune from this process, even without the help of a PR system for Westminster elections. Our own party was formed as a result of the split of the SDP from Labour in 1981. Also, as William Wallace pointed out, the economic liberals who were highly significant in the Liberal Party of the 1940s and early 1950s decided to leave the party and were instead the inspiration for people like Margaret Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph, making the Conservative Party of the 1980s an overtly economic liberal entity.

As a postscript to the discussion, it is worth remembering

that the British Liberal Democrats are now the largest liberal party in Europe. Where we lose out is because, under a first-past-the-post electoral system for the national Parliament, we have not been able to participate in government. This contrasts with the position of some liberal parties in other EU countries, which are much smaller in terms of their national vote or seats in their national assembly but who are able to form coalitions, get into government and sometimes even provide the prime ministership.

*Graham Lippiatt is the Secretary of the Liberal Democrat History Group.*

## LETTERS

**The top three issues in the ELDR manifesto for the June Euro elections were the economy, the environment and civil liberties. This chimes precisely with British Liberal priorities.**

### How long was Lloyd George an MP?

The Liberal Democrat History group's autumn 2008 quiz (reprinted in *Journal* 61, Winter 2008–09) contained a question asking how many years and days David Lloyd George had served as MP for Caernarvon Boroughs. Consideration of the answer threw up some uncertainties: should the start date be counted as the date of his election, or the date of the count and announcement (the next day), or the day on which he took his seat? Should the end date have been the day on which his peerage was announced, or the day on which he died (he was too ill ever to take his Lords seat)? Two correspondents have taken up the issue:

Lloyd George took his seat on 17 April 1890 and ceased being one with the conferment of his title on 1 January 1945. The fact

that he never attended the Lords doesn't affect this. He was certainly not an MP at the time of his death.

*Kenneth O. Morgan*

Lloyd George was surely an MP from when his result was declared on 11 April 1890 until his peerage was announced on 1 January 1945. I have always considered I became Leader of Richmond-upon-Thames council at 10.24 pm on Thursday 10 November 1983. This was the time showing on my watch in the victory photo when the second by-election win was declared that evening.

However, the name of Lloyd George's constituency in 1890 was not Caernarvon Boroughs. It was Carnarvon Boroughs, or strictly the Carnarvon District of Boroughs. The first *Times Guide to the House of Commons* to

use Caernarvon Boroughs was the 1935 edition, probably a late change as it still follows Cardiff. Perhaps there was a Statutory Instrument changing the constituency name, if someone wants to solve *this* puzzle definitively. In 1983 the constituency spelling changed to Caernarfon.

In 1890 the Carnarvon District of Boroughs comprised Carnarvon, Bangor, Conway, Criccieth, Nevin and Pwllheli; and from 1918 to 1950 only Carnarvon, Bangor, Conway and Pwllheli. As well as Caernarfon we now have Conwy, Nefyn, and for some Welsh speakers Criccieth. Name changes are a minefield for the unwary, and even for the expert. FWS Craig has Caernarvon Boroughs in *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885–1918*.

David Williams

### Sheelagh Murnaghan

I was somewhat surprised to see no mention of Sheelagh Murnaghan in the 'Liberalism and Women' issue of the *Journal* (issue 62, Spring 2009). The article on Liberal women MPs notes that between 1951 and 1986 there were none at all.

Sheelagh Murnaghan was the only Liberal MP to be elected to the Northern Ireland Parliament. At a time before the Orpington by-election when there were only six Liberal MPs at Westminster, she won a by-election in 1961 to represent Queen's University. She had already made her name as the only practising woman barrister in Northern Ireland and as an international hockey player. Between 1961 and the abolition of her university constituency in 1969 she was a sole voice for many changes needed

in a pre-troubles Northern Ireland. She introduced a Human Rights Bill on four occasions and campaigned on a wide range of issues from electoral reform to the abolition of capital punishment. In 1965 she even had the rare distinction of being an unopposed Liberal MP!

Berkley Farr

*Editor's note: we will be carrying a full biography of Sheelagh Murnaghan in a future issue of the Journal.*

### CB and women's suffrage

I must challenge Richard Reeves' statement (*Journal of Liberal History* 62, Spring 2009) that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (CB) was 'far from progressive on the issue' of women's suffrage. In 1870 – within two years of his election as an MP in 1868 – CB voted for Jacob Bright's unsuccessful bill for women's suffrage (Jacob Bright, a younger brother of John Bright, was then one of Manchester's three MPs). Nor did CB modify his consistent acceptance of the principle of women's enfranchisement after he became Prime Minister.

On 19 May 1906 he received a deputation of some three hundred suffragettes who were told that, although he thought that the activities of the more militant agitators were counter-productive, in his opinion 'they had made out before the country a conclusive and irrefutable case' and 'should go on pestering'. Then when a Women's Enfranchisement Bill was presented in the Commons on 8 March 1907, CB said that he would vote for it as 'the exclusion of women from the franchise is neither expedient, justifiable or politically right', but the

bill's opponents succeeded in having it talked out. Thus a letter from King Edward to his son, the future King George V, on 12 March, stating: 'Thank heaven these dreadful women have not yet been enfranchised. It would have been more dignified if the PM had not spoken on the Bill – or backed it up'. A letter to CB followed on 29 March when the King wrote: 'The conduct of these so-called "suffragettes" has been so outrageous and done that cause such harm (for which I have no sympathy) that I cannot understand why the Prime Minister could speak in their favour'.

Dr Alexander (Sandy) S. Waugh

### Morley and Gladstone

I was surprised to see that Michael Ledger-Lomas, in reviewing Richard Shannon's *Gladstone: God and Politics* (*Journal* 61, Winter 2008–09), perpetuated the claim that John Morley 'turned a positivist's blind eye' to his subject's religious views. In the introductory chapter to the great biography, Morley suggested that the 'detailed history of Mr Gladstone as theologian and churchman will not be found in these pages'; but there are nevertheless innumerable references, throughout the book, to the key role of religion in Gladstone's career. Major episodes such as the campaign against papal infallibility are covered in full, but equally illuminating are the many religious quotations from Gladstone's diaries and letters. On 6 April 1880, for instance, an overnight journey after the general election provided 'time to ruminate on the great hand of God, so evidently displayed'.

Morley does not comment editorially on many of these references, but occasionally he allows his scepticism to appear, particularly in relation to the scientific discoveries of the century:

Mr Gladstone watched these things vaguely and with misgiving; instinct must have told him that the advance of natural explanation ... would be in some degree at the expense of the supernatural. But from any full or serious examination of the details of the scientific movement he stood aside, safe and steadfast within the citadel of Tradition.

Of course Gladstone read voluminously on theological and even scientific subjects, but his interest often lay in the secondary detail. For Morley and many of his generation the realisation that the universe was both vaster and immeasurably older than previously believed imposed a radical re-examination of the view that the divine creator retained a direct personal interest in the human species inhabiting this small planet. Gladstone, on the other hand, retained the life-long conviction that God supported and directed his daily activities. Morley did not seek to challenge this comforting view, because the purpose of the biography was to establish a myth rather than to undermine it. More fundamentally, throughout his career Morley was fascinated by more dominant personalities who lacked his own self-doubt. In some ways he envied Gladstone the religious certainties that no longer seemed acceptably plausible to his biographer.

Patrick Jackson