



VIOLET & CLEM

‘The only purpose of politics is the expression of one’s deepest convictions – and their translation into facts.’ Lady Violet Bonham Carter.¹

Dr J. Graham Jones examines the contentious relationship between Clement Davies, leader of the Liberal Party 1945–56, and Lady Violet Bonham Carter, dutiful daughter of Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith and formidable mother-in-law of Liberal leader Jo Grimond.

Violet Bonham Carter (1887–1969) and Edward Clement Davies (1884–1962)

VIOLET BONHAM Carter was born Violet Asquith on 15 April 1887 in Hampstead, London, the only daughter and the fourth of the five children of Herbert Henry Asquith and his first wife Helen Kensall, who died prematurely of typhoid fever in 1891 when her daughter was only four years of age. The following year her father became Home Secretary in Gladstone’s last administration, and in 1895 he married his second wife, Margot Tennant, who thereafter became an important influence in her step-daughter’s life. Violet’s education (rather like that of her eventual arch-rival, Lady Megan Lloyd George) was highly informal: she was educated at home by a succession of competent governesses and then ‘finished’ in Dresden and Paris. Yet she emerged as an independent woman of considerable intellect who remained a passionate, committed Liberal for the rest of her days. In Winston Churchill’s memorable phrase, she became her father’s ‘champion redoubtable’.

Violet endured much distress in her early life. Her first real love, Archie Gordon, died following a

car accident in December 1909. During the terrible carnage of the Great War, she lost many of her closest friends as well as one of her brothers. Political problems multiplied, too. Her father, who had succeeded Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as Liberal premier in April 1908, was ousted from office at the height of the war in December 1916 – in Violet’s eyes through the ‘treachery’ of the conspiratorial Lloyd George. Asquith’s subsequent defeat in East Fife, in the ‘coupon’ general election of December 1918, made his humiliation complete and convinced his ever-loyal daughter that she must strive to defend his reputation for the rest of her days. She was by this time a married woman: she had wed Maurice Bonham Carter, her father’s private secretary, in 1915, and was to bear him two daughters and two sons.

Although Violet served as president of the Women’s Liberal Federation in 1923–25, her father’s retirement as party leader in favour of Lloyd George in 1926 saw her rather lose interest in political life, a tendency which became even more marked following Asquith’s death in 1928. She did, however, speak out in

support of the so-called National Government formed in August 1931, and was especially virulent in her condemnation of the rise of fascism in Nazi Germany from 1933, criticising most particularly the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Spurred on, and indeed incensed, by the dramatic course of events in Germany, she now readily spoke at Liberal Party meetings and on election hustings, savagely denouncing 'Hitlerism, that monstrous portent' in 1933 and condemning the government's appeasement policies in 1938 as 'peace at any price that others can be forced to pay'.² In her view, the 'collective security' policy embraced by the League of Nations was the only route to 'peace with honour', a stand which won her the admiration of her lifelong (if intermittent) friend Winston Churchill.

During the Second World War, Violet's patriotism resurfaced in her work as an air-raider warden, while she also accepted a second stint as president of the Women's Liberal Federation. She listened to all the key parliamentary debates from the public gallery of the House of Commons, and made strenuous efforts to reunite the two distinct factions within the Liberal Party born of the 1931 split (the Samuelite Liberals and the Simonite Liberals), readily participating in 1943 in the ultimately ill-fated 'unity negotiations' as one of the representatives of the mainstream Liberal group. Their eventual failure distressed her deeply. The following year she expressed a genuine interest in the Liberal candidature for the Berwick-upon-Tweed division caused by the death on active service in Normandy of the sitting Liberal MP, George Grey, but she soon sensed that she had little in the way of local support and she then gave her backing to the nomination of William Beveridge who was duly elected to parliament in October 1944.

Earlier the same year, Violet Bonham Carter had announced her willingness to run for president of the Liberal Party Organisation. She was not, however, encouraged by the state of the party in 1944. One of the many Liberal MPs who did not generally impress her was E. Clement

'The die is cast – I do not feel exhilarated by the prospect which faces me. There are too many lunatics & pathological cases in the Party ...'

Davies, the MP for Montgomeryshire since May 1929 who had joined the ranks of the Simonite Liberal group in 1931, returning to the mainstream party fold only in 1941. As she wrote in her diary in February 1944:

The die is cast – I do not feel exhilarated by the prospect which faces me. There are too many lunatics & pathological cases in the Party – Clem Davies & [Tom] Horabin [Liberal MP for North Cornwall] – also rather small people bulking larger than they deserve because of the size of the Party. We badly need an infusion of new blood.³

In the general election of July 1945, she stood unsuccessfully as the Liberal candidate at Wells, predictably coming third. Only twelve Liberal MPs were returned to parliament in a general election which saw the shock defeat of party leader Sir Archibald Sinclair in Caithness & Sutherland, the constituency which he had represented continuously since 1922. Other prominent Liberals, too, failed to secure re-election, among them the party's chief whip Sir Percy Harris, the victim of a powerful Labour challenge in Bethnal Green South-West.

The shell-shocked Parliamentary Liberal Party turned to the depressing task of selecting a new party leader. Very few politicians of national stature remained in their ranks. Their choice eventually fell on the little-known and somewhat maverick Clement Davies, who was initially elected as the temporary 'chairman' of the Liberal Party, pending, it was thought, the imminent re-election of Sinclair in a by-election. Hopes that Sinclair would soon return to the Commons were encouraged by the declaration of Gandar Dower (the successful Conservative candidate in Caithness & Sutherland) during the 1945 election campaign that, if he won, he would resign his seat and stand again there following the defeat of Japan.

Violet certainly had her doubts about the new leadership; her fundamental mistrust of Clem Davies had not diminished in the least. Interestingly, the tiny group of

Liberal MPs still pretentiously referred to itself as 'the Liberal Shadow Cabinet'. It met for the first time with Clement Davies as party leader in Lord (Herbert) Samuel's room at the House of Lords on 28 November 1945. Davies took the chair at a meeting devoted mainly to a discussion of foreign affairs, notably Palestine, and the atomic bomb. In Lady Violet's view, 'Nothing very new said or decided. Clem very "agreeable" & full of blarney to Megan [Lloyd George] – whom he had so hotly abused to me! I can't understand these Welsh! But perhaps they understand each other!'⁴

As the first female president of the party's organisation, Lady Violet was inevitably in a pivotal position. It was the fate of poor Clem Davies to be caught in the crossfire between her and the equally formidable Lady Megan Lloyd George, by now well established (since May 1929) as the radical, left-wing Liberal MP for Anglesey. Both women remained ferociously loyal to the good name and reputation of their respective fathers. The primary theme of Lady Violet's published diaries and correspondence is one of criticism and suspicion of Clem Davies and disagreement with the way he led the Liberal Party. But her unpublished letters in the Clement Davies Papers at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, do provide surprising evidence of mutual support, even occasional commendation and encouragement. Lady Violet was unfailingly jubilant whenever Davies stood up to the left within the Liberal Party and when he made sympathetic gestures to the Conservative Party. Equally, she disapproved strongly of any concession he might make to the Labour Party, and she often wrote to him to express her contempt in no uncertain terms. Generally, between 1945 and 1956, her respect for his judgement and qualities of leadership grew considerably, especially as he appeared to drift steadily ever more to the right during his eleven-year stint as party leader.⁵ The same theme in reverse is evident in the relationship between Clem Davies and Lady Megan.

For the post-war Liberal Party, although it was severely depleted

in numbers at Westminster, all was not total doom and gloom. New Liberals, able and relatively young, had come to the fore in the general election campaign of 1945. Old stalwarts remained too – Sinclair, Sir Percy Harris, Beveridge, Samuel, Isaac Foot and Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, as well as Clem Davies, Lady Violet and Lady Megan. All of these were potentially of Cabinet rank.

Generally, during the first two years of the first Attlee administration, there was a tendency for the Liberals to support Labour, but the Parliamentary Liberal Party failed to act in unison. One glaring example was its attitude to the government's National Service Bill, whose third reading took place in the Commons at the end of May 1947. Clem Davies, a conviction Nonconformist, had been convinced by his colleague Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris (the Liberal MP for Carmarthenshire) to oppose peacetime conscription. However he changed his mind at the eleventh hour as the result of the intervention of Lady Violet Bonham Carter, who insisted that conscription was necessary, and made a volte-face at a meeting of the Liberal Party Committee – much to Hopkin Morris's chagrin.⁶ By the time the vote took place in the House of Commons, Davies had backtracked yet again, speaking in the debate against the measure and voting, together with four other Liberal MPs, against it, while five others chose to abstain.⁷ Such glaring vacillation caused Jo Grimond, Lady Violet's son-in-law, who entered the Commons as the Liberal MP for Orkney & Shetland in February 1950 (having stood unsuccessfully there in 1945), to reflect in his memoirs years later: 'Loyalty, gratitude and admiration bound me to Clem, but I was never quite sure on what branch he would finally settle.'⁸

Lady Violet often despaired for the future of her beloved Liberal Party. In mid-October 1947 she took lunch with Frank Byers, the party's chief whip, at the House of Commons, speaking to him 'very frankly' about the party's very gloomy future prospects: 'We must face the possibility of being completely wiped out at the next Election as a Parliamentary force.' In her view, the only

possible route to electoral salvation was 'a deal over seats with the Tories with P.R. as a condition & an agreed programme.' Byers then raised with Lady Violet 'the question of making Clem the official leader of the Party – on the ground that he (Frank) could control him better in this capacity. I said I couldn't possibly accept him as my political Pope to give the "Party line" as I had no respect for his political judgement.'⁹

She even shared her concern with her arch-rival Lady Megan Lloyd George, who was always perched on the far left of the Liberal Party. Officially it was Liberal policy to 'stand firm against Conservative overtures',¹⁰ and, in a high-profile speech at the Royal Albert Hall, London, Megan detected a likely Liberal breakthrough born of the political situation at the end of 1947: 'Must this country ... be condemned to the choice of two evils?'¹¹ Her impassioned peroration spurred Lady Violet to make contact to express her personal view that talk of a likely Liberal revival was misplaced: 'Well now quite frankly I no longer believe that that can happen – (certainly not by 1950) – ... One must face the possibility of parliamentary extinction. *Or do you think this an exaggerated fear?*' Her survey of the party's electoral prospects suggested that only two seats were realistic Liberal targets at the next general election – Caithness & Sutherland, where Sir Archibald Sinclair had been defeated in 1945, and Orkney & Shetland, where her son-in-law Jo Grimond had come within 200 votes of victory:

What can a Party of 10 do? Containing at most 4 "effectives"?? (& even these not always agreed on major issues?) ... But I am convinced that the only condition which will ensure the ultimate survival of any 3rd Party in this country is Electoral Reform. ... I should be strongly opposed to any sort of "alliance" on policy – or Coalition or agreement to put or keep anyone in.¹²

Reluctantly, however, Lady Violet came to the conclusion that an electoral agreement with another political party was now an option

which should not be overlooked, though Megan would never have agreed to such a suggestion.

Indeed, Lady Violet had already had a meeting with Churchill on 22 April to discuss the possibility of a measure of electoral reform. The Tory leader had proved conciliatory, suggesting that 'we might help each other – make some [electoral] arrangements which would be mutually convenient'. The meeting had left Violet much heartened: 'He touches me very much & I feel a certain *pathos* about him. He harks back to his [Liberal] beginnings & I think he definitely – *emotionally* – desires a rapprochement with Liberals.'¹³ The events of subsequent months encouraged her to believe that she was on the right path, an attitude strengthened by an article in *The Economist* during the following January which presented the viewpoint that a third political party like the Liberals could survive 'only through a definite alliance'.¹⁴ Within days she had communicated with Lord Samuel, party leader in the House of Lords since 1944 and a highly respected Liberal elder statesman, expressing the view that it was now 'quite possible to make an arrangement about seats, coupled with a pledge on Electoral Reform, which would be consistent with our sovereign independence and which would ensure our survival'. The nub of her argument was that their adored party was now 'advancing open-eyed towards extinction'.¹⁵

Weeks later Lady Violet revealed to Lord Samuel, an old friend, the gist of her deliberations with Churchill. A 'stormy' exchange ensued, Samuel protesting at once that any such long-term arrangement with the Tories was an 'amoral' political proceeding. Both agreed, however, that on the eve of a general election discussions concerning an electoral deal might well be justified.¹⁶ The subject was left to await a dissolution of parliament. Other issues, meanwhile, were to occupy Lady Violet's attention, notably her energetic membership of the United Europe Movement which had been launched in May 1947.

Lady Violet's despair grew as 1948 ran its course and increased still further in September of that

'What can a Party of 10 do? Containing at most 4 "effectives"?? (& even these not always agreed on major issues?)'

year as a result of the voting record of the Parliamentary Liberal Party on the third reading of the Parliament Bill. Again she gave vent to her feelings to Lord Samuel: 'I feel the most profound depression about this latest public exhibition of Party disunity. ... How can we hope to raise large sums of money when no one knows where we stand on a major issue of this kind? Are we solidly united against Iron and Steel Nationalisation? I have no idea.'¹⁷ In fact, the question of iron and steel nationalisation was to prove one of the most thorny issues to face the Parliamentary Liberal Party. In 1948, Emlyn Hooson, who had recently been chosen as the Liberal candidate for Lloyd George's old seat of the Caernarfon Boroughs, was invited to join the Liberal Party Committee (a body quite distinct from the Liberal executive committee), which to a large extent determined party policy. Here he found proceedings to be 'to put it mildly, vitriolic' and largely dominated by the incessant bickering between Lady Violet and Lady Megan. At one meeting, when the colour to be adopted by the party at the next general election was under discussion, Megan commented tartly, 'I don't mind what colour they have provided, of course, it's not violet.'¹⁸

Early in 1949, a dispute broke out between Lady Violet and Frank Byers over the former's alleged anti-Israeli stand; In Violet's opinion, a party meeting on 8 March left 'Byers looking hot red & speechless & Clem inexpressibly foolish'.¹⁹ In May, Lady Violet directly took issue with Clement Davies in relation to his claims at the party's annual assembly at Hastings the previous month that party membership had doubled during the previous year, quizzing him relentlessly concerning the source of his seemingly spurious information – 'Many of us would be placed in a difficult position if we were asked to justify such a statement' – and casting doubt on the veracity of the Gallup polls, 'a fallible and fluctuating index'. She also raised the question of the secrecy surrounding the proceedings of the Liberal Shadow Cabinet, and was assured that these should always be 'strictly private and confidential'.²⁰

As the Parliamentary Liberal Party had, since 1945, been reduced to a small rump of MPs, most representing the rural Celtic fringes, Lady Violet felt acutely that there had never previously been a parliamentary party which was 'less representative of the party as a whole. Its ten members', she went on 'are constantly at variance with one another, with the Liberal Party Organisation and with their colleagues in the House of Lords'.²¹ As a consequence of the small number of Liberal MPs and their conspicuous failure to act in unison as a group, poor Clem Davies, far more than any of his predecessors as party leader, was compelled regularly to take account of Liberal Party opinion outside parliament. Hence the unprecedented influence (at least as great as that of the Liberal MPs) enjoyed by people like Lady Violet who never themselves succeeded in getting elected to the House of Commons.

As the general election drew closer, the question of electoral arrangements became more pressing. Lady Violet had always hoped for some kind of 'deal' with the Conservatives, an attitude which seemed more realistic by 1949 as a result of the Liberal Party's perceived opposition to the Attlee government. Speaking at Aberystwyth in October, Clement Davies expressed his party's hostility to the government's focusing on nationalisation schemes while neglecting the severe economic and fiscal problems facing the nation.²² The former left-wing Liberal MP Dingle Foot, still influential as a party vice-president, wrote to his political soulmate, Lady Megan Lloyd George: 'The position therefore is that Clem intends to sound a clarion call during next month to blood, toil, tears and sweat. But the quantity of the blood, the nature of the toil, the number of the tears and the precise purpose of the sweat are still undecided.'²³ Towards the end of the year an unexpectedly acrimonious dispute surfaced among the Liberal peers in the House of Lords over their party's electoral strategy, notably the number of candidates it should adopt and its relationship with the other parties.

On 10 January 1950, Attlee announced a general election for the following month. Clem Davies, determined to make a valiant effort to turn around the severe reversals of 1945, remained true to his impassioned words to the 1948 Liberal assembly – 'Let Liberals of little or no faith leave the party' – expressing his revulsion for 'the Quislings who had been among them'.²⁴ An approach from Churchill for some kind of electoral bargain was at once dismissed by the Liberal leader as 'unworthy subterfuge', and no fewer than 475 Liberal candidates were nominated.

On the second day of the new year, Sir Archibald Sinclair, standing for re-election in Caithness & Sutherland, wrote to Clem Davies:

Lady Violet Bonham Carter's speech was mis-quoted in my hearing during my recent speaking tour of England by two Tory hecklers. The mis-quotation was in the same terms on successive nights at places as far apart as Newquay and Bath. It seemed pretty clear, therefore, that the question had been drafted for the hecklers by Tory Headquarters. They asked whether the speakers agreed with Lady Violet Bonham Carter that Liberals should support Tory Candidates in the absence of Liberal Candidates. Dingle Foot at Newquay and I at Bath replied that Lady Violet had never asked Liberals to vote for Tory Candidates but that she had stated, and we agreed with her, that although, if she had lived in a constituency in 1945 in which there had been no Liberal Candidate, she would have voted Labour, if she were in the same circumstances now and had a thousand votes she would not give one to the Socialist Candidate. This answer met with a tumult of cordial applause from practically the whole audience and it seems to me that this is the line we should take.²⁵

Lady Violet felt little enthusiasm for the impending trial of Liberal strength: 'I feel little zest about plunging into the fray – but it is as

Lady Violet had always hoped for some kind of 'deal' with the Conservatives, an attitude which seemed more realistic by 1949 as a result of the Liberal Party's perceived opposition to the Attlee government.

well to know the worst.²⁶ Three official radio broadcasts were allocated to the Liberals: twenty minutes for Clement Davies, and ten minutes apiece for Lady Megan and Lord Samuel. Then, in a bizarre twist, Churchill telephoned Lady Violet to offer her one of the five Conservative Party broadcast slots – ‘quite unconditionally, one of the allocation of 5 which had been made to them. I cld say *what I liked*. He trusted me to be anti-Socialist. He was very sweet and asked me to come down on Monday to discuss it.’ The meeting took place in ‘a luxurious downstairs bedroom’ followed by ‘luncheon tête-à-tête & a bottle of champagne’ in the dining room at Chartwell, the Churchills’ home in Kent.

Violet was sorely tempted and then telephoned Clem Davies whom she found to be ‘wholly negative & ended by offering me his own broadcast if I desisted – an empty gesture – for of course I cld not take it.’ Lord Samuel proved ‘even more negative – said it wld be quite *disastrous* etc etc.’ Her decision to refuse his suggestion left the Tory leader ‘obviously *terribly* dashed & disappointed – begged me to reconsider it.’²⁷ But his efforts came to nothing. Claiming to be unaffected by the impassioned ‘screams’ of her colleagues in the Liberal Party, Lady Violet turned him down – ‘It was the fear that all the humble, loyal rank-and-file Liberals in the country who trust me & believe in me, would feel that on the eve of battle I had stabbed them in the back.’ She then signed her letter, ‘Your drooping, moulting & bedraggled Bloody Duck – *Violet*’.²⁸ Unfortunately for the Liberal Party, the episode became public knowledge after Frank Byers accused Churchill of attempting to deny the party its fair share of election broadcasts and the Conservative leader then felt obliged, in his own defence, to reveal his approach to Lady Violet, who was then accused of conspiring with her old ally at Chartwell.²⁹

There were also petty exchanges between Churchill and Clement Davies over the use of the titles ‘Liberal-Conservatives’ or ‘Liberal-Unionists’ by some National-Liberal candidates.³⁰ The Tory leader taunted Davies

In the aftermath of the election, Churchill met Lady Violet and Grimond to discuss possible anti-Socialist collaboration and future electoral reform.

that, as he had been a Simonite Liberal for fully eleven years, ‘I should not presume to correct your knowledge of the moral, intellectual and legal aspects of adding a prefix or suffix to the honoured name of Liberal.’³¹

In her heart of hearts, Lady Violet would probably have liked to have accepted Churchill’s offer. Licking her wounds, she travelled north of the border to speak on behalf of Archie Sinclair at Caithness and her son-in-law Jo Grimond in the neighbouring constituency of Orkney & Shetland. Both seats were among the very few realistic Liberal targets in the 1950 general election. Lady Violet spent fully ten days in the islands, addressing a succession of political meetings in support of Grimond. Throughout the realm, however, the Liberal Party’s claim that it was putting up enough candidates to form a majority government at Westminster appeared an empty sham. Party heavyweights were largely confined to their own constituencies, fearful of losing their own seats. Alarmed at the likely outcome, party leaders had even taken the step of taking out insurance cover against a maximum of 250 lost deposits.

In the event, there were to be no fewer than 319, with only nine Liberals returned to Westminster, out of a total of 475 candidates – ‘a defeat on a scale which it would be hard to parallel’.³² Frank Byers went down in North Dorset by just ninety-seven votes and, agonisingly for the party, Sinclair very narrowly failed in his brave bid to recapture Caithness. The only real crumb of comfort was Grimond’s success in Orkney & Shetland, an outcome which delighted Lady Violet. But she shared fully, too, her colleagues’ devastation at the results nationally: ‘Two of our dear supporters slunk in with a *N[ews] C[hronicle]* looking shattered. One hardly dared look at them. It was like meeting after a death.’³³ The massive loss of Liberal deposits vexed her particularly. But the very narrow Labour victory at the polls at least gave the small band of Liberal MPs at Westminster a potential significance which they would otherwise have lacked. To Lady Violet’s delight, the novice Grimond was chosen to be his party’s

chief whip in the House of Commons in succession to the defeated Frank Byers.

In the aftermath of the election, Churchill met Lady Violet and Grimond to discuss possible anti-Socialist collaboration and future electoral reform. There were also exchanges between the Conservative leader and Clement Davies, who now found himself pressurised into considering electoral reform by many leading Liberals. Throughout the rest of the year the beleaguered Liberal leader was bombarded by repeated epistles from Lady Violet, Archie Sinclair and the prominent Liberal academic Gilbert Murray urging him to agree to an electoral pact with the Tories. Meetings took place at Westminster to discuss matters.³⁴

The idea of a Liberal–Tory electoral pact was undoubtedly in the air during the early summer of 1950, and Lady Violet was prominent in the discussions which took place.³⁵ To her intense annoyance, the press got wind of the negotiations and gave publicity to an alleged pact whereby the Liberals were to be given ‘a free run in forty constituencies at the next election’.³⁶ Churchill was forced to concede publicly that a Conservative ‘study group’ had indeed been instituted to discuss these matters. The unfortunate publicity gained by the clandestine negotiations alarmed Lady Violet. As she put it to Samuel, ‘I think the probability is that we shall fail in our present object and peter to extinction.’³⁷ There was good reason for her heartfelt pessimism: talk of a Liberal–Tory pact was particularly badly received by Conservative backbenchers, and even more so by the vocal left wing of the Liberal Party, which included Lady Megan Lloyd George, Emrys Roberts, Edgar Granville and Dingle Foot. These four in particular were growing increasingly hostile to the tenor of Clement Davies’s leadership.

Lady Violet drew encouragement from her relationship with Churchill, but sensed, justifiably as it turned out, that Clem Davies was extremely reluctant to play ball. Although the Liberal leader could see that a small number of local arrangements might well work to the party’s electoral



Lord Samuel, Liberal leader in the Lords, and Clem Davies

advantage, especially if the Conservatives might be inclined to support the Liberal call for electoral reform, there could be never be any 'overall or central agreement' between the two parties nationally. As he put it in a memorandum to Churchill and Lord Woolton:

The Liberal Party is and shall remain an independent party. ... [There was to be] no agreement with any other party which would jeopardise or weaken the Liberal Party. ... There can be no overall or central agreement ... for the allocation of constituencies whereby one party would undertake to withdraw its own candidate in favour of the candidate of the other party. Such an agreement would never be permitted by the rank and file of the Liberal Party even if the Party Leaders or HQ were willing to enter into such an agreement.

Candidate selection, insisted Davies, must always remain the preserve of the local Liberal associations.³⁸ Churchill for his part was later to claim that he was

prepared to give the Liberals a free run in as many as sixty constituencies – clearly an alluring initiative to right-wing Liberals like Lady Violet.³⁹ Reflecting on the stand taken by the party leaders during the February 1950 general election campaign, she wrote privately to her daughter Laura, 'I think the people at the top *have* been "irresponsible" – & that their attempts to convince the public that we *could* form a govt. have been either fraudulent or so blankly out of touch with reality as to disqualify those who made them from any claim to political sense ...'.⁴⁰

During the high summer of 1950, Lady Violet shared Clem Davies's harsh criticism of the government's attitude towards Korea. She even feared that a third world war lay in prospect. There is evidence at this point of a greater rapport and understanding between the two of them than ever previously. In an impassioned speech in the House of Commons in late September, Davies taunted the government for pressing ahead with its plans to nationalise the British steel industry, at best a controversial initiative, at the time of a severe national

crisis. Lady Violet was delighted to read the account of the '*brilliant* fighting speech. ... One of the best speeches you ever made', proceeding:

You wiped the floor with Herbert Morrison! How I wish I cld have heard you & seen his face! I am so glad you exploded his fictional accounts of the fall of the 2 Labour Govts – they both died by their own hand – & thro' their own ineptitude. We put them both in – as you pointed out – & we suffered for their sins. I thought the quotation from my Father's speech in 1914 *most* relevant to the present situation & I think it must have been impressive. Thank you for recalling what I had forgotten.⁴¹

Davies had castigated Morrison most effectively for accusing the Liberals of making common cause with the Tories.

The very next day, building on the newfound rapport and apparent understanding with Davies, Lady Violet wrote to him at length to press her advocacy of 'regional arrangements' with the Tories over seat allocation

'on "Huddersfield" lines' (a local arrangement through which the Conservatives and Liberals each fought only one of the two Huddersfield seats):

Everything of course depends on local goodwill & desire to implement such plans. *Where this exists* the kind of arrangement I have adumbrated is: Where Liberals have polled a *negligible* vote – say 3,000 or under – & where *half* that vote cld put the Conservative in, the Liberal shld stand down. Where the Liberal has polled a *substantial* vote – say 8,000 – even though he may be bottom of the Poll – the Conservative shld. We have got to bear in mind that we are making a virtue of necessity. *We cannot fight every seat* – arrangement or no arrangement. As you know, we have no money & few candidates. Our bargaining-power is really nil. At best we have a little nuisance value left ...

It is because this pact has stared me in the face ever since the last Election that I have been working steadily along these lines. It seems to me to be the only way to save the Parliamentary Party from virtual extinction. Without some such arrangement who cld get back next time? Yourself, Megan perhaps, possibly Jo (who has a 3000 majority in hand.) D[onald] Wade – *if* his present position holds. (I don't know how Bowen & Emrys Roberts stand?). In times of crisis people go for *decisive* solutions. 'End the stalemate – give one of the 2 Parties a proper majority. Stop this nonsense of carrying invalids on stretchers into the division lobbies etc.' That will be the public mood – & it will be fatal to what is left of our Party – whose survival I passionately desire.⁴²

In an addendum to this lengthy letter, however, she came down firmly against the idea of 'simultaneous "deals" with Labour – in the West etc. ... It wld appear wholly cynical – & look as though our Party had no *political* purpose.⁴³

The situation in the autumn of 1950 was complex, apparently

shrouded in plot and counterplot. On the one hand, it is clear that there were negotiations between Clement Davies, Churchill and the Conservative Party chairman Lord Woolton on a whole range of issues. At the same time, there were much more clandestine meetings between Churchill, Lady Violet and Grimond, of which Davies apparently knew nothing. In fact, Grimond in his heart of hearts feared which way Davies might jump when the crunch time came, writing to his mother-in-law, 'There are the usual unknowns which centre round Clem. Attlee has shown a slight tendency to pat him on the head. This of course is nectar to him.'⁴⁴ Grimond then told Lady Violet that it was Clem Davies's intention in his forthcoming annual assembly speech to appeal to the Labour Party to dilute its socialism so that a broad-front radical Lib-Lab set-up might be established: 'He expects to draw a derisive reply from the Socialists. Winston can then weigh in with a conciliatory anti-Socialist speech & local arrangements can follow. ... Winston says apparently that he is getting his way with the Tories, and hopes for 30 Liberal members & some sort of electoral reform in the Tory programme.'⁴⁵ Grimond had become convinced that, as the Liberal Party was so desperately short of money, workers and support, 'Therefore if we want a Parliamentary party we have got to swallow some unpalatable medicine.'⁴⁶

The situation was muddled still further by the fact that Lady Megan Lloyd George, appointed deputy leader of the Liberal Party by Clem Davies back in January 1949 (primarily as a tactical ploy to prevent her from defecting to the Labour Party, to which she had obviously been making tracks for years), was now participating in secret discussions with Herbert Morrison about how the Liberals could help to prevent the Conservatives from regaining power. Small wonder that the beleaguered Clement Davies seriously considered resigning the party leadership at this point. But he stayed on, as did Lady Megan as deputy leader.

At the 1950 Liberal Party assembly in Scarborough, it soon

became very clear that there was precious little sympathy for the idea of a Liberal agreement with the Conservatives. When Elliott Dodds, the generally left-wing president of the Liberal Party (who thus acted *ex officio* as assembly chairman), elaborated to delegates on the finer points of the 'Huddersfield formula', he was roundly rejected. In their respective speeches, both Clem Davies and Frank Byers both powerfully underlined their full commitment to their party's independence.⁴⁷ Lady Violet was predictably 'aghast' at the course of events, writing to Davies, 'The Lunatic Fringe seems to have taken complete command & Elliott Dodds' voice was the only one raised in the cause of sanity.' Churchill, she claimed, had been 'very much disturbed' by these events.⁴⁸ She had been heartened to hear from Philip Fothergill encouraging reports of a meeting of the Liberal parliamentary candidates the following day where there was 'some plain-speaking & some sound sense – generally accepted by everyone. But what is the good of talking sense in private if we only talk nonsense in public?'⁴⁹

True to form, she did not give up, encouraged by the proceedings at the next meeting of the Liberal Party Committee which had come out 'in favour of making "regional arrangements" for straight fights' – with only two dissenters (Dingle Foot and MacCallum Scott). 'Where do we go from here?' she asked Davies pointedly:

We know that it is nonsense to talk of 'running for office' now – and such talk only lays us open to ridicule and deceives no one except some of our own deluded rank and file. For us *survival* is the problem. If we come back four or five strong next time (which is quite on the cards), we can no longer pretend to be a National Party with rooms in the House of Commons, a Chief Whip, a Party Broadcast etc. Therefore we must sooner or later make up our minds which way we are going – facing the fact that a decision may split us – (a serious contingency – but better even a split with survival

At the 1950 Liberal Party assembly in Scarborough, it soon became very clear that there was precious little sympathy for the idea of a Liberal agreement with the Conservatives.

than a united death). ... I feel that at present we are drifting without much sense of direction and that an Election, even if delayed, may find us unprepared.⁵⁰

Was the Liberal Party once again on the brink of disintegration? Such an outcome appeared ever more likely. For those on the left of the party (Megan Lloyd George, Emrys Roberts, Edgar Granville and Dingle Foot), by this time a distinctive, discrete radical grouping, the recent course of events constituted a pill too bitter for them to swallow. Publicly, they began to condemn what they perceived to be Clem Davies's marked inclination 'to veer towards the Tories'. Rumours intensified that Lady Megan in particular was likely to jump ship at any time and formally join the Labour Party.

In November, this group of radical politicians staged something of a revolt within the Liberal Party, threatening to join Labour at once and again bringing Clement Davies to the brink of resignation. To Lady Violet he was highly critical of the dissident MPs: 'The truth of the matter as it seems to me is this. They are not concerned really about the Party or the country. They are concerned about themselves only and think that their best chance lies through help from the Socialists.'⁵¹ Not for the first time, he really was at the end of his tether and felt that he could not continue. Lady Violet was by now genuinely fearful that Lady Megan might well succeed Davies as party leader. 'Don't speak or even *think* of laying down the leadership. This is the moment to stand fast & *fight*,' she wrote to Davies. 'Neither Megan nor Emrys Roberts [the Liberal MP for Merioneth] have the slightest desire to leave the Party. They know *how* small a part they wld play in the Labour Party & what discipline would await them there!' She proceeded to give Davies her views on the small band of Liberal MPs:

You & Jo [Grimond] are the trustees of many outside who look to you. Bowen & Hopkin [Morris] can I'm sure be relied on – & I imagine – Wade (tho'

he looks like a bit of damp blotting paper which might take any imprint!) is at least honourable – I hope – sane? MacDonald is a political illiterate who might go anyway & shld be looked after. I told Fothergill to have a straight word with him. *No quitting!*⁵²

The revolt of 'the three' (as they were by now generally known) somehow blew over, but it is clear that, had they joined the Labour Party in November 1950, their departure might well have marked the death of the Liberal Party as a credible parliamentary grouping. It was indeed the most harrowing manifestation to date of the terrible dilemmas which faced Clem Davies almost daily. Small wonder that he told Lady Violet, 'I will willingly lay down this uncomfortable and so-called "leadership".'⁵³ But had he stood down at this point, there was no obvious successor to replace him.

As the new year – 1951 – dawned, it was clear that a general election could not be long delayed. It was also evident that 'Liberal-Tory' election pacts, as at Huddersfield in 1950, were likely elsewhere. One such constituency was Colne Valley in Yorkshire where Lady Violet Bonham Carter was invited to become the Liberal Party candidate in the hope that she might also prove acceptable to local Tories.⁵⁴ She was flattered, and wished to accept the invitation in the reasonable hope that, in the event of a straight fight with a Labour candidate, she might well be elected. But, as she wrote to Clement Davies, 'I am not going into this adventure without the unequivocal support of the Party Organisation – & (I hope) your own.'⁵⁵ (She also wrote in a similar vein to Philip Fothergill, Frank Byers and Lord Rea.) Davies responded cautiously, stating that he 'would sincerely rejoice' to see Lady Violet elected as a Liberal MP, but he refused to give an undertaking to support either of the other parties in the Commons after the election. Both seemed to believe that mounting international tensions might well soon lead to the formation of a national or coalition government at Westminster.⁵⁶

'Don't speak or even *think* of laying down the leadership. This is the moment to stand fast & *fight*,' she wrote to Davies.

The next month, local Conservatives agreed not to oppose Lady Violet in Colne Valley.⁵⁷ Although there was a substantial Labour majority in the division in the 1950 general election, Violet was enthusiastic about the contest. One reason for her exuberance was her conviction that, in the event of a Tory victory at the polls, Churchill, as the incoming Prime Minister, would offer ministerial positions to leading Liberals. As she told Lord Samuel, 'I am confident that if the Conservatives got in, Winston would make every effort to broaden the basis of his Government and include some men of real ability drawn from outside his party fold.'⁵⁸

Attlee eventually called the election for 15 October 1951. The so-called 'Huddersfield arrangement', made the previous year, continued and was also extended to a much more formal election pact in Bolton where the Liberal aspirant, Arthur Holt, was given a free run by local Tories in Bolton West in return for a reciprocal concession by the Liberals in Bolton East. (There was, however, within the Liberal Party much greater concern and doubt about the arrangement in Bolton, where Holt actually attended and spoke at Conservative events in the constituencies, than there had been in relation to Huddersfield the previous year.) In Colne Valley, Lady Violet was not only unopposed by local Tories, but was blessed by a visit from Winston Churchill who spoke in the constituency on her behalf, much to the chagrin of local Liberals. The hope was that a substantial anti-Socialist swing might enhance her prospects.

In all, just 109 Liberal candidates stood (compared with 475 in February 1950), and the party's election manifesto was largely devoted to a rather pathetic defence of the party's very existence. Yet again, the Liberal campaign never really took off; after the election there were to be just six Liberal MPs and sixty-six lost deposits. Lady Violet was to be sorely disappointed too. There was no anti-Socialist swing in Colne Valley, where the local Labour vote actually increased by some 1,500. Some Liberals there had defected to Labour; some Tories had simply stayed at home.

In the words of one of Violet's campaign managers, 'I'm afraid that the oil of the diehard Tory & the vinegar of the extreme Radical would not mix.' Churchill communicated with her – 'It was a gallant fight'.⁵⁹

Then the new Prime Minister fired what has been described as, potentially, 'the deadliest shaft of all' when he offered Clement Davies the position of Minister of Education within the new Conservative Cabinet.⁶⁰ Churchill exerted considerable pressure on Davies to accept and even dangled the prospect of junior ministerial office to one or two other Liberal MPs as well. Davies was undoubtedly sorely tempted. He still retained some ministerial ambition and, at sixty-seven years of age, realised that this was to be his last opportunity to participate in government and make full use of his undoubted aptitude for administration. He was conscious, however, that his response must be a team decision and he felt obliged to consult several leading Liberals such as Grimond, Byers, Lady Violet, Lady Megan and Lord Samuel. Lady Violet alone urged him to accept Churchill's offer. All the others were adamant that Davies must refuse Churchill's alluring olive branch, and he soon acquiesced.⁶²

Churchill told Lady Violet that, had she been successful in Colne Valley, he would have offered her ministerial office too. Her response would have been in the affirmative. As she wrote privately to Liberal academic Gilbert Murray, 'I think the Liberals made a mistake in not accepting Winston's generous offer to join the Government. The crisis is far graver than it was in 1931. Had I been returned, I should have gone in without any hesitation.' These were the sentiments which she also expressed in her private diary for late November 1951, when she recorded that Churchill had offered Davies a seat in the Cabinet and two under-secretaryships for Liberal MPs: 'I think poor Clem longed to accept. I shld have gone in unhesitatingly. (I'm told I shld have been offered Education).'⁶³ Her attitude reflected a much more pragmatic approach to a possible alliance with the Conservatives. But her standpoint

inevitably incurred the wrath of the more radical elements within the Liberal Party.

For the tiny band of Liberal MPs who remained, life soon settled down following the trauma of the November 1951 general election. In many ways Clem Davies's position was easier as a result of the bruising defeats of three left-wing Liberal MPs at the election – Lady Megan, Emrys Roberts and Edgar Granville. No longer were they such a painful thorn in their leader's flesh as previously. Early in 1953, Lady Violet led a Liberal delegation to the Prime Minister to discuss reform of the voting system, but Churchill, although still sympathetic to the old Liberal hobby horse, simply could not carry his party with him on this issue. Violet understood, but emerged disappointed at the outcome: 'What alarms me is that the Tory Party should still run so true to form.'⁶⁴

She was somewhat heartened, however, that Clem Davies was invited to participate in a governmental conference on reform of the House of Lords. The previous December, Davies had told her that he had put her name forward to Churchill for becoming a Dame – 'I was annoyed to hear that he had mentioned my name. The very last thing I want is to be a Dame.' When she visited 10 Downing Street on 15 April 1953, Churchill told her, "'Alas! Well you have been recommended by Clement Davies to be made a Dame.'" I said it was the last thing I desired to be. He replied, "Well – you'll get a letter from me. You can do what you like about it."⁶⁵ In June the offer of the DBE was graciously accepted, following some gentle persuasion from Churchill: 'I never *dreamed* of receiving any honour – & "Dame-dom" is certainly not one for which I have ever qualified – (or ever shall!), but from the hundreds of letters I have received I realize that it has been taken as a recognition of the *Party's* services to the nation.'⁶⁶

In July 1954 Lady Violet visited the Davies' expansive constituency home at Meifod in Montgomeryshire 'in that green & happy valley – with the river swarming through it', and was delighted to be able to attend

Clem's silver anniversary tribute meeting in the constituency, which provided her with 'a wonderful evidence of the vitality of Liberalism in Montgomeryshire & of the personal devotion Clem has inspired.'⁶⁷ She was sorely vexed, however, by the conspicuous failure of the national press to report the occasion adequately.

In the May 1955 general election, probably the least memorable of the post-war contests, Dame Violet spoke just once at Westmoreland and twice in north Wales. She certainly missed Churchill, who had retired as Prime Minister and Conservative leader only the previous month, to be succeeded by Anthony Eden, but was heartened to learn that, although now in his eighty-first year, her old friend fully intended to remain in harness as the Tory MP for Woodford. There was a tiny increase in the Liberal vote – from 2.5 to 2.7 per cent – but 60 out of 110 Liberal deposits were lost, and only the six Liberal MPs elected in November 1951 were returned. Even so, some Liberals detected the beginning of a modest recovery in their party's fortunes. Among them was Lord Samuel, who wrote to Dame Violet, 'I think I see some indications that we may now be in the dead-water just at the turn of the tide.'⁶⁸

Clem Davies's days as party leader were now clearly numbered, following the retirements of both Churchill and Attlee and the emergence of much younger successors in Eden and Gaitskell. For many Liberals, after the May 1955 general election Davies's leadership grew ever more moribund and dated. Yet he lingered on, although increasingly unwell, until his party's annual assembly at Folkestone in September 1956.

One of the first to respond to the long-awaited announcement of his retirement as party leader was Lady Violet. Writing to express her genuine sense of 'sorrow at the end of a *great* chapter in the history of the party', she paid fulsome tribute to Davies's 'courage & *patience* & single-minded devotion with which you have held it together during these *infinitely* difficult years – while the "weaker vessels" were breaking right & left.' Reflecting again at some length on his decision

Writing to express her genuine sense of 'sorrow at the end of a great chapter in the history of the party', she paid fulsome tribute to Davies's 'courage & patience & single-minded devotion with which you have held it together during these infinitely difficult years – while the "weaker vessels" were breaking right & left.'

to refuse Churchill's offer in November 1951, she contemplated her attitude at that time:

You may remember that when Winston wanted you & two Liberal Under-Secretaries to join him in 1951 I wanted you to go in. My reasons were that the economic crisis was *far* greater than in 1931 – when Samuel, Archie [Sinclair] & Donald Maclean joined the national coalition (without any consultation or 'by-your-leave' from the party!) & I thought that the Liberals shld. – through you – make their contribution, & in spite of their small numbers could wield real *power*. ... I did not feel that a Coalition is holy if it is made up of 3 parties, & unholy if it only consists of two! Moreover I thought that responsibility & administrative experience wld. benefit our party which had had none since 1918. One must construct as well as criticize. Whatever you may have thought or felt you refused office then – a great personal sacrifice – because you felt that in so doing you were interpreting the people's will. Looking back I feel that you may well have been right. Your action – however disinterested & patriotic – might well have split the remnant we had left. (I must add that *only* Winston's leadership made me think it possible. I cld never have contemplated it under Eden! Winston was never a Tory – as the Tories know.) But whether right or wrong it was a great & selfless sacrifice – which few would have made – & one that will always be remembered – with reverence & admiration.⁶⁴

She went on to shower lavish praise on the departing leader's:

'gift of patience', I have often marvelled at it during the discussions at our Liberal Party Committee. I have never seen you fail in patience or courtesy – however exasperating your colleagues! Leadership is not 'all jam' & cheers – alas! I have watched my father over that thorny & difficult course. How he suffered from the endless

discords between colleagues – which it always fell to him to resolve. There is no more wearing or ungrateful task.⁶⁵

Davies's successor as Liberal Party leader was to be Dame Violet's son-in-law Jo Grimond, the only real possibility in the circumstances of 1956. There were persistent rumours, never fully confirmed, that Grimond (possibly encouraged and supported by Lady Violet) had actively supported the campaign within the Liberal Party to get rid of the ailing Clem Davies during 1955–56.

Lady Violet was predictably delighted at the unexpected success of her son Mark Bonham Carter in the Torrington by-election of March 1958 – the first Liberal by-election gain since March 1929. She had participated fully in the frenzied campaign and, following her son's narrow victory by just 200 votes, she sent out a personal message to all Liberals throughout the realm: 'Hold on, hold out, we are coming.' She was later to recall (in a pointed reference to the fact that Torrington had previously been held by a National Liberal MP) 'the strange sense of being an army of liberation entering occupied territory which for years had been ruled by quislings and collaborators and that their day was over once and for all.'⁷⁰

When Mark first took his seat following his introduction in the House of Commons, however, just three of his fellow Liberal MPs were there to cheer him. A dejected mother wrote in her diary, 'I remembered my father's introduction when he took his seat after Paisley & how faint the cheers of the survivors of the Liberal Party then sounded to me. But at least they were 27.'⁷¹ It was predicted that Mark Bonham Carter might well soon establish himself as Jo Grimond's natural successor as Liberal Party leader (but to achieve this, he did first need to have a safe seat in parliament).

In the general election the following year, Grimond appealed to his mother-in-law to campaign with him in Orkney & Shetland, something which she had not done since his initial return there in February 1950. His very real fear was that, now that he was

Liberal Party leader, his electorate might well feel that he was rather taking them for granted. Lady Violet was not at all amused: 'I know he is as safe as a church, whereas Mark is fighting for his life at Torrington & [Edwin] Malindine [North Cornwall] & Jeremy [Thorpe, North Devon] might win seats. I don't know what to do.'⁷² Her estimate was sound. Grimond stood no prospect of defeat; he was indeed 'Jo to them all' in his constituency.⁷³

Her son's defeat at Torrington in October 1959, after just eighteen months in the House, came as a severe shock to Lady Violet and to the Liberal Party: 'I cannot bear his exile from the House. I have had a *very* depressed letter from Jo who misses him terribly. Clem is no good, Roderic Bowen never turns up, Jeremy speaks often & is as active as a flea – but does too many outside things & doesn't *sit* there. Nor does he carry Mark's guns.'⁷⁴ Yet she remained on generally friendly terms personally with Clem and Jano Davies whom she still met socially from time to time. Still, she rather resented that Davies remained the Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire in spite of advancing years and severe health problems which meant that he now rarely appeared at Westminster. Following a lunch with Jo Grimond in July 1961, Lady Violet wrote in her diary, 'We had a nice talk – but what a heavy burden he has to carry. Wade is ill, Jeremy is ill, Clem is a chronic absentee & useless when present. He wrote imploring [Roderic] Bowen to be with him for the Berlin debate on Monday & to speak – & Bowen replied that he had 'a function'. He does damn all in the House. As Jo says – why go into it? Jo is literally maid of all work to the party.'⁷⁵ The Liberal Party's very modest national revival was apparent to all, but so too was its parlous position in the House of Commons.

When Clem Davies fell very seriously ill in late March 1962, Lady Violet was 'so shocked & distressed' to read the alarming reports of his declining health in the evening papers: '*No one* cld understand more intimately & more poignantly *all* that you are going through.'⁷⁶ Just two days later he died. Although she had not always approved of his actions,

'Poor old Clem – one cld not help feeling great affection for him & in one way he inspired respect. He gave up a big income at Levers to serve the Party & refused office in W[inston]'s 1951 Govt. when I thought (perhaps mistakenly?) that it wld have been right for us to go in.'

Lady Violet was now moved to write in her diary:

Poor old Clem – one cld not help feeling great affection for him & in one way he inspired respect. He gave up a big income at Levers to serve the Party & refused office in W[inston]'s 1951 Govt. when I thought (perhaps mistakenly?) that it wld have been right for us to go in. ... He showed no rancour at his displacement from the leadership by Jo – tho' he must have minded it.⁷⁷

It was perhaps fitting that after Harold Wilson formed a Labour government in October 1964 and agreed that three Liberals should be elevated to the upper house, Jo Grimond, still party leader, was able to ensure that Lady Violet, although now in poor health, should become an 'honorary' peer together with the two 'working' peerages for Donald Wade and Frank Byers. It was the appropriate reward for a long life of devoted service to the party. Clement Davies would certainly have approved. When she delivered her maiden speech in the House of Lords on 25 January 1965, it was especially fitting that Lady Violet, now rather frail, was able to pay tribute to her old friend Winston Churchill who had died only the previous day.

Dr J. Graham Jones is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

- 1 Violet Bonham Carter to Nigel Nicolson, 10 November 1956, cited in Mark Pottle, *Daring to Hope: the Diaries and Letters of Violet Bonham Carter, 1946–1969* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000), p. 178.
- 2 Cited in Mark Pottle, 'Lady Violet Bonham Carter (1887–1969)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 10 (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 375.
- 3 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers,

- diary entry for 15 February 1944.
- 4 Ibid., diary entry for 28 November 1945.
- 5 See Alun Wyburn-Powell, *Clement Davies: Liberal Leader* (London: Politicos, 2003), p. 147.
- 6 Jo Grimond, *Memoirs* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 148.
- 7 *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1947.
- 8 Grimond, op. cit., p. 148.
- 9 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 13 October 1947.
- 10 *The Times*, 27 November 1947.
- 11 National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) MS 20,491E, no. 3429, unlabelled press cutting dated 18 November 1947.
- 12 NLW MS 20,475C, no. 3168, VB-C to Megan Lloyd George, 17 November 1947.
- 13 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 22 April 1947.
- 14 *The Economist*, 31 January 1948.
- 15 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London, Samuel Papers A/155 (xiii) 11, VB-C to Samuel, 4 February 1948.
- 16 Ibid. A/155 (xiii), 30, VB-C to Samuel, 25 March 1948.
- 17 Ibid. A/155 (xiii), 45, VB-C to Samuel, 25 September 1948.
- 18 Emlyn Hooson, 'Clement Davies: an underestimated Welshman and politician', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1997 (New series, Vol. 4, 1998), 180.
- 19 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 8 March 1949.
- 20 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/4–8.
- 21 John Rylands University Library, Manchester, Leonard Behrens Papers 4, VB-C to Behrens, 4 April 1949.
- 22 *Western Mail*, 3 October 1949.
- 23 NLW MS 20,475C, no. 3174, Dingle Foot to Megan Lloyd George, 15 August 1949.
- 24 Cited in *Daring to Hope*, p. 75.
- 25 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/9, Sir Archibald Sinclair to Davies, 2 January 1950.
- 26 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 11 January 1950.
- 27 Ibid., diary entries for 16 and 18 January 1950.
- 28 Ibid., VB-C to Churchill, 23 January 1950 (copy).
- 29 Wyburn-Powell, op. cit., p. 183.
- 30 Reported in *The Times*, 14, 24 and 26 January 1950.
- 31 Ibid., 26 January 1950.
- 32 H. G. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1950* (London: Macmillan, 1951), p. 299.
- 33 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 24 February 1950.
- 34 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/29, VB-C to Davies, 20 May 1950 ('Private').
- 35 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London, Samuel Papers A/130, 9b and A/155 (xiii), 10, VB-C to Samuel, 5 and 8 May 1950.
- 36 *Daily Express*, 8 May 1950.
- 37 Ibid., 10 May 1950; Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London, Samuel Papers A/155 (xiii), 110, VB-C to Samuel, 11 May 1950.
- 38 NLW, Clement Davies Papers C1/54.
- 39 Wyburn-Powell, op. cit., p. 193.
- 40 VB-C to Laura Grimond, 24 February 1950, cited in *Daring to Hope*, p. 83.
- 41 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/39, VB-C to Davies, 22 September 1950. The speech is also reported in the *Liberal News*, 29 September 1950.
- 42 Ibid. J3/40, VB-C to Davies, 23 September 1950 ('Private').
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, Jo Grimond to VB-C, 16 September 1950.
- 45 Ibid., Grimond to VB-C, 18 September 1950.
- 46 Ibid., Grimond to VB-C, 20 September 1950.
- 47 *Liberal News*, 6 October 1950; *Daily Telegraph*, 30 September 1950.
- 48 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/42, VB-C to Davies, 6 October 1950 ('Private').
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid. J3/43, VB-C to Davies, 27 October 1950.
- 51 Ibid. J3/45, Davies to VB-C, 15 November 1950 (copy).
- 52 Ibid. J3/46, VB-C to Davies, 18 November 1950 ('Private').
- 53 Ibid. J3/45, Davies to VB-C, 15 November 1950 (copy).
- 54 Ibid. J3/49, W. Haig to VB-C, 9 January 1950 [recte 1951] (copy).
- 55 Ibid. J3/50, VB-C to Davies, 10 January 1951.
- 56 Ibid. J3/53, Davies to VB-C, 11 January 1951 (copy).
- 57 *Liberal News*, 6 April 1951.
- 58 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London, Samuel Papers A/155 (xiii), 142, VB-C to Samuel, 28 February 1951.
- 59 *Daring to Hope*, p. 104.
- 60 Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895–1970* (London, 1971), p. 265. See J. Graham Jones, 'Churchill, Clement Davies and the Ministry of Education', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 27 (Summer 2000), 8–14.
- 61 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/83, VB-C to Davies, 2 October 1956.
- 62 *Manchester Guardian*, 29 October 1951.
- 63 *Daring to Hope*, p. 105, citing VB-C to Gilbert Murray, 20 November 1951.
- 64 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 3 February 1953.
- 65 Ibid., diary entries for 18 December 1952 and 15 April 1953.
- 66 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/75, VB-C to Davies, 5 June 1953 ('Personal').
- 67 Ibid. T1/108, VB-C to Jano Clement Davies, 20 July 1954.
- 68 Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London, Samuel Papers A/155 (xiii), 292, Samuel to VB-C, 10 June 1955 (copy).
- 69 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J3/83, VB-C to Davies, 2 October 1956.
- 70 Michael McManus, *Jo Grimond: Towards the Sound of Gunfire* (London: Birlinn, 2001), p. 129; Arthur Cyr, *Liberal Party Politics in Britain* (London: John Calder, 1977), p. 101.
- 71 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 1 April 1958.
- 72 Ibid., diary entry for 16 September 1959.
- 73 *The Orcadian*, 15 October 1959.
- 74 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 11 March 1960.
- 75 Ibid., diary entry 29 July 1961.
- 76 NLW, Clement Davies Papers J25/11, VB-C to Jano Clement Davies, 21 March 1962.
- 77 Bodleian Library, Oxford, Violet Bonham Carter Papers, diary entry for 24 March 1962.