

LIBERAL HISTORY NEWS

WINTER 2013–14

The Jews and Liberalism

To mark Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), we reprint here a pamphlet published by the Liberal Party Organisation in 1928.

British Jews, of course, did not face the horrors unleashed on their counterparts in Germany, but they were nevertheless subject to many forms of discrimination, which in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Liberal Party was instrumental in removing.

This Pamphlet is of importance to every Jewish Elector

Throughout history, the Jews have suffered in all countries because the rights of citizenship have been denied to them. In this country today, however, the Jew is absolutely free. Jews practise their religion and keep their customs without hindrance; they have full citizenship, and every walk of life is open to them. *These benefits are almost entirely the result of Liberal legislation passed during the last hundred years.*

The first principle of Liberalism is individual freedom. Liberals have constantly fought for religious liberty, political liberty and economic liberty. They believe that all men and women should be free to pursue their own lives in peace, and should have a fair and equal chance to shape a successful career. *The Liberal Party have fought the democratic battle for all classes and needs alike, and in that struggle they have gained Equality for the Jews.*

The Liberals have secured for the Jews reforms in religious toleration, in education, in the franchise, in municipal politics, and in admission to Parliament, and as the result Jews have occupied the highest positions in the land, and have had many distinguished honours conferred upon them. On the other hand, the Liberal Party has received invaluable help from practically every Jew who has become famous in the political history of the country.*

Jewish Disabilities

A hundred years ago, the Jews were almost excluded from the professions; they were unable to engage in retail trade in the City of London, and it was questionable whether they had the right to hold land. They were legally prohibited from entering Parliament, from holding high rank in the Army or Navy, from membership of Oxford University, and from taking any degrees or emoluments at Cambridge University. They could even, at the discretion of the Returning Officer, be prevented from voting at an election.

With the advance of Liberalism in the eighteen-thirties, many reforms were quickly carried out. In 1831, London admitted Jewish traders, and in 1833, the first Jew was called to the Bar.

The entrance of Jews to municipal politics was achieved soon afterwards. In 1835, David Salomons was elected as Sheriff of London and Middlesex. Objection was raised to his serving as he did not take the Christian oath, and *the great Liberal leader, Lord John Russell, immediately introduced a Bill into Parliament to overcome the difficulty.* Thereupon, Salomons served his year of office; and two years later he was succeeded as Sheriff by Moses Montefiore.

The Fight for Parliament

The struggle for Parliamentary emancipation was much more arduous, and is one of the most interesting chapters in modern political history; there is, however, but space to recall the bare outline here.

First, in the year 1835, the Liberals passed *an Act finally securing for Jews the right to vote.* Until that time, they could be prevented from doing so by being asked to take an oath, but this practice was now finally abolished.

It took another twenty years of Liberal effort, however, before Jews were admitted to Parliament. The first step was taken in the year 1830, when the Liberal Member for Inverness, Sir Robert Grant, introduced a Bill to remove all disqualifications which prevented Jews from holding various 'civil rights, franchises and privileges' and holding various 'offices, places, employments, trusts and confidences'. The Bill was strongly supported by Lord John Russell, Macaulay, Lord Holland (the nephew and disciple of Charles James Fox) and other prominent Liberals, but was defeated. A General Election was held in 1831, and returned a *strongly Liberal House of Commons; and when the Emancipation Bill was re-introduced in 1833, it was carried.*

The Bill was, however, thrown out by the Lords. The same thing happened in 1834. In 1836, the Bill was again introduced, no longer as a Private Member's Bill, but this time in charge of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Liberal Government. It was again rejected by the House of Lords.

First Jewish Parliamentary Candidates

Efforts were then made to assist progress through the constituencies. The first Jew to be a Parliamentary candidate was Alderman Sir David Salomons, who has already been mentioned as the first Jewish Sheriff, and who was also the first Jewish Alderman and Lord Mayor of London. He was selected as a candidate by the Liberals at Shoreham in 1837, at Maidstone in 1841, and at Greenwich in 1847, but was defeated on each occasion.

Salomon's attacks had all been made upon Tory strongholds, and it was now decided to nominate a Jew as the Liberal candidate in a constituency in which there were good chances of success. Accordingly, in

1847, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, the leader of the Anglo-Jewish community, and Lord John Russell, the Liberal Prime Minister, were nominated as candidates for the City of London, and they were both elected. Baron Rothschild was, however, refused permission to take his seat because he was unable to take the oath 'on the true faith of a Christian'.

Lord John Russell immediately introduced a Bill to admit Jews to Parliament, which received the support of the Conservative leader, Lord George Bentinck, and passed all stages in the House of Commons. The Bill was rejected by the House of Lords; and in consequence of his action, Bentinck was worried by the Conservatives into resigning the leadership of that Party. A similar Bill met with the same fate the next year. Rothschild thereupon resigned his seat to test the feeling of his constituency, and was at once re-elected.

Emancipation Won

In 1851, another Emancipation Bill was introduced, and on the day after its rejection by the Lords, another Jewish Member was returned to Parliament, in the person of Sir David Salomons, who had now successfully contested Greenwich as a Liberal.

In all, eight Bills to admit Jews to Parliament were thrown out by the House of Lords, but at last, in 1858, they grudgingly gave way to the extent of accepting a compromise which left the question to be settled by each House for itself by Resolution.

On July 26, 1858, Baron Rothschild took his seat in the House of Commons, after being returned as a Liberal Member five times, and being compelled to sit 'outside the bar' of the House for eleven years.

In 1860, the Liberals converted the Resolution of the House into a permanent Standing Order.

Removal of Oaths

The Jews suffered many disabilities owing to the necessity in many connections of taking an oath 'as a Christian'.

As already stated, in 1835 the Liberals secured for the Jews the right to vote by abolishing the provision that an elector might be required to take the oath. In the same year, they took the first step towards opening all municipal offices to Jews by abolishing the necessity for taking the oath on becoming a Sheriff.

In 1838, the Liberals passed an Act to enable Jews to take the oath in their own way in a Court of Law. Previously they had actually been tried for perjury because they had sworn on the Old Testament.

The position of Jewish Members of Parliament was finally secured in 1866, when the Liberals passed an Act replacing the existing oaths by one that contained no phrase to which a Jew could object.

Thenceforth, Jews could enter either House of Parliament without any Resolution. Under it, Lord Rothschild, a son of Baron Lionel, was raised to the peerage, and duly took his seat in the House of Lords (during Gladstone's administration in 1886).

In 1871, the Liberals passed the Promissory Oaths Act, which removed the last barrier and entitled the Jews to hold every possible position.

In 1909, the Liberals passed another Oaths Act, which removed an objectionable form of oath sometimes administered to Jews.

Religious Freedom

In 1846, the Liberals passed a most important Act affecting the Jews in this country. It granted religious freedom to the Jews by placing them on an equality with Nonconformist Protestants. It gave the Jews the right to hold property

Lloyd George's Tada

– the one father he never knew!

by Peter Rowland



A biography of William George (1821–64), schoolteacher extraordinaire, is provisionally scheduled for publication by the autumn of 2014, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of William's death.

It will run to almost 85,000 words.

If interested in learning more, please either email lloyd.georges.tada@gmail.com or contact the author via www.peterrowland.org.uk

On This Day . . .

Every day the Liberal Democrat History Group's website, Facebook page and Twitter feed carry an item of Liberal history news from the past. Below we reprint three of them. To see them regularly, look at www.liberalhistory.org.uk or www.facebook.com/LibDemHistoryGroup or follow us at: [LibHistoryToday](#).

December

5 December 1916: Herbert Asquith resigns as Prime Minister. The crisis that led to the Prime Minister's resignation had been building for over a month. Concern at the military weakness in the British army at the Battle of the Somme led Lloyd George to call for a restructuring of the War Council with himself as chairman. Although not completely opposed to Lloyd George's proposals, Asquith could not accept that the Prime Minister would not chair the Council not continue to be a member of it. Protracted negotiations ensued until Lloyd George forced the issue by tendering his resignation. The Unionist ministers sided with Lloyd George and indicated their preparedness to serve in a government headed by Lloyd George. This was the last straw for Asquith and at 7pm he saw King George V to offer his resignation.

January

29 January 1855: Lord Aberdeen's Whig-Peelite Coalition, in office since 1852, is forced to resign following a significant Parliamentary majority (by 305 votes to 148) in favour of a select committee to inquire into what is widely felt to be the government's incompetent handling of the Crimean War. Aberdeen felt obliged to regard this as a vote of no confidence in his administration. In tendering his resignation to Queen Victoria, Aberdeen told her, perhaps foreshadowing current arrangements (or not), that in all other political matters 'it must be acknowledged that the experiment of a coalition had succeeded admirably'. He then virtually retired from public life, speaking in the Lords for the last time in 1858 before his death in 1860.

February

20 February 1977: Death of Elliot Dodds, journalist and Liberal thinker. Dodds was sometime private secretary to Liberal leader Herbert Samuel and was President of the Liberal Party in 1948. By profession a journalist, Dodds was a great writer and thinker for the party, a Chairman for the Unservile State Group and was particularly closely associated with the policies on profit sharing and industrial democracy.

necessary for their worship, education, and charitable purposes, and protected Jewish ministers and synagogues from molestation. It also repealed an old law under which Jews could be compelled to wear badges.

This Act meant a great deal to Jews, for until then, although the laws in existence had not been enforced for some time, it was illegal to hold religious services anywhere else than in the churches, and people could be punished for attending any other places of worship.

The privileges secured by the Act of 1846 were extended by two more Liberal measures passed in 1855. These secured the liberty of Religious Worship, and made it possible for synagogues to be registered. By means of registration, a synagogue is freed from payment of rates, it may receive legacies and gifts, it can enforce contracts for payment of seats, and people who disturb the services can be punished.

The Marriage Laws

A Liberal Government in 1836 passed a Marriage Act, which allowed Jews to marry according to their own laws. In the same year the Government passed an Act which permitted

Jews to have their own Marriage Registrars. Another important Act was passed by the Liberals in 1847, which removed doubts by declaring the legality of all Jewish marriages solemnised before 1837.

Another Liberal Government in 1856 passed an amending Marriage and Registration Act, and in this, Jews were given the permission to marry by licence.

When in 1906, a Liberal Government passed the Marriage with Foreigners Act, making it necessary for foreigners to obtain certificates from their own countries before they can be married here, a Clause was inserted leaving Jews out. The Liberal Government was satisfied that all necessary inquiries are made by the Jewish authorities to obtain the particulars which other people had to obtain from abroad.

Education

The Liberal Government which came into power at the end of 1868 passed, in its first three years of office, three important measures which threw open to Jews all grades of schools, from the public elementary schools to the Universities, without any religious tests or impositions.

These measures were the Endowed Schools Act, 1869; the Elementary Education Act, 1870; and the Universities Tests Act, 1871.

Under these Acts Jews cannot be given any religious teaching against their will, nor can Jews be kept out of any of the schools or Universities. Moreover, Jewish schools are placed on an equality with other schools.

Right to Hold Land

The right of the Jews in England to become property owners was in doubt in the minds of eminent lawyers and other authorities, but all doubts were removed by the Liberal Act of 1846 to which reference has been made.

Aliens can now hold land under the Liberal Naturalisation Act of 1870.

Voting on Saturday

To enable Jews to vote when polling takes place on a Saturday, the Liberal Government inserted a special clause in the Ballot Act of 1872. All that a Jew need do when a poll takes place on a Saturday, and he wishes to vote, is to inform the Presiding Officer at the

Polling Station that he is a Jew, and the Officer will then mark the ballot paper for him according to his instructions. Thus the Liberals safeguarded the great privilege of the vote to the Jews without Sabbath desecration.

Naturalisation

Naturalisation is the means by which an alien obtains all the rights of the natural-born British citizen. Jews who have been born in other countries and have settled here have always been eager to become citizens. It is important that they should. The Naturalisation Certificate confers all rights and removes the disabilities imposed on aliens by the Aliens Act. The Naturalisation Act of 1870 was passed by a Liberal Government.

Thus the Liberals have secured to Jews the right to vote and made it easier for them to obtain all the other privileges of citizenship.

Titles and Honours

The first Jewish Knight was created by a Liberal Government, the honour being conferred on the famous philanthropist, Moses Montefiore, in 1837.

The first Jewish Baronetcy was conferred by the Liberals on Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, in 1841.

The first Jew to be raised to the Peerage, was, as, already stated, Lord Rothschild.

The first Jew to hold office in a Government was Sir George Jessel, who was appointed Solicitor-General by Mr. Gladstone in 1871.

The first Jew to be admitted to the Privy Council was Sir George Jessel, in 1873, thanks to the Liberals.

The first Jew to be made a judge was Sir George Jessel, who was raised to the position of Master of the Rolls in 1873.

The first Jew to become a Member of the Cabinet was Sir (then Mr.) Herbert Samuel,

in the Liberal Government of 1909.

Lord Reading (who as Sir Rufus Isaacs was the first Jew to be made Attorney-General, 1910) was appointed by Mr. Asquith in 1913 to be Lord Chief Justice.

Many other public distinctions (such as Q.C., Recorder, Stipendiary Magistrate) were first conferred upon Jews by the Liberal Party.

The Right Honourable Sir Herbert Samuel is now Chairman of the Liberal Party organisation, and this pamphlet cannot conclude without a reference to the splendid pioneer work done by Sir Herbert Samuel in Palestine, when he was the first High Commissioner (1920–1925).

The Appeal of Liberalism

The present day appeal of Liberalism to the Jews is at least as great as ever it was. Liberalism is still the only real safeguard of individual liberty, and the Liberal Party stands foremost as the guardian of religious toleration, personal freedom, and equality of opportunity for all. Liberalism resists all tyranny and oppression in every form, whether from Conservatism, which believes in aristocratic rule, or from Socialism, which advocates the ever-widening extension of State interference. Nationalisation and Government control must be resisted, and efforts concentrated upon reforms in towns and country alike which will enlarge the scope of individual

opportunity, and bring greater individual happiness and prosperity.

Liberalism stands for the ideal of partnership in industry, and the fairer distribution of wealth. Liberalism also strives for friendship in international relations, and its first watchword – Peace – is also the greatest ideal of the Jews, for upon it alone can be based justice and well-being for all the peoples of the earth.

** The Earl of Beaconsfield is scarcely to be regarded as an exception, for though Disraeli was born a Jew he was baptised at the age of twelve.*

LIBERAL HISTORY QUIZ 2013

The 2013 Liberal history quiz was a feature of the History Group's exhibition stand at the Liberal Democrat conference in Glasgow last September. The winner was Michael Mullaney, with 18½ marks out of 20. Below we reprint the questions – the answers are on page 25.

1. Which former Liberal prime ministers are buried in Scotland?
2. A Liberal MP who later became a Conservative leader held a Scottish seat during the Great War. Which MP and which seat?
3. Who, at the 1992 election, made history by holding his seat with just 26% of the vote, the lowest percentage ever for a winning candidate?
4. Who was Liberal MP for Orkney & Shetland from 1922 to 1935?
5. What is the full name of Danny Alexander's constituency?
6. Which Liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer wrote to which Liberal Secretary of State for War: 'Scotland is a far cry, but then as a compensation it occupies more than half the government, and till we get Home Rule for Scotland it is almost inevitable that Ministers should be occasionally in London'?
7. Who was the leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats from 2005 to 2008?
8. Whom did a former Liberal leader's wife hope to succeed as a Scottish MP in 1970?
9. In which year did the last Leader of the SDP become an MP, and for which party?
10. In which year did H. H. Asquith return to the House of Commons by winning a by-election, and for which seat?
11. What did Liberal Prime Minister Lord Rosebery share with Harry Potter?
12. Which former Liberal (later Liberal Democrat) MP was the first person to take the oath in Gaelic upon entering the House of Lords in 2001?
13. What was the title of the memoirs published by Judy Steel in 2010?
14. What post did Sir Archibald Sinclair hold in Churchill's wartime coalition government from 1940 to 1945?
15. Augustine Birrell once said: 'What a grateful thought that there is not an acre in this vast and varied landscape that is not represented at Westminster by a London barrister.' In which Scottish county was he standing?
16. Russell Johnston once described his political mentor as 'a Scot of untidy kindness' who once said to him: 'I really don't understand why everyone isn't a Liberal'. Who was he?
17. Which former Liberal Prime Minister died in Downing Street a few days after resigning?
18. A former Lord Provost of Edinburgh, he served as Liberal MP for the city from 1865 to 1881 and was known by the nickname of 'The Member for Scotland'. Who was he?
19. Alexander William Charles Oliphant Murray, Liberal MP from 1900 to 1912, serving as Chief Whip under Asquith, was better known by which courtesy title for most of his political career?
20. Which famous Liverpoolian, of Scottish descent, won an Edinburghshire seat the year after an enormously popular oratorical campaign – and in which year?