

political rhetoric. Earl Russell provides a foreword highlighting the continued relevance of the speeches featured.

The collection works at several levels. For those who were present at the more recent orations it may merely act as a souvenir. If you were one of those who cheered Simon Hughes' demolition of Alliance defence policy (incidentally, and perhaps surprisingly, the shortest speech in the book); who heard Roy Jenkins' thoughtful Dimpleby Lecture, the inspiration for the SDP, or were overcome with emotion at Paddy Ashdown's farewell address to party conference, you may wish for a permanent record of the occasion.

But there is a deeper purpose. Some of these speeches have never been published in book form and others have been out of print for very many years. To bring them together will provide not only a source of reference but also the materials by which students can compare changes in style of public address over two hundred years. Examples are given of platform oratory to the mass public meeting at a time when politicians were accorded the star status now only given to entertainers, of speeches made to partisan party conferences and of the more intimate styles favoured by the House of Commons. It is interesting to note that the oratorical techniques identified by Max Atkinson were well applied by popular Victorian speakers.

Most importantly, the book demonstrates the continuity of Liberal and Liberal Democrat thought over 200 years. The classical nineteenth-century liberal position of maximising the freedom of the individual to act and take personal responsibility for their actions remains surprisingly relevant in today's debates on the role of the state and the uses of markets. The Liberal foreign policy created in the same Victorian heyday contained the main ethical principles which informed Paddy Ashdown's approach to Hong Kong and the Balkans, as Ashdown makes clear by his quotation from Gladstone in his final speech in the Commons. Here also is the root of support for self-government, which informs the Liberal Democrats' current stance on the decentralisation of power within the British state, together with a strong internationalist strand which sees the Liberal Democrats as the strongest supporters of the European Union.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the social and economic reform of New Liberalism offered the prospect of the continued pre-eminence of Liberalism in a mass democracy. While the First World War destroyed these hopes, New Liberal thinking informed the policies of all three British parties throughout the century – not least through the work of the Liberals Keynes and Beveridge, also represented in *Great Liberal Speeches*.

The collection also illustrates the way in which the Liberal Party tried to grapple with its decline after 1918 – with Asquith, for example, prefiguring the Third Way in his reference to a 'tertium quid' in his 1926 resignation speech. Unexpectedly the twentieth century ended with renewed optimism both for Liberalism and the Liberal Democrats, and the final group of speeches shows how the party has grappled with its new opportunities. Particularly interesting is the way in which, by abandoning 'equidistance', Paddy Ashdown was able to shift the focus away from the difficulties of relations with other parties, which featured so strongly for Jo Grimond and David Steel, to concentrate on promoting Liberal Democrat policy. But even here history intrudes: Ashdown's penny on income tax to pay for education echoes Joe Chamberlain's call – as part of his Radical Programme of 1885 – for an additional three farthings on tax to make schools free for poorer families.

Great Liberal Speeches will be a unique source of reference for anyone interested in the contribution of Liberals to British politics, or in the importance and impact of political speech-making. For details of availability, see the leaflet enclosed with this *Journal*. It will be launched at two meetings, the first at party conference on 25 September (see back page) and the second in Politico's Bookstore in London in late October or early November.

Liberals cheer Mr Churchill

One speech we did not have room for in *Great Liberal Speeches*: **Winston Churchill** at the National Liberal Club, 22 July 1943

Mr Churchill had one of the greatest ovations of his life when he attended the unveiling of his restored portrait in the Smoking Room

of the National Liberal Club today.

The portrait, which shows him as a young man, was consigned to the cellars of the club during the Liberal quar-

rels following the last war, but it was reinstated to its place on the wall some years ago.

When a bomb hit the club early in

1941 the bottom portion of the picture was damaged. It has now been skilfully restored, and it was formally unveiled in the presence of Mr and Mrs. Churchill at a ceremony presided over by Lord Crewe.

Members of the Club, some of whom had been waiting an hour and a half in the Smoke Room in order to be present at the ceremony, stood cheering Mr Churchill for several minutes.

The Prime Minister said that in some ways the occasion seemed to him like old times.

'I am very greatly honoured to have been invited here today and to sit again beside my old colleague in several administrations, Lord Crewe, whose broad, consistent outlook has been a help to many in the troublous years through which we have passed and to receive at the hands of the National Liberal Club, with apparently the full authority of all its members, this very great compliment of seeing unveiled a portrait which has survived alike the vicissitudes of politics and the violence of the enemy.

My mind goes back to the days of my earlier life and when I first found effective political contact with the Liberal Party. In those days they gained, after a lapse of, many years, political power and at that period – I am talking of 1906 – it seemed that many of the causes which had brought Liberalism into being as a dominant force had already been achieved.

The shackles had been struck off the slaves, career was open to talent, the barriers of class and privilege were being struck down with great rapidity or had indeed already been removed. The rights of small nations and the principles of tradition which animate nationalities were all recognising an ever greater measure of respect.

In many ways when the Liberal Government of 1905–06 came into power it surveyed a scene in which many of the great tasks with which Mr Gladstone had been associated had already been achieved, and then it was that that Government came forward and under the active inspiration and energy of Mr Lloyd George brought forward that long succession of social laws, of insurance of all kinds, of old age pensions, invalidity,

of labour exchanges, trade board and all that great field of social legislation in which Liberalism found a most fertile and practical work to do and which has gone steadily forward, altering the entire life of the people of this country, and will continue.

It is not finished yet and has still greater and finer scope to take.

There was the very remarkable fact that Liberal forces in this country, when for the moment the principles of liberty seemed to be well established, turned to this warmer, more practical sphere of social reform, and they undoubtedly gave to the whole legislation and life of our land an entirely new and beneficent character.

Time passed, and terrible wars swept across the world, wars utterly abhorrent to all (the conceptions of Victorian days), wars not to be conceived in their horror, in their brutality, in their grim ruthlessness, inevitable ruthlessness, by the statesmen of the days of the last century.

But these wars, as they have moved in their course, have thrown the Liberal Party back upon its earliest inspiration, namely, human liberty and duty, the inescapable duty of free men to defend the soil on which they live and to govern themselves in accordance with their desires, conceptions and traditions.

Thus the flame of liberty has burned, and thus the Liberal Party has entered most fully into this struggle with that flame burning, with that torch which went on ahead, that torch of freedom which we shall never allow to be extinguished.

Not only is the sword drawn in a generous cause, commanding the efforts of all, not only is the liberation of all these subjugated and enslaved countries a cause for which every man in whose breast Liberal instincts are implanted burns, not only does that move forward but we see that in days to come, and even at the present time, much more exact definitions will have to be established about the rights of the individual and about the relations of the individual to the great framework of the state which, as I hold, must have as its highest purpose the safeguarding of those individual rights and the reconciling of the freedom of each with the broad general interests of the community.

Therefore it seems to me that across these vicissitudes and storms which we have lived through, through which we have survived, which a large part of this building has successfully withstood, after all these shocks and violences and through them all, there has been a steady theme of Liberalism which has broadened out among other parties and which has given to those who have followed it all their lives a feeling of continuous fruitful exercise and effort.

And it seems to me that after this war is over there will be other tasks to do. There will be great tasks of rebuilding, there will be great tasks of securing the advance of our ideas and not letting it be swept back by mere tides of lassitude, exhaustion or reaction.

A steady advance of rising ideas, cultivated and regimented and brought forward, must be maintained, and among them an exact definition of the relations of the individual in regard to the state will play a part in which Liberal conceptions must exercise a most important sway.

In the rebuilding of this country none has a right to stand aside, except on grounds of intellectual or moral scruple, and content himself with a purely critical attitude, taking the form of throwing brickbats at the toiling workers, and I look forward in the future to not only the Liberal theme but Liberal activities playing a great part in the reconstruction and consolidation of our country in the gains which it will have made through this hard and long trial.

I must tell you that I feel a great emotion at your kindness to me, and I feel greatly honoured that my portrait should be hung on these walls along with men I have known and worked with in formative years of British political life.

Your welcome to me and the great kindness with which you have treated me and my wife will ever be gratefully cherished in my memory.'

When Mr Churchill finished his speech members of the Club sang 'For he's a jolly good fellow'.

A luncheon in honour of Mr and Mrs. Churchill, presided over by Lord

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mance languages: Mary Williams and James A. de Rothschild (editors) *A Miscellany of Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures presented to Leon E. Kastner Professor of French Language and Literature in the University of Manchester* (Cambridge, Heffer (1932)).

- 5 S. Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (1978), p. 188.
- 6 Ibid. pp. 209 and 252.
- 7 Ibid. p. 267.
- 8 Although it has to be admitted that casual anti-Semitism was to be found in all the parties at this time; see R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right* (1980), pp. 59-84. Griffiths points out that there was a great deal of 'parlour anti-Semitism' between the wars from which none of the parties was immune; *ibid* p. 65.
- 9 See H. M. Hyde, *Strong for Service – the Life of Lord Nathan of Churt* (1968); E. Janner, *Barnett Janner - A Personal Portrait* (1984),
- 10 There are various anecdotes about Rothschild's popularity with Labour MPs, e.g. Aneurin Bevan; F. Morton, *The Rothschilds*.
- 11 H. Pelling, *The Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910* (1967), p. 96.
- 12 M. Kinneer, *The British Voter - An Atlas and Survey Since 1885* (1968), pp. 119-20; C. Cook, *The Age of Realignment - Electoral Politics in Britain 1922-1929* (1975), p. 116.
- 13 On the other hand Rothschild may have picked up some of the local 'turf' vote. In neighbouring

Newmarket it was said that wealth and an interest in racing were requirements for a successful Liberal candidate. See Pelling, *op cit*, p. 96, and *Journal of Liberal Democrat History* 26 (Spring 2000), p. 21.

- 14 Liberals took 20% of the votes in 1950 and 11% in 1964, but did not contest the other general elections of the period. Freud held the redrawn seat until 1987.
- 15 The others included Leslie Hore-Belisha, Geoffrey Shakespeare and Ernest Brown.
- 16 Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare, *Let Candles Be Brought In* (1949), pp. 133-34. Sir Henry Morris Jones, *Doctor in the Whips' Room* (1955), p. 84, describing the March meeting, records that 'James Rothschild [was] amusing. He always sat in a chair within our circle and just in front of the Chairman. His silk hat well tilted over the back of his head, he read his contribution to the debate with deliberation and weight.' Perhaps he sat where he did because of his poor eyesight.
- 17 Shakespeare, *op cit*, p.135.
- 18 However, his loyalty to Samuel took a hard blow in 1937 when the former High Commissioner made a speech in the Lords accepting the need for Jewish immigration controls (which he himself had imposed) and the restriction of land settlement – a speech which has not done much to endear his memory to Zionist history; Schama, *op cit*, p. 377 n9.
- 19 N. Smart, *The Diaries and Letters of Robert Bernays 1932-1939* (1996), p. 12. Bernays, a fellow Liberal MP, wrote that 'Rothschild

... though a bad speaker himself, is a good judge of others'.

- 20 Ibid pp. 183-84.
- 21 R Rhodes James (ed.), *Chips – the Diaries of Sir Henry Channon* (1967), p. 247, entry for 17/12/42. The remarkable impact of the speech was confirmed by Lloyd George's assistant, A. J. Sylvester, in his diary: 'Disregarding all the rules of procedure and, in a voice that was full of emotion, he made a speech thanking the Foreign Secretary. During the whole of this time, the House was as silent as the grave. The atmosphere was extraordinary. Although every word uttered by de Rothschild was out of order, not even the Speaker stopped him ... Members of the House then stood in silence. At lunch I asked LG if he had ever seen anything similar to it. "Never in my experience," he replied ... Speaking of de Rothschild's speech, LG said it was really an intonation, such as you get in a synagogue.' A. J. Sylvester, *Life with Lloyd George* (ed Colin Cross), p. 308.
- 22 E. de Rothschild, *op cit*, p. 87.
- 23 Roy Douglas *A History of the Liberal Party* (1970).
- 24 According to Sir Percy Harris, it was due to his membership of the exclusive Tory-Liberal dining club; *The Other Club, Forty Years In and Out of Parliament* (1947).
- 25 Churchill Archive at Churchill College, Cambridge CHAR 20/20741. I am grateful to Ian Hunter for drawing my attention to this document.
- 26 Ibid p. 197.

Liberal cheer Mr Churchill

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Crewe, preceded the unveiling of the portrait.

Sir Archibald Sinclair, Lord Simon and Mr Ernest Brown were among those present.

In his speech at the unveiling Lord Crewe recalled that in the Middle Ages, 'When people believed in magic', it was the custom to fashion a wax image of one's enemy and to stick pins into it in the hope of inflicting some bodily ailment upon him.

'It seems possible', said Lord Crewe, 'that some historically-minded members of the Luftwaffe may have supposed that if they could deface the Prime Minister's portrait with a bomb he would suffer physically, and would be seen an emaciated and hollowed-cheeked figure addressing a distracted House of Commons in tones of desperation'.

'If that were their calculation, they failed here as they have failed elsewhere and as they are going to fail until the end of the War.'

The above speech is reprinted with the kind permission of Curtis Brown.

The final quest for Liberal reunion, 1943-46

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- 7 These papers were originally part of Sir Archibald Sinclair's political papers found at his old shooting lodge, Dalnawillan, in Caithness. The papers have now been deposited with the rest of the Thurso archive at Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 8 'Liberal Reunion – 1943' memo to Sinclair from the Dingle Foot papers (DEFT 1/3) Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 9 'Liberal Reunion – 1943' memo to Sinclair from the Dingle Foot papers (DEFT 1/3) Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 10 'Liberal Reunion – 1943' memo to Sinclair from the Dingle Foot papers (DEFT 1/3) Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 11 'Liberal Reunion – 1943' memo to Sinclair from the Dingle Foot papers (DEFT 1/3) Churchill College, Cambridge.
- 12 Sinclair to Sir Geoffrey Mander 6 December 1945, Thurso Papers
- 13 Letter from Samuel to Montrose, 17 May 1946, Thurso Papers.
- 14 Letter from Sinclair to Samuel, 20 May 1946, Thurso Papers.
- 15 Letter from Samuel to Sinclair 24 May 1946, Thurso Papers.
- 16 Memo written by Herbert Brechin, Secretary of the Scottish Liberal National Association, June 28 1946.
- 17 Letter from Fothergill to Mabane, 23 July 1946, Thurso Papers
- 18 Lady Louise Glen-Coats was an outstanding example of the tough and independent breed of

women who did so much to keep the Liberal Party a viable entity during its electoral low points in the twenty years after 1935. She was originally selected to fight the winnable seat of Orkney & Shetland but stood aside to allow Jo Grimond his chance to stand in 1945.

- 19 Letter from Fothergill to Sinclair, 8 August, 1946, Thurso Papers
- 20 Letter from Violet Bonham Carter to Sinclair, 11 August 1946, Thurso Papers. There is some evidence in the surviving papers that Fothergill and Bonham Carter underestimated Glen-Coats' skills and that, as she wrote to Sinclair on 8 August, 'I am not under any delusion as to the type of person I am up against in the leaders of the opposite camp'.
- 21 Letter from Fothergill to Glen-Coats, 23 July 1946, Thurso Papers.
- 22 Letter from Mabane to Fothergill, 23 October 1946, Thurso Papers
- 23 Letter from Fothergill to Mabane, 24 October 1946, Thurso Papers
- 24 This was a battle that the leadership were having to fight on two fronts: as well as the talks with the Liberal Nationals a group of Liberal candidates was talking directly to a group of Tory reformers led by Peter Thorneycroft about a possible direct merger with the Conservatives. This went as far as the publication of a joint document, *Design for Freedom*, and led to a statement from Liberal headquarters in November 1946 denying rumours of any pact with the Conservatives.