

AT THE HEART OF THE PARTY

the discussions at these meetings, but he was not directly involved. He also served on the 1942 Electoral Machinery Committee, chaired by the Registrar-General, Sir Sylvanus Vivian. Issues such as electoral boundaries, registration of voters and proportional representation were discussed and Jones was an invaluable contributor with his in-depth knowledge of electoral law and first-hand experience of constituency work during elections.

Jones took an active part in the life of the National Liberal Club and served on the executive that dealt with the Club's management and business arrangements. He became Chairman in 1946. He invited distinguished politicians and foreign dignitaries as luncheon speakers. Brenda joined her father at some key events following the end of the war. As well as the Victory in Europe Thank-giving Service at St Paul's Cathedral, she attended the opening session of the General Assembly of United Nations in London. 'It was the second day and Mr Trygve Lie had taken the chair – another day of excitement and hope for the future, though the failure of the League of Nations was still in our minds,' she said.

After the war there seemed to be a national shift in political mood towards the left, and the Liberal Party hoped to benefit, especially since Beveridge had been elected as a Liberal MP in 1944. However the Labour Party routed the other parties, leaving the Liberals with just twelve seats, all rural. Clement Davies was elected temporary chairman of the Liberal MPs and, when the expected by-election to re-elect Sinclair did not materialise, Davies continued to lead the party for another eleven unremarkable years.

Jones retired as Secretary of the Liberal Central Association on 30 June 1948. On 8 July he was entertained to dinner at the House of Commons by seventeen of his closest colleagues in the party. Viscount Samuel and Clement Davies gave speeches. He had made plans for his retirement,

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having been invited to do work for the BBC and also considering opening a chain of coffee shops in London. In August 1948, however, he suffered a coronary thrombosis and died on the Isle of Wight while on holiday with his family celebrating Brenda's twenty-first birthday.

Raymond Jones was a passionately committed Liberal throughout his life and, although he was angered by injustice, he never became depressed or despondent. The publication of the Beveridge Report and the formation of the United Nations gave him much hope for the future. Lloyd George

once dubbed him 'the loyallest of the loyal'.

After her father's death and, sadly, that of her mother a year later, Brenda Jones (now Tillotson) left England to work in Canada, the United States and South Africa as a physiotherapist. She settled in Vancouver, British Columbia. Throughout her career she found that the lessons learned at her father's knee were invaluable. She is now retired and lives with her husband near Vancouver. Ian Hunter is the editor of Winston & Archie: The Letters of Winston Churchill and Archibald Sinclair (Politicos, forthcoming, 2005).

More on Lib Dem voting in the House of Commons

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In our earlier article in *Journal of Liberal History* 43 (Summer 2004) tracking Liberal Democrat voting in the Commons between 1992 and 2003, we showed that the party had shifted from being almost indistinguishable from Labour in terms of its voting to having become a *bona fide* party of opposition. Analysis of the last full session's voting data (ending in November 2004) shows that that trend has continued: out of the 284 Commons whipped votes in which Lib Dem MPs participated, the party's MPs voted against the government in 208 (73 per cent). They voted with the government in just 76 divisions (27 per cent). (There were also 53 Lib Dem free votes, and three occasions when the Lib Dem frontbench line was to abstain.)

The party's tendency to vote with the Conservatives has now been growing steadily year on year: from 27 per cent in the first session of the 1997 Parliament, to 40 per cent in the second, 44 per cent in the third, 47 per cent in the fourth, to 54 per cent in

the first session of this Parliament, to 66 per cent in the second session, and reaching 67 per cent between 2003–04. Liberal Democrat MPs are now therefore more than twice as likely to vote with the Conservatives as they were at the beginning of the 1997 Parliament.

These overall figures continue to mask some differences between the different types of votes. The Lib Dems are more supportive of the government over the principle of legislation than over its details – although even here, there has been a noticeable drop in their levels of support. The third session saw the Lib Dems back the government in 53 per cent of votes on the principle of government legislation (voting with them on either second or third reading). Where they really get stuck in, though, is over the fine print – voting against Labour in more than four out of every five votes on the detail of government legislation.

More information on this and related issues can be found at the website www.revolts.co.uk.