

## 'THE FIGHTING PARSON'

- leading nineteenth-century Methodist evangelist preacher and founder of *Joyful News*.
- 3 C. Twinch, 'Roderick Morris Kedward (1881–1937)', *Bygone Kent*, Vol. 24, no. 11 (November 2003), pp. 642–51.
  - 4 *Methodist Recorder*, 20 October 1960
  - 5 1922 election leaflet, 'R. M. Kedward – By One of his Admirers' Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 6 <http://www.1914-18.net/31div.htm>. See also the novel *Covenant with Death* by J. Harris (1961) which describes the raising and slaughter of the 31<sup>st</sup> Division.
  - 7 *Bermondsey Election News 1924: How the Labour Party deserted*. Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 8 Result: Sykes (Coalition Conservative) 13,805 (80.1 per cent); Kedward (L) 3,434 (19.9 per cent), turnout 54.9 per cent, C majority 10,371 (60.2 per cent).
  - 9 John D. Beasley, *The Bitter Cry Heard and Heeded – The Story of the South London Mission 1889–1989* (South London Mission, London, 1990); Rev. W. Spencer, *Glory in the Garret* (Epworth, London, 1932); A. Turberfield, *John Scott Lidgett – the Archbishop of British Methodism?* (Epworth Press, Peterborough, 2003). The main Central Hall was demolished in 1967.
  - 10 Sir H. Llewellyn Smith et al., *New Survey of London Life and Labour Vol iii Social Survey 1 – Eastern Area* (P. S. King, London, 1932) p. 357 60.
  - 11 Other working-class Liberal strongholds in the 1920s and 1930s included Lambeth North, Southwark North, Bethnal Green South-west and North-east, Shoreditch and Whitechapel.
  - 12 Result: Glanville (L) 4,260 (40.6 per cent), Scriven (CoL) 2,998 (28.5 per cent), Salter (Lab) 1,956 (18.6 per cent), Becker (Ind) 1,294 (12.3 per cent), turnout 48.5 per cent, L majority 1,262 (12.1 per cent).
  - 13 *Election Address of Dr Alfred Salter, 6 December 1923; and leaflet: 'Back to Sanity: Vote for Kedward, A Worker for the Workers', 1923*, Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 14 Result: Salter (Lab) 7,550 (44.6 per cent), Kedward (L) 5,225 (30.9 per cent), Scriven (Nat L) 2,814 (16.6 per cent), Nordon (Ind C) 1,328 (7.9 per cent), turnout 64.6 per cent, Lab majority 2,325 (13.7 per cent). Scriven received official Conservative endorsement.
  - 15 Liberal leaflet: *Fair Play* and Labour leaflets *Foul Play versus Fair Play* and *Foul Play: that is a lie*. Southwark Local Studies Library
  - 16 Result: Kedward (L) 9,186 (52.5 per cent), Salter (Lab) 8,298 (47.5 per cent), turnout 66.1 per cent, L majority 888 (5.0 per cent). There was a definite Liberal–Conservative pact, see C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment – Electoral Politics in Britain 1922–1929* (Macmillan London 1975), p. 160.
  - 17 F. Brockway, *Bermondsey Story – the Life of Alfred Salter* (Geo Allen & Unwin, London, 1949), p. 118.
  - 18 C. Cook, *The Age of Alignment*, p. 235–6.
  - 19 Result: Salter (Lab) 11,578 (57.2 per cent), Kedward (L) 8,676 (42.8 per cent), turnout 75.0 per cent, Lab majority 2,902 (14.4 per cent).
  - 20 SLSL, *Bermondsey Liberal Association leaflet*, November 1924.
  - 21 They held the Parliamentary and London County Council seats and dominated Bermondsey Borough Council and the Board of Guardians. The composition of Bermondsey Borough Council over the decade was as follows:
- | 19--                                   | 19 | 22 | 25 | 28 |
|--|----|----|----|----|
| Labour                                 | 24 | 35 | 48 | 48 |
| Progressive (Liberal)                  | 27 | 5  | 0  | 0  |
| Electoral Association (anti-Socialist) | 0  | 10 | 6  | 6  |
| Independent                            | 1  | 4  | 0  | 0  |
- 22 S. Goss, *Local Labour and Local Government – A study of changing interests, politics and policy in Southwark from 1919–1982* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 41.
  - 23 Salter held the seat in 1931 by ninety-one votes against a Conservative and a Communist. Labour had very comfortable victories over Liberal Nationals in 1935 and 1945 and a Liberal also stood in 1945 winning just 8 per cent of the vote.
  - 24 Result: Steel (Con) 15,159 (60.4 per cent), Humphrey (L) 5,487 (21.8 per cent), Noble (Lab) 4,473 (17.8 per cent), Con majority 9,672 (38.6 per cent), turnout 70.4 per cent.
  - 25 Result: Kedward (L) 15,753 (46.0 per cent), Steel (Con) 14,579 (42.6 per cent), Follick (Lab) 3,885 (11.4 per cent), L majority 1,174 (3.4 per cent), turnout 75.3 per cent.
  - 26 Letter from Georgia Reed to the author, 16 June 2004. I am grateful for Georgia Reed and Prof. H. Roderick Kedward for sharing information with me on their grandfather. They have confirmed that apart from a few photographs, press cuttings and the quoted letter from Lloyd George, none of their grandfather's political papers have survived – 'he was rather secretive about his later life and didn't keep any biographical material'.
  - 27 On the tithe war see further: C. Twinch, *Tithe War 1918–1939 – The Countryside in Revolt* (Media, Norwich, 2001); and on the historical background see E. J. Evans, *The Contentious Tithe – the Tithe Problem and English Agriculture 1750–1850* (London 1976).
  - 28 A. Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991), p. 175. Result: Knatchbull (Con) 20,891 (58.7 per cent), Kedward (L Nat) 14,681 (41.3 per cent), Con majority 6,210 (17.4 per cent), turnout 75.9 per cent.
  - 29 The president of the NTA in 1931 was Viscount Lymington, a Tory MP. Other Tory supporters included R. A. Butler.
  - 30 Twinch, *Tythe War*, p. 81.
  - 31 *The Star*, 5 March 1937.
  - 32 Result: Spens (Con) 16,051 (47.7 per cent), Kedward (L) 11,423 (33.9 per cent), Beck (Lab) 6,178 (18.4 per cent), Con majority 4,628 (13.8 per cent), turnout 70.9 per cent.
  - 33 Twinch, *Tythe War*, p. 126.
  - 34 [http://www.historic-kent.co.uk/vill\\_h.htm](http://www.historic-kent.co.uk/vill_h.htm). It was moved to the new Ashford cattle market in the 1990s.

# REPORTS

## Liberals and organised labour

Fringe meeting, March 2005, Harrogate, with David Powell and Keith Laybourn  
Report by **Chris Gurney**

**W**ith the 2005 general election not too far in the future, Liberal Democrats gathered in a packed-out Charter Suite in the conference

hotel in Harrogate for a scintillating discussion from two academics about the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour. The loss of support from

organised labour during the late Victorian and Edwardian period was clearly a central element in the decline of the Liberal Party as a significant electoral and political force. Once this confidence in the party was gone, the Liberals never got it back and trade union and labour issues have never since had the same high priority in Liberal politics. Our two speakers, whilst coming from very differing perspectives and with differing motivations, sought to examine why and how it was that organised labour broke away from the Liberal Party and the impact this had on the Liberal vote.

David Powell (Head of the History Programme, York St John College, and author of *British Politics and the Labour Question: 1868–1990*) began the session by explaining that the brief that he had been given, the history of Liberals and organised labour since the nineteenth century, was both rather vague and too broad for the time allotted to him. He stressed that the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour was not static and that its dynamism reflected the evolution of both in changing contexts. He therefore hoped that by focusing on the organisational and intellectual elements of the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour he could elucidate three distinctive periods that serve to demonstrate the dynamism of a gradually distancing and disintegrating relationship and also to prompt some interesting questions in the present context.

The earliest period that Dr Powell wished to focus on was in the mid-nineteenth century and saw the origins of both the Liberal Party and labour organisation. This period was when relations between the two groups were at their best, partly, he argued because of the strong relationship between Gladstonians and skilled labour. Many members of both groups believed in the ‘common interests’ of capital and labour in society and this helped to sustain the alliance

into the late nineteenth century, despite evident tensions in areas such as trade-union reform. Many of the first working men elected to the House of Commons were members of the Liberal–labour alliance, helping to provide further cross-fertilisation and co-operation between the two groups. For many, Liberals and organised labour were ‘natural allies’ and they saw no reason for this to change.

The second period that was important in the Liberal–labour alliance began in the mid 1880s. In comparison to the earlier period of co-operation, this was one of challenge and contest within the relationship. The changing context of industrial relations, characterised by the increasing numbers and militancy of disputes and increasing hostility from both employers and the courts towards organised labour, meant that the assumption by many of harmony between the interests of the ‘two halves’ of industry was becoming more difficult to sustain. Some organisations, such as the Social Democratic Federation and militant union groups, sought to challenge the ‘closeness’ of the relationship and the very ‘naturalness’ that had been taken for granted in the earlier period, seeking to develop organisations and alliances that would represent the workers themselves.

This increasing confrontation did not mean that co-operation was impossible, and at the 1892 general election twenty candidates stood on a Lib–Lab platform demonstrating the strength of the alliance in many areas. Liberal Party support for many union reforms had secured continuing loyalty from many sections of labour. This was not to the satisfaction of all, however, and the Independent Labour Party was set up in 1893 seeking to provide an ‘independent’ (from Liberals) voice for organised labour in the House of Commons.

This challenge to the alliance was to have interesting ideological consequences. The late nineteenth

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century was to see the rise of a ‘New Liberalism’ that sought to respond to both unionism and Marxism and to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Liberalism for the next century. Hobhouse’s 1893 text *The Labour Movement* argued for the positive and progressive role that could be played by trade unions as well as more traditional liberal concerns such as the importance of organised self-interest and competition for the good of all. Things were not quite this simple, however. Hobson, writing in 1899, warned of the dangers that an over-powerful trade union might have. He saw that the possibilities of a conflict between trade-union interests (whether directly those of workers or indirectly those generated by bureaucratic organisations) and the wider ‘social good’ meant that there remained a vital role for the state in regulating union activities and preventing them from becoming too powerful.

The years either side of the First World War provided the third of the periods that Dr Powell argued was essential for understanding the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour. This period saw the final dissolution of the relationship between the two groups. Whilst the early twentieth century’s Liberal governments adopted many trade unions reforms and legislative proposals that found support in the labour movement, the trend was by no means unidirectional. Many in the labour movement, for example, considered Churchill’s policy of labour exchanges to be, in fact, a source of non-unionised labour, the ‘industrial reserve army’ that Marx had prophesied, revealing Liberals as being in league with capital. Whilst on the other side trade union demands for freedom from liability revealed them to be the anti-individualist organisations that many Liberals had always said they were.

Increasing industrial unrest placed the Liberal government in a difficult position. Traditional Liberal attitudes suggested that the state’s role as mediator would

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place it in a perfect position to act as 'referee' between the interests of labour and capital. However, use of the army to quell industrial unrest only served to create greater distance between the Liberal Party and organised labour. To many this was sufficient evidence that the Liberal state, far from being an impartial referee (as it and Liberals claimed it was), was actually firmly in the pocket of capital. The Miners Federation was the first union formally to affiliate to the new Labour Party. By 1913 union ballots for political funds were donating most of their resources to the Labour Party, and, worst of all, local election arrangements for a progressive alliance to keep out the Conservatives had broken down.

If the situation was not already bad, the First World War only worsened it. The splits in the Liberal Party over entry into the war meant that the focus of much Liberal attention was directed at reuniting the Liberal 'family' rather than seeking to maintain an even more complicated alliance with organised labour. The Liberal Party was slowly pushed into the political wilderness. Despite positive attempts to 'rethink' Liberalism (such as *The Yellow Book* in 1928), in the new context of 'industrial politics' the Liberal Party remained politically unpopular as the Labour Party became the new 'natural' home of organised labour.

Dr Powell closed his remarks by bringing us back to the present day. He suggested that the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour had to be seen in the light of the changing content and context of the labour question. This raises questions for us in the present. Thatcher's reforms in the 1980s have created a different and shifting industrial context. We have seen the decline of union membership and the destruction of Britain's manufacturing and extractive industries, the traditional backbone of the union movement. There has also been a commensurate increase in the

number of skilled workers in the labour market. These factors, combined with weakening institutional links between the trade union movement and the Labour Party, suggests that there may now be 'something of an opportunity for a renewal' of links between Liberals and organised labour. The breakdown of 'class,' the rise of the multiple interests of labour combined with increasing focus on both political and economic citizenship mean that Liberals, always the ones to exalt the individual and their interests, may be in an ideal opportunity to exploit this new position.

The focus of our second speaker, Professor Laybourn (Professor of History, Huddersfield University, and author of *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1890–1918*), was somewhat different from that of Dr Powell. Rather than focus on organisational and ideological changes in the relationship between the Liberal Party and organised labour, he sought to provide a case study on relations between Liberals and labour in the textile district of West Riding between 1880 and the eve of the First World War. This had traditionally been a Liberal heartland (in 1886 nineteen of the twenty-three MPs from West Riding were Liberals) but by 1914 the Independent Labour Party had seriously challenged this hegemony and by 1929 only one Liberal MP remained. Professor Laybourn sought to explain why this situation had developed, such that by 1913 the *Huddersfield Herald* was able to declare the 'passing of Liberalism.'

The first factor that Professor Laybourn focused on was a strong sense of anti-Liberalism among trade unions and the labour movement. It was felt by many that the Liberal Party was insensitive to the needs of the labour movement, and the trade unions were to play a central role in capturing working-class support from the Liberal Party. These views were reinforced by the fact that local employers seen as exploiting workers (such as Alfred Illingworth and Sir James Kitson)

were active in local Liberal associations. Not only this but the refusal of many Liberals to support the adoption of trade-union-friendly candidates further served to drive people away from the Liberal Party. 'Illingworthism' (attempts to subsume union demands under the Liberal banner) gradually gave way to 'Hardieism,' which pushed for the democratic involvement of the trade union movement in political activity.

Liberal Party responses to industrial unrest in the West Riding in the 1880s and 1890s provided further impetus for the breakdown of relations between Liberals and organised labour. In the Huddersfield textile strikes in 1883, Liberals came down on the side of the employers against labour. The Manningham mill strikes of 1890–91, which lasted six months, saw 5,000 people on strike, acts of violence and the reading of the Riot Act. Local Liberals dominated the 'watch committee' and tried to stop union meetings that sought to discuss strike action. They also supported the use of troops against strikers. Given the importance that was often placed on strikes as a form of political activity by those in the labour movement it was hardly surprising that using the army would drive more support away from the Liberal Party. All this added further credence to the idea that both Liberals and Conservatives were 'capitalists first' and only 'politicians second'. Trade unionists began to appreciate that 'you cannot give political support to a man who economically opposes you'. The Liberal Party was offering harmony and compromise whilst trade unionists wanted support and independent representation.

These developments were coupled with the rise of socialist societies and independent workers' movements across the region. These provided a sphere in which workers could organise together, develop self-reliance and also develop political programmes. These included the formation of

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the Socialist League in Bradford and Leeds, Labour Union clubs as well as more 'cultural' aspects of life such as socialist Sunday schools, the Clarion cycling clubs, and support from some Anglicans and nonconformists. In this way organised labour began to arise as a genuinely independent movement from the Liberal Party and to break the hegemony of Liberals as the 'best representatives of the working class'. What had been the hope of John Stuart Mill in the 1850s was being utterly refuted by locally organised labour groups developing outside the Liberal Party giving organised labour the opportunity to develop their own interests and increasingly to see themselves as the best guarantors of their fulfilment.

Laybourn finished by arguing that the Liberal Party had neglected the needs of workers at their cost. It was a pity that he had not focused more on *how* the Liberal Party had failed to articulate the needs of workers in its programmes, rather than simply describing the failure and Labour's rise to fill the vacuum. At times it seemed to him as if it were self-evident that the Labour Party should represent organised labour best, and that it was merely a matter of workers coming to realise this truth rather than of anything more complex. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the trade unions had often been suspicious of Liberal reforms (as in 1906–14) and the failure of the Liberal Party to involve workers in decision-making processes could have only exacerbated this. The Liberal Party, by assuming that it knew what the workers needed better than they did themselves, only served to drive itself further away from organised labour movements that sought actually to involve working people in the decisions that affected their lives.

Dr Powell and Professor Laybourn provided interesting and challenging discussions on the collapse of relations between the Liberal Party and organised labour in the nineteenth and early

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twentieth century. Whilst both brought differing perspectives to bear on the question of this relationship, it was interesting how both presentations brought out the problem of the Liberal Party's assumption that it was the 'natural' home of the working class and the effect that that had on attitudes towards organised labour and socialist movements. After all, if you are their 'natural home' any challenge to that is likely to be seen as misguided, rather than as

necessarily dangerous. Is the idea that the Labour Party is the 'natural' home of the working class an idea that has come to an end? Is the Labour Party aware of this? Is now a time for new possibilities of articulating alliances between Liberals and organised labour groups on issues of mutual concern? Who knows, but what seems clear is that it cannot get worse than Liberal-labour relations in the early and mid-twentieth century.

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## Civil liberties in war and peace

Evening meeting, January 2005, with Professor Clive Emsley and Julian Dee

Report by **Neil Stockley**

Since the events of 11 September 2001 and the so-called 'war on terror' began, the question of balancing the need to protect the state against the desire to promote individual freedom has been at top of the political agenda. Liberal Democrats take considerable pride in our steadfast commitment to civil liberties. We roundly condemned the detention of foreign nationals for an indefinite period without trial in Belmarsh prison. We were against the government's proposals to detain terror suspects without trial and its plans to place them under house arrest and to apply other restrictions on liberty, with only limited appeal to judges. We oppose Labour's plans to bring in compulsory identity cards. In his personal introduction to *Freedom, Fairness and Trust*, the party's 'pre-manifesto' document before the 2005 general election, Charles Kennedy declared that 'our Liberal background makes us wary of an over-mighty state and dedicated to civil liberties'.

But is there really a Liberal heritage on matters of personal freedom; if so, how can we describe it? Did our political

antecedents really champion civil liberties, even when the state perceived itself to be under threat? This meeting gave answers that were different to what many Liberals might expect, or, indeed, be comfortable with.

Professor Clive Emsley explained how the Whig Charles James Fox had 'kept the flame of liberty alive' during the 'reign of terror' of William Pitt the Younger during the 1790s. When the French Revolution happened, it was initially viewed sympathetically in this country. However, as Professor Emsley put it, 'things went a bit nasty' after English and Irish radicals took inspiration from events over the channel. They wanted to reform Parliament and create a true democracy. Some spoke of overthrowing King George III. In 1793, war broke out with revolutionary France as the Pitt ministry, which had been formed four years earlier and supported by the majority of Whigs, sought to save the King and the state.

Professor Emsley gave a grim summary of the steps taken by Pitt's government. These included: the suspension of habeas corpus in 1794 and 1795;