

than eighteen different leaflets from the Liberal Democrats. As the authors understandably conclude, 'the Liberal Democrats were determined to win this seat'. The result? A Liberal Democrat gain, with a swing of 15 per cent. Similar double-figure levels of contact were recorded in other dramatic wins in Manchester Withington and Westmorland & Lonsdale.

A more detailed reading of the figures shows some strong results for the Liberal Democrats on more modest campaigns, but the overall picture is a clear link between very heavy levels of Lib Dem contact and good Lib Dem results. What is also clear is that in many of these seats the 'classic ALDC' type campaign of four or five leaflets is now seen as barely breaking sweat. This is partly a reaction to the increasing difficulty of getting a political message across as advertising and marketing material have encroached more and more on every aspect of life (and through the letterbox). On the other hand, in many seats the Liberal Democrats clearly still struggle to

reach this level of intensive campaigning activity across a Parliamentary seat – and as a result across the country as a whole the Lib Dem leaflets come out as the least local due to the reliance on standard national artwork in many of the weaker seats.

The connection between activity and results appears much looser for the other parties, again a reflection of the wider world, in this case the higher core support and media coverage for Labour and the Conservatives.

The book is rounded off with a detailed analysis of what the parties said on immigration – the most contentious

issue of campaign ethics during the campaign – and a sketch of the campaign in five individual constituencies. At £7.50 for just forty pages the book is rather pricey, but there is enough interest in this brief book to make it worthwhile – and brevity does mean a busy political activist may actually have the time to read it!

Mark Pack works in the Liberal Democrats Campaigns Department and, in his spare time, wrote most of the eighteen letters and leaflets the lucky Hornsey & Wood Green resident received.

A Prime Minister speaks

Paul Richards (ed.) *Tony Blair: In His Own Words*
(London; Politico's Publishing, 2004)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

This collection brings together forty-three of Blair's speeches, articles and similar items stretching from 1982 to 2004.

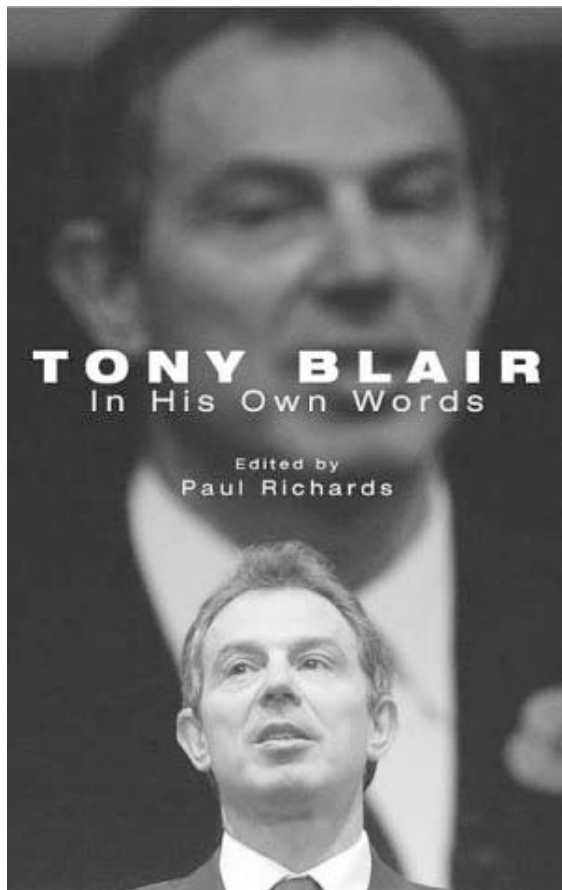
The quote on the inner flap is typical Blair: 'I want us to be a young country again. With a common purpose. With ideals we cherish and live up to. Not resting on past glories. Not fighting old battles.' It has visionary rhetoric, displaying a real verbal oratorical style (so rare in politicians these days) with its sparseness with words and verbs – and not distinctively Labour in content. It has overtones of JFK but with a few small changes could have come from Mrs Thatcher.

Some of the speeches are heavily edited, with the extracts thereby losing their coherence and form, but fortunately those to suffer most are the conference speeches, which are available elsewhere. And Blair's political CV from 1983 is published in full and untouched, leaving in even the bizarre misspelling by Blair of his own name.

The editor, an ardent New Labour fan, argues that Blair's values come through the book as consistent and heavily based on his Christian views. There is no room here for criticisms of Blair's timidity after having won a large Parliamentary majority, nor of the Women's Institute speech that, due to its failure, is one of his most famous.

Perhaps the most interesting speech is Blair's 1982 lecture outlining the state of British politics. Some later themes of Blairism are already clear, including criticism of Tony Benn for divisiveness. Concerns about social exclusion and the scepticism of party activists ('the trouble is that they can end up with little or no time for meeting those with whom they disagree') are here too.

Blair was even then searching for an alternative to sterile right-left debates, albeit in a rather different form from his latter beliefs. In the early 1980s he was willing to praise the left for generating new thinking. And the 1982 Blair also criticised the



Labour right for basking in praise from the *Financial Times*, *The Times* and *Guardian* – yet seeking praise from at least the first two would later become an obsession of New Labour.

Other early items also clearly show traits that have become emblematic of Blair. In his 1990 interview with *Marxism Today* we have the family man changing nappies, and a determination verging on insolence and wrapped in self-deprecation. He happily admits – even boasts about – unpopular aspects of his beliefs and background.

Many of the items have dated very little. This reflects Blair's tendency to talk on larger and more enduring themes than on policy detail. It also reflects his failure to deliver on many of them in government – he is still talking about the same issues now because his government has failed to move the debate on.

Blair's *New Statesman* article on crime is also here with the 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' approach that made his name as a national

politician and helped bring about a major shift in the Labour Party's attitude towards crime. For such an important shift, the article itself is curiously disappointing. It is a fairly banal romp through the horrors of crime with the usual superficial *mêlée* of statistics showing that crime is at its worst since the Creation. There is no serious analysis of the levels of crime, their trends or their causes. Yet the soundbite helped bring about a substantive shift in Labour's policies and priorities.

The importance of his religious beliefs comes through in pieces such as his foreword to *Reclaiming Socialism: Christianity and Socialism*. Here we see how his religious beliefs underpin and give justification to his self-righteous stridency and directness on some issues, notably Iraq: 'Christianity is a very tough religion ... There is right and wrong. There is good and bad ... We should not hesitate to make such judgements. And then follow them with determined action.'

The religious tenor appears in many of the speeches and writing which were not aimed at a specifically religious audience, as in his 1996 conference speech and its quasi-biblical exhortation about '1,000 days to prepare for a 1,000 years', the references to Old Testament prophets and

the rallying cry – 'let us lead [the nation] to our new age.'

His justification of the war in Iraq is often couched in similar moralistic tones: 'This is a tough choice. But it is also a stark one ... I believe we must hold firm ... to show at the moment of decision that we have the courage to do the right thing.'

As with any good collection of speeches there are a few gems of detail to cherish, such as Blair's approving quotation of Lenin on the importance of being willing to compromise.

The Liberals and Liberal Democrats barely feature in the book, despite the fact that Blair's views on the possibility of realignment and on deals to entrench an anti-Conservative majority had a major role in much of his political thought for several years.

The production qualities are the usual Politico's mix – good paper and clear print, but sloppiness creeps in during the production process, in this case evidenced by a rather hit-and-miss index.

Mark Pack has a doctorate in nineteenth century English elections, and now works in the Liberal Democrats' Campaigns and Elections Department, specialising in internet and legal matters.

Political studies

British Elections & Parties Review: Volume 13 (edited by Colin Rallings, Roger Scully, Jonathan Tonge and Paul Webb; Frank Cass, 2003) and *Volume 14* (edited by Roger Scully, Justin Fisher, Paul Webb and David Broughton; Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2004)

Reviewed by **Mark Pack**

Over the years the volumes in this series have maintained a consistent house style despite a large number of different editors. These two volumes, as with previous ones,

contain a collection of new research in the field of political science. There is the usual smattering of chapters which make a nod to the outside world, and a few which do not rely on the