

How the Libera Committed to E

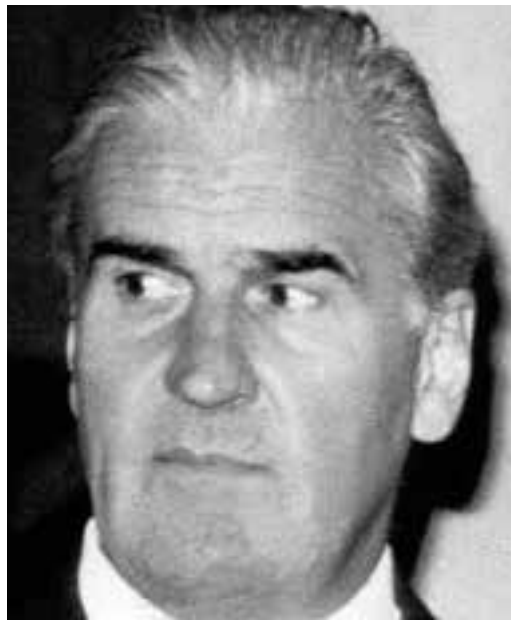
IT WAS NOT inevitable that the Liberal Party should have become identified with support for European unity. Throughout the post-war years until the 1960 Liberal Assembly, a significant minority within the party saw European integration as incompatible with free trade, not as a step towards economic and political cooperation. When the 1961 Assembly committed the party unequivocally to support Macmillan's first application to join the European Communities there was near civil war in France over Algeria, Italy was governed by Christian Democrats supported by the CIA against a Communist opposition, and West Germany still had a number of judges and officials who had also held office in the 1930s: plenty of reasons to be wary of commitment, only sixteen years after the Second World War. A number of leading Liberals had been involved in the Council of Europe in the late 1940s, supporting transatlantic cooperation and West European integration as steps towards a democratic world order; Clement Davies praised the Schuman Plan of 1950 for a European Coal and Steel Community as 'the greatest step towards peace in the annals of European history.'¹ Yet even for many party members, the European continent seemed remote and insecure; for all except those who had fought from Italy or Normandy through to Germany, it remained much more foreign than Canada, Australia or New Zealand. The conversion of a party of local activists and enthusiasts for the distant goal of world government into an active supporter of European integration was above all due to the charismatic persuasiveness of Jo Grimond as leader, with the support of a small group of key advisers.²

Free trade was a fundamental tenet of political liberalism in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Richard Cobden had committed the infant Liberal Party to free trade and open borders, as making for peace and international cooperation, and permitting

retrenchment in military spending. Protection and economic nationalism, he and others argued, made for war. The party later split both on Ireland and on free trade, with Joseph Chamberlain opting in the 1890s for Imperial Preference. Many Liberals did not distinguish between their economic interest (often as businessmen or mill-owners) and their idealist commitment to peace and international harmony. The impact of John Maynard Keynes on Liberal Party thinking between the wars, and the support that Lloyd George and others gave to his commitment to a more active state role in managing the economy, led to the party giving out confused – even contradictory – messages about free trade and the size of the state in the interwar years.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, what Roy Douglas describes as 'the Liberal civil war' revolved around how to respond to unemployment and industrial adjustment; Liberals in parliament split three ways on issues of temporary protection and the 'safeguarding of industries'.³ Lloyd George's establishment in the 1920s of 'a wide range of Inquiries, which were at least as well staffed and financed as Royal Commissions', deepened the contradictions between the Cobdenite commitment to free trade and retrenchment and the emerging Keynesian support for an active and interventionist state. The Beveridge Report, and Sir William Beveridge's welcome into the Liberal Party, and entry into parliament in the Berwick by-election of 1944, strengthened the image of a Keynesian social liberal party. During the Second World War, however, commitment to international institutions and open borders for both Keynesians and Cobdenites remained global, as against regional – partly because Liberals resisted a return to British 'imperial preference.' Sir Percy Harris, then one of the party's longest-serving MPs, warned in 1944 that regional economic federations 'in proportion as they are exclusive in character must contain a threat to international harmony.'⁴

Liberal Party Became European Union



Top: Clement Davies,
Oliver Smedley
Bottom: Walter
Layton, Jo Grimond

How the Liberal Party became committed to European Union

The Liberal Party after 1945

The war had provided divergent lessons for Liberals, and for others who joined as peace returned. The distinction between liberals and libertarians was not then as evident as today. Exiles from the continent such as Friedrich von Hayek, who had moved to the London School of Economics at the invitation of Lionel Robbins in 1931, had revolted against the corporatist states of interwar Europe, and saw the only way to protect *The Constitution of Liberty* (the title of one of Hayek's works on political economy) as paring back the role of government and taxation in the economy, leaving private enterprise free to flourish. Beveridge had been one of the leading members of the Academic Assistance Council in the 1930s, formed to help professors from Germany and other Central European countries who had fled to Britain; some of these came to see Britain as a model free society in contrast to what they saw as a naturally authoritarian continent, and taught their students to share their view of an exceptional free England.⁵ With a Labour government in power, strengthening the grip of the central state over the economy, over local authorities and over individual citizens, Liberalism and anti-socialism overlapped as motivating instincts within the party.

Attitudes to cooperation with our European neighbours did not stand alone. They were mostly part of contrasting mindsets – as they still are. Opponents of state intervention were often also committed to the British Empire and Commonwealth (as they then were) as forces for good in world politics, alongside the Anglo-Saxon USA. Commitment to free trade meant opposition to agricultural protection and the arguments for food security which marked continental agricultural policies; cheap food for Britain came from Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and our African and Caribbean colonies. Global defence commitments kept open 'the sea lanes' for British trade; so free traders were often strong supporters of Britain's global status and high defence spending. Proponents of Keynesian interventionism were more open to cooperation with the continent, recognising the benefits of cooperation between employers and workers that continental partnership brought. And they were often much more critical of British imperial policy in Malaya, Africa and Cyprus in the post-war years.

These opposing mindsets ran across all of the political parties – linking support for nuclear deterrence to the concept of a 'global Britain' with an exceptional role derived from its partnership with the USA and its leadership of the Commonwealth, and conversely linking opposition to nuclear deterrence to opposition to the 'illusions' of global status. It is striking – and saddening – how little the arguments about Britain's role in the world have changed since the 1950s. In all three parties, experience of the European continent in the Second World War was a strong indicator for support for the European Movement after 1945

and for close British engagement in the political and economic reconstruction of Western Europe: Denis Healey, Lord Carrington, Edward Heath, against Enoch Powell, Hugh Gaitskill, Harold Wilson and others who spent the war in Africa and India or in economic and transatlantic roles. Few of the leading figures in the post-war Liberal Party had witnessed conflict on the continent; but many of those who formed the core group around Jo Grimond had. Grimond himself had been a staff officer in the 53rd division as it fought its way from Normandy to Hamburg, Desmond Banks a colonel in the artillery, Frank Byers a colonel on Montgomery's staff. Mark Bonham Carter had been captured by the Italians in Tunisia, escaped from an Italian prison camp when Italy surrendered and joined the Guards Armoured Division as it fought its way into Germany; the experience, including the emotion of liberating a concentration camp, made him 'a passionate European'.⁶ Richard Wainwright had been a conscientious objector in the Friends Ambulance Unit, who had been with the unit as it followed the army from Normandy through Antwerp to Germany as it collapsed.⁷

There was also an age difference in attitudes to regional cooperation. Older Liberals held more often to the view that global free trade, with the distant objective of world government, was superior to regional schemes. Young Liberals, particularly in university societies, were more attracted by the idea of 'federal union' to unite a war-torn Europe. The 1948 Liberal Assembly, meeting a month before the Hague Congress on European Union, supported the creation of 'a political union strong enough to save European democracy and the values of Western civilization', although accepting an amendment pressed by Lord Samuel, Lady Violet Bonham Carter and others to insist that this should not conflict with Commonwealth, UN or transatlantic links. Clement Davies as party leader insisted that there was no contradiction between European integration and the goal of world government; he was repeatedly critical of what he called 'the imperial mind' that governed British foreign policy.⁸

One of the older generation of Liberals was much more directly in touch with those who were designing the institutions of West European cooperation. Walter Layton, who became a Liberal peer in 1946 and served as the group's deputy leader from 1952 to 1955, had been an economics lecturer in Cambridge alongside Keynes when they and others were called into government in the First World War. During that war he worked in allied economic planning in London, Paris and Washington; 'one of several life-long partnerships formed then was with a young Frenchman, Jean Monnet, who played a key role in persuading France of the need for systematic wartime planning'. Layton's remarkable and varied career included an advisory role (again, alongside Keynes) at the Versailles conference, efforts to renegotiate the financial reparations placed on

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Those who joined – or rejoined – the party in 1957–9 were radical in the sense that they rejected the post-war consensus of Britain as still a world power, with global military and imperial responsibilities. They were internationalists, opposed to the post-imperial nationalism that characterised the Suez intervention. Most knew little of continental European politics; but they were sympathetic to Grimond’s political approach, and followed his lead.

Weimar Germany, and leadership of the British delegation in the abortive efforts in 1931 to create a European customs union – as well as editing *The Economist* and chairing the board of the *News Chronicle*. In the Second World War he re-entered government service, again working with Monnet on transatlantic economic assistance.⁹ In 1943, when he left public service, he gave a series of lectures on the theme of a united Europe. He attended the Hague Congress of 1948, and as the only Liberal in the British delegation to the first Assembly of the Council of Europe, in 1949, was elected a vice-president.¹⁰ Layton was both passionately in favour of European integration and well informed about how it might be managed. His son Christopher, in turn, became a key adviser to Grimond on economic and European issues between 1957 and 1966.

Committed internationalists in the Liberal Party also had the Liberal International as effectively a European network. The Liberal International was formally instituted at a conference in an Oxford College in 1947, after two preparatory meetings in Brussels and rural Norway. Sir Percy Harris had been one of its enthusiastic supporters, and Clement Davies, Lord Samuel and other senior British Liberals helped to shape the manifesto. The only non-European on the LI’s initial executive was from Canada; Belgians, Swiss, Scandinavians, French and Italians were the most active, with the distinguished Spanish intellectual Dr Salvador de Madariaga representing the many states where Liberals were still in prison or exile. ‘The Liberal Party as a body, however, remained bleakly incurious about the affair’;¹¹ local campaigning, on domestic issues, preoccupied most party members far more than international concerns. The LI manifesto recommitted to world peace and ‘a world organization of all nations’, with no specific reference to the uncertain situation across Europe. One sign of tensions to come within several Liberal parties was that the organisers discovered at a late stage in the preparations for the founding Oxford conference that Friedrich von Hayek was planning the initial meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in Switzerland on overlapping dates, with a number of intellectual liberals invited to both.¹²

The Liberal Party however had little clarity on policy, and little capacity for coherent policy development, in the ten years after 1945. The 1952 Assembly passed a resolution in favour of unilateral free trade, against the views of those who – like Walter Layton – had worked in government during and after both world wars and who supported active measures to promote economic growth and industrial recovery. What policy thinking there was took place within factions, free traders on one side and radical Liberals on the other. The Radical Reform Group (RRG), created in 1952 ‘to save the soul of the Liberal Party’, contested with the free traders across a range of policies, including industrial policy and European

cooperation; but the free traders had the advantage of greater access to financial supporters for a cash-strapped party. The RRG dissociated itself from the party after a ‘stormy’ Assembly in 1954, losing some of its prominent members to Labour – including Dingle Foot and Wilfred Roberts, both former MPs – when the group reaffiliated to the party in 1956.¹³

It was the shock of the Suez intervention that turned the party round – and that attracted back into the party Liberals who shared Clement Davies’s disdain for the ‘imperial mind’ that Suez clearly displayed. Those who joined – or rejoined – the party in 1957–9 were radical in the sense that they rejected the post-war consensus of Britain as still a world power, with global military and imperial responsibilities. They were internationalists, opposed to the post-imperial nationalism that characterised the Suez intervention. Most knew little of continental European politics; but they were sympathetic to Grimond’s political approach, and followed his lead.

The retreat of the free-traders

In the autumn of 1961, Michael Steed and I spent a week campaigning in the early stages of the Orpington by-election. We stayed with Marjory Seldon, a stalwart of the local Liberal Party. But we saw little of her husband, Arthur, who had left the party on the issue of free trade.¹⁴ Only some years later did I understand the origins of the Institute of Economic Affairs, and how the disputes within the party about our approach to the European Economic Community had been linked to the raucous arguments in the 1958 Liberal Assembly, to the departure from the party of an influential group of small-state economic liberals, some of whom went on to win over many within the Conservative Party to their ideas.

Many of the leading figures in the Liberal Party for ten to fifteen years after 1945 had held to this view, and formed a powerful opposition within the party to Grimond’s determined support for the United Kingdom to join the EEC. They were a colourful, even eccentric crew. S. W. Alexander was a successful journalist, pouring out articles and books promoting free trade; he was also a Liberal candidate in 1950, and chair of the London Liberal Party. Anthony Fisher, who first met von Hayek in 1945, was then a dairy farmer. Urged by von Hayek to make money rather than become directly involved in politics, he discovered intensive chicken farming on a visit to the USA, and introduced the battery cage to Britain. Buxted Chickens made him a very wealthy man; from which, in 1955, he founded (with Oliver Smedley) the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA).¹⁵

Oliver Smedley was at that time a vice-president of the Liberal Party. His behaviour at the 1958 Liberal Assembly made a significant contribution to the confusion that reigned. Michael

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McManus records that there 'were a series of unedifying squabbles between Oliver Smedley, unofficial leader of the party's remaining hard-line free-traders, and some of the party's younger members, who felt that his calls with "unilateral free trade" were archaic and impractical'.¹⁶ And then there was Edward Martell, considered by Roy Douglas and others to have been, with Philip Fothergill, one of the key figures in the party's survival and recovery after the Second World War. A man of immense energy, elected with Sir Percy Harris to the London County Council in 1946, 'one must not discount his services to Liberalism in the late 1940s because of the astounding political adventures on which he was later to embark'. He was an effective fundraiser; 'although a man with the makings of a dictator, he supplied the Liberals with a ceaseless flow of ideas, and a great deal of enthusiasm'.¹⁷ He left the party in the mid-1950s to establish the anti-socialist and anti-union People's League for the Defence of Freedom. The free-traders lost influence as new members came into the party, and as Grimond as leader set out a more Keynesian and European approach. They drifted away into other bodies, leaving a Liberal Party with a more anti-Conservative bias than the anti-socialist stance they had espoused.

Oliver Smedley took his belief in free markets and untrammelled capitalism to the limit – and beyond it. As he moved away from the Liberal Party, after the 1960 Liberal Assembly decisively voted down his opposition to Common Market membership, he became a pioneer of pirate radio – a cause espoused by the IEA in several pamphlets, together with open competition in TV and less regulation of tobacco. Operating on the edge of the law and from chartered ships or coastal batteries, the cut-throat competition between these entrepreneurs was such that one of his rivals burst into Smedley's house in mid-1966, knocked over his housekeeper, and threatened Smedley – who shot him dead. Pleading self-defence before Justice Melford Stevenson, one of England's most conservative judges, he was acquitted. Commercial radio survived in a more respectable and regulated fashion, but the BBC's authoritarian monopoly – as free marketers saw it – was broken.¹⁸

Grimond reshapes party policy

Jo Grimond became leader in November 1956, on the day that British forces landed in Port Said, followed by the humiliating Anglo-French withdrawal from the Suez Canal. He inherited a party that was chaotic in its structure and undisciplined in its approach to policy. He resolved the problem of reshaping party policy by working in parallel to the party's formal structures, attracting a number of first-class thinkers to advise him. He began with a series of articles in *Liberal News* in the Spring of 1957, under the heading 'Where Liberals Stand'; the first of these was in support

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of European integration, and a later contribution proposed abandoning the manufacture of British nuclear weapons in favour of stronger conventional forces in Western Europe, and withdrawal from all bases east of Suez except Singapore. The two themes were linked: the Conservative reaction to the failure of the Suez intervention was to stress our independent nuclear deterrent and the special relationship with the USA, rather than to move with the French closer towards West European integration. The 1958 Assembly, regardless of Grimond's prompting, passed a resolution in favour of unilateral free trade. The team around Grimond, with Arthur Holt now chair of the Liberal Publication Department and a small team of parliamentary staff assisting on policy, were nevertheless moving ahead with a different approach.

Less official bodies such as the Unservile State Group and the New Orbits Group contributed published papers and books along similar lines.¹⁹ The Unservile State Group consisted primarily of academics from Oxford, Cambridge, the LSE and Edinburgh, with Jo Grimond himself as a member and Elliott Dodds as chair. Its opening volume, published in 1957, included a chapter on 'Britain in the World' which criticised 'the imperial hangover' and the 'cloud of self-deception' that still shaped British foreign policy; it argued for 'some surrender of sovereignty' in defence and trade with our European partners, though recognising that public opinion would require careful persuasion to accept 'any sort of European political union'.²⁰ A further chapter, 'Colonies to Commonwealth', criticised the confusions of Conservative decolonisation and the support for white regimes in central and southern Africa.

Grimond published *The Liberal Future* under his own name before the 1959 election, drawing on the same network of expert advisers and others. Its international chapters carry the same themes of modernisation, adaptation to economic and technological change, and to Britain's transformed place in the world: a recognition that 'we live at the tail end of the age of the nation state' in which sharing of sovereignty is needed, that the Commonwealth and Europe offer competing frameworks for such sharing, that 'the haziness of the whole Commonwealth idea' is a fundamental weakness, and that 'a Liberal foreign policy towards Europe would be based on the firm belief that Britain is a part – a leading part – of Europe and that international bodies should be executive and not merely advisory'.²¹ Grimond went on to criticise the post-Suez shift in British defence policy towards independent nuclear deterrence, arguing instead for closer cooperation within NATO and with our European neighbours. Here was a coherent alternative view of the world to Conservative orthodoxy, in which faster decolonisation, greater scepticism about the future coherence of the Commonwealth, and more modest ambitions in defence, went with support for closer European integration.

The 1959 manifesto said little directly about European unity. This may perhaps have reflected some continuing hesitation within the party, with the leadership unwilling to push the remaining dissidents further. Commitments to 'stop the manufacture and testing of nuclear weapons by this country' and to pursue interracial partnership in Africa demonstrate the radical world view of which European integration was becoming, for Grimond and his closest advisers, an intrinsic part. Half the parliamentary candidates in that election mentioned Britain's relationship with the European Communities in their election addresses.²²

The modest successes of the 1959 election brought the party a gradual rise in membership and in income – enabling the expansion of its policy staff and the creation of a number of policy committees, combining sympathetic experts with party activists. The first of a new series of pamphlets around the theme of modernisation for Britain, issued under Grimond's chairmanship from the autumn of 1960, was *Britain Must Join*, unequivocally calling for UK entry to the EEC. A later paper, *Growth not Grandeur* (1961), advocated following the French model of economic planning, reductions in overseas commitments and defence spending, and a recognition that economic sovereignty was no longer viable.²³ Prime Minister Macmillan's parallel moves towards economic planning and negotiations with the EEC, combined with the resistance of his own right-wing to these moves and the government's difficulties with funding its nuclear deterrent and defence programmes, added popular credibility to these linked proposals. New members who poured into the party in 1961–2 largely accepted Grimond's modernisation agenda, including its European, anti-colonial and end-to-world-status elements. By 1963 commitment to European integration had become party orthodoxy, with only a minority of rural activists and candidates opposed.²⁴

The collapse of the first British application to join the EC, in January 1963, did not remove the issue from British politics – though it reduced the political saliency of one of the Liberal Party's most recognisable policies. Both the Conservatives and Labour had demonstrated deep internal divisions on this partly symbolic issue, related to the defence of sovereignty, attitudes to the white Commonwealth, and assumptions about Britain's place in the world. Modernisers within the other parties noted Liberal opposition to defence spending and deployments east of Suez, and condemnation of support for white Rhodesia, beginning the long process through which internationalist members of both other parties realigned towards the Liberals. The Liberal manifestos in both 1964 and 1966 committed the party to full membership of the European Communities. Labour's forced withdrawal from east of Suez in 1968, following its own (poorly prepared and unsuccessful) application to join the 'Common Market' in mid-1967,

suggested that Grimond had got it right: that economic reform and post-imperial adjustment required accession to the EEC.

After Grimond

Jeremy Thorpe, who succeeded Grimond as leader in 1967, was committed to the modernisation agenda, including the commitment to European integration. Joining the European Communities was not a controversial issue within the party under his leadership. 'Bomber Thorpe', who had advocated military intervention against the unilateral declaration of Rhodesian independence, nevertheless deplored the direct action of the radical Young Liberals against the white South African regime, similarly resisted Young Liberal support for the Palestinians against Israel, and above all fought against the determined efforts of Young Liberals to commit the party to unilateral nuclear disarmament.²⁵ The Liberal Party was therefore split on major international issues in the late 1960s, but not on Europe. The return of the Conservatives under Edward Heath in 1970, with his own version of a domestic and international modernisation agenda, led to the revival of the UK application to join the European Communities, in which the shrunken group of six Liberal MPs could again play a significant role within the Commons on votes where both other parties were split. Informal whipping within the pro-EC wing of the Labour Party, in 1971–2, as Labour MPs entered different voting lobbies, built personal contacts and mutual respect. The surge in by-election votes for Liberal candidates, including victories, in 1972–3 increased the attractions of cooperation with the Liberals to members of other parties.

It should be emphasised that Liberal commitment to European integration, before the UK joined in 1973, was not based on any deep understanding of the policies or institutions of the EC among more than a handful of people. Apart from Christopher Layton, Gladwyn Jebb (Lord Gladwyn), who moved from the cross benches to the Liberals in the Lords in 1965, becoming Lords deputy leader and spokesman on foreign affairs from 1966, was a major source of expertise and continental contacts; he had been involved in European negotiations from 1947, and was ambassador to France from 1954 to 1960. Derek Ezra, who became a Liberal peer in 1983, but as chair of the National Coal Board had remained outside party politics until then, was probably also a source of informal advice; he had been a Young Liberal before the war, and had been involved in European negotiations since the initial proposals for a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950, including a period in the early 1950s as a member of the UK delegation to the ECSC in Luxembourg.²⁶ Arthur Holt's nephew Stephen became one of the first academic experts on European integration. Some Liberal activists,

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in addition, were also active members of the European Movement, which gave them contacts with continental speakers and with broader European developments.

Surveys of voters in the 1960s showed a higher proportion of Liberal supporters in favour of entry into the Common Market (as the EEC was popularly labelled) than Labour or Conservative voters. One survey of suburban voters, in 1962, showed 62 per cent of Liberal supporters in favour of joining; but across the country as a whole, the proportion of 'pro-European' Liberal voters never reached 50 per cent.²⁷ In rural constituencies, from where elites and institutions in London looked remote, European unification looked even more unwelcome. It remained a source of tension within the party that so many voters in the seats that it won did not share the enthusiasm of its London and suburban members. In 1971–2, Emlyn Hooson dissented from his parliamentary colleagues on several votes, responding to the views of Montgomeryshire voters. Twenty years later, on the legislation implementing the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, nineteen Liberal Democrat votes were crucial to John Major's ability to defeat Conservative rebels, but Nick Harvey chose to represent the more sceptical views of the voters of North Devon.

Successful accession, in 1973, transformed the domestic debate. Liberals now needed to take positions on the direction and development of European institutions and their policies. The February 1974 election manifesto declared that Liberals were 'effective but constructive critics of the policies of the Common Market.' In this they were informed by the critical views of a German Liberal EC commissioner, Ralf Dahrendorf, who moved to Britain in 1974 to become director of the London School of Economics; he later became a British citizen and a Liberal Democrat peer (in 1988 and 1993 respectively). The bitter divide within the Labour Party over EC membership, which led to refusal to take up places in the nominated European Parliament in 1973, gave the Liberals more opportunity to learn the details of European policy, with Russell Johnston MP and Lord Gladwyn as part of the British delegation. But it was the commitment to a referendum on EC membership, given by the Labour government that had returned to office in

1974 as a gesture to its left-wing anti-Europeans, that engaged Liberal activists in campaigning on European issues, arguing the strengths and weaknesses of EC policies, and working with pro-Europeans in other parties as the campaign proceeded.

The pro-European campaign in the 1975 referendum was a genuinely cross-party exercise – in contrast to the campaign of 2016, which was tightly controlled from the Conservative prime minister's office. The pro-Europeans within the other parties in 1975 recognised that they needed Liberal support to be sure of winning. Regional campaigns were managed by coordinators from across the three parties; in the north-west, for example, these were Peter Blaker MP for the Conservatives, John Roper MP for Labour, and Helen Wallace (then chair of the Manchester City Liberals) for the Liberals. Experience of working together in a well-organised and successful campaign created links at national, regional and local levels which laid some of the foundations for the later SDP–Liberal Alliance.²⁸

The divisions on Europe within the Labour Party were not resolved by the decisive outcome of the 1975 referendum. They similarly formed part of conflicting mindsets. Commitment to state planning and sovereignty, resistance to NATO membership and to nuclear weapons as such, went along with a depiction of the European Communities as a free market enterprise; while in contrast an internationalist (European and Atlantic) acceptance of constraints on UK sovereignty, and a preference for regulated markets over direct state control, made for enthusiasm for the EC. Europe, and nuclear weapons, were almost the most important symbolic dividing lines between left and right in the Labour Party in the late-1970s. But they coincided with more liberal attitudes to civil liberties, and to sexual freedoms, than many on the Labour left were yet willing to accept. The relationship between David Steel, who became leader of the Liberal Party on Jeremy Thorpe's resignation in 1976, and Roy Jenkins – which was a crucial factor in the formation of the Liberal–SDP Alliance – had been forged in the late 1960s when Jenkins was Labour home secretary and Steel a newly elected MP promoting a private member's bill to legalise abortion.

Jeremy Thorpe, Edward Heath and Roy Jenkins share a platform during the 1975 referendum campaign

Jenkins's appointment as president of the European Commission, in 1977, symbolised the alienation of Labour 'moderates' from the leftward drift of their party. The clear and consistent support of Liberals for European integration was thus a powerful attraction for future cooperation. Informal conversations after Labour's defeat in the 1979 election developed into proposals for the Liberals to make space for an allied new party, for which commitment to European union would be one of its founding principles. The surge of popular support for the Liberal-SDP Alliance, in 1982-3, was dashed by the Argentinian occupation of the Falklands and the subsequent victorious British recapture of the islands, which re-established popular support for Britain's image as a global power with a powerful, and independent, role. But the alliance survived, to re-emerge after the 1987 election as the Liberal Democrats. Grimond had laid the foundation for this, in his broad modernisation agenda, in his repeated calls when leader for a 'progressive alliance', and above all in his commitment to international cooperation through European integration.

William Wallace is an emeritus professor of international relations at the LSE, and a Liberal Democrat peer. He joined the Liberal Party as a student in 1959. He was assistant press officer in the Liberal Party Organisation in the 1966 election, a member of various policy advisory groups from 1966 onwards, chair of the New Orbits Group in 1966-68, and a member of Party Council and of the Party's Standing (Policy) Committee from 1969 onwards.

1 David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 157.

2 This article is a blend of personal recollection and research. The author joined the Liberal Party at the end of 1959, was president of the Cambridge University Liberal Club in 1962 and returned from three years in the USA in 1965 to research and write a Ph.D. thesis (for Cornell University) on 'The Liberal Revival: the Liberal Party in Britain, 1955-1966', taking a month off in 1966 to work as assistant press officer to Pratap Chitnis in the general election. His wife (Helen) joined the Liberal Party before him, and was president of the Oxford University Liberal Club in 1965; her father was an active participant in the Radical Reform Group. A copy of the Ph.D. thesis is lodged in Nuffield College Library, Oxford.

3 Roy Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1971), pp. 154-5.

4 Quoted in Scott Clarke and John Curtice, 'Liberal Democrats and Integration', ch. 4 of David Baker and David Seawright (eds.), *Britain for and against Europe* (Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 92. Harris had joined the Liberal Party before the First World War, was persuaded by Herbert Gladstone to stand as a candidate in the 1906 general election, and first elected in 1916.

5 Geoffrey Elton's idealisation of Tudor England, which I and my contemporaries absorbed as history students in Cambridge, was one classic example of this.

6 Jane and Leslie Bonham Carter, personal information.

7 Matt Cole, *Richard Wainwright: the Liberals and Liberal Democrats* (Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 31-3.

8 Alan Butt Philip, 'The Liberals and Europe', in Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Liberal Party Politics* (Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 219-20; Wallace, 'The Liberal Revival', p. 332.

9 After the Second World War, Jean Monnet was the architect first of France's post-war economic planning system, and then of the Schuman Plan, which led to the European Coal and Steel Community; he then became the first president of its 'High Authority'.

10 Christopher Layton, 'Walter Layton', *Dictionary of Liberal Biography*, (Politico's Publishing Ltd, 1998), pp. 217-19.

11 John H. MacCallum Scott, *Experiment in Internationalism* (Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 18.

12 Richard Moore tells me that he invited Milton Friedman, then not yet a world-famous free market economist, to address the Cambridge University Liberal Club; free market liberals and social liberals at that point did not find their philosophies incompatible.

13 Wallace, 'The Liberal Revival', pp.13, 19. Desmond Banks was one of the leading members of the RRG; Jo Grimond attended many of its meetings, and the young Jeremy Thorpe was an active member; Michael McManus, *Jo Grimond: Towards the Sound of Gunfire* (Birlinn Ltd, 2001), p. 124.

14 Arthur Seldon's Wikipedia entry, accessed in August 2017, states that he was 'involved' in the Orpington by-election; if so, this was an extremely discreet involvement.

15 Anthony Fisher became increasingly caught up with American libertarian thinking, funding an American parallel to the IEA which became the Atlas Network of free market institutes; he was involved also in founding the Adam Smith Institute. Both his daughter and his granddaughter, Rachel Whetstone, worked within this institutional network before Rachel and her husband Steve Hilton worked for David Cameron and the Conservative Party. See also Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-tanks and the Economic Counter-revolution* (Fontana, 1995).

16 McManus, *Jo Grimond*, p. 133.

17 Douglas, *History of the Liberal Party*, p. 250. Bear in mind that on policy issues Roy Douglas was close to the free traders, and opposed joining the Common Market; so this should count as a sympathetic assessment.

18 Adrian Johns, *Death of a Pirate: British Radio and the Making of the Information Age* (Norton, 2011).

19 Peter Sloman's Wikipedia article on the Unservile State Group is the most comprehensive review of this group of Oxbridge academics, financially supported through the early 1950s by Elliott Dodds and later by Richard Wainwright. Its volume - George Watson (ed.), *The Unservile State* - was published in 1957, and followed by a long series of pamphlets. For the New Orbits Group, see Trevor Smith's article in *Journal of Liberal History* 95, Summer 2017.

20 Watson (ed.), *Unservile State*, pp. 265, 269.

21 Jo Grimond, *The Liberal Future* (Faber, 1959), pp. 159, 163, 164.

22 Butt Philip, 'The Liberals and Europe', p. 222.

23 Wallace, 'The Liberal Revival', pp. 77-9. Grimond published his own volume on policy in 1963, *The Liberal Challenge*, which repeats his perception of 'the decline of national sovereignty' (p. 227) but focuses in its international chapter more on security and defence than economic integration. It includes the blunt statement that 'Liberals believe that Britain should not attempt to keep its own deterrent.' (p. 248)

24 Some of those who flocked into the party in the early sixties shed their internationalism as they left the party; I recall a former Young Liberal who stood as a Conservative in Huddersfield in the 1970 election, proclaiming his opposition to Europe as well as to immigration.

25 Thorpe was particularly opposed to the digging up of the test match cricket pitch before England were to play the South African team, which captured public attention as well as establishment condemnation.

26 Some younger party members invested in learning about the European institutions which in principle they supported. Helen Wallace (then Rushworth) studied at the College of Europe in 1967-8; Simon Hughes and Graham Colley were there in 1974-5. Levels of understanding of the EC within the Conservative and Labour Parties in the 1960s and early 1970s were similarly limited.

27 Wallace, 'The Liberal Revival', pp. 383-6. See also David Butler and Donald Stokes (eds.), *Political Change in Britain* (Macmillan, 1969), ch. 14.

28 John Roper, for example, became a Social Democrat MP, and later a Liberal Democrat peer.