

Reasons for 'Progressive' Disunity: Labour and Liberal Politics in Britain, 1918-45

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Introduction

The Labour party was, by some distance, the most significant political organisation of the left in twentieth-century Britain. Over the century as a whole, on every meaningful measure – electoral success, periods in government at both national and local levels, membership, and wider social and cultural impact – it dwarfed its rivals. This might lead us to believe that we can understand all that we need to know about Labour by looking at it alone. And yet the party's history cannot be understood fully without attention to the place of the party in relation to other political parties and movements. To a large extent, the Labour party was made and remade, not just by itself, but by the actions of the other organisations with which it was competing.

Some important work has been done in this area. Some significant features and characteristics of the Labour party have been highlighted by means of a focus on the borders and barriers between the Labour party and movements to its left, be they the Communist party, the Independent Labour party, independent Marxist movements, or entryist organisations like the Militant Tendency, even though we still await an authoritative study of the relationship between Labour and the far left. In February 2004, Labour's disaffiliation of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) for supporting Scottish Socialist party candidates – in contravention of Labour party rules – provided a further example of the Labour–far left interface arousing interest.¹ Some people have celebrated this strong line against Communists and the like, seeing it as a 'frontier guard' against undesirable elements; some have even regretted that the process did not go further.² But others have regretted the extent to which Labour erected barriers against the far left. They have taken the view that the British left as a whole would have been stronger if it had been more united, and less riven by sectarian

divisions on what they see as essentially secondary issues. This 'missed opportunity' view has, implicitly at least, influenced quite a few observers.³

The notion that there were real possibilities of profitable Labour co-operation with the far left appears, to most people, like a throwback to a bygone age today. The collapse of Communism has largely silenced that section of the far left that still claimed adherence to aspects of the Soviet tradition. Marxist critics of the Soviet tradition, however, have largely failed to show people that they have a convincing alternative. Thus while there are those who still purport to see great opportunities ahead for the radical left, it would probably be fair to say that they are in more of a minority than ever.

In more recent years, however, greater attention has been paid to the idea that the missed opportunity came, not in Labour's relations with those to its political left, but with those to its political right. It is not hard to see why this should have been the case. The revival, from the 1970s, of third-party/centre-party politics in Britain was matched by increasing interest in the opportunities for realignment of 'progressive' forces of the centre-left. Now, there was increasing focus on the idea that the conscious erection of barriers to co-operation between Labour and the Liberals was a wilful act of political sectarianism which caused huge problems, not least the division of the radical forces in British politics and, consequently, the creation, almost by default, of a long period of Conservative hegemony. Perhaps the most significant single act in this process was Labour's adoption, in 1918, of a new party constitution which in effect declared Labour a socialist party. Far from being a natural development arising from Labour's 'coming of age', this constitution reinforced, even invented, obstacles to Lib-Lab co-operation. And those obstacles, in turn, helped to ensconce the Conservatives in power for virtually the whole of the inter-war period, and to give them a flying start in the competition for votes at most elections thereafter.⁴ On this reading, the fault lay very largely with those who are seen as having wilfully obstructed the continuation of the

‘progressive alliance’ after the First World War. After all, as David Blaazer has ably demonstrated, there was no shortage of advocates of a wider unity after 1918.⁵

Such a view was, of course, given a huge boost by wider developments in the 1980s and 1990s. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism in all but its most remotest hideouts, the apparent removal of socialism from the political menu, and the reining in of militant trade unionism under years of Conservative government, all combined to remove sticking points between Labour and those to its immediate political right. Those obstacles were not entirely removed, as it transpired, but at times it did appear as though they might be: in particular, Labour’s leader from 1994 onwards, Tony Blair, did on many occasions stress his belief that his personal politics, and those of the ‘New’ Labour party which he was leading, derived not just from Labour’s own history, but from a broader ‘progressive’ tradition which included Liberals every bit as much as Labourites. In his speech to the Fabian Society celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Labour’s 1945 election victory, Blair stressed the need to ‘value the contribution of [the Liberals] Lloyd George, Beveridge and Keynes and not just [the Labourites] Attlee, Bevan or Crosland’, as well as calling on his party’s members ‘to welcome the radical left-of-centre tradition outside our own party, as well as celebrating the achievements of that tradition within it’.⁶ To some extent, this can be seen as a clever re-application of an old Labour tactic – flattering Liberal traditions in order, not to promote real top-level co-operation, but to appeal to Liberals, over the heads of their leaders, to vote Labour. Nonetheless, the fact that Blair took the process to such significant lengths, including even a series of clandestine meetings with the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, about a possible Coalition, suggests that he was, in the period up to the 1997 election at least, convinced by the case for a renewed ‘progressive alliance’.⁷

At the same time, there was renewed focus in historical writing on the earlier period of ‘progressive alliance’. Since the 1980s, much of the most important work on the politics of the two or three decades before 1914 has tended to stress the continuities of progressive

politics in Edwardian Britain. In the place of older, ‘heroic’ visions, which had represented the coming of the Labour party as the culmination, and inevitable by-product, of the rise of the working class, this new work emphasised the contingent nature of Labour’s pre-war advance; the continuing vitality of the Liberal party and Liberalism; and the extent to which the two parties were still able to muddle along together in a largely informal, but nonetheless real, ‘Progressive Alliance’.⁸

Of course, no serious historians or commentators have suggested that it would have been easy to keep the alliance in being. Perhaps the most spirited advocate of the possibilities for continuing Lib-Lab collaboration has been David Marquand. But his *The Progressive Dilemma*, first published in 1991, is as nuanced as one would expect from someone who could interpret the subject from the differing perspectives of the historian, the political scientist, and the political practitioner. This article does not seek to act as a direct critique of Marquand’s work: those seeking such a critique are directed to the excellent piece published by Fielding and McHugh in 2003.⁹ Rather, I am concerned here to argue, on the basis of research conducted on all levels of both parties, that the obstacles to co-operation in the period between 1918 and 1945 were even greater than has been generally recognised. They were, in fact, *so* significant as effectively to rule out Lib-Lab collaboration, let alone any kind of ‘progressive alliance’.

Liberal-Labour Relations 1914-45: An Outline

Argument has continued, and will continue, about the extent to which the ‘progressive alliance’ was fracturing prior to 1914. But it is beyond doubt that it did not survive the Great War. Liberal progressivism was becalmed, not least because its main cabinet advocate, David Lloyd George, was sucked into the war effort, first as Chancellor of the Exchequer, then as Minister of Munitions and Secretary of State for War, before he effectively broke with the Liberal party altogether to become Prime Minister of a Coalition government in December 1916.¹⁰ Many other progressive Liberals were marginalized by their criticism of the war. the

result was that the less progressive elements of the party, which in reality had never entirely lost control, now reasserted themselves strongly. Labour's hopes were raised by the expansion of trade union membership, and by an apparently increased appetite, and potential, for increased state power. At the same time, the fears of at least some of its leaders were stirred by the introduction of compulsory military service, and talk of industrial conscription, as well as by the development of radical, anti-democratic revolutionary movements in Russia after February Revolution of 1917. Many of Labour's leaders now expected some kind of swing to the left to take place after the war. In one sense, of course, they welcomed this: it clearly offered opportunities to them. However, they also saw that the divided and discredited Liberals were in no state even to try to exploit the expected leftwards surge. If Labour, therefore, did not step into the breach, then the moment might well be seized by the far left, revolutionaries who had no interest in the kind of 'ordered progress' which characterised the thinking of Labour's leading strategists and intellectuals, but would instead bring bloody insurrection in their wake.¹¹ Accordingly, those strategists supported the adoption of a new party constitution in 1918. This constitution gave the trade unions, as a whole, more influence over the party than ever before.¹² But it also declared the intention of building up the party in every part of Britain, through the introduction of constituency Labour parties with individual membership; and, most famously in retrospect, it committed the party to socialism (although the word itself was not used) through what was to become known as 'Clause IV': the commitment to 'the common ownership of the means of production'. The adoption of a socialist commitment was notable in the context of this paper because it marked, and was meant to mark, a clear dividing line with the Liberals: a line that Liberals could not cross, without becoming socialists and thereby renouncing their Liberalism. It was made clear that Liberals who did make this renunciation would be welcome. But it was equally clear that they must come in on Labour's, and not their own, terms. In the contemporary Communist parlance, what Labour was seeking was not a united front from above, involving deals between Labour and Liberal leaders, but a kind of united front from below, wherein ordinary Liberals would move towards Labour leaving the Liberal leadership isolated.

And, of course, many Liberals did make such a move. No undergraduate essay on the subject is complete without the requisite list of often rather grand names: C P Trevelyan, E D Morel, Arthur Ponsonby, Viscount Haldane, H B Lees-Smith.¹³ However, the high hopes of 1917-18, which had led to the promulgation of the new constitution, were soon being scaled back. Economic slump from August 1920, and the subsequent – and consequent – series of severe industrial defeats suffered by the trade unions, dented the party's aspirations. The development of a bloody Communist dictatorship in Russia did little to ease the task of Labour politicians and canvassers when challenged about 'Red Scares'; the weakness of the British Communist party poked fun at suggestions that a commitment to socialism had been necessary to head off a potent threat from the far left.¹⁴ The Conservatives' decision to jettison Lloyd George's activist and interventionist leadership and settle instead for the role of party of 'resistance'¹⁵ made them formidable opponents in a polity which had had enough of overseas adventures, which was busy remembering and memorialising its war dead, and where for many there was no more potent cry than the desire to return to 1913.¹⁶ In this context, far from being the advantage that had been hoped, it might well be that Labour's radical departure of 1918 was, in fact, an obstacle to its progress. Indeed, it is not *entirely* idle to speculate whether, had it not adopted a socialist commitment in 1918, Labour would have done so at any point from mid-1920 onwards.

This, in turn, raises the question of whether there was more potential for Labour-Liberal co-operation between 1918 and 1945. It should be borne in mind, of course, that there were periods of co-operation between the two parties in this period. In January 1924, for example, they united in the House of Commons to turn out Stanley Baldwin's protectionist Conservative government following the latter's loss of its parliamentary majority at the general election of December 1923. The first Labour government, which followed, relied on the Liberals to remain in office, especially so as the Conservatives remained the largest party in the House of Commons. However, that support was withdrawn over MacDonald's poor

handling of the Campbell Case later in 1924, and the government fell. At the general election that followed, the Liberals probably suffered more than Labour from the 'Red Scare' atmosphere, since those voters who took such things seriously were now more likely to support the party of resistance – the Conservatives – than the Liberals who had let the 'socialists' into office in the first place.

Both Labourites and Conservatives hoped that the Liberals' heavy defeat in 1924 would lead to their imminent demise and the clarity of a two-party system. But such hopes were temporarily dashed by the Liberal revival under Lloyd George, who took over as leader from the ailing former Prime Minister, the Earl of Oxford (H. H. Asquith) in October 1926. The Liberals' advance between then and the 1929 general election was not enough to bring them to parity with Labour (which emerged as the largest party for the first time) or the Conservatives, but it was sufficient to give them the balance of power in the House of Commons once more. This time, the Liberals tried to wield the balance of power more cleverly, but the Conservatives' effective refusal to bargain with them meant that they were forced, by early 1930, into fairly steady support for the Labour government, despite the latter's many failings.¹⁷ From mid-1930 onwards, there were regular meetings between Labour ministers and Liberal leaders, and rumours were flying in the spring of 1931 that a Liberal might soon join the cabinet. Although some historians have taken these signals very seriously, others have been less convinced that a Lib-Lab coalition was about to emerge: it seems more likely that the combination of a joint desire to avoid a general election and a sense of drift in the government combined to produce a fertile ground for rumours.¹⁸

In any case, hopes of a renewal of some kind of progressive alliance were confounded in the summer of 1931. The decision of the Liberals to back the Conservatives in calling for heavy spending cuts to meet a projected budget deficit that August led to the creation of the National government under Labour's erstwhile leader, Ramsay MacDonald. And that government then went on to trounce Labour at the October 1931 general election, winning 554 seats to

Labour's 46. The National government remained in office – under first MacDonald, then Baldwin, and then Neville Chamberlain – until 1940. The Liberal MPs split, more or less in half (in addition, Lloyd George – who had opposed the National government at the election – and three members of his family formed a separate ‘family group’). The Liberal Nationals remained part of the government throughout, finally merging with the Conservatives in the late 1940s.¹⁹ The official Liberals, first under Sir Herbert Samuel (1931-35) and Sir Archibald Sinclair (1935-45) remained in the government until 1932, and finally moved onto the opposition benches in November 1933. By the latter date, however, they were in sharp decline. There were, arguably, some signs of a slight recovery in the later 1930s, but these came, ultimately, to very little; while fleeting hopes of progress in the Second World War were to be bitterly disappointed by the party's virtual obliteration at the 1945 general election.²⁰ At that election, the Liberals won only 12 seats. Labour, on the other hand, won 393, and formed its first majority government with a parliamentary majority of 146. Although there had been some local-level co-operation in anti-Conservative fronts in the later 1930s, based on the popular front agitation,²¹ and although Labour and the Liberals had been partners under Churchill in the 1940-45 Coalition government, the two parties remained separate. Indeed, the results of the 1945 election seemed finally to bear out the promise of the formal separation that had taken place in 1918: the strategy of keeping the Liberals at arm's length had, it seemed, finally paid off.

Obstacles to Co-operation

Nineteen forty-five, then, seemed to vindicate Labour's strategy towards the Liberals over the past generation. But as the party failed to establish itself as the natural party of government after its great post-war administration (1945-51), so doubts began to arise once more. During the 1970s and 1980s, these doubts began to be expressed with increasing stridency. Why could not there have been greater co-operation against the Conservatives, in such a way as to shut the latter out from power at the national level? Inevitably, given the polarising nature of the Thatcher administration between 1979 and 1990, and the growth of the idea that a more

ecumenical approach towards anti-Conservative politics would be of benefit, such questions began to be asked with increasing urgency. As people began, for example, to consider the merits of 'tactical voting' to remove Thatcher, so they also began to pay attention to the question of whether the decades-long 'division' of anti-Conservative progressive forces had not been a mistake.²²

Counterfactuals are always intriguing, and frequently tempting. But the notion that it was possible to maintain any kind of 'progressive unity' after 1918 rests on shaky foundations. In almost every respect, in fact, there were severe obstacles to co-operation between Labour and the Liberals by 1918. These operated at the levels of leadership; ideology; policy; trade unionism; relations with the Conservative party; and organisation and ethos. To demonstrate the point, each of these areas will be discussed in turn.

Leadership attitudes were one clear hindrance to greater co-operation. Most Labour leaders of the period shared something of a distrust of the Liberals. This had not prevented co-operation before 1914, but it had tended to limit it, and its intensification after 1914 was palpable. The dominant figures of the inter-war Labour party, certainly, had a degree of prejudice against the Liberals. Among the key leaders during the 1920s, MacDonald and Arthur Henderson had both been disappointed by the Liberals' failure to adopt them as candidates in the 1890s, perhaps more so in the former case than the latter.²³ Neither had refused to work with the Liberals before the war as a result; MacDonald, indeed, had been involved with some leading progressive Liberal thinkers in the London-based discussion group, the Rainbow Circle.²⁴ But it seems plausible to argue that, as the Liberal party as a whole moved away from progressivism, so the party's less palatable elements returned to the fore. Certainly, Labour's frequent criticisms of the character of those elected as Coalition Liberal MPs in 1918 would suggest that they were only comfortable with a certain type of Liberal. Henderson had respected Asquith, but such respect had been dented by the events of the Great War, and, as his post-war performance deteriorated, he could be forgiven for seeing him as yesterday's

man.²⁵ MacDonald, for his part, 'had never had a high opinion of Asquith'.²⁶ The relations of both men with Lloyd George deteriorated considerably during the war, and still more during his post-war premiership (1918-22), when Labour's progress owed much to its stern critique of the Coalition's record on a variety of issues.²⁷ Of all the Liberal leaders prior to 1931, Samuel was the one with whom they found it easiest to do business: he was the most pro-Labour of Liberal leaders, having, for example, shown some sympathy to the miners' cause in 1925-26, and attempted to act as an arbitrator during the General Strike of 1926. It is not surprising that it was Samuel's name that was mentioned most frequently in gossip about which Liberal might enter the Labour cabinet in 1930-1.²⁸ Other leading Labourites of the 1920s, even if moderates, were not necessarily interested in working with the Liberals: J. H. Thomas, for example, was in many ways more like a Conservative than a Liberal.²⁹ Perhaps Philip Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first two Labour governments, came closest among the party's leading figures in the 1920s to supporting cross-party co-operation. After his breaks with Labour in 1931 and the National government in 1932, indeed, he gravitated towards the Liberals, broadcasting for them at the 1935 election and, according to some accounts, living out his days in receipt of a pension from Lloyd George.³⁰ But Snowden was in some ways a more marginal figure in the development of Labour's political strategy in the 1920s than his position as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first two Labour governments might suggest; and his inability to build coalitions within the party around the positions he favoured meant that there was no prospect whatever of his overturning the prevailing strategy in favour of a closer relationship between Labour and the Liberals.

If Labour's leaders down to 1931 did not feel much empathy with the Liberal party, then it is hardly surprising that their successors were even less enthusiastic. Someone like Henderson, born in 1863, or MacDonald, born three years later, had grown into middle age with the Liberal party as a key element of British politics: they had been thirty-one and twenty-eight years old respectively when William Gladstone had finally retired from the premiership in 1894, forty-three and forty when the Liberals won their great victory in 1906. For their

successors – people like Clement Attlee (born 1883), Hugh Dalton (1887), or Herbert Morrison (1888) – the Liberals conjured up less resonant memories: less the glory days of Gladstone than the dog days of Asquith. Nor did they feel much enthusiasm for contemporary Liberal leaders – Samuel had burnt his boats with Labour by finally siding with the National government in 1931 and remaining in it as it trounced Labour at that year’s general election, while after 1935 Sinclair was generally seen as an amiable but somewhat lightweight individual leading a by now doomed party.³¹ The other notable leading Liberal of the period was Sir William Beveridge, who shot into the party leadership in late 1944 following his election as MP for Berwick: but, for all Labour’s apparent enthusiasm for the Beveridge Report of 1942, there was a good deal of personal distrust of someone who was generally regarded, in Labour circles, as a very difficult colleague: ‘full of egoism and petulance’ was Dalton’s view in May 1942.³² In short, there was very little room for collaboration between the leaders of the two parties during this period as a whole.

Another major obstacle was ideology. It might be suggested that this should not have mattered: that the concerns of the here-and-now should have taken priority over somewhat theological questions regarding the ultimate fate of private property, and so on. But this is a rather misconstrued criticism. Labourites and Liberals were ‘ideological’ whether they liked it or not. Ideology is not an optional extra in politics, but is fundamental to it: even those who would proclaim themselves as un-ideological are thereby subscribing to an ideology.³³ And, in any case, both Labour and the Liberals *did* like it: they took ideology seriously. It was valuable in itself, as offering *raisons d’etre* for each party. It also had strategic value, in helping to keep each party together in times of crisis, of which there were many between the wars. Like all ideologies, the Liberals’ Liberalism and Labour’s socialism were not unchanging: and as Michael Freedman reminds us, ‘in their multiple metamorphoses, the differences between ideological families are unceasingly accentuated *or* moderated. That is the give and take of political discourse, relating to institutional and social environments that,

in turn, encourage convergence or divergence.’³⁴ But they were not adaptable enough in this period to allow sufficient convergence to make a ‘progressive alliance’ a reality.

Liberals were not modest in their claims for their ideology. They believed that Liberalism was an honourable doctrine that had liberated people from age-old shackles, enabling them to enjoy a freer existence. The notion that this could or should be given up, or even compromised, was anathema for most. Indeed, reading through Liberal politicians’ private correspondence and public writings, and the records of the party at all levels down to the humblest local party associations, what is clear during this period is the pride that such people still took in being Liberals. Their political world might seem to have been falling apart, but they were not, on the whole, interested in changing their views if this meant renouncing Liberalism. On the contrary, they believed that the reason that the world had become a worse place since 1914 was precisely *because* people had neglected the basic Liberal values of the former generation: as one liberal body put it in March 1940, ‘[t][he world ha[d] indeed become a nightmare since it turned its back on Liberalism following the Great War’.³⁵ Linked with this was an imperturbable optimism on the part of some Liberals, an extreme example being the Chairman of East Dorset Liberal Association who stated on 29 August 1939 – three days before Germany attacked Poland to unleash almost six years of bloody and genocidal war in Europe – that ‘there was a wave of Liberalism spreading over Europe, and the Liberal creed was being adopted in other Parties and other countries’.³⁶ Even the Liberal Nationals, who remained with the Conservatives in the National government after 1932, were keen, at least until the end of the Second World War, to sustain an image of themselves *as* Liberals *within* a broader National alliance. After the Munich agreement, the Liberal National cabinet minister Sir John Simon wrote to the prominent Liberal J. A. Spender bemoaning the attitude taken up by ‘the Opposition Liberal rump in the Commons. Anyone would think they had never heard of Asquith’.³⁷ Similarly, the Liberal MP Herbert Holdsworth, on moving from the Liberals to the Liberal Nationals in 1938, emphasised that he had never deviated from any Liberal principle, adding ‘I still claim to be as good a Liberal as ever I was & intend to remain

a Liberal'; but he was 'not going to obey the decision of a little caucus'.³⁸ They might be allies of the Conservatives, but they were not merely Conservative stooges. If even the Liberal Nationals continued to feel such a bond to Liberalism, then it is hard to imagine that the independent Liberals would have felt any less of a commitment; and that, in turn, calls into serious question the extent to which they might have participated willingly in any kind of 'progressive' movement. It also suggests that any idea of giving up on Liberalism would have been even weaker in the 1920s, when the party's activists and supporters could still convince themselves that the party had the chance of a future in government in the short term.

But it was not just that Liberalism mattered to Liberals. It was also that socialism mattered to Labourites. Indeed, it almost certainly mattered to more Labourites – taken as a whole – in this period than it had before the Great War. Those of a leftish disposition had, to a large extent, seen that war as proving the benefits and merits of socialism. For all, the February revolution in Russia had been an inspiration: and even if most did not want to repeat the Bolshevik revolution in all its details, many were impressed by the potential for rapid socialist transformation which they believed Soviet Russia possessed. But even where they were more sceptical about the Soviet regime, they felt that the national and international problems that had been thrown up by the war could only be resolved by significant social change, and socialism was an integral part of their analysis. There might have been an element of calculation in the adoption of the socialist commitment in 1918, but that does not mean that the socialists in the party did not believe in it, or that they would have been happy to accept its dilution in the interests of appealing to Liberals. Indeed, the 1922 party conference passed unanimously a resolution denouncing 'any alliance or electoral arrangement with any section of the Liberal or Conservative Parties', with Sidney Webb telling delegates 'very emphatically' that it would be 'a terrible mistake' for Labour to try to enter government with any other party.³⁹ Freedman has suggested that '[t]he argument that many differences between evolutionary socialism and left-liberalism are illusory is a compelling one'.⁴⁰ But even if this was the case, it must be remembered that the sub-sets he mentions – 'evolutionary socialism'

and ‘left-liberalism’ – did not in any way comprise the whole of Labour’s socialism or the Liberals’ Liberalism in the period.

In any case, the division operated at the level of policy as well as that of ideology; and this, again, clearly constrained the potential for co-operation. During the Edwardian period there had been considerable policy overlaps: the defence of free trade against Chamberlainite protectionism, advocacy of Irish Home Rule, support for ‘the people’ against ‘the peers’, commitment to a degree of social reform, desire for the clarification of trade unions’ legal position, and an inclination towards temperance, among others, had provided a raft of areas on which there was the potential for broad – though never unanimous – agreement.⁴¹ To be sure, within each of these areas there were differences of emphasis, but it was possible for these to be overcome, most of the time. Even on the vexed issue of the trade union political levy, where a Liberal railwayman, W. V. Osborne, provoked the eponymous legal judgment that called unions’ payments to the Labour party into question, a solution was eventually reached (by the 1913 Trade Unions Act) which, ultimately, produced about as much consensus as it was possible to produce.⁴²

After 1918, though, the policy landscape was more divisive. The extension of the role and powers of the state during the war soon led to new fissures, or deepened old ones, between Liberals and Labourites. Most Labourites welcomed the state’s expansion, although some, notably guild socialists, expressed concerns about an over-mighty state unchecked by other agencies.⁴³ Many Liberals were a good deal less sanguine, not just during the First World War, but right down to the end of the Second and, indeed, beyond. In some ways this might seem surprising, given the development of Liberal policy at various stages – towards the Yellow Book under Lloyd George in 1927-9, or the fulsome acceptance of Beveridge in the latter part of the Second World War. But appearances here were a little deceptive. During Lloyd George’s period as leader (1926-31) there remained considerable – if at times subterranean – hostility towards the party’s apparent conversion to statism.⁴⁴ As Garry

Tregidga has argued, in the South West – one of the party’s few remaining strongholds at the end of the 1920s – the Liberals were ‘still sustained by the forces that had motivated the party before the war: a deep reverence for the cause of Gladstone, the moral fervour of religious nonconformity and a belief that the Liberals were still a potential party of government’.⁴⁵ The party’s eager adoption of Beveridge – who was virtually its joint leader, with Sinclair, at the 1945 election – smacked of a degree of desperation, and it was this desperation which led Liberals largely to ignore, or fail to see, the extent to which, as Jose Harris has demonstrated, Beveridge himself had moved towards a socialist perspective at this time.⁴⁶ In particular, she argues, ‘his view of “full employment” in 1942 was essentially a state socialist rather than a Keynesian conception’.⁴⁷ For all the noise that surrounded Beveridge – much of it, it must be said, made by Beveridge himself – there remained within the party a significant, though at this stage rather muted and cowed, opposition from those – like the banker Sir Andrew MacFadyean, or the editor of the *Huddersfield Examiner*, Elliott Dodds – who would have preferred greater emphasis on free enterprise, free trade, individual liberty, and the small trader.⁴⁸

Emphasis on free enterprise also calls into question the issue of trade unionism. Here, the Liberals’ often unfavourable attitudes were crucial in determining Labour hostility. It was true that, by and large, the Liberals had been more sympathetic than the Conservatives towards trade unions since the mid-nineteenth century. It was, after all, Conservative-appointed judges who were making the running against the unions in the 1890s and 1900s, and the Liberal government under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that restored trade union legal immunities by means of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act. However, it is worth reiterating that the case that challenged the whole basis of Labour party funding through the trade unions was brought by a working-class Liberal, in the person of Osborne (who was to remain active in local Liberal party politics in Walthamstow right up to the time of the Second World War).⁴⁹ As stated above, the 1913 Act did resolve matters, but its failure simply to overturn Osborne was taken by some trade unionists as a clear sign of Liberal hostility, even though its long-term effects

probably helped the Labour party more than anyone had expected.⁵⁰ After the war, the conduct of the Lloyd George Coalition in crushing industrial disputes (such as the 1921 coal lockout) did much to fuel union hostility towards him and towards the Liberals who supported his Coalition.⁵¹ This might not have mattered in terms of Liberal-Labour relations, except that the collapse of the Coalition eventually brought many such Coalitionists back into the Liberal party proper. In 1926, ironically, it was Lloyd George among the Liberal leaders who attempted to take a conciliatory line in the General Strike; but the bulk of the Liberal leadership came out strongly on the side of the government and against the unions, and Sir John Simon, in particular, made a speech which challenged the legality of the Trades Union Congress's actions in calling the strike.⁵² This speech 'had a swingeing effect on trade union headquarters' at the time, and was subsequently used, along with other Liberal arguments, by the Conservative government to help justify the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, which was seen by the unions as a vindictive piece of class legislation, enacted in revenge for the General Strike.⁵³ Any attempt at a Labour-Liberal coalition in 1929-31 would have aroused strong union resistance, especially since the Liberals were lukewarm at best towards any repeal or amendment of the 1927 Act.⁵⁴ It is far from clear that there was any significant change in Liberal attitudes towards unions thereafter: certainly, trade unionists were not particularly conscious of any change.

This division, on an issue of fundamental importance for the Labour party, could not, and cannot, be wished away. Of course, it would be simplistic to say that Labour in this period was simply 'union-dominated'. But, at the same time, if enough unions felt sufficiently animated on a particular issue, they were usually able to block the party from taking a particular path. And this was always likely to be the case where any pact with the Liberals was concerned. It is certainly no coincidence that those Labourites who enjoyed the best relations with the Liberals in this period tended to be the ones, like Snowden, who were least enamoured of the unions. None of this, of course, is to suggest that either the unions or the

Liberals were 'wrong' in the stances they took on this issue: but it does demonstrate how elusive any kind of agreement would have been likely to prove.

Such difficulties were also marked when it came to the Liberals' relationship with the Conservative party. At the national level, their co-operation with the Conservatives in 1931 can be seen as something of an aberration for an otherwise progressive party. The official Liberal party, after all, had opposed the Lloyd George Coalition, and supported the first two Labour governments in parliament, at least up to a point. Samuel suggested to King George V the replacement of the National government with an alternative Liberal-Labour coalition under MacDonald shortly before the calling of the 1931 election. (The King's reaction appears to have been somewhat dismissive, to put it mildly.)⁵⁵ Sinclair eventually led the Liberals to come out against Chamberlain's appeasement policy, and his party was far less hostile than Labour in 1938-9 towards the idea of a broad alliance against the National government.⁵⁶ Radical policy alternatives emanated from the party from time to time, never more so than in the late 1920s.

And yet there were always other Liberalisms, even at national level. These Liberalisms were often disparate, and they had little in common with each other; some were pro-Lloyd George, some anti, and so on. But even when they stood outside the Liberal party, such Liberalisms could never be ignored by the leadership of that party. And the one thing they did share was a strong, almost visceral hostility towards Labour and practically everything it stood for. Such Liberalisms included the Liberalisms of the Lloyd George Coalition in the early 1920s, of the anti-Lloyd George Liberal Council from 1926 onwards, of the Liberal Nationals in the 1930s and 1940s, and of the anti-statist defenders of 'the independent man' and small trader during the Second World War. This is a tradition which fits less easily with prevalent modern-day views of the Liberals as a 'progressive' party, and so has tended to be neglected by modern historians with Liberal sympathies: but it was no less strong for that. In industrial West Yorkshire, for example, the stolid business-oriented Liberalism identified by Jack Reynolds

and Keith Laybourn prior to 1918 remained the predominant force during the period down to 1945.⁵⁷ Indeed, West Yorkshire provides some very good illustrations of the kaleidoscopic nature of local Liberalisms. Here, one such example – Huddersfield – will have to suffice. At the 1945 general election, the MP defending the seat was a Liberal National, Sir William Mabane, who had the support of the local Conservatives, but who was also the nominee of the official Huddersfield Liberal Association. He faced opposition from an official Sinclair Liberal candidate in the person of Roy Harrod, who was a fervent admirer of John Maynard Keynes, the progressive Liberal economist. Yet the chairman of the independent Borough Liberal Association, which was supporting Harrod, was Elliott Dodds, who although a local figure was also, at national level, arguably the Liberal party's chief advocate of the interests of small independent traders against the all-embracing claims of the state. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Labour won the seat.⁵⁸

This reminder that the national scene was not the only forum for Liberal-Labour relations is apposite. While the Liberals might flirt with Labour at national level, they often tended to cleave pretty firmly opposite direction at the local level. Of course, there were exceptions, but it was usually the case that, where Liberals responded to their increasing weakness in local councils by entering into inter-party pacts, it was not with Labour, but with the Conservatives. In the council chamber, the Liberals were, in many cases, every bit as much a 'party of resistance' as the Conservatives: resistance to high rates, to direct labour, to municipal trading, to council housing, and to all the other manifestations of municipal socialism. Anti-Labour pacts were formed in many towns and cities, such as Bristol and Sheffield.⁵⁹ To Labourites in such places, the idea of a national-level pact of any kind between Labour and the Liberals would have made no sense at all, and would, indeed, have aroused considerable criticism and hostility.

Issues of organisation and ethos formed another barrier between the parties. It might well be that the Edwardian period represented a unique concatenation of characteristics of the two

parties' machines, in which there was, for once, the potential for close co-operation. On the one hand, the powerful, but broadly tolerant, Liberal machine was able to offer a nascent Labour party – which was not yet strongly centralised on the model of continental social democratic parties – the opportunity of collaboration as a junior partner.⁶⁰ Many Liberals, and pro-Liberal historians, have regretted this: Roy Douglas, for example, wrote in 1971 that '[t]he price which was paid for the Liberal Whips' squeamish refusal to strangle the Labour Party in its cradle was the division and confusion of radicals throughout the interwar years, and the eventual establishment of "Labour" administrations which had remarkably little in common with the wishes and needs of the workers themselves'.⁶¹ In the same year, the then Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe, argued that the pact had been 'an act of uncalled-for [Liberal] electoral generosity unforgivable in a Chief Whip'.⁶² In the context of 1903, however, it made sense for the Liberals, who had been struggling in opposition for eight years, and trounced at the 1900 general election, to attempt an electoral deal with the new Labour organisation.⁶³ At the very least, they could thereby try to ensure that the coming election did not see the Conservatives returned to power for want of a united front against them. As stated above, this was feasible because there was such a degree of overlap in terms of policy between Labour and the Liberals.

As Labour's organisation grew, however, so its ethos began to harden in a way less favourable to these kind of inter-party deals. To be sure, a key development here was self-willed: namely, the adoption, in 1918, of the new party constitution, which ensconced the trade unions more firmly in control of the party than ever before (much to the chagrin of ILPers like Snowden).⁶⁴ But the second, which came two years later, was something about which Labour could have done very little: the formation of the Communist party of Great Britain. These two events had a significant impact upon the way the Labour party was organised and the way in which it saw co-operation with other organisations. In the specific context of relations with the Liberals, two points seem especially worthy of note. The first is that the party after 1918, still more than hitherto, had an ethos which was strongly influenced

by trade union ideas of solidarity and loyalty to majority decisions. Such an ethos sat ill with the views of many Liberals. Even among those who came over to the Labour party, some were to find it hard to knuckle down to accepting that ethos.⁶⁵ For example, Josiah Wedgwood came to be seen as a maverick figure: among other things, he was denied official party endorsement at the 1931 general election for refusing to accept the parliamentary Labour party's new, more restrictive standing orders.⁶⁶ Sir Charles Trevelyan, for his part, was also refused official endorsement at that election, for the same reason; and he was to be expelled in 1939 for supporting Sir Stafford Cripps's campaign for Labour to enter a broader alliance against the National government.⁶⁷ For those who remained within the Liberal party, ideas of co-operation with a party which, at least on the face of it, was so much committed to the collective over the individual was a real problem.⁶⁸ The second point concerns the Communists. One of the key reasons for Labour's organisational tightening from the early 1920s onwards was a keen awareness of the threat that Communists and communism posed to an essentially social democratic party. The chief aim of Labour's key strategists was to keep the Communists out, and to do this they had to erect barriers against co-operation with *all* other parties. This made them, ultimately, as hostile towards collaboration with Liberals as they were regarding co-operation with Communists. It is worth remembering, in this connexion, that Cripps, Trevelyan, Aneurin Bevan and others were expelled in early 1939 for advocating a broad front which would have included Liberals as well as Communists.⁶⁹ But even had they advocated collaboration with the Liberals alone by this stage, they would probably have suffered some form of disciplinary action: Liberals were seen as undesirable in themselves, but it was also recognised by the party leadership that, once the Liberals had breached the barrier, it would have *then* been so much harder to keep the Communists out.

Finally, the potential for co-operation had to rely on an assessment of the potential futures on offer. Once they had made the decision for independence, Labourites would have taken a lot of persuading that some kind of collaboration with the Liberals would have brought serious long-term benefits. According to the vague evolutionary beliefs which in some inchoate way

helped to shape the thinking of most Labourites, Liberalism was an outdated ideology whose time – the nineteenth century – was passed; the ideology of the twentieth century was socialism. The increasingly obvious debility of the Liberal party during the inter-war period did little to counter such prejudices. It is possible, of course, to argue that at certain points Liberal prospects looked a little brighter: this was true, say, of the time of the 1923 election; of the period between Lloyd George's accession to the leadership and the beginning of 1929; or, perhaps, the period around 1936 when the Liberal party, under Sinclair, was beginning to reform itself (although the extent to which that represented a real revival must be very doubtful). For the most part, however, these were periods of at best fleeting, and often questionable, progress, set within a much wider context of decline and failure. In a sense it was a counsel of despair for Labourites to wish to harness themselves to such an obviously failing, and arguably doomed, organisation. There was plenty to despair about in Labour's performance during this period, but there was also much of which the party felt it could be proud, and the failure of the Liberal party even seriously to arrest its decline in anything but the very shortest of terms made it an unlikely and unwelcome collaborator.

Conclusion

Viewed in global terms, it is easy to see why the period between the wars should have given rise to so much counterfactual wishful thinking. In the British context, the Conservative party's domination of government at national level led many progressives, at the time and afterwards, to try to discover some alternative. At the time, many progressives did precisely that.⁷⁰ We should not simply dismiss the potential of their efforts: the politics of the period were not pre-ordained: there was usually some room for human agency. Politicians were not, and are not, merely helpless puppets within structures. However, they did have to operate according to constraints about which they could often do very little. Conversely, there were those in both parties who actively sought to diminish, and ultimately extinguish, any prospects for co-operation between the two parties. A combination of rational calculation, sectarianism, personal ambition, and sheer prejudice severely inhibited the prospects for those

who sought to renew the Edwardian ‘progressive alliance’ in a new form. And yet that was not the whole story. The alliance had had its opponents in the pre-1914 period, after all, but the context then had been less favourable to those opponents, and the alliance had – more or less – survived. It was the change in the context, outlined above, that made the crucial difference to the prospects for co-operation. This, in turn, meant that the advocates of progressive unity – who remained numerous, and in some cases prominent – faced a tough, and ultimately futile, battle in trying to forge wider alliances.

It is worth concluding with two further – perhaps paradoxical – thoughts. One is that even had there been a progressive alliance, it would probably not have made any difference on the key question of Conservative hegemony. Simplistic analysis which assumes that Liberal-Labour co-operation would have led to all their voters combining straightforwardly against the Conservatives is not fit to be called psephology. There is clear evidence that such a deal would instead have led to the large-scale desertion of Liberals from ‘progressivism’ and into the Conservative camp – that was what happened, anyway, at almost every general election between the wars, even when the Liberals were fighting on an independent ticket. It might have been true, as it was during the 1980s, that there was an anti-Conservative majority among voters; but, as also at that time, there was even more markedly an anti-*Labour* majority.

The other point appears to contradict this, but in fact complements it. It is that the variety of ‘lefts’ on offer in the inter-war period was, in many ways, very rich. This was a period of weakness for the left at the macro level, but one where, in micro terms, it was relatively strong. There was great debate and discussion at all levels; there were differences of ideology that really did seem to matter. The nature of the post-1945 settlement – both in terms of what was included but also of what was excluded – was to some extent set during this earlier period. Perhaps, like Protestant non-conformity in the nineteenth century, the left was most vibrant on the ground when it was most divided. In this regard, ecumenical politics is perhaps

rather like ecumenical religion: agreeable and inoffensive, but rarely very vital, usually quite bland, and almost always somewhat ineffectual in arresting decline.

¹ ‘R.M.T. EXPELLED FROM LABOUR PARTY’, *Railnews*, 7 February 2004, <http://www.railnews.co.uk/displaynews.asp?ID=345>, accessed 20 September 2004. Thanks for comments are due to Stefan Berger, John Callaghan, and Kevin Morgan; and for financial assistance to the Arts and Humanities Research Board, the British Academy, and the University of Exeter.

² Austin Mitchell, *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party* (London, 1983), p. 28; Carl F. Brand, *The British Labour Party; A Short History* (Stanford, CA, 1965).

³ See especially Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (2nd edn., 1972), pp. 216-20, 229-30.

⁴ The most developed version of this argument comes in David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Kinnock* (London, rev. edn., 1992).

⁵ David Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals, and the Quest for Unity, 1884-1939* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁶ Tony Blair, speech to Fabian Society, 5 July 1995, reprinted in Tony Blair, *New Britain: My Vision of a Young Country* (London, 1996), pp. 4-21, at p. 7.

⁷ For these discussions, see especially Paddy Ashdown, *The Ashdown Diaries, Volume One: 1988-1997* (London, 2000).

⁸ See e.g. D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990); Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organized Labour, and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁹ Steven Fielding and Declan McHugh, ‘*The Progressive Dilemma and the social democratic perspective*’, in John Callaghan, Steven Fielding and Steve Ludlam (eds.), *Interpreting the Labour Party: Approaches to Labour Politics and History* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 134-49.

¹⁰ Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918*, pp. 373-83.

¹¹ On this see Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (2nd edn., 2001), pp. 27-40; J. M. Winter, ‘Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the reconstruction of the

Labour party', *Historical Journal* 15 (1972), pp. 753-73, at p. 755; A. Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (2nd edn., Manchester, 1918), pp. 67-70.

¹² Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 90-1.

¹³ Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914-1931* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1963) remains useful on this subject.

¹⁴ For the CPGB in this period, see Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1919-1943* (Manchester, 2000).

¹⁵ Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924* (Cambridge, 1971), especially pp. 1-3.

¹⁶ For analysis of how these considerations held Labour back in rural areas in particular – where there had initially been high hopes of advance after 1918 – see especially Nicholas Mansfield, *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism, 1900-1930* (Aldershot, 2001), especially pp. 159-98.

¹⁷ Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), 105-6, 109-14.

¹⁸ Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government*, pp. 251-2, argues strongly for the possibility of a reconstruction along these lines; John Campbell, *Lloyd George: The Goat in the Wilderness, 1922-1931* (London, 1977), pp. 294-6, and David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977), pp. 601-3, argue along broadly similar lines, although somewhat more circumspectly; Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991), p. 56, takes a different view.

¹⁹ For the Liberal Nationals, see Graham Goodlad, 'The Liberal Nationals 1931-40: the problems of party in a "partnership government"', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp. 133-43.

²⁰ Malcolm Baines, 'The survival of the British Liberal party, 1932-59', Oxford D. Phil., 1990; see also his published work: 'The survival of the British Liberal party, 1933-59', in A. Gorst, L. Johnman and W. S. Lucas (eds.), *Contemporary British History 1931-1961: Politics and the Limits of Policy* (1991), pp. 17-32, and 'The Liberal party and the 1945 general election', *Contemporary Record* 9 (1995), pp. 48-61.

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- ²¹ Garry Tregidga, *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918: Decline, Dormancy and Rebirth* (Exeter, 2000), pp. 87-96.
- ²² David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (London, 1992), pp. 280, 336-7.
- ²³ David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977), p. 36; Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson: A Biography* (London, 1938), p. 30; Chris Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson* (Cardiff, 1990), pp. 16-19.
- ²⁴ *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894-1924*, ed. Michael Freedon (London, 1989). He continued to attend occasionally even after the war, and gave a paper on 'The Labour Outlook' as late as June 1922: see *ibid.*, pp. 324-5.
- ²⁵ Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson*, pp. 107-8.
- ²⁶ Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 320.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 320; Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson*, pp. 137-8.
- ²⁸ See e.g. *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, Volume 3: The Heir Apparent, 1928-33*, ed. Robert Self (Aldershot, 2002), p. 260, Neville to Hilda Chamberlain, 25 May 1931.
- ²⁹ See Andrew Thorpe, 'J. H. Thomas and the rise of Labour in Derby, 1880-1945', *Midland History*, 15 (1990), pp. 111-28.
- ³⁰ See Colin Cross, *Philip Snowden* (London, 1966); Keith Laybourn, *Philip Snowden: A Biography* (Aldershot, 1988). For Snowden as a 'pensioner' see Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 35.
- ³¹ Bernard Wasserstein, *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life* (Oxford, 1992), p. 366; Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945* (London, 1957), p. 200.
- ³² *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45*, ed. Ben Pimlott (London, 1986), p. 427, entry for 8 May 1942.
- ³³ For more on this, see Michael Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, 1996).
- ³⁴ Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 553.

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- ³⁵ Manchester Local Studies and Archives Service, M392/1/4, Society of Certified and Associated Liberal Agents, North West District, annual report for 1939, presented to annual meeting 16 March 1940.
- ³⁶ Dorset Record Office, Dorchester, D1512/A1, East Dorset Liberal association, executive committee minutes, 29 August 1939.
- ³⁷ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS Simon 85, folios 77-8, Sir John Simon to J. A. Spender, 10 October 1938.
- ³⁸ West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford, 36D78/29, Bradford Liberal National association, minutes of meeting, 21 November 1938.
- ³⁹ Labour party, *Report of the Twenty-Second Annual Conference, 1922* (London, 1922), p. 210.
- ⁴⁰ Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, p. 479.
- ⁴¹ Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party*, pp. 44-78; A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: The General Election of 1906* (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp. 82-3; Neal Blewett, *The Peers. The Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London, 1972), pp. 315-29, 412-15.
- ⁴² Henry Pelling, 'The politics of the Osborne judgment', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), pp. 889-909; McKibbin, *Evolution of the Labour Party*, pp. 20-1, 85-6. The verdict of A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 114-15, remains illuminating.
- ⁴³ See e.g. G. D. H. Cole, *Self-Government in Industry* (London, 1917).
- ⁴⁴ See e.g. University of Newcastle Library, Runciman papers, WR 221, Lord Shuttleworth to Walter Runciman, 3 December 1930.
- ⁴⁵ Tregidga, *The Liberal Party in South-West Britain since 1918*, p. 55.
- ⁴⁶ Jose Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (rev. edn., Oxford, 1997), pp. 428-32.
- ⁴⁷ Harris, *William Beveridge*, p. 432.
- ⁴⁸ Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 307-8; British Library of Political and Economic Science, Beveridge papers, VI/103, folio 49, Elliott

Dodds to Sir William Beveridge, 28 January 1945. This facet of wartime Liberalism is largely ignored in the otherwise excellent Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931-1983* (London, 1994).

⁴⁹ Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library, uncatalogued, Walthamstow Liberal and Radical association, joint executive committee, 9 September 1939; joint officers' meeting, 9 January 1940. For example, he addressed a meeting of the local Old Age Pensions League on behalf of the local Liberal association in early 1940. He moved to York in 1940 or 1941 and only then did he sever his links with the Walthamstow Liberals: *ibid.*, joint executive committee, 10 July 1941.

⁵⁰ Pelling, 'The politics of the Osborne judgment'; McKibbin, *Evolution of the Labour Party*, pp. 20-1, 85-6.

⁵¹ On this see C. J. Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition, 1918-1922* (London, 1990).

⁵² Campbell, *Lloyd George: The Goat in the Wilderness*, pp. 136-56.

⁵³ Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London, 1969), p. 412; Sir John Simon, *Three Speeches on the General Strike* (London, 1926); Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, ed. Keith Middlemas (3 vols., 1969), pp. 44-5, entries for 9 and 10 May 1926.

⁵⁴ University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre, Transport and General Workers' Union papers, MSS 126/T&G/1/1/7, general secretary's quarterly report, 27 May 1930; Thorpe, *British General Election of 1931*, p. 56.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵⁶ Gerard J. de Groot, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London, 1993), pp. 132-50.

⁵⁷ Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890-1918* (London, 1984), especially p. 205.

⁵⁸ For the election in Huddersfield, see the following collections in the West Yorkshire Archives Service, Kirklees (Huddersfield): Huddersfield Liberal association [Liberal Nationals]; Huddersfield borough Liberal association [Liberals]; Sir William Mabane papers.

⁵⁹ Chris Cook, 'Liberals, Labour and local elections', in Gillian Peele and Chris Cook (eds.), *The Politics of Reappraisal, 1918-1939* (London, 1975), pp. 166-88, at pp. 178-9, 186-7.

Sam Davies and Bob Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis, Volume 2 – Bradford–Carlisle* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 199-205;

Helen Mathers, 'The City of Sheffield 1893-1926', and Andrew Thorpe, 'The consolidation of a Labour stronghold, 1926-1951' in Clyde Binfield et al (eds.), *The History of the City of Sheffield, 1843-1993* (3 vols., Sheffield, 1993), pp. 53-83, 85-118, at 58, 75-7, 85-94, 98, 117.

⁶⁰ For an excellent analysis of Labour's eventual similarities with the European parties, see Stefan Berger, *The British Labour Party and the German Asocial Democrats, 1900-1931: A Comparative Study* (Oxford, 1994), especially pp. 248-55.

⁶¹ Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party 1895-1970* (London, 1971), p. 90.

⁶² Jeremy Thorpe, 'Foreword', *ibid.*, pp. xi-xvii, at p. xii.

⁶³ Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918*, pp. 21-22; Frank Bealey and Henry Pelling, *Labour and Politics 1900-1906: The History of the Labour Representation Committee* (London, 1958), pp. 125-59.

⁶⁴ Laybourn, *Philip Snowden*, pp. 79-81; R. E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London, 1966), p. 43.

⁶⁵ Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, *passim*.

⁶⁶ Thorpe, *British General Election of 1931*, p. 182.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition*, p. 188.

⁶⁸ Michael Freedon, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought, 1914-1939* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 177-222.

⁶⁹ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 170-82.

⁷⁰ Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition*, *passim*.