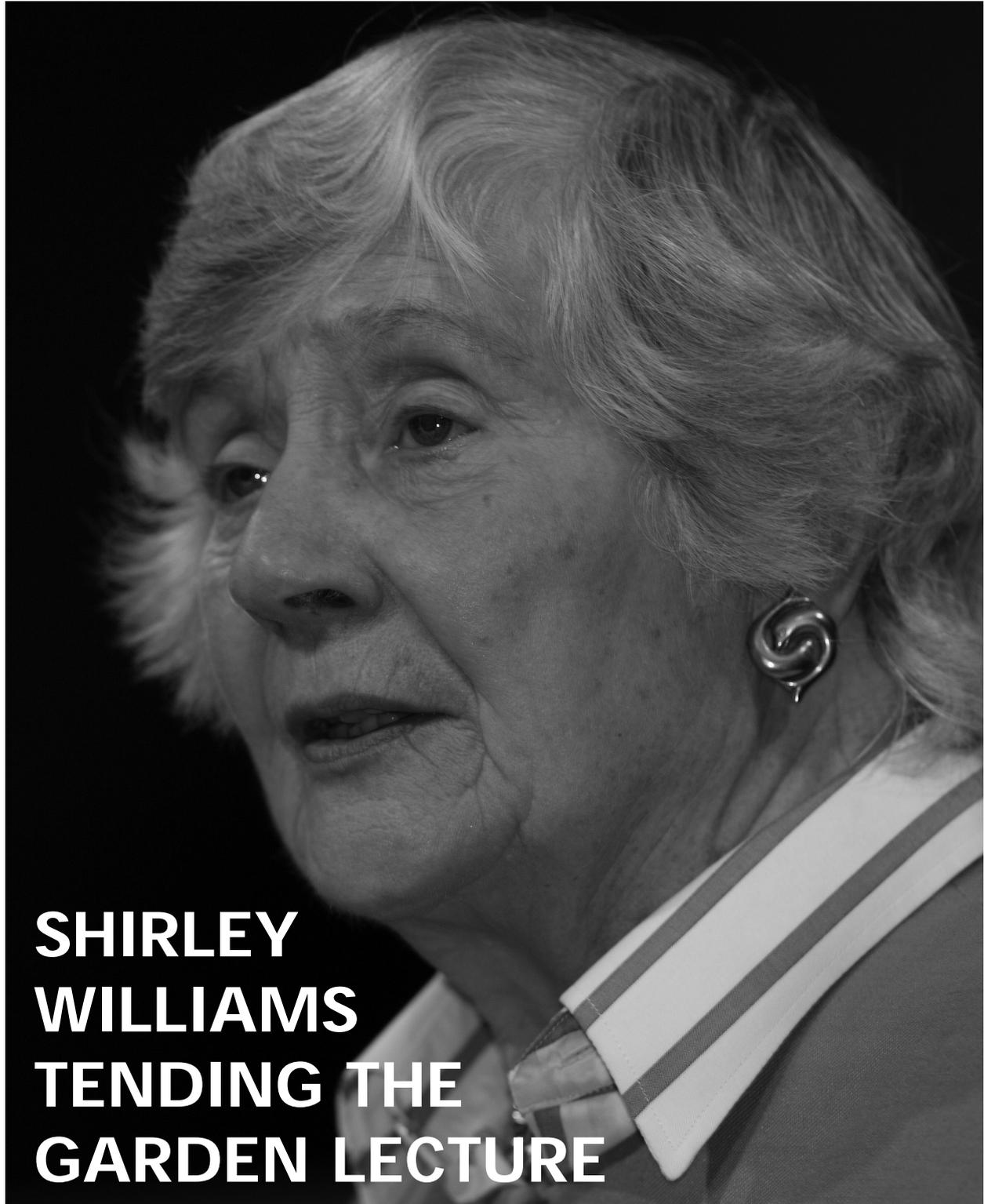




2010 no.2 £3.00 (free to members)

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



**SHIRLEY
WILLIAMS
TENDING THE
GARDEN LECTURE**

EVENTS

14th September	Executive 7.00pm NLC
18th–22nd September	Lib Dem Autumn Conference, Liverpool.
14th-15th October	ELDR Congress, Helsinki
15th-17th October	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru/Welsh Liberal Democrats' Autumn Conference 2010 Castle of Brecon Hotel, Brecon
13th-14th November	LI Executive Cape Town
3rd-4th March 2011	Scottish Liberal Democrats Conference, Perth. LIBG Scotland fringe meeting – Sir Menzies Campbell on Afghanistan.
Spring 2011	LI Congress Panama?

For bookings & other information please contact the Treasurer below.

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London SW1A 2HE
Underground: Embankment

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CONTENTS

Letter from the Chairman	3
Election Results LI(GB) AGM 2010	
The 2010 General Election and its Implications	4
The Democrats Dilemma	6
Burma's Electoral framework	7
Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference... The International Bits...	8
Liberal International at Liverpool	
Sudan How the West lost the South	10
Afghanistan Forum	11
Annual General Meeting	12
News from Scotland	13
Moeders voor Vrede	
Ronnie Fraser	
YABLOKO leader convicted for involvement in demonstration	
LI supports the Catalan nation, says Secretary General	
Zille vows to fight Information Bill	14
Reviews;	
The Struggle for Tibet by Wang Lixiong and Tsering Shakya	
Czechoslovakia, the state that failed, by Mary Heimann	
The Cartoons that Shook the World, by Jytte Klausen	15
Understanding the politics of heritage, edited by Rodney Harrison	
ALDE and MEP's call for a prompt response to Pakistan disaster	16
Equatorial Guinea's opposition condemns executions	
Garden Party	

Letter from the Chairman

This summer has been busy with a raft of LIBG events, including the Annual Tim Garden Lecture given by Shirley Williams, a Forum on Afghanistan and a garden party courtesy of Barbara and Robert Woodthorpe-Browne. Elsewhere events were developing at a rather faster pace.

The political landscape in the UK has changed dramatically since the last edition of InterLIB went to press. Following just five days of post-election negotiations (very short by international standards – Australia, currently engaged in its own coalition discussions has taken far longer to form a government, while The Netherlands frequently endured protracted coalition negotiations) the Liberal Democrats found themselves in a coalition government with the Conservatives. As Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg has an important international as well as domestic role, with a particular focus on one emerging power: China.

Meanwhile, Jeremy Browne MP has become a Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and while there is no Lib Dem in the Department for International Development, outgoing LIBG President Malcolm Bruce MP is Chair of the important International Development Committee in the House of Commons.

These domestic political changes will undoubtedly have important ramifications internationally. Over the coming months LIBG will seek both to keep members briefed about important aspects of British foreign policy and to help affect that policy.

We also plan to engage more actively in political campaigns, whether lobbying the British government about Trident renewal or embassies of third countries about human rights and other international issues where we believe we can make a difference.

Within the LIBG Exec there have also been several changes over the summer. Simon Hughes succeeded Malcolm Bruce as President, as Malcolm had served the maximum three year term. Moira Brett and Ahmad Mallick stepped down as Membership Treasurer and Treasurer to be replaced by Adrian Trett and Wendy Kyrle-Pope respectively, while David Griffiths stepped down as Vice-President after decades of dedicated work with both LIBG and Liberal International in a range of different roles. I would like to thank them, and everyone else who has not returned to the Executive, most warmly for everything they have done for LIBG over the years. We really are grateful to all of them for their sterling efforts.

Like all voluntary organisations, LIBG really does rely on the commitment of individuals. There are still some spaces on the Executive, so if you think you might like to get more involved, please don't hesitate to contact me.

We are currently planning our events diary for the year. The aim will be to have monthly events through working other like-minded groups, including the Lib Dem Friends of India and the Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats. If you have any suggestions for other groups with which we might



work, or topics you would like to see debated – or better still might prove to be a useful campaigning issue – do let us know.

A full schedule events plus a Conference update will be sent out in the next few weeks; highlights are likely to include meeting discussion Trident replacement and the role of the Commonwealth in the 21st Century.

I hope to see many of you at Conference or one of our forthcoming events.

With best wishes, Julie Smith

ELECTION RESULTS LI(GB) AGM 2010

President:
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The 2010 General Election and its Implications

Shirley Williams:

Air Marshal Lord Garden, whom we all knew as Tim, was an outstanding defence strategist, thinker and public servant. In all three roles he flew high. Such was his ability as a pilot that he was able to range from bombers to helicopters, and from practicing to instructing, in his illustrious RAF career. He was also a thinker, a man who contributed ideas well beyond the requirements of his responsibilities as a senior military officer. He took a postgraduate degree in international relations at Magdalene College, Cambridge, in the early 1980s. It was his wider understanding of the world in which military power operates that made him such an effective director of defence studies for the RAF, a visiting professor at Kings College London, and an outstanding commander of the Royal College of Defence Studies. I lectured there on several occasions to an impressively international audience of senior officers and civilians, potential members of a mutually respectful and close network that stretched to many countries. Tim, outgoing, informal, never constrained by rank or pomposity, moved easily among them making friends.

Tim understood better than most of us that defence strategy had to take account of a dramatically changing world, in which traditional Cold War assumptions about relative influence and power no longer held good. His analyses and conclusions were grounded in thorough study of the facts, and in respect for truth, however uncomfortable. His moral courage was as unflinching as was his courtesy.

Tim recognised the limitations of national power in this new world. That was one of the reasons for his early interest in European security. He supported closer cooperation in procurement and on peacekeeping operations with other EU countries, although those still remain far from fully realised. His work was recognised by the award to him by President Chirac of the Legion d'honneur. It was Tim's commitment to European integration that made the Liberal Democrats the obvious party for him; both he and his wife Sue were committed and active members, she standing as a Parliamentary candidate for Finchley in the 2005 General Election, he becoming the Party's defence spokesman in the House of Lords after his elevation to the peerage in 2004, just in time to make a searing critique of the UK's involvement in what he called "the rush to war" in Iraq.

Would Tim have been an enthusiastic supporter of the coalition? Incapable of self-deception, or indeed of deception of any kind, he would undoubtedly have recognised the scale of the economic challenge both to the United Kingdom and to the European Union. He would have understood that the scale of the challenge is such that partisan obsessions and even passionate preoccupations have to be put on one side to ensure our economic survival. Being Tim, he would have realised too that the current growth projections and investment prospects for the UK, for the Euro zone and for the United States, around 2%, as compared to the emerging powers, particularly China at over 12% and Latin America at 10%, spell out the further relative decline of the West – not quite "Der Untergang des Abendlandes" forecast by Oswald Spengler in his notorious book, but an imitation of it.

The institutional structure of the post-war world does not even



begin to reflect this transformation in relative power – and it is always worth remembering that with power goes responsibility. The failure to alter our institutional structures has left the Great Powers of 1945 with a much resented leadership role, but also with disproportionate responsibility for maintaining order and the rule of law. I can sum this up quickly. The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are exactly the same as they were in 1946. A combined effort in September 2004 by the strongest candidates for permanent places on the Security Council, India, Brazil, Japan and Germany, got nowhere.

In the great financial institutions created at Bretton Woods in 1944, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, voting power is based on financial contributions. Taking the IMF as an illustration, this means that the UK has a larger vote than China, and Italy a larger vote than India. In addition, the presidency of the World Bank is traditionally held by an American, that of the IMF by a European. To his credit, the World Bank's President Robert Zoellick has recently negotiated an increase in its capital in exchange for some shift of voting powers from the Europeans to the emerging markets of China, India and Brazil

But even the more recent decision-making-bodies, the G8 and the

G20, are anachronisms. The G8 consists of four European countries, together with Canada, Russia, the United States and Japan. In an effort to make the G8 more representative, a new body called the Outreach Group, consisting of China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa was bolted on in 1995. The G8, it was announced, was to become the new permanent council for international economic co-operation. But it has already been superseded by the G20, the nearest thing to a globally representative group. Formed in 1999, it includes all the world's richest and largest countries. But it lacks the formal legitimacy of its older forerunners.

The disjunction between power and responsibility is well illustrated in the final conclusions of the recent review conference on the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty. The proposals for nuclear disarmament put forward by the P5, the recognised nuclear powers, despite some welcome evidence of progress such as the new START treaty between Russia and the United States, were deemed by some non-nuclear weapons countries to be too cautious and too slow in moving towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. Rather than the detailed, dogged work of strengthening the IAEA and pressing ahead with a collection of disarmament measures from fissile material cut-off to getting rid of tactical nuclear weapons, some member-states proposed a big fix, a global convention to be held in 2012 charged with drawing up a convention to outlaw all nuclear weapons by 2025.

The other major focus was to convene a regional conference in 2012 on the establishment in the Middle East of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. For some member-states, this would entail the outing of Israel, still stubbornly silent on its nuclear role. That silence will be made more difficult by the willingness of the United States government and of the new Foreign Secretary William Hague in the UK to reveal details of the exact number of warheads each state possesses. For other member states, the proposed NFZ should deal peacefully with Iran's nuclear aspirations in the region. The conference might even find answers to the insufferable wretchedness of Gaza, a situation being brilliantly exploited by Hamas and its Iranian godfather.

The traditional Great Powers may find themselves isolated and irrelevant if they cannot build new bridges with the emerging countries. It does not help that some of these emerging countries have remained outside the NPT and are now making their own bilateral deals with nuclear powers inside the NPT. The Indo-US deal of 2008, bypassing the NPT and leaning on the Nuclear Suppliers Group to bend their own rules, was a troubling innovation, brought about by President Bush's desire to build a strong alliance with India against terrorism. Now Pakistan is seeking approval for a deal with China to supply her with two new nuclear reactors. This would be in contravention of the NSG rules, since Pakistan is not a signatory of the NPT, nor does it accept IAEA inspection or international safeguards on reactors. It also has a much more fraught internal security position than India. The NPT's rules are being eroded, and can only be reconstructed by bringing the so called nuclear armed states within the system.

Nor does it help for the P5 to dismiss efforts by non-nuclear weapons states to bring potential proliferators in from the cold. Turkey is a key player in this respect, a secular state but also a moderate Muslim country. The joint Turkish-Brazilian attempt to revive the Vienna group's proposal to enrich under IAEA safeguards, a substantial part of Iran's stock of LEU outside Iranian territory, returning HEU in fuel rod form to supply Iran's isotope producing research reactor. The deal was far from perfect – for instance Iran

insisted on its right to enrich part of its LEU stock up to 20%, a much higher level than is required to feed civilian power reactors. The timing of the Turkish-Brazilian deal also weakened its original purpose. But it would have been much more constructive to raise questions with Turkey and Brazil about these aspects, and to ask for renegotiation, than to dismiss the deal out of hand. Both of these important non nuclear powers were angered by the reaction to their proposal.

The success of international efforts to prevent proliferation and to move towards a massive reduction of nuclear weapons hangs in the balance. The review conference said the right things but took few concrete steps towards non-proliferation and disarmament.

The agreement between the partners in the UK's new coalition government states that Britain's nuclear deterrent will be maintained, that its renewal will be scrutinised to ensure value for money, and that Liberal Democrats will continue to make the case for alternatives.

So let me take the opportunity so helpfully offered. .

Nuclear weapons are very expensive weapons seeking a role and purpose in the post Cold War world. It is difficult to find one. Against terrorists, they would be far less effective than conventional weapons or the soft power of men and women with the skills to reach people's hearts and minds. Against psychotic states like North Korea, a nuclear attack would almost certainly lead to retaliation capable of destroying much of the population and the economic infrastructure too of our ally South Korea. Against other current nuclear powers, their usefulness is again questionable, since these are now our partners or allies.

We do not have to decide between a vastly expensive like for like renewal (which would send all the wrong signals to would-be nuclear powers) and abolition at this point in time. We can reduce our nuclear position stage by stage, at each stage encouraging others to join us in a global move towards nuclear disarmament.

For the United Kingdom, that first stage could be a reduction in the number of Trident carrying submarines from four to three. Before he left office, the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown was considering such a step. It could be achieved by not replacing the first of the submarines to be taken out of service.

The second stage, based on the recent research appearing in RUSI's Journal (the Royal United Services Institute) would be to keep the Trident submarines in port, with at least one on alert status able to sail in a developing crisis situation. The present very expensive "continuous at sea" strategy made sense at the height of the Cold War when Warsaw Pact nuclear weapons were at high alert levels, but it seems excessive now. With at least one submarine on alert status, the United Kingdom would keep a smaller but still effective deterrent, and would save an estimated seven billions pounds a year.

This proposed stage by stage reduction would enable the United Kingdom government to take into account technological and political developments over the next few years. The commitment of the Obama administration to nuclear weapons minimisation and eventual abolition remains staunchly strong; a number of influential non-nuclear powers are trying to extend nuclear-free zones beyond Latin America and Africa to Central Asia and the Middle East. If these initiatives are successful, there may well come a time when our own reduced deterrent should be put on the global negotiating table. It would be a mistake of the first order to get locked into a more expensive modernised nuclear deterrent with a lifetime of several decades.

The UK's contribution to the nuclear weapons debate has been impressive and appreciated internationally. We should not retreat from it. By maintaining the high quality of our technical work on verification and our remarkable joint research with Norway, we will sustain that contribution. We should add to it an offer to train some of the new generation of inspectors that the IAEA will require, and we should propose a study of cyber threats to the command and control systems on which nuclear peace depends.

Let me give the last word to Tim Garden himself. This is what he said about Trident on his own website not long before his untimely death:

"Any radically new nuclear system, whether ballistic or cruise missile based, would involve significant development costs for the

platform, missile and warhead. Such costs would put further pressure on a defence budget which is already finding it difficult to retain coherence. Nor is it clear that such systems could contribute to our security needs beyond deterring indeterminate future nuclear threats. The constraints of the NPT would cause further complications.

"The most sensible answer is likely to be that we should keep the Trident system going with life extension programmes, when needed. We can have a useful public debate about the future of UK nuclear weapons, but we would be foolish to rush into decisions that are likely to prove costly and irrelevant."

(Quote from Tim's website on Trident)
Shirley Williams, Co-President Chatham House (2002-06); Leader of the

The Democrats Dilemma

Dennis Graf

Obama's overall approval rating has dipped below 50% in recent polls and he has slipped to a dangerous 36% among the majority white voters. A few months ago he was at 49% among these people, a high figure for a Democratic President. In spite of this, Obama is still probably the single most popular elected public official on the national scene and the leftist "spin" is that most Presidents, Reagan and Clinton included, suffered this level of public disapproval at comparable points in their tenure. The Republican (GOP) party, especially the Congressional members, is not especially liked or trusted by most people, but still – they rate usually a few points higher in generic polls. Americans are very angry and uneasy and they seem to distrust everyone in political life.

It's clear, and a number of GOP leaders have said this from the beginning, that the Republicans intended to sabotage the Obama Presidency, no matter the cost to the nation. They have been "the party of no" and people don't seem to mind. This seems to be paying off and the Republicans are expected to take over the House and gain seats in the Senate in the coming November elections.

The conventional wisdom when Obama came into office was that he would be an inspiring public figure, a golden tongued communicator, a man who could sell his programs to the broad American public. It was thought that he might even find it possible to bring Democrats and Republicans together to finally tackle some of our immense national problems. That has not been the case; when Obama speaks, he seems a touch professorial, an "elitist," even foreign, and to many critics, lacking in "passion." We have some serious social pathology here; around a quarter of the public thinks it likely that Obama is not even an American citizen. In the US, though, a black man who shows emotion and "passion" makes many white people uneasy and I'm sure that Obama realizes this.

In his short time Obama has accomplished a great deal. He should receive some credit for pulling America, and the world, back from the brink of another cataclysmic Great Depression. But voters have very short memories. The public was outraged by the TARP program, the so-called "bank bailout." Though this was started during the Bush administration, most people assume this to be an Obama decision. The "stimulus," a costly and difficult to explain

program, is popularly thought to be a failure, even though large numbers of jobs were saved. However, it's much easier to sell a plan which creates jobs than one which saves them. We still have high rates of unemployment and improvements have been modest and slow. And, indeed, most Americans don't understand that we have a world wide economic sickness, something which directly impacts our economy.

Obama has done something that no one has been able to do for decades – he has reformed our wildly expensive and inefficient health care delivery system. Six months ago this was thought impossible. It's an unwieldy solution filled with problems, primarily the issue of effective cost control, but it also does provide some very good things. It will cover large numbers of people – though not everyone – who are now left out of the system. In exchange for mandated coverage, the insurance industry has agreed to not drop people when they get sick, not to reject those who have pre-existing medical conditions and to not impose a life time limit on benefits.

One would think that this would all be very popular. It is not. A majority hates it, though it's clear that most of them really don't understand the new health care law. (Americans seem to get their political education from Rupert Murdoch's Fox Network.) Most people do have coverage with which they're satisfied, though the most satisfied ones are younger people who are less likely to be sick. Americans are highly individualistic and many, quite frankly, don't care if other people can't get medical care. Republicans speak for these people. The GOP, to a man, fought every provision of the bill and now they complain about not having been consulted. The voters who dislike "Obamacare" especially object to the individual mandates to buy insurance. We already have mandatory car insurance, but the Right says that it's possible, at least in theory, to avoid driving. (It's very possible to use only public transport in most of Europe, but except perhaps for New York City, this is not possible in the United States.)

Obama has also been able to push through a bill which brings back a limited amount of financial regulation. This is, of course, highly unpopular with the business community and money will soon start flowing away from him. Obama had a surprising amount

of support from the financial people when he ran for the Presidency in 2008, but then the opposition was even more frightening. John McCain seemed old, pale, unhealthy, a cancer survivor and not quick witted in the debates, even somewhat erratic. His choice of Sarah Palin made many long time Republicans vote for Obama.

John McCain in his current attempt to remain in the US Senate has turned sharply to the far right and Palin has blossomed into an unlikely media celebrity with some real political influence, though not one with much insight. People wonder if she might run for the Presidency. I think not. The current stable of Republican Presidential candidates looks quite thin, but one person often mentioned is Jeb Bush, the brother of George W. Bush, and a former governor of Florida, one of the largest states.

It's difficult to explain, but in the United States, we have given the Supreme Court an immense amount of power. They can invalidate laws passed by Congress and signed by the President. Their word is final. These 9 people, a majority now Roman Catholic (and ultra conservative) and the remainder Jewish, serve for life and can be removed only through impeachment, a process which has never been done or even seriously tried.

Their most frightening and unpopular recent decision was the Citizens United case which struck down long existing campaign reform laws and essentially declared that business corporations (and our weak labor unions) could spend virtually unlimited amounts of money in any election at any time, to defeat any candidates they disliked, even in local races. Any boundaries seem porous. Democrats in Congress are trying now to formulate some laws which would mandate that these contributors at least be identified, though courts could strike those down, too. We have what is really a form of legalized bribery.

The American political attention span is very short right now and we seem to require a news event of the week, something designed to fill the noisy and hyperactive cable news networks. The BP oil disaster is no longer in the news. (Most people here didn't especially identify the company as British.) Last week the "big story" was the new draconian Arizona immigration law. This would – it has been delayed by a judge – require Arizona police to check

the papers of anyone they thought might be here illegally. Now, in Europe this would not be an especially dramatic step, but in the US – it is. Both parties are treading very carefully. The Democrats hope to have a long term political gain from the rapidly expanding Hispanic vote – primarily people of Mexican background – who are frightened by the anti immigrant and sometimes anti Hispanic rhetoric from the far Republican right.

This week, one of the national stories has been a Republican cry to change the Fourteenth Amendment, a clause in the Constitution which declares that any child born in the US is automatically a US citizen. (It was originally inserted to safeguard the citizenship of former slaves.) Many Republicans, including some in the leadership, are in favor of "discussing changes." The Hispanics have a far higher than average birth rate and since a large proportion of them will probably vote Democratic in the future, one can see the reason behind this GOP ploy. Texas is one of the largest states and it almost always votes Republican, but if the Hispanic population continue to grow at the present rate – a time will come when Texas would be lost to the GOP. It is generally believed that without Texas, the Republicans would not be able to win the Presidency but the Republicans are willing to take this risk in order to win in the next election.

The other minority group currently under suspicion are the Muslims. Many Americans feel that this is one of the few groups about them that they are allowed to hate and it's not uncommon to hear unpleasant things from otherwise sensible people. Today's news story is whether Muslims should be allowed to build a "community center" in Lower Manhattan, fairly close to the site of 9-11, something they quite clearly have a legal right to do. Obama has supported them. Most Democrats are not saying anything. Republicans are attacking the President's statements.

It does seem strange that Republicans are willing to alienate two large groups of people – Hispanics and now Muslims – for a short term political advantage, but right now they're brimming over with self confidence.

Dennis Graf is an activist and political commentator in Minnesota.

Burma's Electoral framework fails to meet international standards

Li cooperating organization the National Democratic Institute (NDI), claims that Burma's Electoral framework is fundamentally undemocratic and as it fails to meet basic international standards. The NDI report states that the process surrounding Burma's first national elections since 1990 "is clearly designed to guarantee a pre-determined outcome and, therefore, does not meet even the very minimum of international standards... The elections, appear to be designed to gain international acceptance for an illegitimate process." Four identified areas in particular in which the constitution and the new election laws fall short of basic international standards are; a government based on the will of people, basic human rights, freedom to stand for election and impartial election

administration. In December 2008 Liberal International visited the Burmese-Thailand border on a fact-Finding Mission. In its resolutions from the 55th Congress in Belfast and 56th Congress in Cairo, LI reaffirms that the Burmese National Convention should end the impunity towards the violations of the citizen's human rights and move towards a democracy that genuinely reflects the wishes of the Burmese people.

On 13th August the Burmese government announced, that on 7th November it will hold its first election in two decades, and has called on the country's political parties to submit their lists of candidates before 30th August. Aung San Suu Kyi, is however prevented from taking part in the election due to the country's election law which prohibits her and more than 2,000 other political prisoners from participating in elections. "This election is a sham and a farce," said Mr. Moe Zaw Oo, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of NLD-LA. The upcoming election will be the first since 1990, when Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD won the election with a landslide victory, a result that would be rejected by the junta.

Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference...

The International Bits...

There is a solid International focus to the Lib Dems' Autumn conference with the International Development policy paper, Accountability to the Poor. David Hall Matthews commented on this in the last interLib. There is also Mole Valley's motion on Human Rights & the War on Terror.

The mysteries of power have brought about something of a

transformation of the conference fringe... who are some of these people and where do they come from? With the Defence Review there is much focus on those issues, and Climate Change attracts a lot of attention in both domestic and international fields. Will delegates stand the pace of an agenda from 7.15 in the morning to 10.00 at night! Reports of any meetings will be welcome.

Saturday 18th afternoon

13.00-14.00

● **ALDE & Lib Dem Friends of**

Palestine: The Strangling of Bethlehem, is it time for sanctions?

Hilton Liverpool – Grace Suite 1

F10 Report: **European Parliamentary Party**

20.00-20.15

● **Say No to Trident (A Lib Dem ACT Group) & Lib Dems for Peace & Security:** The Real Cost of Trident.

Jury Inn – Suite 6

● **Ethnic Minority Lib Dems & Chinese Lib Dems:** The Impact of the Immigration Cap on Communities.

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 2

● **CAABU & Lib Dem Friends of**

Palestine: Accounting for War Crimes.

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 6/7

Sunday 19th morning

07.15-08.30

● **London Detainee Support Group:**

The Real Cost of Indefinite Immigration Detention.

Jury Inn – Suite 9

13.00-14.00

● **EMLD & Friends of Turkey:** Turkey & her developing foreign policy.

ACC Hall 11B

● **Greenpeace, Pugwash UK & WMD Awareness Project:** Why is now the time to reduce nuclear weapons?

Jurys Inn – Suite 9

● **Action Aid with Women Lib Dems:** On the Frontline: Women, Peace & Conflict.

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 3

Sunday 19th afternoon

F18 **Question and Answer Session:**

Nick Clegg MP

F19 **Policy Motion: Human Rights and the 'War on Terror'**

F20 **Speech: Jeremy Browne MP**

F21 **Policy Motion: Accountability to the Poor (International Development Policy Paper)**

18.15-19.30

● **LDEG: Inaugural Schumann Lecture**

– Guy Verhofstadt MEP, Leader in the European Parliament & former prime Minister of Belgium on the Future of Europe in a Global context.

ACC Hall 1B

● **CentreForUm, Business for New Europe & Aviva:** Britain, Europe & a shifting global order.

ACC Hall 11A

● **Lib Dem Friends of Pakistan:**

Pakistan High Commission Annual Buffet Reception

(contact 07956 873076

qassim.afzal@ntlworld.com)

ACC Hall 11B

● **Foreign Policy Centre, BBC World**

Service Trust & ActionAid UK: Can aid help poor people hold their leaders to account?

Jurys Inn – Suite 7

● **Oxfam GB & Robin Hood Tax**

Coalition: Can a Robin Hood Tax help protect the poor of the planet?

Hilton Liverpool – Grace Suite 3

● **Lib Dems for Peace & Security:**

What are we doing in Afghanistan?

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 1

● **UNICEF UK, Christian Aid &**

Climate Clinic: Responding to global climate change.

Climate Clinic @ Hampton by Hilton – mezzanine floor

20.00-21.00

● **ADS, Amnesty International, Oxfam & Saferworld:** Making the International Arms Trade Bulletproof.

Hilton Liverpool – Rooms 6/7

21.15-22.30

● **CentreForum & RSPB:** How to save the planet & save money.

ACC Hall 3B

Monday 20th morning

07.15-08.30

● **CER & BNE:** Europe's crisis, what role for Britain?

ACC Hall 11A

Monday 20th afternoon

13.00-14.00

● **Defence Matters & Dods:** Defence Review 2010, Afghanistan & beyond.

ACC Hall 2N

● **Institute of Development Studies:**

Where did all the aid go? Lessons for effective development.

Jurys Inn – Suite 6

● **The Foreign Policy Centre, International Alert & Care**

International UK: Conflict afflicted states, is it time to rethink development?

Jurys Inn – Suite 8

● **Transport Hub, ABTA & Flying Matters:** Can holidays abroad be a force for good?

Jurys Inn – Suite 10

18.15-19.30

● **CentreForum & Institute of Chartered Accountants:** The Coalition & Europe.

Jurys Inn – Suite 8

● **Foreign Policy Centre, Coca-Cola GB, Coca-Cola Enterprises & Standard Chartered:** From poverty to prosperity, big business in poor countries.

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 2

● **WWF-UK:** Scraping the bottom of the barrel, a future fuelled by hard to reach carbon comes at what cost.

Hilton Liverpool – Meeting Room 4/5

20.00-21.15

● **LIBG:** Democracy & Human Rights in the Developing World. John Alderdice & Gordon Lishman.

ACC Hall 11A

● **Chinese Embassy:** China, an emerging economy & a progressing country.

ACC Hall 11B

● **Foreign Policy Centre & European Azerbaijan Society:** Securing the Caucasus, conflict, energy & opportunities.

Jurys Inn – Suite 7

● **Refugee Council, Still Human Here & UNHRC:** Asylum Policy: honouring our refugee protection commitments.

Jurys Inn – Suite 8

● **WorldVision & Saferworld:** The Afghan, Somali... & me; engaging in fragile countries.

Hilton Liverpool – Rooms 4/5

● **Lib Dem Friends of Israel:**

Israel/Palestine, is peace possible? Hilton Liverpool – Rooms 6/7

Tuesday 21st morning

10.00-11.30

● **Jeremy Browne** Foreign Affairs briefing
Hilton Liverpool, Grace Suite 2

Tuesday 21st afternoon

13.00-14.00

● **Christian Aid:** Taxing Times, a role for tax in international development.

Hilton Liverpool – Grace Suite 1

● **Save the Children:** Afghanistan, Pakistan – how do we win the peace?

Holiday Inn Express – Britannia 1

● **RSPB, WWF-UK & Climate**

Change: Rainforests, protecting species & climate?

Climate Clinic @ Hampton by Hilton – mezzanine floor

● **Foreign Policy Centre, SABMiller & Business Action for Africa:** The truth about trade, igniting or impeding African development?

Novotel – Albert Johnson Room

17.30-19.00

● **BBC World Service:** BBC live radio broadcast 'World have your say'

ACC Hall 11A

18.15-19.30

● **Lib Dem Friends of India:** Annual dinner reception (invitation) – ends 22.30

ACC Hall 3A

● **Tobacco Retailers Association:**

Tackling tobacco smuggling together.

ACC Hall 4B

● **ESRC Genomics Network:** Pills or progress, improving healthcare in Africa.

ACC Hall 13

● **New Statesman & Medical Aid for Palestinians:** Gaza life support, is aid a failure in politics?

Jurys Inn – Suite 1

20.00-21.15

● **BOND, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, Amnesty, Saferworld &**

others: What is the Lib Dem vision for international development?

ACC Hall 11A

● **VSO:** Should I stay or should I go? Development & Migration. ACC Hall 13

● **Holocaust Education Trust:** When everything is Auschwitz you deny the holocaust. Anti-Semitism reinvented.

Jurys Inn – Suite 6

20.30-22.00

● **Lib Dem Friends of Kashmir:**

Kashmir, its future in a Lib Dem/Conservative coalition.

ACC Hall 11B

22.00-!!!

● **Glee Club**

Hilton Liverpool – Grace Suite 1

Wednesday 22nd morning

08.00-09.00

● **BBC World Service & BBC World News:** Breakfast (invitation)

AAC Hall 12

Wednesday 22nd afternoon

13.00-14.00

● **APPG on Kurdistan Region in Iraq & Kurdistan Regional Government:** Is Britain being left behind in Kurdistan & Iraq?

ACC Hall 4B

● **Amnesty International:** Defending the defenders – human rights & UK foreign policy.

ACC Hall 13

LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL AT LIVERPOOL

We will have a stall (D12) focused on human rights abuses at this year's Federal Conference. Please come and see us, renew your membership and find out how to become more involved in LIBG. As always, we ask members to do a stint on the stall, because even with our friends from Liberator next door it is embarrassing when people can't speak to us. We need to build up membership, and with the Coalition boosting interest now is the time to reel them in. If you are able to volunteer time before the start of the conference please email Dirk Hazell on dh@dirkhazell.com

Our Fringe Meeting this year will be on the theme Democracy

and Human Rights in the Developing World on Monday at 8pm in the Arena Conference Centre, Hall 11A. Speakers: Lord Alderdice, Convenor of the Lib Dems in the House of Lords and immediate past-President of Liberal International, and Gordon Lishman, Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the Liberal International. Chair: Dr Julie Smith, Chair of LIBG.

In addition, there will be a Foreign Affairs briefing by Lib Dem Minister of State in the Foreign Office, Jeremy Browne MP, on Tuesday 21st September from 10am to 11am. Venue tbc. This event is organised jointly with the Parliamentary Candidates' Association (PCA) and the Liberal Democrat European Group (LDEG)

Sudan How the West lost the South

As a referendum on the future of war-torn Sudan approaches, the West is poised to tick the box and move on.

It may regret being midwife to an extreme new Islamist regime in Khartoum.

Becky Tinsley

No one familiar with Sudan was surprised that last April's presidential election was brazenly rigged, or that millions of its black African citizens were denied a vote, or that opposition activists and journalists were intimidated and beaten up.

More noteworthy is what the poll, and the forthcoming referendum on southern secession, reveals about 'the international community,' as the Western donor nations are known. Supposedly independent observers declared the elections merely flawed by technical and administrative problems. No one was vulgar enough to mention that Field Marshall Omar Bashir, a man indicted for genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes by the International Criminal Court, fixed the vote and claimed victory.

All the signs are the North-South secession referendum in January will be a whitewash. But, by ignoring massive human rights abuses and fraud, the west is unwittingly signalling to the wily Khartoum regime, based in the mainly Arab north, that it can continue to wage war and ethnic cleansing by proxy, with escalating insecurity in the oil-rich south and Darfur.

Among the dozens of civil society leaders our Waging Peace team interviewed in South Sudan, we met none who believed President Bashir will hand over the oil without a fight. So far Khartoum has worn down all concerned in negotiations on where the border will be between North and South, and how the divorce will be managed. Those familiar with the Darfur peace negotiations will recognise the tactics: Khartoum agrees to the big issues, having no intention of sticking to its promises, and then quibbles at length about the details.

The Obama Administration, increasingly siding with Bashir, is said to be strong-arming the Southern Sudanese representatives to surrender more oil revenues to Khartoum in a renegotiated alimony deal. Most disappointing, the Southern rebels have been bought off at every stage, seduced by Khartoum with ministerial cars and titles.

BREATH-taking ABOUT-TURN

In a breathtaking about-turn that has left Southern citizens furious and bewildered, their leaders are now divided on whether or not their long-suffering people should want unity with their long-time oppressors in Khartoum. Why? Because those same politicians have been told they will be included in the new government if Sudan stays unified. Evidently 20 years of bloodshed are forgotten with the promise of a few Mercedes and international junkets.

It is widely assumed that if the South votes for secession it will be ruled by corrupt, incompetent, self-interested 'big men' and former rebels. There are no grounds to believe life will improve for the black African Sudanese who have endured decades of genocide and ethnic cleansing by Khartoum's proxies. To illustrate how poor the area is, consider this UN statistic: a 15-year-old girl is more likely to die in childbirth than to complete her primary education.

However, little attention is paid to what will remain of Sudan, including Khartoum, where President Bashir's power lies, and several marginalised and neglected regions, the most famous of which is

Darfur. Bashir's National Congress Party, elected in April's charade of an election, is tightening the screws of what will be the new North Sudan. The NCP is unashamedly Islamist, the hard-line form of political Islam entailing complete control of the judiciary, all aspects of government, civil society and the economy. They openly confess their hatred of gays, women, Jews, black Africans and, most of all, Arabs who disagree with their version of Islam.

Brave Sudanese NGOs are literally risking their lives to speak out about increasing totalitarianism, but they are ignored because the international community wants the referendum provisions of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement to be seen as fulfilled. The CPA, negotiated by the USA, UK and Norway, brought to an end 20 years of conflict between Khartoum and South Sudan, a war that cost the lives of two million mainly black African southerners.

President Obama's special envoy, Scott Gration, believes that by rewarding and legitimising Bashir, his regime will respond by stopping killing its own citizens. He calls for carrot and sticks, but, although Khartoum routinely breaks its own commitments, it is never punished. Khartoum draws the obvious conclusions, and continues killing its own people.

Earlier this year Gration announced that the war in Darfur was over, and urged talk of 'development' there rather than protecting civilians. Yet, since February the Sudanese Armed Forces have been repeatedly attacking villages and murdering unarmed people in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur. The toothless UN/African Union peacekeepers are so cowed by Khartoum that they have not even asked permission to investigate the reported deaths of thousands of Darfuris.

MASSIVE DEATH TOLL

No NGOs or media are allowed into a vast region, and no one knows what is happening there. Humanitarian groups have been excluded, and charities that have heard survivors' horrific testimony dare not speak out for fear of being expelled from Sudan. Waging Peace's contacts in Darfur tell of a massive death toll, but the people whom we contact are increasingly afraid even to talk on the phone: they know Khartoum is monitoring them.

So, why is the Obama Administration apparently siding with an indicted war criminal against Sudan's black African people in the South and Darfur? Is it naivety or cynicism? Or perhaps the US president has other priorities, like getting re-elected in an improving domestic economic climate.

One theory is that in place of a well thought out foreign policy, the Obama folk automatically do the opposite to the Bush people. Bush, placating his religious right base, stood squarely behind the (mainly Christian) Southern Sudanese.

But Washington insiders believe the reason why Obama is placating Khartoum is the war on terror. President Bashir has convinced the Pentagon he is on their side against Al Qaeda, despite his avowed Islamism, and despite giving Bin Laden a sanctuary for five years. America's greater security concerns are in neighbouring Somalia and nearby Yemen where Bashir's security services are sup-

posedly helping to monitor terrorist training camps.

The US has just constructed its biggest African embassy in Khartoum, and has built a massive military intelligence listening post in Sudan. Only a few in Washington, notably the State Department's Susan Rice, seem concerned that Bashir's regime are the ideological brothers-in-arms of the terrorists in both Somalia and Yemen. But Rice has been overruled by Hillary Clinton and Gration.

According to our contacts in Sudan's besieged civil society, Western meddling has left them with the worst of all outcomes: Field Marshall Bashir emerges massively strengthened from a fraudulent election, claiming legitimacy in the eyes of both Arab and African regional bodies. There are also signs that Washington may drop its sanctions against Sudan, and the UN will be under immense pressure to suspend the ICC warrant against Bashir. The message to dictators around the globe is "carry on as you were, but

pay lip service to being on our side against Al Qaeda".

Sudanese democracy activists fear Gration will pressure Darfuri civil society groups and rebels to accept meaningless peace deals with no specific sanctions if the Khartoum regime breaks its word. Sudan's displaced millions thus have no reason to believe it is safe to return home, meaning justice and lasting peace are a distant as ever for the long-suffering people of Darfur.

Meanwhile the voices of the majority of Sudanese, be they Arab or Africa, Muslim or Christian, have yet to be heard. There is a word for what the international community has been up to in Sudan: appeasement. Any school child knows there is never a happy ending when diplomats chose appeasement over tough decisions.

*Becky Tinsley is director of Waging Peace
www.WagingPeace.info*

Afghanistan Forum

Stewart Rayment

Predictably the Forum on Afghanistan was a pessimistic affair. Neither the British, Russians nor Americans have ever had any clear idea of what they were doing in Afghanistan, nor an understanding of its peoples and cultures.

Sir Rodric Braithwaite, former British Ambassador to Moscow, opened the meeting by quoting an American sergeant, who in 2001 told him 'We don't want to hear any Commie nonsense from you about a bunch of sorry arses who lost to a bunch of monkeys'. He then ran through a brief history of Afghanistan which made the short-comings of such an attitude abundantly clear.

In 1839 the British invaded Afghanistan on forged intelligence and lost Army of the Indus. Army of Retribution burnt and hanged its way to Kabul. A puppet was put in place, who took the money; twenty years later – the British invaded Afghanistan...

Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) – a model Afghan ruler, bribed or killed the opposition. This worked for twenty years to 1919 when the Afghans invaded India and were again thrown out. Britain then gave up the ambition of controlling the Afghans – still celebrated in terms of independence.



Sir Rodric Braithwaite

In 1973 King Zahir Shah was deposed by his Prime Minister, Sardar Mohammed Daoud, who took over as president. Daoud played off USSR and USA. The 1978 Coup, in which the Communist Party overthrew Daoud, presented the Russians with a difficult problem. They had not engineered the coup, and were taken by surprise. The Afghan CP split, murdering each other and everybody else – mullahs, landowners – why not, they were simply following Comrade Stalin.

In March 1979 there was a rising in Heraz, close to Iran, against the CP. It was bloody, the CP lost control of the town for a week

and appealed to the Russians for military assistance. The Russians were unsure of the situation – some of their people had been killed. The Politburo met for four days. 'Arm the proletariat' Kosygin calls Taraki – it would be a 'fatal mistake to commit ground troops, the situation would get worse' – the right decision.

In September 1979, the Prime Minister murdered the President, again without Russian influence. Russia has real interests in Afghanistan, especially after the US debacle in Iran; legitimate interests – it is on their border. They thought they could do something positive, based on their own experience in central Asia – clean water, women, education etc., it might be the same. The Russians kill Amin, the Prime Minister, amongst others and send in a 'limited contingent' – four divisions – 80,000 men (they sent 26 divisions to Czechoslovakia). The Russian's motives were limited – that they wanted a warm water port was without foundation. They wanted merely to preserve the regime under a new leader – train up the army and police, leaving a docile, subservient neighbour. Instead they got involved in a vicious civil war, as they had feared.

The Mujahedeen tried to cut supply routes from the USSR; use mines, ambush the Russians, try to cut caravans. They use helicopters, mines, ambush. The Russians would mount large operations to clean out a rebel base or close the frontier with Pakistan. These always succeeded, but they could not then hold the situation.

Public opinion turned against the war earlier than the Russians previously admitted. They sent out feelers to negotiate as early as 1983. In October 1985 Gorbachev told Kamil to plan on the basis that troops would leave within a year to 18 months. Stingers made little real impact, but took another five years because the Russians wanted to save face – leave undefeated, with a friendly government. American and Pakistan negotiated but took another view – Fundamentalist Islamic government. The final settlement was to withdraw in good order with a puppet government in place. But President Najibullah was overthrown when Gorbachev cut off supplies in 1992. The Taliban took over in 1996.

The present war is about as big as the Russian's. Casualties are lower. The Coalition has more troops (smart weapons plus TV, but kill enough Afghans to annoy them). The Mujahedeen had more support than the Taliban. American ideology is not welcome. We should be careful about drawing lessons from history.

Dr Gareth Price, Head of the Asia Programme at Chatham House, had been involved with Afghanistan since 1997. He said that Six years later (after little international attention) there is more a sense of failure than optimism. There is a lack of political focus on why we went into Afghanistan – women, heroin etc., build up the state vs. take on drugs problem before building up state. A scenario of the Taliban vs. al Qaeda was possible before 9/11, but not now. Now we're seeking moderates within the Taliban.

Problems remain – the literacy level is low. The average age is 15. Do we 'bottom up' or build up ministries? Ministries are a façade whilst Afghans are alienated from the opportunities of 2002.

The electoral system is complicated; you vote for 5 people (not parties) – hence the predominance of several warlords. The Taliban narrative actually makes sense.

There is stagnation of western policy. The Obama rethink is basically how to get out as quickly as possible with our heads held high – hence return to 'bottom up'. Karzai should run the government better and the Taliban encouraged to reform. But US/UK public opinion wants to get out asap.

Mistakes of the first 7-8 years now recognised and we are trying another approach, but is it too late?

The chair, Claire Yorke of Chatham House and LIBG, then opened the forum to the floor. Wendy Kyrle Pope said that the effect of the poppy on the Russian army and state devastating and asked 'Why not buy the poppy?' The Russians used marijuana, not

heroin. It had little effect on their fighting quality. The poppy is an illegal market, with leakage through to India; if we buy it there is still an incentive to grow. The amount on the market remains the same if paying over the odds, the growers can buy wheat.

Should we withdraw where we have no hope of control? The Russians were in the country in a way that we aren't – effect on perception. Small groups all over the place. 'Hearts and minds' doesn't work if there is no understanding of Afghan culture. The next group in won't have it and will have to start again.

Are we capable of succeeding? No. There is no popular support for Taliban, but money has been misspent. Instead we fuel corruption.

What is needed is a regional strategy – with India and Pakistan. There is too much concentration on the Northern Alliance rather than the Pashtuns. Do madrasas in Pakistan have a trans-national agenda? Afghanistan is mostly involved with Pakistan; Pakistan sees Indian aid to Afghans as hostile. The Pashtuns are the largest contributors to the Mujahedeen & Taliban. You can't run government without them. At present the Tajiks have the upper hand because invasion came from the north, but without Pashtuns there can be no meaningful government.

Better leave them to get on with it – we lack understanding, skills, intent.

The LIBG Forum on Afghanistan was held on the 24th May at the National Liberal Club.



Dr Gareth Price

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 19th July 2010

Simon Hughes praised the outgoing President, Malcolm Bruce MP, who had completed three years as President. He hoped to see more members engaged in more ways and that LI's voice should be noticed in the UK and elsewhere: LI's purpose should be more outward-facing and have a wider reach.



Simon Hughes chats with members

He noted changed opportunities for LIBG: the UK had already had the largest Liberal Party in Europe in terms of the share of the vote but, unlike others, had not until May, when our vote

had again risen, been in government since 1945. Being in government should strengthen Lib Dems in LI. Simon suggested that LI should prioritize three issues:-

1 ensuring that dealing with the environmental crisis was seen to be priority for us: there should be a permanent UN Climate

Security Council. Loss of biodiversity was of grave concern and people did care about this. The threat to Bangladesh and Maldives was also of concern;

2 the global economic crisis and avoiding repetition needed to be addressed. While there were different types of liberal, exploitation of the many by the few, greed and willingness to countenance huge debts were not the way to go; the new economic order should not allow such irresponsible conduct; and

3 ensuring we were a movement of political renewal, enhancing democracy and human rights. We should applaud India's democracy and economy while noting abuses of minorities and the need to protect human rights. We should also argue for human rights in China, Zimbabwe etc.

Simon suggested that LI could also be more pro-active in championing the cause of investment in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Activism against the arms trade was needed. The World was also looking at nuclear arsenals and there should be more multilateral disarmament: USA and Russia had set good examples.

He believed another generic issue to consider was that of advancing and building of democracy, and training tomorrow's leaders.

LI could argue for Turkish membership of the EU and support a long-term peaceful solution for Israel and Palestine.

LIBG should be pro-active in the media on our agenda. Simon wanted LIBG to be noticed on way to Congress, while there and on our return.

Simon also argues that LIBG should target key speakers and make them available to young audiences; also, for example, LIBG should be seen to be at forefront of human rights at rallies and demonstrations.

Dirk Hazell

News from Scotland

The annual general meeting of the Scottish committee of LIBG was held in Edinburgh on June 12th, and the following were elected office-bearers: Willis Pickard, chairman; Clive Sneddon, secretary; John Barnett, treasurer.

An event will be arranged to honour the memory of Ronnie Fraser, founding member of Liberal International in Scotland, who died earlier this year. To offer the maximum opportunity for attendance, this will probably take place during the conference of the Scottish Liberal Democrats in Perth next March.

*Willis Pickard
Chairman, Scottish committee LIBG*

Moeders voor Vrede

In 1999 the Belgian branch of Mothers for Peace decided that they would like to help the women of Afghanistan, and in 2002 were given a plot of land where they built a women's house in the village of Istafan, which I think is some 30 miles from Kabul. After 2 years they rethought what they would do - and started working for families, rather than just for women. They not only run literacy classes from the women's house (where only women enter) and in surrounding villages, not only enable women doctors to practice in the women's house for their ailments, but also now have agricultural projects and have sponsored digging wells and organising sewage disposal. It is important to stress that local people take over the running of the ventures as soon as they are trained and understanding the ethos of the organisation.

Mothers for Peace (Belgium) have been asked to set up similar projects in twelve other local towns and villages.

If they were to be given the amount of money that is spent on ammunition in one day in Afghanistan, they could work many more wonders. Hundreds of women have learned to read and write, and to make garments and things for sale. Their health has improved and a small amount of money brings much happiness in the villages. This micro aid works.

If you want to make contact with Jennie Vanlerberghe the wonderful woman who has led the project, please do jennie.vanlerberghe@telenet.be She is in Afghanistan at the moment, setting up one of the new projects, and may have difficulty in responding. I have known her for some 20 years, via www.womenwelcome-women.org.uk She has become a great friend, whose work I respect enormously. The Moeders voor Vrede website is at <http://www.mothersforpeace.be> - it is in Flemish, but there is a facility to translate it from the Dutch.

*Frances Alexander
Founder, Women Welcome Women World Wide President, Wycombe Liberal Democrats.*

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Ronnie Fraser

The death in March of TRL (Ronnie) Fraser was the passing of a faithful supporter of the Liberal cause in Scotland and of Liberalism internationally. Born in 1929 he was proud of having been the youngest candidate in the 1950 General Election when he contested the Govan division of Glasgow and used a tent from which he and his helpers operated. As an agricultural journalist he was particularly well informed about rural affairs and, in the course of a lifetime of Liberal activity, he was candidate in the former constituency of West Aberdeenshire, and then of Banff.

Keenly interested in foreign affairs, especially in the fortunes of Liberal parties in Europe, he was founder and for many years the first chairman of the Scottish Branch of Liberal International.

In latter years he moved from Glasgow to near Dunoon in Argyll where he rejoiced in Liberal success, first by the late Ray Michie and then with Alan Reid MP. All who knew Ronnie Fraser will cherish his memory.

R Ian Elder

YABLOKO leader convicted for involvement in demonstration

Earlier this week, leader of Russia's opposition Yabloko party (LI Full Member) Sergei Mitrokhin was among several people arrested during a demonstration against the destruction of part of Khimki forest in order to build a section of the highway running between Moscow and Saint Petersburg. After Mr. Mitrokhin refused to leave the site on police order, he was subsequently escorted to court by Russian police, and found guilty of "organized and unsanctioned action". The YABLOKO protest was joined by a number of environmental activists. Testimonies of civilian witnesses defending Mr. Mitrokhin were not allowed in court, making the statement of the police the only basis for the verdict. The arrest and trial adds another incident to the long list of controversial Russian government obstruction of the YABLOKO party's political activities. "Spending this day in Khimki I saw the functioning of the judicial-police-prosecution mafia which have kept the whole district in their tentacles", Mitrokhin said. "The police are lying, but the courts believe these lies and public prosecutors cover all these police actions," he added referring to the court case.

LI supports the Catalan nation, says Secretary General

The LI Secretary General Emil Kirjas has called on Spanish and Catalan parties to comply with the desire of the Catalan people to recognise Catalonia as a nation to respect the Statute of Catalonia that was voted by the Catalan people. LI gives its full support to the existence of the Catalan nation and the recognition of

the Catalan language, Kirjas said. "We will give our support to our fellow liberals in the Catalan Parliament, the European Commission and where ever necessary' Kirjas continued as he stated that he finds the Court declaration to be 'alarming'.

Kirjas characterised the 10 July Barcelona demonstrations as 'the largest expression for the right to self-determination not only in Europe, but ... all over the world' which only did 'demand respect'. ELDR Vice President Marc Guerrero has welcomed LI's position saying that 'Catalonia needs international allies...it is very important that the liberal family recognizes our identity and our national aspirations despite the opinion of Spain.'

Zille vows to fight Information Bill

In the light of the proposed Protection of Information Bill in South Africa, Helen Zille, leader of LI Full Member Democratic Alliance, has vowed in Parliament to use every means available to fight the bill, which she said is the 'gravest legislative threat to our constitutional democracy since 1994'. While the government has argued that the bill is intended to protect the national interest, its passage into law would be "unbelievably damaging' to the country, according to Zille. 'We have to use every single mechanism at our disposal (to fight the bill). We want to stop it being passed because we believe it would be unbelievably damaging, ironically, to South Africa's national interest to have the ruling party turn its back on the constitution and its hard-won freedoms," Zille continued as she said the bill would allow the cover up of abuse of power and stated that the bill would have a 'devastating impact' on press freedom and would effectively 'outlaw' investigative journalism and whistle-blowing in relation to the government.

Earlier Helen Zille had announced the merger between the Democratic Alliance with the Independent Democrats, which should strengthen the opposition in next year's local elections.

R E V I E W

The Struggle for Tibet by Wang Lixiong and Tsering Shakya,

Verso, 2009, £8.99

Books on Tibet tend to be very one-sided. Chinese publications justify the 'liberation' of a formerly feudal land and highlight the health and human right horrors of pre-1951 Tibet, while Tibetan exiles stress the destruction and killings that took place during China's Cultural Revolution and look back nostalgically to an alleged Shangri-la. The truth, as so often, lies somewhere in the middle.

This means that Wang Lixiong and Tsering Shakya volume of essays (and one interview) has a particular value. Wang Lixiong is a writer in the People's Republic, but shows an understanding of Tibet's religious and political aspirations that few of his countrymen possess. Similarly, Tsering Shakya, while now being a Tibetan exiled academic in Canada, is far more objective about past and current

realities than many of the Tibetans based in India.

The years of the Cultural Revolution were indeed awful, but as this book makes clear, most of the destruction was carried out by ethnic Tibetans (albeit often under Chinese instigation). Subsequently, much has been rebuilt – I have been round the magnificently restored Potala Palace in Lhasa myself – though only a fraction of the Tibetan population now live as monks and nuns, unlike 50 years ago. Is that necessarily a bad thing? This book should help readers make up their minds.

Jonathan Fryer

R E V I E W

Czechoslovakia, the state that failed, by Mary Heimann

Yale UP 2009

It's not often that you become engrossed in a book before you've reached the end of the introduction, but the story of Czechoslovakia, or Czecho-Slovakia is sad enough to script Constipation Street or some equally miserable soap opera. There is a myth, national and popularly shared, that the plucky little Czechs (and Slovaks I suppose), under the leadership of Tomáš Masaryk clawed their way out of Hapsburg tyranny and established a model liberal democracy until they were stabbed in the back by their western allies at Munich, succumbed to Nazi and Communist dictatorship, rebelled in the Prague Spring (with the promise of Socialism with a Human Face, what ever that is), rebelled again with Glasnost, but were unable to hold themselves together and became two separate nations – the Czech and Slovak republics, a triumph of a Europe of the regions.

Mary Heimann goes beyond that story; the founding fathers of Czechoslovakia deliberately included substantial minorities, notably of Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Ukrainians within their boundaries. They did not treat these people particularly well, along with their substantial Gypsy and Jewish populations, and were as much perpetrators of the events that led up to Munich as they were victims. Following Munich, in varying degrees many collaborated with the Nazis, not only the quasi-Fascist Catholic regime under Father Tiso in the then independent Slovakia, the seeds of authoritarianism having taken root across the country. After the war, more than any other east European country, the Czechs and Slovaks embraced Communism. Dubek actually offered less of a change, but was buoyed along by popular enthusiasm; the Russians struck back and things 'normalized'. On the back of the experiences of the Prague Spring, Czechoslovakia was the most hesitant of the Soviet satellites to embrace Gorbachev's reforms and the last to rebel. Throughout this story, the Czechs had taken a high-handed attitude towards the Slovaks, both of whom continued to mistreat Gypsies, Jews and other minorities.

Despite the fact that Slovaks have always played important roles on the positive side of Czecho-Slovak history – Dubek not least, they tend to be portrayed as if there is something dodgy about them – the exclusivity of their nationalism chiefly. It is of course, individuals who rise above the grey mass and inspire with their example. At the Oxford Congress of the Liberal International I found myself with Eduard Kukan, chair of Demokratická únia (Democratic Union),

with a major cabinet post as the junior member of the then governing coalition. 'You certainly dealt with those Gypsies' he confided approvingly – our xenophobic press had whipped up hostility to Slovakian Gypsies trying to seek asylum here and stuck at Calais. I assured him that there was nothing wrong with Pikes. Kukan now sits with the Christian Democrat group in the European Parliament, which is probably just as well. Liberal International has neither Czech nor Slovak member parties at this moment, though Sergej Kozlík of Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (HZDS) sit in the ALDE group in the European Parliament, though not a Liberal, nor even liberal party (national conservative).

salise is open to debate, but it is always useful to have some clues. For example, the move to West has facilitated a broadening of religious debate and development, which would not be possible in their more theocratically controlled homelands. *Stewart Rayment*

R E V I E W

Understanding the politics of heritage, edited by Rodney Harrison

Manchester UP 2010

R E V I E W

The Cartoons that Shook the World, by Jytte Klausen

Yale UP 2009

Oh, those cartoons – the ones of the Prophet Mohammed that appeared in some Danish newspaper some years ago (2005) and caused a bit of a flap. I couldn't swear that I've seen any of them; even *Liberator* didn't republish them, though they have been pretty blunt in the past about fundamentalists of any persuasion taking it on the chin like any other Joe, and the need to confront their absurdities with a bit of fundamentalist Liberalism. Remember 'Was God an Astro turf' or 'The Gospel according to David Alton' in the *Liberal Review*

So why didn't interLib publish them? First & foremost it did not occur to us – who cares about Denmark – as is echoed throughout the book. If we had thought about it then it is likely that enough members of the Collective have enough experience of working with British Moslems to have thought better of it, but that aside we would probably have gone along with the European consensus on the matter (I don't think there was any major disclosure in the UK). Venstre, the Danish economic Liberal party aren't exactly our cup of tea (Radical Venstre – much more fun) and what I've read of them and Fogh Rasmussen I might even start to doubt their credentials.

There was one UK 'almost publication' that Klausen doesn't seem to be aware of. The Cardiff university student magazine *Gair Rhydd* printed them, but the newspaper was pulped by the university before it could be distributed. The editor, Tom Wellingham, and two journalists were temporarily suspended and forced to apologise in the next issue according to Barry Miles (*London Calling*, 2010). *Gair Rhydd* means 'Free Speech' in the Welsh language.

So why read this book? It is a thorough investigation of the events around the cartoon crisis. We really are a global village and have to think responsibly about our possible actions. The global village has yet to acquire a global sense of humour. Moslem governments are likely to attach significance to things which seem trivial to the West partly because they can score points in the on-going tit-for-tat of their relationships with western governments, particularly those trying to impose their own objectives on them (ie: democracy). Moslems living in the west however are hardly likely to want governments that they may be escaping from to claim to speak for them.

There are some useful insights into the workings and thinking of some members of immigrant communities; whether these univer-

I've never been so naïve as to believe that small scale voluntary sector organisations working primarily in the environmental & heritage sectors might be immune from politics, but through one of those with which I'm involved, come upon a raft of political problems, which will almost certainly be on-going, I thought this might prove an illuminating title. It is, primarily in opening up the range of assumptions that we operate in, and the extent to which these might be in conflict with equally valid viewpoints.

My issue is a disused Victorian cemetery, one of the Magnificent Seven, but of no particular national importance as yet discovered. It does however comprise 27 acres of London's inner-most woodland. Some while ago, a GLC hangover, the London Advisory Planning Committee, for want of anything better to do, produced a report on London's burial requirements. In a footnote they said that if reopened and properly managed, the cemetery could cope with the sub-regional demand indefinitely. LPAC's methods have since been discredited, but their ideas resonate. If they seriously thought about it, no local authority that didn't run a burial facility and didn't have to would count their blessings. An emotional issue at the best of times, they are bad news. Suddenly in the wake of a bad by-election Labour proposes to reopen the disused cemetery as a Moslem burial ground, rapidly discovers that this would be ultra vires and proposes a secular alternative. The small voluntary body, which actually carries out practically all of the work in the cemetery park for the borough finds itself inundated over a period of about six weeks with concerned phone calls, emails and letters. Naturally they express opposition to the proposal, which in the wake of the inevitable bad publicity is shelved, though lingers in the back of many minds. The small voluntary body loses mainstream grant funding from the council by some coincidence, though it still carries out most of the work and the council refers probably all of their genealogical enquiries to it.

This is small fry by comparison with some of the issues dealt with by the case studies in the book. There are chunky sections on Bath and Glasgow which should be studied by those active in such places, if only to get a general background and a different take on the issues. More controversial issues – the Parthenon Marbles, the destruction of Babri Masjid and the Hindu temple that preceded it, the Bamiyan Buddhas are instructive; here we meet the cross-cultural divides. Remains of various indigenous peoples (and the British Museum) aside, western imperialism and its assumptions are dealt with in the practices of Theravada Buddhism and the Phra Sri Rattana (aka the Golden) Chedi in Bangkok.

A fascinating and useful book, which with its two companions is

actually part of an Open University course 'Understanding Global Heritage'. Any member of a local authority dealing with issues of this kind could profitably dip into it. *Stewart Rayment*

ALDE and MEP's call for a prompt response to Pakistan disaster

Pakistan's troubles have come in three's – first David Cameron finally said what everybody thought about Pakistan and terrorism, then the floods and finally the cricket. The West's response has been underwhelming so far, yet potentially it is offered the chance to try to win hearts and minds.

Charles Goerens coordinator for ALDE on the European Parliamentary committee on Development (DEVE) (and member of the Luxembourg Demokratesch Partei, DP) called for, in a joint declaration with DEVE President Eva Joly, for an in depth political debate on the humanitarian situation in Pakistan. '20 million people have been condemned to live in absolute distress... What is crucial right now is a rapid response... It's important that the EU stands out and demonstrates what she does best: to in a visible way as the first humanitarian actor in the world' Goerens and Joly pleaded. "The next decades will be marked by large scale catastrophes, which according experts will be more and more frequent... "Let's remember the posture that the EU should take now and in the future," Goerens further stated. Graham Watson, MEP has further urged the EU to take a lead in climate actions to alleviate future Pakistan floods and climate change. "Until Europe has a concerted and coordinated a policy to combat climate change and help poorer countries to mitigate its impact, such tragedies will hit us more frequently and with greater impact", Watson said.

Equatorial Guinea's opposition condemns executions

In a letter to LI, Equatorial Guinea's opposition leader in exile Martin-Endje Ngonde Maguga, of the Unión Democrática Nacional (UDENA) has expressed his disgust and sadness over the execution of four political opponents. The dissidents were convicted by a military court for their role in a bid to assassinate the country's dictator Teodoro Obiang Nguema in a 2009 attack on the presidential palace. Condemning the executions Mr. Ngonde Maguga, said that the trial was carried out without procedural safeguards, leaving the men to be executed immediately after their sentences without the right to appeal. Mr. Ngonde Maguga also called upon the international community to respond to the ongoing injustice and the lack of respect for human rights in his country. "Esto que parece un acto aislado para la Comunidad Internacional es un hecho que ocurre con relativa frecuencia en Guinea Ecuatorial desde los albores mismos de la Independencia del país hace 42 años (...) Con el paso del tiempo he visto cumplida la razón de la frase de Francisco Macías Nguema, entonces Presidente pronunciada en Malabo a primeros días del mes de febrero de 1969, cuando le oí decir que el "Presidente puede fusilar, y no pasa nada".

GARDEN PARTY

Two MEPs and a Mexican Diplomat graced us with their presence on the lovely June day of the LI(GB) Garden Party. This year it was held in the gardens of Coleherne Court, kindly and expertly hosted by Barbara and Robert Woodthorpe-Browne. When not stuffing our faces with the delicious cakes provided by Barbara, the conversation was about the Coalition, the future of the Lib Dem Party and the economic climate. Baroness Ludford talked about new exports for Britain (intellectual property, academic support), while the Political & Human Rights Attaché from the



Enjoying the LIBG Garden Party

Mexican Embassy, Minister Miguel Jimenez, told us that Mexico was coming out of the recession, at least for the time being. Graham Watson spoke of successful coalitions in Europe, where such a form of government is the norm.

Garden parties, when the weather and the surroundings are as fine as they were this June, are excellent opportunities to catch up with events, both domestic and international, at a gentler, slower pace.

Coleherne Court is just over 100 years old, and we enjoyed the irony that, just like our Edwardian forefathers, we still enjoy garden parties where the great events of the world are discussed.

Wendy Kyrle-Pope



Graham Watson, Manuel Jimenez, Robert Woodthorpe Browne, Merlene Emerson and William Parker