

United States. I would also like to have read more on Liberal experiments with mutuals, co-ownership and profit-sharing, ideas which Jo Grimond and those around him thought central to a modified market system but which we currently neglect. In 50 pages, however, this is a tightly-packed history of

Liberal achievements in politics and government, which I warmly recommend.

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addition to developing a love of Germany (costing him dear in 1915) he met Hermann Lotze, professor of philosophy.

Lotze taught him how he could be reconciled with his evangelical parents, reworking the Christian tradition compatibly with German intellectual trends. Thus emerged the foundations of Haldane's philosophy of life. (Appropriately, 'Lotse' is German for 'pilot' or 'guide').

Lotze's school of philosophy was Idealism. At its heart lay the higher values of life and recognition that intellect and spirit matter supremely. For Haldane, this philosophy was to be approached pragmatically. Educational reform mattered more to him than anything else. For this he would tirelessly evangelise.

Rationalism was the foundation of his way of thinking. His Scottish intellectual background, based on reason, stood him apart from the English empirical tradition of looking for what works. The philosophers who most inspired him, flowing from Rousseau and the Enlightenment, were Fichte, Kant, Hegel and Berkeley.

The essence of Haldane's approach was to identify a problem, research the facts deeply, devise a rational solution and then work tirelessly to turn it into practical policy which he could pursue with influencers to achieve change. He was always ardent to understand the viewpoint of others and integrate the best ideas to produce compromises – as long as his principles (values) were not undermined – which provided a workable solution.

Haldane was exceptionally willing, for a politician, to befriend political opponents, most prominently

Forgotten Liberal

John Campbell, *Haldane, The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain* (C. Hurst & Co., 2020)

Review by Tony Paterson

What caused the polymath and philosopher-statesman who had played a key role in preventing an early German victory in the First World War, to be humiliatingly excluded by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith from the new coalition war cabinet in May 1915? It was, after all, the Liberal MP Richard Haldane who, after becoming War Secretary in 1905, had created the Territorial Army (TA) and the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), making Britain ready to send an army overseas when war broke out in August 1914.

Why Haldane was nonetheless ousted from the cabinet in May 1915 is one of many fascinating questions which John Campbell answers with insight and fervour in his magisterial biography, *Haldane, The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain*.

A biographer as devoted to his subject as Campbell is to Haldane risks lapsing into hagiography but, instead, this author hugs his hero so close that

the reader emerges almost feeling that Haldane (1856–1928), with his balance of values, evidence-based thinking, and consultation, is still alive, and wishing he was.

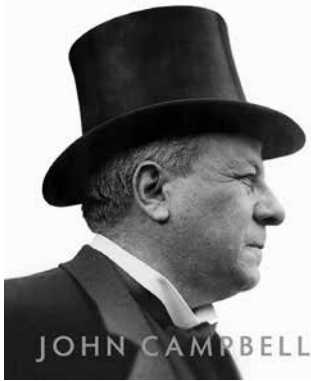
In the early chapters, Campbell traces his subject's formidable forebears, including the (unlike Haldane) reactionary Lord Chancellor Lord Eldon, who sat on the Woolsack between 1801 and 1806 and again between 1807 and 1827, and Haldane's patrician Scottish parents, both pious Victorians.

After struggling, in his teens, to fully embrace his parents' Christianity because so much feeling sweeping over Scotland left him hungry for a supporting intellectual foundation for belief, Haldane was spared from alienation by the transformative proposal of his professor of Greek at Edinburgh University, to send him to Göttingen University in Germany for a term.

This began in April 1874. The experience changed Haldane's life – and, arguably, in view of all that he subsequently achieved, ours. Here, in

HALDANE

The Forgotten Statesman
Who Shaped Modern Britain



Arthur Balfour. He was adept at what Campbell terms ‘energising networks’: topping up his own mental and physical effort, which were rarely enough on their own to enable him to succeed in his most successful endeavours. This worked nowhere better than in his cross-party labouring in the field of educational reform.

Haldane believed in public service to the nth degree. Modern hedonist practitioners of populist politics would have appalled him. His austere family motto was, simply, ‘Suffer’.

Before exploring how his high-minded approach to politics bore fruit for Haldane the politician (a talented lawyer whose parliamentary career as Liberal MP for Haddingtonshire stretched unbroken from 1885 to 1911, when he was elevated to the Lords), Campbell notes the fall from grace of German Idealism, which underwent denigration by other philosophers, especially after the First World War, though the school of Realism had taken root even before.

The leading post-war detractors of Idealism were Bertrand Russell, G.E.

Moore, Wittgenstein and A.J. Ayer. To them, Idealism no longer made sense after that catastrophe, justifying cynicism. Philosophy changed to become an avenue to the sciences in the decades leading up to the Second World War. According to the atheist Ayer, for instance, when we argue about whether a value-judgement is right or wrong, we merely argue about the empirical facts upon which it is based.

What Haldane achieved – and how

Having traced the influences, familial and philosophical, which made Haldane who he was, John Campbell describes his prodigious record of political achievement, and his highly original method.

Campbell’s biographical approach is more thematic than chronological. Studying how he achieved what he did rightly interests Campbell as much as narrating his vast range of reforms.

It was as Secretary of State for War, an office he held between 1905 and 1912, that Haldane, created the TA and the BEF, thereby critically helping to avert the early defeat of France in the First World War. A staggering eighty per cent of his 90,000 BEF soldiers were killed or wounded between August and Christmas 1914 but, critically, they successfully helped to blunt Germany’s advance into France.

He also tackled the chaotic back-up available to the regular forces: the Militia, the Volunteers and the Yeomanry – rebranding and reorganising them in the teeth of entrenched opposition.

He actually decreased military spending (as the radicals demanded)

while boosting the army’s capacity to enter the field of combat. Haldane was also the minister responsible for creating the Officers’ Training Corps, the Imperial General Staff and the Royal Flying Corps.

Key to his success was his method: consultation as opposed to imposing a plan without making the relevant Generals feel involved.

In a sense Haldane’s insistence on putting thinking first brought about his undeserved downfall in May 1915. The rise of British air power was – and by some still is – thought to have been impeded by his ardour for putting deep thought ahead of speed.

The press magnate Lord Northcliffe thought Haldane should have confronted the challenge posed by foreign powers amassing air power by swiftly acquiring some aircraft of our own. In April 1915, Northcliffe led the vitriolic press campaign to exclude Haldane from the newly formed coalition cabinet in part because he hadn’t heeded these pleas.

The other factor was the visit the germanophile Haldane had secretly made to Germany, at the cabinet’s behest, in 1912 to, allegedly, sell out his home country. In reality, the ‘Haldane Mission’ had been diplomatic – designed to defuse tensions – but the secrecy with which it was shrouded left many people suspecting, after it became known, that he had been guilty of treachery.

After being ousted from the cabinet, Haldane later achieved rehabilitation in the light of his crucial pre-war reorganisation of the military. Never one to be deflected by prejudice, in 1921 he invited Einstein to visit Britain and stay in his home, which required courage of them both. The theory of

relativity had so fascinated Haldane that he had written a book called *The Reign of Relativity*.

Haldane achieved his mother's ambition for him since his childhood by becoming Lord Chancellor in 1912. In office, he laid the foundations for what became the Law of Property Act 1925 and shaped the future of Canada through his transformative presidency of the Privy Council's Judicial Committee.

Later, after despairing of the Liberals over educational reform, Haldane joined the Labour Party and became Lord Chancellor in their first government in January 1924.

Education was his third sphere of high achievement. He campaigned for a massive increase in education based on ability, not wealth. His greatest passion educationally was to reform the universities, reflecting the Scottish tradition of wider educational access than in England.

The University of London, for instance, in 1894, had no teachers and no students! He then co-founded the London School of Economics with Sidney and Beatrice Webb and they achieved a fully fledged University of London in 1898, relying on Haldane's warm relations with the Tory Arthur Balfour, then Leader of the House of Commons.

Perhaps Haldane's greatest educational achievement was – shocked by the damage to British industry resulting from defective technical education and scientific research, while science and business were cross-fertilising ever more closely in Germany – his central role in founding Imperial College.

The transformation Haldane engineered also led to the creation

of numerous universities outside London.

Haldane's other forgotten achievements include empowering women in the civil service, creating the Secret Service Bureau (forerunner of today's MI5 and MI6) and advocating the establishment of both the Medical Research Council and a Ministry of Health in his seminal 1918 Machinery of Government review.

Conclusion

Are today's Liberal Democrats forever condemned to the role of Sisyphus, laboriously rolling the stone up the hill in Everest-conquering by-elections, only to see it tantalisingly tumble back down the hill at the next general election?

Haldane saw that abstract principles (values) are vital, though only really useful if scientifically applied

to make life better for the many. His revolutionary, pragmatic values-based approach may show how the Liberal Democrats, despite the hostile voting system, can retain the loyalty of their voters at general elections.

Campbell combines a degree of passion for his hero unprecedented in the experience of this reviewer and lover of biographies, with a steely determination to remain objective. The figure who emerges is a towering platonic guardian, vibrantly alive, whose principled thinking still inspires about how governing could be done so much better.

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Liberal parenting

Kevin A. Morrison, *A Micro-History of Victorian Liberal Parenting: John Morley's 'Discreet Indifference'* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Review by Ian Packer

This book is part of Palgrave Macmillan's 'Palgrave Pivot' series of works of 25,000–50,000 words, which offers authors the opportunity to publish pieces somewhere between a journal article and a full-length book in length – a series that has the great advantage of allowing writers to explore new ideas in some depth without committing to a lengthy monograph.

Kevin Morrison's book definitely breaks new ground by exploring

the concept of 'liberal parenting' in Victorian Britain, through a detailed examination of the practice and ideas of the leading Liberal writer and politician, John Morley. Morley was an important example of the social mobility of the Victorian middle class. He was the son of a doctor in Blackburn, who sent the young man to public school and Oxford, before Morley struck out on his own as a journalist, essayist and biographer. In 1883 he became a Liberal