

# Liberals

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The word "liberal" is not in good repute nowadays among those who profess to stand for the principles of a free society; the term "libertarian" is preferred by them, on the grounds that "liberalism" has come to denote encroachment of the state upon the freedom of the individual.

"Liberal" is a good fine word, connoting breadth of mind, generosity of outlook, respect for freedom and for the individual. And there still exists in England a Liberal party which remains loyal after a fashion to the great tradition of liberalism. (Not as much can be said for the Liberal party of New York State).

In a history of England's Liberal party, R. J. Cruikshank offers this description: "Liberalism is a political philosophy of moderation and reason, a creed that detests violence, compulsion and authoritarianism, but it finds its driving force in the impulse toward social justice (sic) ... First and foremost, the Liberal party is the party of Freedom. ... "What is Liberty?" "What are its frontiers?" ... How to reconcile a well-organized society with the full expression of the individual, particularly the uncommon individual. How to achieve security without enduring regimentation. How to set free the vital energies of the whole people." The liberal "finds Conservatism negative, living in the past, and lacking the positive qualities needed to arrest the drift toward the total State. ...As for socialism, the Liberal is less attracted by it now that he has seen it in power, than when it was a dream or noble minds. He feels that his old suspicion that Democratic Socialism is really a contradiction in terms has been confirmed."

Put me down as a Liberal!

How, you ask, can they avoid running squarely into the Georgist philosophy?

As a matter of fact, they have.

In its hey-day the Liberal party saw Cobden and Bright bring free trade to England. John Stuart Mill was one of its spokesmen. And in the days of Gladstone, when Henry George visited England, it is said that his land reform ideas were in almost daily discussion in Parliament.

A little later and land value taxation was a national issue. In the memorable year 1909 there was Liberal government with as brilliant a constellation of stars as was ever assembled -- Lord Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman, Lloyd George, Winston Churchill,

James Bryce, John Morley, Edward Grey and a host of others. Across the country they campaigned for a national land valuation and sang the Land Song.

Alas! A series of calamities doomed the effort. The implacable opposition of vested interests, the exigencies of politics and coalitions, a disastrous world war, the rising tide of socialism -- all left the Liberal party and its issues on the sidelines by the 1920's.

On the sidelines -- not *hors de combat*. The effort will certainly come again. Where? When?

Varus, Varus, give me back my legions!