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producer of the Monster Mash**
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Obituaries

Sir Trevor Jones

Swashbuckling Liberal politician who was known as Jones the Vote' because of his flair at elections

The Liverpool politician Trevor Jones delighted in being called "Jones the Vote" because of his role, often using unorthodox methods, in improving the Liberal party's fortunes in by-elections. David Steel, the leader, once warned him: "I don't think the party is quite ready for your methods." Jones replied: "No — but they're ready for my results."

An outstanding campaigner who invented what became known as "pave-ment politics", Jones became the Liberal leader of Liverpool city council between 1981 and 1983. He was concerned with everyday problems and used "focus" leaflets directed at specific local targets. Liberals elsewhere followed his example.

However, Jones was something of a cuckoo in the Liberal nest. He had little in common with the Liberal establishment which was made up largely of privately educated university graduates drawn from the professions. Nor was he in step with party activists, who often fussed about procedures and the setting up of committees.

The two factors that influenced Jones were his remarkable wartime experience and his rise as a self-made businessman. He was short and stocky, walked with a swagger and had a flair for self-publicity. He never lacked confidence. Always ready with a humorous quip, he dismissed Saatchi & Saatchi, the advertising agency used by the Tories, as "Snatchy and Snitchy."

Trevor Owen Jones was born in Bootle in 1926. His parents came from Portmadoc in north Wales but settled in Liverpool. He left Waterloo grammar school at the age of 14 and concealed his age to join the Merchant Navy in 1940. He saw action with the Atlantic convoys and was in Singapore at the end of the war against Japan. When Lord Mountbatten, who was Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command, took the salute as Allied prisoners were liberated from the Japanese prison camp at Changi, Jones was chosen to represent the Merchant Navy at the ceremony. At 18, he was the youngest man there. More than 70 years later he still recalled seeing the prisoners "with bones protruding in places where I did not know there were bones."

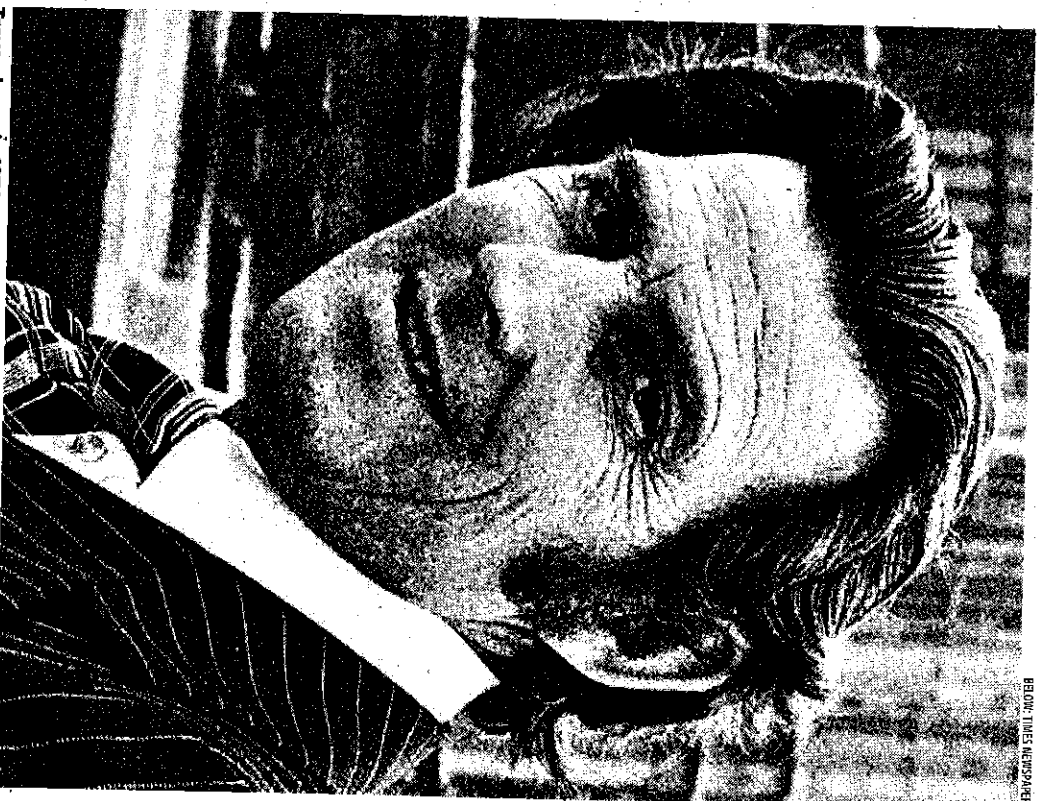
Hardened by the horrors of war, Jones returned home with a sense of ambition and drive. He took various

He joined the Merchant Navy at just 14 and sailed with the Atlantic convoys

jobs in the Liverpool docks, then began making ships' fenders, cargo nets and pilots' ladders. He took over a failing ships' chandler's, J Plant & Sons, and turned it into the largest in the country. He also owned three sport shops.

Although his liberalism as a young man was only rather token, he traced his political radicalism to his Welsh roots. A friend said: "You can take Jones out of Portmadoc but you can't take Portmadoc out of Trevor." At the time the Liberal party was almost extinct.

In 1966, when the Labour and Conservative leaders on Liverpool council announced redevelopment plans involving the bulldozing of large parts of



Trevor Jones in 1974 and, below, with his wife Doreen, flying the Jolly Roger on the Mersey while campaigning for local elections. He had a knack for self-publicity



the city centre, including one of Jones's warehouses, he was galvanised into political activity. He became a prominent campaigner, organising petitions, protests and posters. He gained national attention when he tried and failed to get parliament to pass a private bill to stop the development. He had found his vocation in political protest. Liberalism had found a champion.

Having seen the local council in action Jones decided to seek election. He won a seat in 1968, becoming only the second Liberal councillor in the city since the war. He was soon joined by more, including his wife, Doreen, who would later serve as lord mayor.

In 1972 he promised Jeremy Thorpe, the party leader, that the Liberals would take control of the city. A disbelieving Thorpe promised to ride naked on an elephant through the streets of Liverpool if that happened. In the local elections of 1973, 48 Liberals were elected and became the first councillors from their party to control a major city in 40 years. The confounded Thorpe claimed that he could not find an elephant.

Jones became deputy leader and chairman of the housing committee. One of the committee's first acts was to cancel plans to construct an elevated inner-city motorway, which would have involved the destruction of

hundreds of houses. Instead, the group supported an ambitious scheme of housing improvements.

Jones also became prominent in national politics. He was elected party president for 1972-73 and took his battle bus to several successful by-elections. In search of recognised names to fight seats the party pressed him to run for parliament. He tried twice in 1974 — first in Toxteth, then in Gillingham, Kent — and lost on both occasions.

In business and politics he was "Mr Liverpool" and soon abandoned any parliamentary ambitions. At the same time, the Westminster leadership did not know quite how to handle this political late-starter, who was swashbuckling, even arrogant, and dismissive of London's political "games".

A strong family man who enjoyed many of the good things in life, his wife and their two children, Glyn and Louise, helped him to run his business. Glyn was educated at the private Liverpool College where Gladstone had once delivered a speech day oration lasting three hours, and read classics at Oxford. He once worked in the Merseyside development office in London.

Liverpool was at the forefront of the Liberal revival in the inner cities, where Labour had had it too easy for too long. They replaced the Conservatives as the main alternative to Labour. Jones became Liberal leader on the council in 1976 and later council leader. Among the young activists he inspired were David (now Lord) Alton, his deputy leader on the council, and Chris Renard (now Lord Renard of Waverley), who became the Lib Dem campaign chief. In 1979, Jones helped Alton to win the Liverpool Edge Hill by-election with a record swing of 36 per cent.

Jones did not approve of the Lib-Lab pact in 1977 and only reluctantly supported the alliance between the Liberals and the Social Democrats (SDP). Indeed, the decision of the SDP to stand against Liberal councillors in Liverpool helped to pave the way for the Militant-controlled Labour party to take over the council in 1983. For Jones it was a bitter period in local politics. He sold his Aston Martin because it was so often damaged by political opponents.

After the Toxteth riots in 1981 Michael Heseltine, the Conservative secretary of state for the environment and the new minister for Merseyside, worked closely with Jones in trying to regenerate the city. He became a member of the Merseyside Development Corporation and, once again, leader of the council. Although his party lacked a majority in the chamber he was used to wheeling and dealing.

It was a surprise to many when, aged 75, Jones was again elected to the council in 2003, with the party regaining control. He finally retired in 2010. His friend Lord Alton, recalling Jones's role during the Seventies and Eighties, said: "He led by example, always staying close to the people, fearless in opposing Militant, consistently arguing for the city and its needs. Liverpool has lost a formidable champion."

Sir Trevor Jones, businessman and politician, was born on December 17, 1926. He died of cancer on September 8, 2016, aged 89.