

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## Looking For A Leader

It's a little over two months since the Tories won the general election with a majority of just twelve seats on 36.9% of the vote. Not enough to form a government, if their proposals on trade union strike ballots were applied to general elections. But the Tories have always advised, "don't do as I do, do as I say." It's a party that knows its place in British politics is to run the country in favour of its class. This applies to the current Bullingdon Club elite, who run the government, as it did to Major's and Thatcher's governments. Cameron and Osborne may say they believe in One Nation Conservatism, but the One Nation Conservatism that appealed to voters had a life under Macmillan and ultimately died under Heath.

Under Miliband's leadership, Labour had a shot at a 'One Nation' strategy but it never really left the drawing board. Labour had little idea of the kind of One Nation it wanted to create. Miliband simply cherry picked from a popular list and seemed to believe that a range of disconnected issues added up to a coherent election strategy. Labour failed abysmally to respond to the Tory charge that Britain's debt and deficit were the result of economic mismanagement by Brown and Balls. It should have combated the widely held belief that Tory governments manage the economy better than Labour governments. The records do not bear this out, for example Osborne's efforts to rebalance the economy have been a failure, but the myth constantly repeated by the Tories and their media supporters became the reality for voters.

Miliband resigned immediately it was known that Labour had lost. He may have been an honourable man, but he was an ineffective leader easily caricatured by the Tory press as a geek. It was repeatedly said that his brother would have been a better choice, but it is hard to believe so given his record as Foreign Secretary. He was Blair's right hand man in his thirst for military adventures and in many other areas of policy. Now the party is in the throes of an election to choose a new leader. A process that began on 24 May, will end on 25 September with the announcement of the new leader. Initially, four candidates declared their interest: Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, Liz Kendall and Chuka

Umunna. Umunna dropped out of the contest early pleading the potential effect of pressure on him and his family. This is a pity as he at least understood the changes needed to provide sustainable jobs for all, but the policies of Burnham and Cooper could not be separated with a cigarette paper, with Kendall out on a limb sounding more Tory than Ian Duncan Smith.

The three candidates acquired the support of a minimum of thirty-five of their party colleagues. But in the interests of political diversity calls were made for a representative of the left to come forward. Enter Jeremy Corbyn, a modest, self-effacing man, and apparently a reluctant candidate, who offers a clear alternative to the other three. It was said that voters wouldn't be attracted to Corbyn, a political dinosaur in the eyes of the Tories and many in Labour's ranks. But, surprisingly, the more he has been exposed to voters, the more voters have liked him and agreed with his political alternative. The media have highlighted the fact that he has rebelled against his party on more than 500 occasions. But this includes voting against amendments to Parliamentary bills, of which there are many, as well as on Second Readings. By refusing to toe the party line Corbyn has shown he is his own man, a rare presence in today's Commons. His views on foreign policy and nuclear weapons are derided by the Mail and the Sun, but polls have shown they resonate with voters. Cameron wishes a Corbyn victory, knowing that his press friends will crucify him. He may get his wish, but live to regret it.

Labour's new leader will have their work cut out to mount an effective challenge to the Tories and their newly confident Chancellor. Osborne's sleight of hand, of which the late Tommy Cooper would have been proud, turned an increase in the minimum wage into a statutory living wage. Rebranded as a national living wage, it took Labour by surprise. But no one should be fooled by Osborne's apparent largesse. The 'national living wage' of £6.70 an hour in October 2015 rising to £9.35 an hour in October 2020, excludes workers under the age of 25. It sends a clear message to employers, who normally resent being told what to pay their workers, to increase the number of under 25s

in their employment. The free market is to be cast aside and replaced with compulsion.

The so-called national living wage is in any case well below what is required for a family to live on without extra support. And the proposal carries with it a sting in the tail. Working tax credits will be cut or frozen for four years plunging hundreds of thousands of working households into poverty. They are the people Osborne and his sidekick Ian Duncan Smith lauded as 'hard working families.' Millions more households will be pushed deeper into poverty as their tax credits are cut or withdrawn altogether, when their earnings rise. Child tax credits will be limited to two children, punishing children in large families. There is a case for reducing the £30 billion tax credits bill, but Osborne's assault on the working poor and those who genuinely depend on state support is a callous way to do so. And his further assault on young people from poor working class families with the transference of the (£3,300) student maintenance grant into a loan, will increase the total amount of student loans making it more difficult for them to get to university.

Of the candidates, only Jeremy Corbyn is pre-disposed to challenge the dogma of austerity. Osborne's aim of a low tax, low welfare economy is ideologically driven. Corbyn understands that austerity for families, coupled with further cuts in government department budgets and the imposition of a 1% rise in public sector salaries for four years, is an attack on public services and the welfare state. Cameron and Osborne are doing what Thatcher failed to do, or was perhaps reluctant to do. The claim that cuts in the welfare budget are necessary to balance the books rings hollow when about half of the budget cost is taken up with pensions and pensioners allowances, left untouched by Osborne.

The press made much of the news that UNITE, the largest trade union, had declared its support for Jeremy Corbyn, ignoring the fact that the result will be decided by a one member, one

vote electoral system. Labour has said that anyone can vote in the election providing they pay a fee of £3 to join the party, with a closing date of 8 September. This is a temporary measure which excludes full membership. It could help to elect Corbyn if a significant number of those who left the party, disillusioned with Blair's leadership, rejoin to vote for the left candidate. Victory for Corbyn will be opposed by the party's right wing, but welcomed by the Tories and their press supporters. His victory or a very good showing could be a catalyst for a long overdue shake up of Labour which has become Tweedledee to the Tories Tweedledum.

### TEARS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

Tourists die on a Tunisian holiday,  
a decapitation in France to Hollande's dismay?  
Cameron acts with equal feigned surprise,  
reality for the inner cabinet, for the public lies.

Three ruined nations with two dead presidents,  
another one under attack in his own residence.

Bombing pilots as heroes,  
their masters as EU Neros.

Weeping on TV from the Tunisian survivors,  
let's have more of that says the media skivers.  
But what of those blown to bits by our heroes,  
no mention, no cover, a row of zeros.

Innocents forgotten and dismembered  
have justice long to be remembered,  
an AK47  
has been the leaven  
but why has it to be you  
and me.

Ask the EU?

Wilson John Haire.

# Labour Affairs

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# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

On 10 July 1916 Prime Minister Asquith made the following statement to the House of Commons.

I have during the last fortnight asked many hon. Members to postpone questions in regard to the proposed Irish settlement, and what I am now about to say will, I hope, be taken to be a comprehensive reply to those inquiries. The House will, I am sure, excuse me if it is a reply which exceeds the dimensions of an ordinary answer.

On the 25th May I informed the House that I had come back from Ireland impressed not only with the breakdown of the existing machinery of Irish government, but with the strength and depth, and I think I said even the universality of the feeling that we had now a unique opportunity for a joint effort to attain agreement as to the way in which the government of Ireland is in the future to be carried on. I said that His Majesty's Government were anxious to do everything in their power to facilitate that result, and I added that with that object my right hon. Friend, then Minister of Munitions (Mr. Lloyd George), at the unanimous request of his colleagues, had undertaken what I described as a mission of peace and reconciliation and of possible unity. I think I indicated with clearness what was the scope and character of my right hon. Friend's effort. It was not to invite the assent of the various parties and sections of opinion in Ireland to proposals put forward by or on behalf of His Majesty's Government. It was, upon the assumption that the Government of Ireland Act is on the Statute Book, though its operation is, for the time being, suspended, to see whether, under the existing conditions, they might not be disposed, by a process of give-and-take, to come to an agreed settlement. Such an agreement, if and when arrived at, would, of course, have to be submitted to the Cabinet, and, if approved by them, to Parliament.

In pursuance of that purpose my right hon. Friend proceeded at once to make

himself an intermediary between the different sections of Irish opinion. I think there is no section representing any substantial body of opinion whose view he did not invite and receive. I may say—and I am glad to say—that at every step in the negotiations my right hon. Friend was in close consultation with me. He very soon discovered that, as between the leaders of the Nationalist party and of the Ulster Unionists there was one basis, and only one, upon which a settlement was possible. It involved, on the one side, the bringing into operation, as soon as possible after Parliamentary sanction had been given to the new arrangement, of the Government of Ireland Act as so modified. It involved, on the other side, the exclusion from the operation of that Act of an area consisting of the six counties, Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone, and the three Parliamentary boroughs, Belfast, Londonderry, and Newry. The negotiations proceeding upon that basis developed agreement on a number of other important but relatively subsidiary points, and in the end the rough heads of a settlement were drawn up. I think it right to observe at this point that none of the parties to the agreement was in the position of a plenipotentiary with power to bind those for whom he was acting. It was, with all of them, an arrangement *ad referendum*—in the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Dublin University (Sir E. Carson), to the Unionists of Ulster; in the case of the hon. and learned Member for Waterford (Mr. J. Redmond), to the Nationalists of Ulster and subsequently of the rest of Ireland; and in the case of my right hon. Friend and colleague, to the Cabinet. That assent was secured by both the Irish

leaders. It is only fair to some of my colleagues in the Cabinet to say that, owing to reasons for which I think we all of us here agree, none of us was to blame, there was some misunderstanding as to the point in the negotiations when they should have come under Cabinet review. But, in view of the agreements which had been publicly come to in Ireland, and of the supreme importance of preserving the unity of the Government in this great crisis of our history, we are all willing to share the responsibility of now submitting them to this House and recommending their acceptance by Parliament.

Let me say here at once—and most emphatically—there has been one dominating factor which has induced—or, if you like, compelled—acquiescence at the present juncture of men who have fought against one another upon this domestic battlefield for the lifetime of a generation, and have never yet laid down their arms. There are features in the proposed settlement which none of us, voluntarily, would have chosen; one or another of which, for different reasons, all of us dislike. That was inevitable in any arrangement which did not involve the complete triumph of one set of ideas over another. It was this fact which hitherto, and notably at the Buckingham Palace Conference on the eve of the War, baffled and frustrated every effort at accommodation. What is it, then, that has made Irishmen of the most divergent views, and members of the Cabinet itself—none of whom, in either section of the Coalition, has surrendered his convictions in this matter—what is it that has made them willing to become parties to, or sponsors of, this new experiment? There is one simple and, I think, sufficient

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.



answer—it is the War! If I may for a moment digress—I hope the House will pardon me—from my theme to look at what, at this time, is going on in the region of the Somme, where the gallant Ulster Division has covered itself with undying fame, and Irish regiments from every province are vying with one another in a splendid rivalry and devotion to the Empire and the cause of the Allies—which we all alike know and feel is the cause of justice and freedom—there is not a patriotic Irishman, I do not care to what section of Irish opinion he belongs, who does not feel that these common sacrifices and glories in themselves create a new bond between themselves and between them and ourselves.

This, then, is the moment to remove, if we can, the future peril of domestic strife, that we may be free in every part of the United Kingdom to concentrate our whole thoughts and energies upon the achievement of victory. It is in that spirit that both Ulstermen and Nationalists have conducted and continued these negotiations, and that we as a Government are going to offer to the House proposals embodying in substance the heads of their agreement. Those proposals, of course, must take the form of a Bill, which will in due course be introduced. Therefore it would be in the highest degree inconvenient if I were at this stage to anticipate its detailed provisions, for which at the proper time there will be abundant opportunity both for explanation and debate. I will only indicate in the broadest terms that the main changes contemplated in the existing Act, apart from those which are consequential upon the exclusion of the six counties, are that the Irish House of Commons is to consist of persons who, for the time being, are Members returned by the same constituencies in Ireland to serve in this Parliament, and that the Appeal Court in Dublin is to consist of judges appointed by the Imperial Executive. Up till now we have not received any specific proposals from the Unionists of the South and West of Ireland, though they have been invited by my right hon. Friend—and by me—to make them.

Any such proposals will, of course, receive our most careful and sympathetic consideration.

Finally, there are two points which, before I conclude, seem to deserve special mention. The first relates to the powers of the Imperial Government in Ireland during the continuance of the present War. The Government of Ireland Act was drawn, and its Clauses were framed and passed, without any reference to the struggle in which we are now engaged. The Act contains a general provision which reserves for the exclusive authority of the Imperial Government and Parliament, not only the Navy and the Army, but all matters arising out of war. I myself believe—I speak my own personal opinion—that that general enactment would suffice to cover the exigencies of the case. I am certain it is not the intention or desire of any of those who can conceivably be members of the Irish Executive during the currency of the War to encroach in any way upon the undivided power and responsibility, in all that appertains directly or indirectly to its successful prosecution and conduct, of the Imperial authority. To avoid, however, any possible doubt, words will be proposed—in my opinion they are a mere exposition of what is already implied, if not expressed, in the Government of Ireland Act—to make this abundantly clear, especially with reference to emergency legislation which Parliament has found it necessary to pass in the Defence of the Realm Acts and other Statutes in temporary operation, which arise out of the state of war, and are needed there under for the defence and safety of the Kingdom. The other point to which I think it right to refer before I sit down is that, under these heads of agreement, it is provided that the Bill is to remain in force during the continuance of the War and for a period of twelve months thereafter; but that, if Parliament has not by that time made a further and permanent provision for the government of Ireland, the period for which the measure remains in force is to be extended by an Order in Council for such time as may be necessary to enable Parliament to make this provision. In other words, in a sense and in a very true sense, the Bill is a provisional measure. But I see all sorts of possibilities of misapprehension in the use of the term. To relieve any possible doubt on that point, let me say, speaking for those who, like myself, look forward to and are anxious for a united Ireland, “we recognise and agree in the fullest and sincerest sense that such union

can only be brought about with, and can never be brought about without, the free will and assent of the excluded area.

I believe I have been engaged in this controversy myself, like some of those who sit here, for nearly thirty years, and I have never altered my view. I believe we have now the golden opportunity, brought upon us by circumstances which we could not have foreseen—urged upon us by the exigencies of the War—to arrive at an arrangement already approved by the representatives of the two leading Irish parties, though in many of its features it is distasteful to both of them, and in some of its features, I know, distasteful to my colleagues, and, I will add, to myself—we have here an arrangement such as would never have been possible before. Though, of course, I am not now dealing with the Bill to be introduced, or inviting debate, I venture to make one more appeal to the House and to the country to take advantage of an opportunity which may never recur to provide, at any rate, the seed and germs of a lasting settlement of this question.

**Sir Edward Carson:**

I should like to ask the right hon. Gentleman two questions. He talked of the arrangement as a “provisional arrangement,” I understand. I also understand, from what he said, that the six counties will be definitely struck out of the Act of 1914. Of course, at any time afterwards they could be included by a Bill?

**The Prime Minister:**

They could not be included without a Bill.

**Sir E. Carson:**

Another thing I should like to ask is, I assume that the Bill to be brought in will contain the provisions with reference to the future government of the six counties, or, at all events, we will have, before the Bill goes through the House, the provision for the government of the six counties laid before the House?

**The Prime Minister:**

The machinery will be suggested.

**Sir E. Carson:**

I am obliged.

**Mr. W. O'Brien:**

Will the right hon. Gentleman say how soon the provisions of this Bill will be laid before the House?

**The Prime Minister:**

I cannot give a date, but, of course, there will be no avoidable delay.

**Mr. W. O'Brien:**

This week or next week?

**The Prime Minister:**

I should not like to give an exact date.

**Lord Hugh Cecil**

Can the right hon. Gentleman say at all in detail what will be the authority in Ireland which will have the administration of the Defence of the Realm Act and the other emergency laws to which he refers?

**The Prime Minister:**

The representative of the Imperial Executive

**Lord H. Cecil:**

Who will that be I do not mean what individual, but what office he will hold?

**The Prime Minister:**

I should like to consider that.

**Major Guinness:**

May I ask whether any provision will be made to resolve differences which may arise between the British authority controlling the Defence of the Realm Act and the Irish Executive as to the enforcement of those Acts; and, further, whether there is any proposal to disarm the rival Volunteers in Ireland?

**The Prime Minister:**

That is rather a matter of Executive action, and I would appeal to hon. Members not to ask me for details. These matters are still being most carefully considered, and I think it would be very foolish of me to commit myself or the Government to specify proposals at this moment.

**Lord Claud Hamilton:**

Might I ask a general question? Will the 63 Nationalist Members continue to vote in this House after the Parliament in Dublin is set up?

**The Prime Minister:**

Yes, Sir, under the provisions of the Home Rule Act.

**Mr. Joynson-Hicks:**

Might I ask the right hon. Gentleman what will be the effect as regards finance upon the United Kingdom—whether the point of finance will be considered?

**The Prime Minister:**

I deprecate a question of that kind at this time. The hon. Member will have a most ample opportunity of considering that later on.

**Mr. Pringle:**

Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether the provisions in the existing Act in relation to the powers over Customs and Post Office are to continue?

**The Prime Minister:**

There again I must deprecate these questions.

**Mr. Hogge:**

Does the right hon. Gentleman not think it would be better to give Members of the House an opportunity to discuss them

before the Cabinet matures its proposals in a Bill, so that we may not have division at a time when he wants unity; and may I also ask him if he will not, after the differences the Colonial Secretary found in his own party, call a meeting of his own party, and see if we are united?

**The Prime Minister:**

I am always glad to meet my own party. If they wish to see me, I will see them, but I have no reason to think any such need has arisen. I would once more, if the House will allow me, ask hon. Members to postpone these questions. A Bill will be brought in, and there will be every opportunity of discussion.

**Lord H. Cecil:**

Will the right hon. Gentleman give an opportunity of discussing Lord Hardinge's Report?

**The Prime Minister:**

I have answered that question already.

**Lord H. Cecil:**

I understood the right hon. Gentleman to say that he would, if a sufficient number wished it?

**The Prime Minister:**

If the Noble Lord looks at my answer, he will find that I did not say that. What I said was, if a specific Motion were put down with regard to the Report, I would consult my colleagues.

**Mr. Peto:**

I want to ask the right hon. Gentleman, not a question of detail but with regard to something I took down when he was speaking. I understood all members of the Cabinet share the responsibility of recommending this proposal to Parliament. Later on, in pointing out the difference of views of one section of the Cabinet, he said they were all sponsors of this new experiment. Do I rightly understand that the Cabinet as a whole are jointly and severally responsible?

**The Prime Minister:**

The hon. Gentleman did not do me the compliment of listening to the statement I made, and if he will read it to-morrow he will see what I said.

**Mr. Ginnell:**

As my questions were postponed for this occasion, and yet have not been answered, perhaps the Prime Minister will be good enough to answer me now on a very definite point. He has said that he desires this settlement to be arrived at by the free will and consent of the Irish people. Will he explain how it is that martial law and the Defence of the Realm Act have been used to suppress a meeting in opposition to his present proposal, and to facilitate a

meeting in support of that proposal; and will he inform the House whether he has received from any statutory elected body in Ireland a request for such a Bill as this for the partition of Ireland, and whether all the elected bodies that have voted at all on the subject have not voted directly against partition?

Mr. Gwynne Does the right hon. Gentleman propose at once to set up two Houses of Parliament in Dublin, and, if so, how will the second House be nominated?

**The Prime Minister:**

When the hon. Member sees the Bill he will find that question will be answered.

**Colonel Yate:**

The right hon. Gentleman spoke of "the Irish House of Commons". May I ask if he will give an Irish name to the Irish House of Commons?

**German Casualties (Killed).**

Question asked on 4 July 1916.

**Mr. Outhwaite** asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he can give an estimate of the number of Germans killed since the outbreak of war; and how many male Germans reach the age of eighteen each year?

**Mr. Tennant:**

I am afraid I can satisfy the hon. Gentleman's bloodthirsty cravings only with estimates, and not with scientifically ascertained facts. According to the German official casualty lists published up to the 31st May, 690,268 of all ranks had been killed or died of wounds. I must not be taken as doing more than giving the official German figure. Hon. Gentlemen must form their own estimate of the credibility or accuracy of these figures. Any estimate, however, in the numbers of killed and died of wounds, whose names have been omitted from these casualty lists, must be purely conjectural. In answer to the second part of the question, I may inform him that it has been calculated that the number of males between seventeen and eighteen years of age on the 1st December, 1914, was 674,580, and on the 1st December, 1915, 691,274.

**Mr. Outhwaite:**

Why does the right hon. Gentleman refer to this question as being a bloodthirsty craving on my part, when the object of it was to show how many Germans of military age are killed each year and therefore the futility of the War?

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Algeria saving French jobs?

A flour mill (Les Grands Moulins Maurel) in Marseille belonging to a large company (Nutrixo) closed 19 months ago and has been occupied for the past 9 months by 27 ex-employees fighting to keep it going. This mill produced flour and semolina for 155 years and is viable, but it is situated on expensive land next to an expanding commercial centre. Employees were sacked, occupied the site, were dislodged *manu militari* by the riot police but returned and have been in the place since October 2014.

Salvation might come in the shape of 5 Algerian entrepreneurs who want to produce semolina and cattle feed for the Algerian market. The remaining obstacle is Algerian legislation which forbids entrepreneurs from investing abroad. This law has been repealed but the decree of implementation has not yet been passed. The 27 employees are waiting for the French government's diplomatic action to accelerate the process.

François Hollande visited another site where employees have taken over their place of work in the hope of keeping it going and meeting with success at the moment, the Fralib tea cooperative, also in the South of France; the Fralib had given him a letter containing information on three other such sites, the Grands Moulins Maurel, Saint-Louis Sucre (a sugar factory) and the SNCM. The state is also not proceeding with the expulsion of the workers from the mill, even though a court has given the order. Nutrixo is threatening to sue the government.

### Scientists saving jobs?

Goodyear tyres closed down their Amiens-Nord factory in January 2014

with the loss of 1173 jobs; some 300 of their ex-employees, with the CGT union, wanting to keep it going as a SCOP (*Société Cooperative Ouvrière de Production* or Production Cooperative Labour Company) and are working together with American and French scientists to develop special tires for agricultural machinery.

On the positive side, the Amiens Court of Justice has ordered the end of the dismantlement of the factory; an American professor of management at the university of Cornell is making a business plan; the president of the scientific council of the CNRS (the French Research Institute) is working on the creation of a Research and Development service.

On the problematic side, the ex-employees must get licences from Goodyear Dunlop Tires France for agricultural activities.

The researchers are not philanthropic: it's not a case of intellectual charity, it's a case of two employment crises meeting: the unemployment of scientists and the unemployment of factory workers.

### A working SCOP destroyed

Employees of Sealink Channel ferries which went into liquidation in November 2011 formed a Cooperative Company (SCOP) to run three ships of the former company. The new company was called My Ferry Link (not a very good French name) and had been offering successful Dover Calais sailings from August 2012 until July of this year when the service stopped. What went wrong?

There were 3 companies offering ferry crossings: P&O, FSDS (Danish) and My Ferry Link, with various prices and frequency of service. My Ferry

Link was cheaper but offered less frequent crossings, so you couldn't just turn up and board as with the others. In that sense it did not compete in terms of service, but it was advantageous price wise.

My Ferry Link did not own the ships; Eurotunnel had bought the ships and leased them to former employees to run.

The UK Competition Commission ruled that Eurotunnel may not use the port of Dover for the next 10 years. This did not happen overnight.

The Competition and markets authority (CMA) only won its case after gaining from the British supreme court leave of appeal against the London appeal court decision which had overturned the ban on Eurotunnel boats in the Channel.

The result is the loss of French jobs, and no French company operating ferry services across the Channel. The French Competition Authority does not agree with the decision of its British equivalent, nor does the French minister of state for transport. They argue that cross Channel ferry travel has increased by 12% and that there is enough traffic to support 3 companies. They argue that the CMA has no right to prevent ships entering a harbour, in this case, Dover.

Meanwhile passengers had a smaller choice this year, and hundreds of workers lost their livelihood. The workers have prevented the Danish company FSDS from using the port of Calais and blocked roads; it remains to be seen whether their action will have a positive result.

### The Encyclical on the environment.

The Encyclical on the environment



was published in May 2015. It is a Papal document intended for the widest possible readership, viz everyone in the world, written from a non-Western point of view. Obviously the Pope is not supposed to have a point of view dependent on where he lives or comes from, but Pope Francis has a distinctive point of view because of where he comes from, that is, South America. He supports his text with many quotations from past authors and from bishops from all parts of the world.

For him 'environmental' and 'social' are not separate. He says: 'The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.' For example rich countries exploit resources in the developing world without regard to the human consequences, which include the destruction of where people live: (numbers are the number of the paragraph)

'52. The foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them, yet this is not the case where ecological debt is concerned. In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future.'

See also later in the text the same idea:

'139. When we speak of the "environment", what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality.'

This is particularly clear in the destruction of traditional ways of life:

'145. Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community. The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems.

[...]146. In this sense, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.'

The Pope is optimistic on principle, but his conclusion regarding the future is that 'Yet the same ingenuity which has brought about enormous technological progress has so far proved incapable of finding effective ways of dealing with grave environmental and social problems worldwide. A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries. Such a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture, developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water.'

## STREETWISE

The cardboard boxes  
the bin-bags  
the life of foxes  
in posh store  
doorways  
awakened  
in Central London  
by the cleaner's roar  
dreaming thinking  
I once had a flat  
blinking  
at the dawn  
but I had no job  
once I mowed  
the rich man's lawn  
on the minimum wage  
out sick  
no longer engaged  
Job Seeker's Allowance  
and rent paid  
hardly a life enhance  
but in the dry  
then before the committee  
2015 in this great city  
without money

without pity  
was I trying hard enough  
that zero-hour restaurant  
for example  
prove to us you seek work  
four times a week  
through your library  
computer  
says she  
with the purple fingernails  
cuter  
than Sally Bercow  
you'll find your skills  
or you're off the till  
off  
six weeks  
then a year  
food-banks  
bleak  
rent off  
now streetwise  
unemployment register  
off  
head full of words like  
kill  
chill  
shrill

ill  
and  
nil  
somewhere in Oxford Street  
competing with the dope-heads  
the alcoholic piss-the-beds  
any spare change  
avoided  
like I had the mange  
then the law  
move along  
but where to  
just fuck off  
where to  
anywhere  
see if I care  
hear me sing  
Land of Hope and Glory  
for a copper  
when I should be singing  
Land of Dopes and Tories  
I must warn you  
anything you say- !  
any spare change

**Wilson John Haire**

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## **Austerity – Working Well for the More-Than-Millionaire Class**

“Capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men, for the nastiest of reasons, will somehow work for the benefit of us all.”<sup>1</sup>

That’s what Keynes once said, reflecting what most of the British ruling class believed when they dominated the world. Capitalism was a useful source of new wealth, but always viewed with suspicion. The ruling class was consisted mostly of landowners, lawyers, senior civil servants and military men: actual working capitalists were rare.

Socialists believe in socialism as an abstract ideal. But there is no reason why actual working capitalists should believe in the abstractions dreamt up by Adam Smith and other economists. Mostly they take a pragmatic view: often an unprincipled view. Theories that dogmatically reject state intervention are useful for arguing against regulations and spending that get in the way of some particular capitalist’s business. But a lot of the regulations suit them, as do many state subsidies.

The US Republicans depend heavily on the votes of rural areas that receive enormous state hand-outs for their crops. (Or sometimes for *not* growing particular crops – the sequence about a farmer’s success at ‘not growing alfalfa’ in *Catch-22* is based on hard facts.) The supposed logic of the Free Market is violated, but why not? The real motivation has always been to give the More-Than-Millionaire class as much money as possible. Subsidies tend to be based on output, so the biggest and least needy farmers get the lion’s share. But the rest are needed for their votes, and so get something.

The almost-forgotten stock market crash of 1987 was handled by a surge in state spending, carried through by the Thatcher government in Britain and the Reagan administration in the USA. For that matter, Reagan’s success involved a lot of state spending, but it was spending on the military. He pumped up the Military-Industrial Complex, the system that President Eisenhower viewed with suspicion but lacked the power to curb. In my view, it was the Military-Industrial Complex that allowed the USA to win the Cold War without becoming overtly socialist. Military research shows an interest in new possibilities without concern for whether they might be profitable in the short term, or ever. Right-wingers support such spending because it is military and they like the military. Left-wingers fail to say that it proves the usefulness of research and development that ignores costs and

immediate profits. One could sensibly cut out the actual spending on new weapons, but it’s better that the research and development be done under military sponsorship than that it not be done at all.

(Microchips were developed first for military use. So was the Internet. The World Wide Web – different from the Internet, a system that *runs on* the internet – was developed at CERN as one of the side projects allowed for researchers like Tim Berners-Lee, even though it had no obvious link to high-energy physics.)

It’s also a mistake for the left to simply say ‘austerity isn’t working’. The economic pain is undeniable, but right-wingers are able to present the pain as *necessary*. The left-wing argument should be that the pain has fallen mostly on the middling and poor. Overall government spending has continued much as before, but vast amounts have gone to ‘quantitative easing’, a confusing name for giving money to banks with bad debts, meaning that the value of speculative investments are maintained. It works for the rich, even though it is painful for everyone else.

Actual believers in the Free Market would have allowed a huge number of financial institutions and hedge funds to crash in the financial crisis of 2008. Most countries have guarantees for individual savers: up to £85,000 *per account* in the UK. A crash would only have hurt the More-Than-Millionaire class, almost all of whom had dabbled in high-risk, high-return investments. But in practice they were in charge and opposition was incoherent. The rich were looked after and have suffered very little. Ordinary people were much too trusting and have suffered a great deal.

This comes on top of a long-term trend of paying increasingly large salaries to people at the top of the system: people within or near to the More-Than-Millionaire class.

“Until the 1980s, corporate CEOs were paid, on average, 30 times what their typical worker was paid. Since then, CEO pay has skyrocketed to 280 times the pay of a typical worker; in big companies, to 354 times.”<sup>2</sup>

Thirty-five years of New Right policies haven’t really reduced the size of the state. Nor have they increased the average rate of growth in the West. All that’s happened is that the rich got an unfair share.

## **Don’t Call Them the 1%**

Why do I speak of a More-Than-Millionaire class? Because many people have trouble with numbers. And because people often place themselves much higher

in the social hierarchy than they actually are. And because having somewhere between one and two millions is entry level for this elite group.

A survey in the USA found that a fifth of the population think they are part of the richest 1%. Another fifth thought they would get there eventually. Twenty times too many to be possible: forty times too many if you include those who think they are candidates. But no one can suppose they are a millionaire when in fact they are not.

Not that all millionaires would qualify. Not if it’s based on the value of a house: something that has happened to a few middle-income people with the explosion of London property prices. And within the More-Than-Millionaire class, it’s safe to assume that those with only one million would count for much less than the really rich.

The term means less than it used to. A million dollars in 1920 would be maybe 65 million today, in terms of economic status.<sup>3</sup> The first recorded usage of ‘millionaire’ was by Disraeli in 1826,<sup>4</sup> when a million pounds sterling was 75 million by purchasing power, but more than a thousand million in terms of economic status.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless, the More-Than-Millionaire class is large enough to dominate, for as long as voters are persuaded that socialist ideals are outdated. Members or potential members stand at the top of many organisations, with those below them aspiring to such status. And they tend to look after their own class at the expense of the rest of us:

“Christine Lagarde, the IMF boss who caused international outrage after she suggested in an interview with the *Guardian* on Friday that beleaguered Greeks might do well to pay their taxes, pays no taxes, it has emerged.

“As an official of an international institution, her salary of \$467,940 (£298,675) a year plus \$83,760 additional allowance a year is not subject to any taxes.”<sup>6</sup>

That’s equivalent to half a million for someone in pounds paying normal British tax.<sup>7</sup> Members of international organisations being exempt from tax makes a certain amount of sense; but the rates of pay are ludicrous. Or would be ludicrous if the intention was to have people who’d look after the interests of ordinary people rather than the elite, which is presumably why rates were set so high. Keynes commented on this as well:

“During the 1944 economic conference at Bretton Woods, where the IMF was created, American and British politicians



disagreed over salaries for the bureaucrats. British delegates, including the economist John Maynard Keynes, considered the American proposals for salaries to be 'monstrous', but lost the argument.

"Officials from the various organisations have long maintained that the high salaries are a way of attracting talent from the private sector. In fact, most senior employees are recruited from government posts."<sup>8</sup>

But the weakness of this class is that they know how to work the system, but don't know how the system works. Worse, they are filled with illusions about the merits of 'capitalist democracy' – not that the actual system is either solidly capitalist or straightforwardly democratic. Britain was not even loosely democratic until the 1880s, when a majority of adult males in the British Isles got the vote. The British Empire was never democratic and never intended to be, or not until the late attempt to convert it into a Commonwealth when the Empire was clearly in decline after World War Two. The Western system would not have won the Cold War if it hadn't imported a lot of socialist ideas in the 1940s, and most of these have not so far been purged by the best efforts of the New Right.

### Greece – Compromise and IMF Sabotage

Global finance does not want a left-wing government to succeed. And within Europe, there is a strong left-wing challenge likely to be expressed in the Spanish General Election, which must be held by 20th December. (Likely to be held at the end of November, but the date is not yet decided.)<sup>9</sup>

For this reason, it's not surprising that the Eurozone when confronting Greece has insisted not just on balance, but on austerity, or rather 'Feed the Rich'.

In the same spirit, no penalties are being applied to the experts who fiddled the books to make Greece look suitable for Euro membership, which should not have happened:

"If you thought the Goldman Sachs banker who did the deal to get Greece into the euro might have been chased out of the City of London, think again.

"Antigone Loudiadis, more widely known as 'Addy', has been richly rewarded by the bank for her dealmaking prowess and now sits atop one of Europe's fastest growing insurance companies, Rothesay Life."<sup>10</sup>

Greece needs fixing, but New Right methods will not fix it. They haven't really fixed anything. The fairly successful Westernisation of the Arab and Muslim world went into reverse when they used Western power to enforce their own 'wisdom'. They wrecked Yugoslavia and are currently wrecking Ukraine. They alienated Russia when Russia had been very keen to Westernise in the 1990s. Their only real success has been getting ordinary people to go on voting for 'Feed the Rich' policies. And this has been made easy by the strong left-wing fear of 'corporatism', which became fear of any efficient government action.

The left wouldn't take 'yes' for an answer in the 1970s, when ideas of Incomes Policy and Workers Control were popular. They wanted an immediate transition to some ideal system, rather than accepting the messy compromises that real-world politics almost always require.

In Greece, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has accepted the messy compromises, which do give him the chance to make left-wing reforms in the long run. Meantime Varoufakis has resigned as Finance Minister, presumably to avoid having to make such a deal. This is unrealistic, though one can understand how he

feels. The whole situation is messed up:

"On our way back from Berlin on Tuesday, Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis remarked to me that current usage of the word 'reform' has its origins in the middle period of the Soviet Union, notably under Khrushchev, when modernizing academics sought to introduce elements of decentralization and market process into a sclerotic planning system. In those years when the American struggle was for rights and some young Europeans still dreamed of revolution, 'reform' was not much used in the West. Today, in an odd twist of convergence, it has become the watchword of the ruling class.

"The word, reform, has now become central to the tug of war between Greece and its creditors. New debt relief might be possible—but only if the Greeks agree to 'reforms.' But what reforms and to what end? The press has generally tossed around the word, reform, in the Greek context, as if there were broad agreement on its meaning.

"The specific reforms demanded by Greece's creditors today are a peculiar blend. They aim to reduce the state; in this sense they are 'market-oriented'. Yet they are the furthest thing from promoting decentralization and diversity. On the contrary they work to destroy local institutions and to impose a single policy model across Europe, with Greece not at the trailing edge but actually in the vanguard."<sup>11</sup>

But they've got the power. Iceland was able to defy International Finance,<sup>12</sup> but they had their own currency. Likewise Malaysia in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Greece should have stayed out of the Euro, but things have gone too far now. Greece had to take what was on offer.

Remarkable, no sooner had the deal been painfully made than the IMF denounced it.<sup>13</sup> It doesn't mean that they are going to offer anything better: just that they want to make everyone discontent with what is actually available. My belief is that this was deliberate sabotage: it makes no sense unless they reckon the deal isn't optimal for global finance. Unless they would prefer chaos and the probable break-up of the Euro, reaping vast profits for speculators and producing short-term gains for the Anglosphere. (And if anyone says this would be short-sighted, it may indeed prove so. But they have been amazingly foolish before and are unlikely to have learned anything.)

Syriza were elected to resist austerity, but not to take Greece out of the Eurozone or European Union. Tsipras has showed his quality by accepting the best available deal – and one which gives him time to make some solid achievements.<sup>14</sup> When it came to the show-down, Europe's leaders must have been well aware that the only people protesting vigorously against a harsh line with Greece were people who'd never vote for them anyway. Whereas there were a lot of votes that might have been lost if the deal could have been presented as 'too soft', even if the harshness were actually self-defeating. That's democracy for you.

### Foolishness in China

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 was a unique event. The only occasion when a sudden collapse in share prices triggered a general economic slump. And most economists agree that the initial crisis was mishandled, though they disagree about which policies were errors.

Subsequent stock market crashes have been handled much better. The Crash of 1987 is almost forgotten, and the bursting of the Dotcom bubble did not cause major problems. What happened in 2008 was different: the global financial system was at risk. But it has not led to another depression, though there has been

much economic pain. Governments have gone on spending, though they've used it as an excuse to spend less on the needs of ordinary people and give most of their handouts to dodgy banks that hold the wealth of the very rich.

In China, I'd see it as the government going too far in a pro-market direction over the past few years. It is generally agreed that easier borrowing allowed a bubble:

"China's stock market tumble has presented the government of President Xi Jinping with a searing test of its commitment to overhaul the country's financial system and open up the state-controlled economy.

"Building off the work of his predecessors in the last three decades, Mr. Xi has been introducing competition into the banking industry, overhauling state-owned companies and making it easier for foreign investors to buy Chinese stocks. But the pace of reform may slow if the stock market slump persists, or even accelerates.

"The stock market represents the swirl of social, political and economic forces at play in the reform efforts...

"The government had encouraged the stock market rally, since strong demand for shares would have made it much easier to sell their shares of state-controlled businesses. Now, their efforts to shore up the stock market are actually reinforcing the dominance of state-owned enterprises.

"With the new lending initiatives, those state-owned companies, viewed as too big to fail, are actually performing well, as the shares of smaller, private sector business take a major hit. Shanghai-listed shares of PetroChina, the state-controlled oil giant that has some of the closest links to the Chinese Communist Party of any company, have surged 28.8 percent since the start of last week. The company's New York-listed shares, where no special financing is available, have fallen 5.3 percent in the same period."<sup>15</sup>

*The Economist* regards the position as not very serious:

"The first mistake—often made by China pessimists—is to think that the market crash presages an economic collapse. That is most unlikely. True, the stockmarket is down by a third in a few weeks, but it has fallen back only to March levels; it is still up by 75% in a year.

"Lost in the drama is the fact that the stockmarket still plays a small role in China. The free-float value of Chinese markets—the amount available for trading—is just about a third of GDP, compared with more than 100% in developed economies. Less than 15% of household financial assets are invested in the stockmarket, which is why soaring shares did little to boost consumption and their crash should do little to hurt it. Many stocks were bought with debt, and the unwinding of these loans helps explain why the government has been unable to stop the rout. But such financing is not a systemic risk; the loans are about 1.5% of total assets in the banking system. The economy is solid. Growth, though slowing, has stabilised. The property market, long becalmed, is picking up. Money-market rates are low and steady, suggesting banks are stable."<sup>16</sup>

A lot of the Western media were thinking that here at last was the crisis that would end China's inconvenient rise. But *The Economist* is there to give sound advice to investors, so it sings a different tune.

Almost all commentators including *The Economist* are worried that economic 'reforms' may get hit. They should be. The Chinese government relaxed controls on buying shares with borrowed money. This produced a bubble, with people paying more than the underlying

value of the shares in the belief that they would go higher. As of 14th July, it seems to have been brought under control. China is now imposing much tougher regulation, forbidding major investors to sell their shares.

"The Shanghai Composite closed up 2.4% to 3,970.39, rebounding nearly 20% from the four-month low hit on Thursday.

"The latest measures from regulators involved cracking down on 'grey-market' margin lending, which is flooding the market with leveraged stock bets.

"They will also clamp down on investors creating fake trading accounts."<sup>17</sup>

What's surprising is that it was allowed in the first place.

### A Triple Whammy in the USA

The USA is finally coming into line with European values. First, the Supreme Court rejected a legal challenge that would have undermined 'Obamacare'.<sup>18</sup> Then it declared that Gay Marriage was a part of Human Rights, meaning that individual states will no longer be allowed to forbid it.<sup>19</sup> And separately from this, South Carolina hauled down the Confederate Battle Flag that has for decades been a visible symbol of White Supremacy.

The flag is actually the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>20</sup> There are a number of other Confederate flags without the same racist overtones. They had the problem of looking rather similar to the regular US flag, which is why the Battle Flag was chosen.

Don't listen to arguments that it was about the Southern heritage or State Rights. Former Confederates reacted sensibly to their crushing military defeat: they abandoned any serious notion of separatism in favour of racism. Even the Klu Klux Klan were in practice sullen unionists, they did not challenge the system but served as violent enforcers for segregation. This was acceptable because most of the north was also racist, as I have detailed elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

Booker T. Washington was spot on when he said "You can't hold a man down without staying down with him."<sup>22</sup> Sadly, the bulk of the South was happy to stay down just so long as they could maintain White Supremacy. When the ruling elite decided that open racism had to be abolished for the USA to win the Cold War, they deserted a Democratic Party that looked after their economic interests in favour of a Republican Party that looked after the rich and was not serious about opposing multiracialism: it wanted their votes, not their values. Rather pathetic, really – except that a pathetic fellow with a firearm can very easily become a mass murderer.

In the modern USA, notions of an agreed and legal secession by Texas or any other state are marginal. The South showed that its main reason for secession had been racism by settling down so readily when slavery was ended, when it found that racism and segregation were accepted. It settled down when it found that Southern politicians could dominate the government, just so long as they respected the predominant power of the North.

As for Gay Rights, the USA has experienced the same sort of shift that led the Irish to vote overwhelmingly for Gay Marriage in their recent referendum. People nowadays have decided it is indeed a human right. As recently as 1999, US citizens would have been two to one against it: but now they are for it by 55% to 42%.<sup>23</sup> It all fits with Marx's notion of 'bourgeois capitalism' undermining its own values with its greed: but society has unexpectedly been able to generate a new form of corporatist capitalism in which bourgeois values are being junked.

Which leaves unresolved problems with

surrogate mothers. Lots of people think 'selling a child' is a bad idea: but outside of China, I don't think anyone is ready to get tough enough to actually prevent it. Even Chinese controls have not stopped it, but are strict enough that we now have wealthy Chinese hiring women in the USA to serve as surrogates for their children.<sup>24</sup> Mostly, though, the market is uncontrolled and there are certainly abuses. My solution would be regular agencies, large and regulated and non-profit-making.

### How Arab Secular Nationalism Was Sabotaged

"You can speak about the ideology of the Baath, which was secular and socialist in outlook with a centralized state and wanting to modernize. In other ways it was just being pragmatic. It was responding to the situation on the ground and decided that it had human resources and it should take advantage of them. Lots of Iraqi women, even those who were in opposition to the regime and who might have suffered under the regime, who I have talked to think with nostalgia about the 70s when there was an expanding economy, social-economic rights, and the state was quite generous. In my mind, it is not true that Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party lasted so long just because they brutally repressed the population. I think they also bought off the expanding middle class. In terms of social-economic rights, in terms of access to education, health care, having a house, a freezer, a car, people could do quite well if they didn't open up their mouths. This was all in the 1970s.

"Then in the 1980s there was the Iran-Iraq War. During that period things changed drastically. Lots of the state funding, instead of channelling it into education, health care, and child care, it got channelled into the military, and that's when things started to shift...

"What really had a devastating affect upon Iraqi women was not the Gulf War in 1991, but the 13 years of economic sanctions. To my mind I feel that part of history should not be forgotten. You can't actually understand contemporary Iraq without understanding the impact that the sanctions had on society. Lots has been written and talked about the humanitarian crisis that occurred during that period in terms of health care and education. When it came to women it really triggered a shift to greater social conservatism. That had different causes. One was that when people are fighting and struggling over resources and over jobs there is often a call for women to go back home and look after the children. That happened in Iraq where in some parts you had up to 70% unemployment...

"This shift towards greater social conservatism in the 90s is an important background in order to understand what happened after 2003. Also, lots of people had left by 2003 including many secular, educated, and middle class people, and this has had an impact on what's going on today."<sup>25</sup>

As I said earlier, the weakness of the current 'Overclass' is that they know how to work the system, but don't know how their own system works. Are filled with illusions about the strengths and merits of 'capitalist democracy', so that they are genuinely surprised that dumping such a system on Iraq was a pathetic failure.

In real terms, Iraq no longer exists: Iraqi Kurds and Shia Arabs each have their own state, while Sunni Arabs have merged with similar people in Syria to form ISIS. The US weakened or destroyed the elements that might have worked with them, wanting only believers in their own nonsense about 'capitalist democracy'.

Exactly the same happened in Libya. Having made a sensible deal with Gaddafi that would have allowed for gradual incorporation, the West rattled on it when the 'Arab Spring' started:

"The Congressional harrying of former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over emails concerning the 2012 death of an American Ambassador and three staff members in Benghazi, Libya, has become a sort of running joke, with Republicans claiming 'cover-up' and Democrats dismissing the whole matter as nothing more than election year politics. But there is indeed a story embedded in the emails, one that is deeply damning of American and French actions in the Libyan civil war...

"While the emails do raise questions about Hilary Clinton's veracity, the real story is how French intelligence plotted to overthrow the Libyan leader in order to claim a hefty slice of Libya's oil production and "favorable consideration" for French businesses.

"The courier in this cynical undertaking was journalist and rightwing philosopher Bernard Henri-Levy, a man who has yet to see a civil war that he doesn't advocate intervening in, from Yugoslavia to Syria."<sup>26</sup>

There was a plot to destroy Gaddafi, in the belief they could create a docile government to replace him. It was never realistic. Those who wanted such an outcome were not tough enough or numerous enough or popular enough. A lot of them were anyway insincere, playing the West for what it was worth but with no intention of dying for their supposed beliefs. Some of them were honest and some did indeed die for the deal the West was offering. But not enough to transform a society where Western ideas were alien and mostly seen as hostile.

I said at the start of the Arab Spring that Tunisia, with its relatively strong survival of socialism, was the one place where the process might work. But as the recent killing of Western tourists has shown, even Tunisia is far from safe.

### Why Hilaire Belloc Reverenced Mussolini

"Society in Italy had to reach the point of acute peril before that reaction took place which saved the country; but what a fine reaction it was, not only in its virtues, but, what is more important, in its spirit" What a strong critical sense Italy has shown! What intelligence in rejection of sophistry, and what virility in execution! May it last! But will it last? Even in Italy?

"Everything good in this world is doomed to perish, and I cannot tell how long this excellent experiment will stand, or whether it will take firm root, and make Italy all that it desires to be, and all that Italy should be...

"I made a sort of pilgrimage to see Mussolini, the head of the movement, and I wrote about him for the Americans. I had the honor of a long conversation with him alone, discovering and receiving his judgments. What a contrast with the sly and shifty talk of your parliamentarian!"<sup>27</sup>

Belloc was in his time a major writer in Britain. Nowadays he is mostly viewed as part of a charming vanished world. I did find one exception:

"The Belloc of *The Cruise of the Nona* is a very different figure - a genuinely dangerous character. The book begins softly enough, in the language of romantic escapism, but by the time it has run its course it has laid down a seductive program for the regeneration of England. The program is explicitly Fascist, and the real hero of this story is Mussolini, who had come to power in Italy in 1922, three years before Belloc's *Cruise* was first published'...



"Belloc doesn't make a secret of his support for dictatorship and the abolition of the representative corps of States:

"The Italian [Parliament] was contemptible, and the Spanish a joke. They have both been happily kicked into the street, and I trust we shall hear of them no more."<sup>28</sup>

Belloc also says "No one in France, for instance, regards the Parliament as necessary".<sup>29</sup> And his 1922 book *The Jews* is widely viewed as anti-Semitic. But like many other Britons, he managed to distance himself from fascism when fascism became an enemy of the British Empire. Had Hitler avoided a war with Britain, or had the Fall of France been followed by the compromise peace that many Britons wanted, things might have been very different.

### Snippets

#### Pope Francis Being Serious

"What makes this encyclical controversial is its reading of contested questions of science, economics, and politics. What makes it radical — in the sense of going to the root — is the pope's reading of the profound human crisis that he sees underlying our modern world. Abuse of our environment isn't the only problem facing humanity. In fact, Pope Francis sees the ecological crisis as a symptom of a deeper crisis — a human crisis. These two problems are related and interdependent."<sup>30</sup>

Among other things, he said:

"These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. To cite one example, most of the paper we produce is thrown away and not recycled. It is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. But our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them. A serious consideration of this issue would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet, but it must be said that only limited progress has been made in this regard."<sup>31</sup>

Naturally there are left-wing complaints, in the fine old tradition of "don't take 'yes' for an answer". People not noticing that this pope has more or less abandoned the attempt to impose traditional rules about sex on the membership, which increasingly ignores such rules. Ignores the advantages of such a big section of global opinion opposing the dominant neo-liberal values.

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#### Israel and the Druze

"Over the last two years, Israel has provided medical care to hundreds of Syrians, including fighters, usually transferred from the ceasefire line with the Golan Heights in military ambulances to mainly two hospitals in the north.

"The Druze accuse rebels of committing atrocities against their community in Syria and have called on Israel to stop treating injured fighters. Instead they call on the government to protect Syrian Druze and some even want Israel to provide them with weapons and air support against the advances of al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, the Nusra Front...

"Syria's Druze minority has largely

remained loyal to President Bashar al-Assad since the war began in 2011...

"In a statement, Kara said Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon had told him Israel would not admit fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or the Nusra Front. Israeli officials have said they did not make treatment conditional on casualties' affiliations.

"Officials say there are 110,000 Druze in northern Israel, and another 20,000 in the Israeli-held Golan."<sup>32</sup>

"The Druze are an Arab minority that practice an offshoot of Islam and whose adherents in Syria, long loyal to the ruling Assad family, are beset by jihadi insurgents. Israeli Druze, some of whom wield clout in Netanyahu's government and the military, have been urging intervention.

"In the absence of such action, many Druze in Israel and the Golan Heights are angry at the admission of casualties from rival Sunni Muslim communities in Syria, anti-Assad fighters among them, for medical treatment."<sup>33</sup>

Israel seems to be alienating some of its last friends. Israeli Druze had mostly supported Israel. Most Muslims do not recognise Druze as Muslims. Assad's secular state had a place for them. The West, encouraged by Israel, had stirred up forces likely to eventually destroy yet another minority community in the Middle East.

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#### Islands of the South China Sea

"In 1974 the Chinese seized the Paracels from Vietnam, killing more than 70 Vietnamese troops."<sup>34</sup>

That's from a BBC summary of the dispute over the Spratly and Paracel islands, which the Philippines is trying to get the UN involved in.<sup>35</sup>

Half of what I quoted from the BBC is a half-truth. The other half is a sheer untruth.

The half-truth is *which* Vietnamese these were. The untruth is failing to mention that half of the islands had been occupied by Chinese since 1945.

"China (PRC) took over the Amphitrite Group in 1950 from Taiwan (ROC) during the Chinese Civil War, and the Crescent Group from South Vietnam in the Battle of the Paracel Islands in January 1974. South Vietnam's claim to the islands was inherited by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which has ruled all of Vietnam since 1976. In July 2012, China (PRC) established the city of Sansha, under Hainan Province, to administer the area."<sup>36</sup>

The BBC also says: "Vietnam hotly disputes China's historical account, saying China had never claimed sovereignty over the islands before the 1940s. Vietnam says it has actively ruled over both the Paracels and the Spratlys since the 17th Century - and has the documents to prove it."

Actually China had vaguely claimed the islands for a very long time, and placed the uninhabited islands under the authority of Chinese provinces. Chinese fishermen were found there by European visitors.<sup>37</sup> Contradictory claims were made by both Vietnam and China across the centuries. Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines make claims on the basis of geographical nearness, which is irrelevant when the islands in question already had two rival owners.

What the UN will make of this is anyone's guess. Much more likely to be decided on the basis of power politics than abstract justice. The USA destroyed the possibility of the UN becoming a real world authority with their sabotage of the 1960s intervention in the Congo, when they helped depose Lumumba, who had naively supposed that the UN would uphold his right to rule after being democratically

elected.

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#### Disloyal History at the BBC

While BBC News is getting increasingly nationalist, the opposite seems to be happening with BBC history programs. I noticed this with recent programs about Queen Elizabeth Tudor, Napoleon and Winston Churchill. A forthcoming program about British slave-owners looks like more of the same.

*Armada: 12 Days to Save England* was inaccurate about the context, not mentioning that the key event was the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Spain would not have wanted to put *her* on the throne of England, because rivalry with France was maybe more important than rivalry with England, even though France was Roman Catholic. Indeed, France under Louis 14<sup>th</sup> was later to end Spain's imperial and counter-reformation project. Killing her made King Phillip a plausible claimant, from earlier intermarriage between the dynasties of Spain and England.

What was remarkable, though, was the debunking of Elizabeth. She was shown as old, bald and weak. Elizabeth was 55 and badly preserved by modern standards. Cate Blanchett was under 40 when she played her in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, which is entertaining but full of inaccuracies.<sup>38</sup> To show the Virgin Queen as a frail elderly lady is a big departure from the standard image.

A three-part program about Napoleon was surprisingly sensible about how the attempt at Representative Democracy in France had failed, while Napoleon was fighting for values that are nowadays standard. But which were contested at the time, suffered a relapse after his fall and might not have won out without him.

*Churchill: When Britain Said No* gave an excellent account of how Churchill was rejected and Labour elected in the 1945 election. Correctly explaining how the man was part of a party that Britons rejected, despite his contribution to winning the war.

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#### Sudan: Justice Intermittently Done

*The Guardian* was outraged when one of the Anglosphere's enemies managed to avoid International Justice:

"When Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir was allowed to escape the country in a private jet — in defiance of a domestic court order and international law — Nelson Mandela's democracy stood in solidarity with the Big Men of the African Union, who have declared the international criminal court (ICC) a racist organisation that targets Africans for trial."<sup>39</sup>

The problem is not so much that it is racist, as that it never targets people within the Anglosphere. Lots of people might be targets if justice was being applied impartially, including Henry Kissinger and Tony Blair. There is no real chance of this ever happening.

Given the lack of real justice, there are reasons for accepting Mr Bashir. *The Guardian* did allow this opinion to be expressed:

"Bashir, 67, has run Sudan since the day in June 1989 when he seized control in a bloodless coup. Since then he has survived internal unrest, a long-running civil war with the separatist south, US air strikes in 1998, and a bloody rebellion in Darfur — whose violent suppression earned him the bitter condemnation of much of the western world.

"For human rights pressure groups, some southern Sudanese and Darfuri separatists, American Christian evangelicals, and US and European neocons, Bashir is nothing less than a monster, a ruthless dictator wedded to repression and terror — a sort of African Stalin who presided over a modern-day genocide and now defies the righteous will of the UN's



international criminal court (ICC).

"But for many northern Sudanese, and many Africans and Arabs, Bashir is a popularly elected president, the statesman who signed the landmark 2005 comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) ending the 22-year war with the south, the leader who broke the power of Sudan's Islamists (who once harboured Osama bin Laden), and a man unfairly maligned and traduced by western powers locked in the old colonial mindset and covetous of Sudan's vast mineral wealth..."

"Asked repeatedly why he has not surrendered to the court, and whether he regrets any of his actions or would do anything differently in Darfur if he had his time again, Bashir falls back on his standard condemnation of the legal process in general and the chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, in particular.

"It is a political issue and double standards, because there are obvious crimes like Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, but they did not find their way to the international criminal court," he complains. As for Moreno-Ocampo, he is behaving more like a political activist than a member of the legal profession, Bashir says. 'He is now working on a big campaign to add more lies,' he adds.

"On the question of whether the Sudanese people might join neighbouring Egypt and other Arab nations in rising up against their government, Bashir is again both complacent and defensive. National elections had been held last year and he was returned to office with 69% of the vote, he says."<sup>40</sup>

A lot of the trouble stemmed from the US demand for independence for South Sudan, an issue promoted by some influential Afro-American politicians. But creating South Sudan has solved nothing. The place has failed to jell and suffers from interminable civil wars.<sup>41</sup>

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#### Mock-Racists and Mockingbirds

I saw the film, I read the book, and I never saw why *To Kill A Mockingbird* had such a high reputation. Mind you, I never much liked *Huckleberry Finn* either. I felt that both books massaged US vanity, while giving the appearance of being realistic. And I wasn't surprised to find some much darker and nastier views in other works by Twain.<sup>42</sup>

Now we're told that Harper Lee originally had something more serious to say, in a book which would have featured the events of *Mockingbird* as flashbacks. She was persuaded to make this an entire book, and it was an enormous success. The original novel was abandoned, but a copy survived and has just been published.

And will shock fans of *Mockingbird*:

"We remember Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's 1960 classic, *'To Kill a Mockingbird'*, as that novel's moral conscience: kind, wise, honorable, an avatar of integrity who used his gifts as a lawyer to defend a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman in a small Alabama town filled with prejudice and hatred in the 1930s. As indelibly played by Gregory Peck in the 1962 movie, he was the perfect man — the ideal father and a principled idealist, an enlightened, almost saintly believer in justice and fairness. In real life, people named their children after Atticus. People went to law school and became lawyers because of Atticus.

"Shockingly, in Ms. Lee's long-awaited novel, *'Go Set a Watchman'* (due out Tuesday), Atticus is a racist who once attended a Klan meeting, who says things like 'The Negroes down here are still in their childhood as a people.' Or asks his daughter: 'Do you want Negroes by the carload in our schools and churches and theaters? Do you want them in

our world?'"<sup>43</sup>

I'm not surprised. It always seemed to me that *Mockingbird* evaded the key issues of equality and asked just for fairness within an unfair system. Nor am I surprised that the lady left it there. Life in the US South must be very comfortable if you are white, rich and don't say anything to upset people.

I also always had a suspicion that her close friend Truman Capote might have re-written a lot of *Mockingbird* and improved its quality. Close study of this new book might throw more light on that

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#### Milk-Drinking Supermen

Europe is a continent inhabited by immigrants, arriving in various waves. First hunters, who displaced the Neanderthals, though perhaps interbreeding a little.<sup>44</sup> Then farmers from West Asia. And finally the original speakers of Indo-European languages, who had the wheel and probably chariots and began in what is now Russia.<sup>45</sup>

Europe became distinctive by people adapting to drink milk:

"The ability in adulthood to break down lactose is rare or absent in most parts of the world. Those without the mutation can experience unpleasant side effects if they consume substantial amounts of milk.

"The ability to drink milk is a very unique European feature - you also find it in a few African groups, but there it is due to different mutations," said Prof Willerslev...

"Milk is just good for you - it's a 'superfood'... a good source of uncontaminated fluid."<sup>46</sup>

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#### Gravity Saves Schrodinger's Cat

Everyone seems to have heard of the puzzle of a cat that is either dead or alive due to quantum uncertainty. But now the puzzle may have been answered.

There have been various suggestions over the years that gravity might be the key. Gravity is much weaker than subatomic forces. But at the scale where we actually see the world, gravity matters. This might prevent the quantum ambiguities that have been confirmed to exist for individual particles. Richard Feynman suggested this might be the answer. Now the idea has been developed systematically.

"One of Einstein's predictions is that gravity slows down time. For massive objects, the effect can be extreme, as shown in the film *Interstellar*, where an hour on a planet orbiting a black hole is equivalent to seven years on Earth.

"But it also affects you. Lab experiments with atomic clocks have revealed that your head ages slightly faster than your feet, because of the tiny differences in gravitational field strength.

"Pikovski's calculations show that molecules placed in a superposition should also experience this time difference, and it can disrupt their quantum state. This happens because the bonds between atoms in a molecule act like springs and constantly vibrate. If a molecule is in a superposition of two states that are at different heights from the ground, each state will vibrate at a different rate, destroying the superposition."<sup>47</sup>

Incidentally, when I looked into the matter it occurred to me that Schrodinger might have been influenced by the enigmatic Cheshire Cat in Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*. The man was in Oxford at the time, a refugee from the Nazis.

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#### Physics Mysteries

While worries about Schrodinger's Cat are part of popular culture, people mostly don't stop to wonder why it is that unstable isotopes

decay at a wholly predictable rate. Every atom in an isotope is an identical mix of protons and neutrons. The decay of any one atom is wholly unpredictable. Yet for a mass of atoms, the rate of decay is standard and predictable.

It may be down to what's going on inside the protons and neutrons themselves. What's happening inside of them is far from simple:

"We've known for half a century that protons and neutrons are not fundamental particles, but made of smaller constituents called quarks. There are six types of quark: up, down, strange, charm, bottom and top. The proton has a composition of up-up-down, while the neutron is up-down-down.

"Down quarks are slightly heavier than up quarks, but don't expect that to explain the neutron's sliver of extra mass: both quark masses are tiny. It's hard to tell exactly how tiny, because quarks are never seen singly (see "Quark quirks"), but the up quark has a mass of something like 2 or 3 MeV, and the down quark maybe double that - just a tiny fraction of the total proton or neutron mass...

"Electrically charged particles can bind together by exchanging massless photons. Similarly, colour-charged quarks bind together to form matter such as protons and neutrons by exchanging particles known as gluons. Although gluons have no mass, they do have energy. What's more, thanks to Einstein's famous  $E = mc^2$ , that energy can be converted into a froth of quarks (and their antimatter equivalents) beyond the three normally said to reside in a proton or neutron. According to the uncertainty principle of quantum physics, these extra particles are constantly popping up and disappearing again."<sup>48</sup>

Could the particular configurations of the 'froth' of quarks and gluons within protons and neutrons be the 'hidden variables' that explain quantum uncertainty, at least for particles composed of quarks? The explanation as to why seemingly identical free neutrons will have different lifetimes, yet all conform to a general rule about their half-life? The decay might be hitting one of more unstable configuration within the froth, or one that can generate an electron that is then ejected. (And likewise for the variable behaviour of individual atoms of unstable isotopes.) It would be like the Butterfly Effect in weather forecasting: arising from definite causes but in practice unpredictable.

I'm aware that uncertainty also applies to electrons. But the fact that quarks have very exact fractions of the charge of the electron suggest that electrons too are composed of something more basic. (Even though no one has yet produced a detailed theory that convinced many other people.)

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#### Hello, Pluto, Goodbye<sup>49</sup>

Concorde flew faster than all but a few military aircraft, yet its speed was less than one kilometre per second. The *New Horizons* probe flew past Pluto at nearly fourteen kilometres per second, so there was time for only a brief glimpse. But what it found was fascinating.

(As I write, the data is still being analysed. But I was fascinated by the photo of Pluto and its big moon Charon, shown in exaggerated colours.<sup>50</sup> I noticed that the blue and pink terrain looks remarkably similar on the two bodies. It may be just an artefact of the processing, of course.)

Pluto was previously demoted from being a planet: it is one of a vast class of similar small worlds. But it also seemed to be part of what is now being called the Third Zone. As NASA astronomers put it:

"Our solar system contains three zones: the inner, rocky planets; the gas giant planets; and

the Kuiper Belt. Pluto is one of the largest bodies of the icy, 'third zone' of our solar system. In the early 2000s, the National Academy of Sciences placed the exploration of the third zone in general - and Pluto-Charon in particular - among its highest priority planetary mission rankings for the coming decade. New Horizons is NASA's mission to fulfill this objective.

"In those zones, our solar system has three classes of planets: worlds of rock and metal (Earth, Venus, Mercury and Mars); the gas and ice giants (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune); and the ice dwarfs of the Kuiper Belt. There are far more ice dwarf planets than rocky and gas giant worlds combined - yet, no spacecraft has been sent to a planet in this class."<sup>51</sup>

Nor will it end there. The Kuiper Belt is enormous, so there is no chance of the probe flying on to one of the other interesting large planetoids, some of which are further from Pluto than we are. But there are some decent targets that it can be steered to with the small amounts of fuel it has left:

"The preferred flyby target is PT1, a 40–70 km object, but PT3, a slightly bigger object, could also be targeted for a flyby, with the decision to be made in August. PT2 is no longer under consideration."<sup>52</sup>

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Iran

The deal is good news, obviously. But the scandal is that it didn't happen much sooner.

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Dictatorship of the Idle &amp; Cynical

The crushing victory of the Tories at the last General election was based on 36.9% of the vote and less than a quarter of the electorate. (23.9%, to be exact.) Yet they seek the power to nullify strike ballots unless those in favour can reach an improbable 40 percent of the membership. Logical?

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Websites

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And at my own website, <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

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# Will the UK Supreme Court really become the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK?

by David Morrison

The manifesto [\[1\]](#) on which the Conservative Party fought the General Election on 7 May 2015 made the following commitment:

“The next Conservative Government will scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights. This will break the formal link between British courts and the European Court of Human Rights, and make our own Supreme Court the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK.” (page 60)

These measures were mooted last October in a Conservative strategy paper, entitled *Protecting human rights in the UK* [\[2\]](#).

## European Court of Human Rights is the ultimate arbiter now

The manifesto omits to mention that, at present, the UK is under an international treaty obligation to accept the European Court of Human Rights based in Strasbourg as “the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK”. The treaty in question is the European Convention on Human Rights [\[3\]](#), which the UK had a large part in drawing up and to which the UK has been a party for over 60 years.

Article 46(1) of the Convention states: “The High Contracting Parties undertake to abide by the final judgment of the [European] Court [of Human Rights] in any case to which they are parties.”

So, as long as the UK remains a party to the Convention, it is obliged to abide by the final judgment of the European Court in any case to which it is a party, including in cases where the judgment of the European Court conflicts with that of the UK Supreme Court. In other words, as a party to the Convention, the UK has an existing international treaty obligation to accept the European Court as “the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK”.

## Will the Government withdraw from the Convention?

Of course, the UK could withdraw from the Convention and dispense with this international treaty obligation – and the UK Supreme Court would then become “the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK”.

But the Conservative manifesto does not make a specific proposal to that effect

and subsequent to the election, the Government has refused to rule in or to rule out withdrawal from the Convention. In the House of Commons on 28 May, in answer to questions from Yvette Cooper for Labour, Michael Gove, who as Minister of Justice is responsible for implementing these proposals, refused three times to do so [\[4\]](#). The Prime Minister has been equally evasive. Asked by Conservative MP Andrew Mitchell at PMQs on 3 June “to make it clear that he has no plans” to withdraw from the Convention, he delivered the following piece of rhetoric designed to keep his anti-European backbenchers happy:

“We are very clear about what we want: British judges making decisions in British courts, and the British Parliament being accountable to the British people. The plans that were set out in our manifesto do not involve us leaving the European convention on human rights, but let us be absolutely clear about our position if we cannot achieve what we need – I am very clear about that. When we have these foreign criminals committing offence after offence, and we cannot send them home because of their ‘right to a family life’, that needs to change. I rule out absolutely nothing in getting that done.” [\[5\]](#)

If he is to live up to this rhetoric about deporting “foreign criminals”, he would be well advised to deprive them of access to all courts, not just foreign ones.

(Incidentally, does the Prime Minister not realise that British judges already make decisions in British courts and that the British Parliament is already accountable to the British people? There has just been an election after all.)

## The UK Supreme Court: the ultimate arbiter in practice?

So, what will the Government do about the Convention? Answer: probably, nothing. So, how will it achieve its manifesto commitment to “make our own Supreme Court the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK”? Answer: it will probably attempt to achieve it [in practice](#) by refusing to abide by the relatively few judgments of the European Court that it doesn’t approve of and/or are at variance with those of the UK Supreme Court.

Of course, this will mean that in each case the UK will breach its international

treaty obligation, as a party to the Convention, to abide by judgments of the European Court. Theoretically, the UK could get expelled from the Council of Europe [\[6\]](#), the body responsible for the Convention, for failing to do so, but in practice expulsion is inconceivable.

However, failing to do so will undermine the UK’s ability to lecture other states around the world about failing to honour international treaties and abide by international law. But, from that point of view, withdrawing from the Convention would be much worse. How could the UK continue to preach to states about the universality of human rights if the UK itself withdraws after 60 years from a human rights convention it helped draw up? How could the UK seek to persuade states to submit to international systems of justice like the International Criminal Court if the UK itself withdraws from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, because it didn’t like a few of its judgments?

## A British Bill of Rights

In addition to making the UK Supreme Court “the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK”, the Conservative manifesto promised to “scrap the Human Rights Act, and introduce a British Bill of Rights”.

The Human Rights Act [\[7\]](#), which was passed by the Labour Government in 1998, put the European Convention on Human Rights into UK domestic law and enabled individuals to have their Convention rights enforced in UK domestic courts without having to take a case to the European Court. However, it continued to be open to individuals to do that if they wished.

In upholding an individual’s Convention rights, Section 2 of the Human Rights Act obliges UK courts to “take into account” any “judgment, decision, declaration or advisory opinion of the European Court of Human Rights”. This attempts to ensure that decisions by UK courts are in harmony with the superior European Court.

The British Bill of Rights the Conservatives propose as a replacement for the Human Rights Act will also write the European Convention into domestic law. But, assuming the principles outlined in last October’s strategy paper are reflected in the Bill, some of the rights enshrined



in the Convention will be qualified significantly. For example, the strategy paper says:

“Our new Bill will clarify ... limitations on individual rights in certain circumstances. So for example a foreign national who takes the life of another person will not be able to use a defence based on Article 8 [right to family life] to prevent the state deporting them after they have served their sentence.”

Furthermore, unlike the Human Rights Act, the British Bill of Rights will not oblige UK courts to take account of rulings by the European Court of Human Rights.

However, assuming the UK remains a party to the Convention, an individual will still have the right to take a case to the European Court and potentially have a judgment of the UK Supreme Court overridden. Because the British Bill of Rights is going to contain a qualified version of the Convention rights and will not oblige the UK Supreme Court to take into account rulings by the European Court, it is likely that the judgments of the UK Supreme Court will diverge to a greater extent than before from those of the European Court.

If they diverge, which judgment is the Government going to apply? Presumably, a Government committed to the UK Supreme Court being “the ultimate arbiter of human rights matters in the UK” will always apply its judgments. This could mean the Government deporting a foreign national even though the European Court had declared that to be in breach of the Convention.

### Bill dead in the water?

Of course, notwithstanding the Prime Minister’s bluster, the Government’s proposals may already be dead in the water. True, in the Queen’s Speech on 27 May, the Government undertook to “bring forward proposals for a British Bill of Rights” [8]. Here, it is worth noting that in last October’s strategy paper the Conservative Party promised to “shortly publish a draft British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for consultation” but it didn’t. Now the Government isn’t even promising to publish a draft bill, merely to bring forward proposals for one (without “responsibilities”).

If a Bill eventually emerges, it is by no means certain that the Government will be able to get it through the House of Commons, and it is likely to be rejected by the House of Lords. The Government’s

overall majority in the Commons is slim and several of its senior backbenchers are opposed, for example, Dominic Grieve (former Attorney General), Kenneth Clark (former Minister of Justice), David Davis (former shadow Home Secretary), Damian Green (former justice minister) and Andrew Mitchell (former Chief Whip). And, with the possible exception of the Unionist parties from Northern Ireland, it is not going to get any assistance from the opposition parties to pass the Bill.

(Dominic Grieve served as Attorney General for four years until he was removed from his post in July last year. He described the proposals set out in the Conservative strategy paper last October as “almost puerile”, adding: “I also think they are unworkable and will damage the UK’s international reputation.” [9])

### Implications for Northern Ireland

Repealing the Human Rights Act, as the Government is proposing, would have serious implications for the political settlement in Northern Ireland. The 1998 Belfast Agreement, which formed the basis of that settlement, includes a commitment by the UK Government to “complete incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights with direct access to the courts, and remedies for breach of the Convention” [10]. This was achieved by the Labour Government passing that Human Rights Act for the UK as a whole in 1998.

It would be a clear breach of the Belfast Agreement to repeal this Act, unless the Convention was put into Northern Ireland law by other means. The proposed British Bill of Rights would not suffice since the indications are that it will contain a modified version of the Convention.

This is not just a domestic matter for the UK – the Belfast Agreement was endorsed by referenda in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland and incorporated into an international treaty with the Irish Republic, which was deposited with the UN. It certainly cannot be changed without the consent of the Irish Republic.

### Implications for human rights under devolution

The existence of devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales imposes considerable restraints on the ability of the UK government to alter the human rights regimes in these areas.

The complications involved in this are explained by Colm O’Cinneide, a reader in law at University College London, in a

March 2013 paper *Human Rights, Devolution and the Constrained Authority of the Westminster Parliament* [11].

The key fact here is that there are provisions written into the devolution statutes requiring the devolved legislatures and executives in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights and there are other provisions enabling the devolved legislatures to extend human rights protection further.

The Human Rights Act is Westminster legislation which imposes duties on public authorities throughout the UK. Obviously, the Westminster Parliament has the power to amend or repeal as it sees fit. Likewise, the UK’s withdrawal from the European Convention is matter reserved to the Westminster Parliament and is outside the remit of the devolved legislatures. However, as I indicated above, human rights protection is not wholly reserved to Westminster but the devolved bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have also got a role.

This introduces serious complications for a UK Government determined to replace European Convention rights across the UK with a ‘British’ variant. As Colm O’Cinneide writes:

“For example, any change to the current requirement that the Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh legislatures must comply with Convention rights would affect the scope of their devolved powers: as a result, under existing constitutional arrangements, it would appear to trigger the Sewel Convention, meaning that Westminster would ‘normally’ have to seek the consent of the devolved legislatures before it could legislate in respect of human rights law as it applies in respect of devolved matters.

“Furthermore, because the devolved legislatures are able to take steps to extend human rights protection, they have the power to minimise the impact of any reduction of rights protection brought about by Westminster legislation within the sphere of devolved functions. Thus, for example, if the Westminster Parliament wished to root out the Convention rights from UK law and replace them with home-grown ‘British’ variants through a new Bill of Rights, it would either have to leave intact the provisions of the devolution legislation that require the Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh legislatures to comply with Convention rights, or else seek the consent of the three legislatures to the removal of Convention rights from

the devolution framework.

“Furthermore, even if such consent was forthcoming, or the Westminster Parliament chose simply to disregard the Sewel Convention, the devolved legislatures might subsequently be able to restore much of the status quo within the sphere of devolved functions. For example, if Westminster were to repeal the HRA [Human Rights Act], the Scottish Parliament would appear to have the power to introduce a ‘Scottish HRA’ or an equivalent measure in respect of devolved matters, which could provide an equivalent or even greater level of rights protection within its sphere of application than currently available under the HRA.”

Perhaps, it would be wiser to leave things as they are.

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## Was President Yanukovich impeached? British Government said YES, President Poroshenko says NO by David Morrison

President Yanukovich was removed from power on 22 February 2014, a year or so before his term of office was due to end. On 4 February this year, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) [passed a law](#) titled ‘*On the Divestment of Viktor Yanukovich of the Title of President of Ukraine*’. This law, authored by amongst others Yulia Tymoshenko, his opponent in the 2010 presidential election, sought to divest him of the title of ‘President of Ukraine’, which past presidents are normally allowed to keep for life.

But President Poroshenko has refused to sign this law. Instead, he referred it to the Constitutional Court and asked the Court to certify that it contravenes the Constitution. His grounds for doing so is that “the title of President of Ukraine is protected by law and retained for life, unless the president of Ukraine in question has undergone the procedure of impeachment” (see [Poroshenko sees law stripping Yanukovich of presidential rank as unconstitutional](#)).

The grounds cited by President Poroshenko are based on Article 105 of the [Constitution of Ukraine](#), which says:

“The title of President of Ukraine is protected by law and is reserved for the President for life, unless the President of Ukraine has been removed from office by the procedure of impeachment”.

Article 111 of the Constitution specifies the lengthy procedure of impeachment which must be followed if a president is to be removed from power before the end of his term of office without violating the

Constitution. Clearly, President Poroshenko doesn’t believe that Yanukovich was subject to this procedure in February 2014.

#### British Government said Yanukovich was impeached

The British Government at the time said the opposite: then Ministers assured Parliament that Yanukovich’s removal had been effected in accordance with the Ukrainian Constitution and there was no reason to question the legitimacy of the new regime in Kiev.

On 24 February 2014, for example, Foreign Secretary William Hague [told](#) the House of Commons that two days earlier the Rada had “voted ... to impeach the President”. Foreign Office Minister Lord Wallace [repeated](#) this message in the House of Lords.

And so [did](#) Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi on 20 March 2014, in answer to a question from Lord Stoddart of Swindon, who had asked the Government

“what steps they took to satisfy themselves that the removal from office of President Yanukovich was carried out in accordance with Article 111 of the Ukrainian Constitution”.

#### The procedure of impeachment

According to the procedure of impeachment defined in Article 111, the Rada must establish a special investigatory commission to formulate charges against the president, seek evidence to justify the

charges and come to conclusions about the president’s guilt for the Rada to consider. To find the president guilty, at least two-thirds of Rada members must assent.

Prior to a final vote to remove the president from power, the procedure requires the Constitutional Court of Ukraine to review the case and certify that the constitutional procedure of investigation and consideration has been followed, and the Supreme Court of Ukraine to certify that the acts of which the President is accused are worthy of impeachment.

To remove the president from power, at least three-quarters of Rada members must assent.

The Rada didn’t make any pretence of following this procedure. No investigatory commission was established and the Courts were not involved. On 22 February 2014, the Rada simply passed a [resolution](#) purporting to remove Yanukovich from office in accordance with the Constitution.

It was therefore reasonable for President Poroshenko to refer the law seeking to divest Yanukovich of his title of ‘President of Ukraine’ to the Constitutional Court on the grounds that he wasn’t impeached in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Constitution.

#### An unconstitutional coup d’etat?

In doing so, Poroshenko comes close

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# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

**Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty**  
**Tobias Ellwood, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, made the following statement to MPs on 1 June:**

The House may welcome a report on the 2015 nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) review conference, held at the United Nations in New York between 27 April and 22 May to review progress and agree future actions against the NPT's three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The review conference was a substantive event, which advanced discussion on each of the treaty's three pillars but concluded without reaching a consensus outcome.

The UK played an active role both in the preparation for the review conference and at the conference itself. As part of its preparations for the review conference, the UK invited certain

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to confirming that the removal of Yanukovich from power in February 2014 was an unconstitutional coup d'état.

It is true that the Rada can also remove an elected president from power under Article 110 of the Constitution if he is deemed unfit to exercise power due to ill health – and he/she may die or resign. But Yanukovich didn't die or resign, nor was he unable to exercise his powers due to ill health, so the only constitutional means of removing him from power before the end of his term was by following the impeachment procedure enshrined in Article 111. It wasn't followed.

The British Government lied to Parliament in saying that Yanukovich was impeached and removed from power in accordance with the Constitution. That the British Government lied is confirmed by President Poroshenko's action in referring this law to the Constitutional Court on the grounds that Yanukovich wasn't impeached in accordance with the Constitution.

non-nuclear weapons states and civil society representatives, for the first time, to the UK-hosted P5 conference of nuclear weapon states in February this year. The UK also submitted a revised national report setting out the action the UK is taking to support the NPT. We encouraged and participated in five rounds of informal consultations between Israel and Arab states on a conference on a middle east zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns DBE, set out the UK's approach and progress against NPT objectives on the opening day of the conference. The UK delegation participated actively, both in the main conference and at side events, including on our pioneering verification work and nuclear energy. We engaged constructively in the negotiations throughout, seeking to reach agreement and to make progress on all three pillars of the treaty.

**We were disappointed that, despite the progress made in many areas, the conference was not able to find common ground on how to make further progress on the proposed middle east zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. This issue was the reason that consensus was not reached on the draft outcome document.** The UK sought a process which was meaningful and based on arrangements freely arrived at by all states of the region. The proposed text would not have enabled tangible progress to be made and so we were unable to support the draft conclusions. **We remain committed to the 1995 resolution on the middle east, the creation of a middle east zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, and**

**the steps agreed in 2010 towards that end.**

The UK's commitment to the treaty and to fulfilling our NPT obligations, including under article VI on disarmament, remains undiminished. As a responsible nuclear weapon state and an original party to the NPT, the UK remains committed to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. We have reduced our nuclear forces by well over half since the cold war peak and dismantled all of our air delivered nuclear weapons. In 2010 the UK committed to reducing the number of operationally available warheads to no more than 120; we have now achieved this which means that our Vanguard submarines now carry 40 warheads. We also remain on course to reduce our total stockpile of nuclear weapons to no more than 180 warheads by the mid 2020s.

The lack of a consensus outcome neither undermines the treaty nor changes states' obligations. Of the eight previous review conferences, three have ended without consensus. Throughout, the treaty has remained vitally important for the UK and for the international community as a whole, playing an unparalleled role in curtailing the nuclear arms race and keeping the world safe. The action plan agreed at the 2010 review conference remains valid as a comprehensive roadmap for all NPT states to follow to take forward action on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear technology, as do the agreements from 2000 and 1995. The UK will continue to pursue this roadmap, working closely with our partners in the NPT.

**Comment:** A statement on the non-nuclear proliferation treaty which regrets the failure to make further progress on the proposed "middle east



zone free from nuclear weapons” but omits any reference to Israel’s possession of nuclear weapons is not worth the paper it’s written on. All efforts to date to achieve the objective of a nuclear free zone have been directed at Iran. Not a word has been spoken or written about Israel. In a recent statement to the House of Commons Defence Committee, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said that Israel and Saudi Arabia were concerned about the potential of Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, but omitted to say that Israel already possessed them. The west is content for Israel to possess nuclear weapons because it is seen as a friendly ally constantly under threat from its neighbours. Britain and the US are in a state of silent denial on Israel’s nuclear capability.

### **New Nuclear Power**

**Labour’s Paul Flynn introduced a short debate on nuclear power on 17 June.**

#### **Paul Flynn:**

I beg to move,

That this House has considered new nuclear power.

Nuclear power was promised as an energy source that would be too cheap to meter. It is now too expensive to generate. If we were planning a nuclear policy from scratch, would we choose to do a deal with two French companies, one of which is bankrupt, while the other, Électricité de France, has a debt of €33 billion? Would we also collaborate with a country with a dreadful human rights record—China, whose national investment department is coming into the arrangement—and with Saudi Arabia, with its atrocious record on human rights, where people are executed on the street? We are left with the dregs of investment from throughout the world—fragile and tainted. The sensible money deserted Hinkley Point years ago. Centrica had an investment of £200 million, and it abandoned it and ran away, because it saw the project as a basket case.

Still, nuclear power has wide support in this House, from almost all parties except the Scottish National party. I hope that this morning the new Minister, whom I welcome to her new work, can apply her distinguished forensic skills to taking a fresh look at the situation. Many people are gravely disturbed by the prospect of new nuclear power. That is particularly so among Treasury civil servants. We are in an extraordinary situation, where there is still public support in spite of Fukushima.

One of the main reasons for that is that the British public were “protected” by a skilled public relations operation from knowing the terrible cost of Fukushima—between \$100 billion and \$250 billion. Radiation is still leaking four years after the event, and tens of thousands of people cannot return to their homes. Other populations were not protected from knowing about Fukushima by an obedient press. However, former lobbyists for nuclear power appeared as independent witnesses, such as Malcolm Grimston, who was on television every day during the Fukushima events, praising the explosions of hydrogen as something of benefit. There is ludicrous PR spin, to the extent that this week two different people from a public relations agency that works for nuclear power rang me up and offered to write my speech for me. They inquired who the Chair would be, as if that might be important. Those are lobbyists and spinners, presenting a favourable case for nuclear power.

Hinkley Point B is a European pressurised reactor. There are some under construction in Finland, France and China. Not one of them has produced enough electricity to light a bicycle lamp. They are all in serious trouble, so why do we continue with our belief in Hinkley Point C? The EPR in Finland was due to generate electricity in 2009. There has been a series of delays, problems and cost overruns, which have themselves now overrun, and the bill is €4 billion greater than anticipated. The possible opening date has been moved year after year and is now set at 2016, at a cost of €8.3 billion. However, other problems have come up. There is another station under construction at Flamanville. It was due to be completed at a cost of €3.3 billion and now has an overrun of nearly €5 billion. There is a serious problem at Flamanville which will affect all the reactors—the carbon level in the steel for the pressure vessel is too high. That means that the steel is brittle and could crack open, with catastrophic results. That affects the planned reactors in China, Finland, France and of course at Hinkley Point. It is a catastrophic problem and will mean a major delay. There is no way of reconstituting that steel.

The way the deal was done is almost unbelievable. We agreed under pressure, because there were Government promises and political pressure, to do a deal at almost any price to justify Hinkley Point C. We struck a deal for £92.50 per MWh. That is twice the going rate for electricity now, and we said that we would guarantee that

deal for 35 years. That was two years ago. Since then, the price of energy throughout the world has gone down a great deal, because of shale gas and the drop in the price of oil. The price we agreed was ludicrous at the time—far too generous. The head of INEOS, the company in Grangemouth, has struck a deal since then with the same company—Électricité de France—for less than half that price. The country was ripped off, and we cannot seem to get out of it. We must do something about the strike price that we agreed.

In the world as a whole, nuclear powered energy generation peaked in 2006. Since then it has been in decline. It has gone down by 10% in Europe. Most energy consultants say that the total cost of the project is indefensible. We omit something from our calculations of historical costs and pretend that nuclear is cheap, when we forget about the cost of waste. In fact we do not know what the cost of the waste from Sellafield is. We are still adding up the bill. The latest estimate for clearing up Sellafield—just one site—is £53 billion. It is thought that the figure will exceed £100 billion eventually. When those costs are added to the historical costs of nuclear power it will not be found to be competitive any more.

Also, we now have alternatives. We are not in a situation where nothing else is available. The world has moved towards renewables, including the clean renewables, to a far greater extent. The Government are to be congratulated on having put forward a package and the money for tidal lagoons in the Severn estuary. An enormous tide of water sweeps up that estuary twice a day. That is vast untapped energy—British, free, eternal and entirely predictable. The technology involved is simple and has been working successfully in France for 50 years, producing the cheapest electricity in the world.

It is a curious thing, but the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change in the previous Parliament had an impeccable record on energy some years ago, when he launched the Liberal Democrat energy policy under the heading “Say No to Nuclear”, saying that

“a new generation of nuclear power stations will cost taxpayers and consumers tens of billions of pounds”.

That is absolutely right. He went on:

“In addition to posing safety and environmental risks, nuclear power will only be possible with vast taxpayer subsidies or a rigged market”.

That was the man who, when the red

boxes and chauffeur-driven car arrived, changed his mind altogether and did a terrible financial deal to get Hinkley Point on the road. We will be paying for that for many years. The cost of Hinkley Point has been estimated as an additional £200 a year for every consumer in Britain. That is billions of pounds in subsidy over 35 years. The Government have guaranteed £16 billion in subsidy for a technology that has not been proved to work and is not working anywhere. Almost any alternative is better than pressing on with Hinkley Point. There are older nuclear designs that we could use, but we are heading into a technological jam where there will be difficulties. We are proposing to invest tens of billions in a system that has not been proved to be effective, and has certainly never proved to be economic.

There have been many problems at Flamanville, near Cherbourg, which are not limited to the pressure vessel. There have also been problems with the valves and the whole cooling system, following a warning in April from the French nuclear safety regulator about an excessive amount of carbon in the reactor vessel. That is not a journalist causing trouble but the head of the French nuclear industry talking about a potential disaster in the making.

What is likely to happen in future? There is a nuclear disaster almost every 10 to 15 years, due to various causes. The result of Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima has been great fear among the population. That is what happened in Germany, which felt the full force of the truth about Fukushima and sensibly cancelled its whole nuclear programme. Germany is now going into solar power and many other alternatives that are available to us. Tidal power is not available to Germany, but we have that great opportunity ahead.

There will almost certainly be problems in future. Some hazards today were unknown in the past. I recall going to an exhibition called "Atoms for Peace" as a young boy in 1948, when we believed that nuclear would be the answer, but experience has taught us otherwise. The possible accidents range from simple mechanical errors, such as not having enough carbon in the steel, to the simple human errors that happened at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. Technical faults also occur, but the greatest risk we now face is terrorism. Older nuclear power stations were not built to withstand terrorist attacks by drones and all the means by which people could attack them. Anyone living anywhere near a nuclear power station

must be in a state of anxiety about that possibility, because of the accidents and disasters we have seen.

Fukushima was built to withstand a tsunami, but it could not withstand the tsunami and earthquake that came together. Any of these natural disasters are possible. We have not had a tsunami for some time along the Severn estuary, but we had one in 1607 when part of the area that I represent and the area where Hinkley Point now stands was flooded by a tsunami that came up the Bristol channel. It is believed to have come from underwater activity out in the deep ocean, so a tsunami is unlikely but possible there. We cannot guard against it. Why on earth risk a catastrophic accident when alternatives are available?

I am encouraged to see reports that many civil servants in the Treasury are deeply unhappy about the financial situation of nuclear power. There was a story that if Labour had been elected, it would have turned its back on nuclear power. I believe that to be true. There have been reports in *The Times* and elsewhere—authoritative reports from serious journalists—that groups in the Treasury are saying that it will be a terrible mistake and a financial catastrophe if we go ahead. May I say to those civil servants that it is their job to speak publicly? We know now what happened in Scotland during the referendum debate, when Sir Nicholas Macpherson decided to leak—to publish—a report of his advice to the Chancellor. His reason for doing so was that he thought the likely effects of Scottish independence would be catastrophic for the country and for Scotland. He justified that leak, which was almost unprecedented among senior civil servants, on the basis that it was in the national interest. He was supported by the head of the civil service, Sir Jeremy Heywood, and condemned by a Committee of this House.

Look at the past; look, for example, at the commercial advantages of the steam-generating heavy water reactor, which produced nothing and was useless, but cost £200 million. That was many years ago. There was also the decision to treat Concorde as a commercial venture that would succeed. There were civil servants who quite rightly opposed those, but the ethos of the civil service is the unimportance of being right. The careers of civil servants who go along with the ministerial folly of the day prosper, while the careers of those who are right in the long term wither. It is different now. There is some heroism in civil servants speaking truth to

power and saying to their masters, "This should not go on. There are alternatives. The time has gone for nuclear power." Civil servants who know the new ethos in the civil service should regard it as their patriotic duty to speak truth, not only to power but to the nation, by saying that the time for nuclear power is over.

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Andrea Leadsom):**

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bone. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) on securing the debate. New nuclear is an important topic, and Members' challenges and questions are very much welcomed. I would particularly like to assure the hon. Gentleman that my fellow Ministers and I listen carefully to civil servants' views. There is no sense in which they are not allowed to give their opinions, and they very much do so. I hope that reassures him. I note his interest, as demonstrated by his recent parliamentary questions on Hinkley Point C, the geological disposal facility, and safety and security at licensed sites. I hope to reassure him further on those topics, but I will first set the scene for the benefits of a new nuclear programme.

Nuclear energy plays a critical role in the Government's security of supply and decarbonisation goals. The UK's nine existing nuclear power plants generate around 20% of our electricity. However, all but one of them are currently expected to retire by 2030. Nuclear power is one of the cheaper forms of low-carbon electricity, reducing pressures on consumer electricity bills, relative to an energy mix without nuclear. Nuclear power provides reliable base-load electricity with lifecycle carbon dioxide emissions similar to those from wind power and much less than those from fossil fuels. New nuclear power is a vital part of the investment needed in our electricity sector that will boost the economy, create thousands of jobs and help to keep the lights on.

As set out in the Conservative party's manifesto, we are committed to a significant expansion in new nuclear in the UK. The Government have prepared the ground for new nuclear power stations through a package of reforms and regulatory measures that will remove barriers to investment and give developers the confidence to take forward projects that will help to deliver secure, low-carbon and affordable energy. We have also ensured that operators of new nuclear power stations put in place

robust plans for the finance and management of their waste and decommissioning from the outset.

We are seeing significant progress. The first new nuclear power station in a generation moved a step closer last year, as the European Commission announced on 8 October 2014 that it has approved the Hinkley Point C state aid case. The Government and EDF are currently in discussions to finalise the contract for Hinkley, which is expected to start generating electricity from 2023. In total, industry has set out plans for five new nuclear projects in the UK for a total of up to 16 GW of new nuclear capacity, providing around 35% of electricity generation.

**Paul Flynn:**

I would have been grateful if the hon. Lady had left behind her civil service brief, which is the conventional one we know, with much repeated claims. Is it true that the Chinese company is threatening to withdraw its investment unless it has a stake in building Sizewell, Bradwell and Wylfa Newydd? That would mean that the new jobs in nuclear were jobs in China and France, not here, because what it is offering to provide is almost a ready-made nuclear power station, made by Chinese people with Chinese money. We are using investment to create jobs not in this country, but elsewhere.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that each project is taken on its merits. Britain is open for business. We are very keen to see investment from overseas in our new nuclear, but it is very clear that the UK supply chain will provide an enormous amount of the jobs and growth that we are looking for in this country. In total, industry has set out plans for five new nuclear projects. The Government are clear that the UK is open for business. We want to see high-quality investment from overseas. The nuclear programme represents a tremendous opportunity to establish the UK as a key nuclear country, with the potential to export capabilities to other countries. That includes capabilities in decommissioning, in which we are already a world leader. This offers us an opportunity to develop our domestic supply chain and to realise economies of scale. It is also an opportunity to make the UK an even more attractive partner for international research and development collaboration.

**Paul Flynn:**

This is utter nonsense. The person decommissioning at Sellafield is an

American company. We do not have any expertise. Will the Minister give us some idea, looking at the historical cost, of what the cost of cleaning up Sellafield will be? It is already admitted to be £53 billion; it is uninsurable, so the taxpayer has to take the risk; and it will probably cost more than £100 billion, which wrecks her argument that nuclear power has ever been good value.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

The hon. Gentleman is exactly right to point out that there is an enormous nuclear legacy, which this Government have been committed to sorting out, unlike previous Governments, such as the one that he was part of. The nuclear provision currently stands at £70 billion discounted and £110 billion undiscounted. That is the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's best estimate of the total lifetime costs of the decommissioning mission across the whole estate. Nobody welcomes that cost. Nevertheless, this Government have been determined to get to grips with it and to ensure that the material can be safely, carefully, thoroughly and properly disposed of.

To deliver the ambitious new build programme on time and on budget, a skilled workforce in the UK is essential. The scale of the industry's new build aspirations, the length of time since the last new build project and the high average age of the existing nuclear workforce mean that it is essential to take action now to prevent skills gaps from developing in the course of the new nuclear programme. The Government recognise that this is a big challenge, particularly with the ongoing need to maintain and decommission existing nuclear power stations, so we have introduced the National College for Nuclear, which will work collaboratively with the wider industry, skills bodies and training providers, and will utilise international best practice to develop an industry-wide curriculum.

Moving on to the vital issues of safety and security, we are confident that the UK has one of the most robust regulatory regimes in the world. As the global expansion in nuclear continues, the UK will ensure that any technology used in this country meets the rigorous safety, security and environmental standards. The importance that we attach to safety is shown through the UK's independent nuclear regulators—the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the Environment Agency—which ensure, through regular reviews and inspections, that operators

are fulfilling their duties and that robust safety and security measures are in place right across the industry.

With plans for 16 GW of new nuclear capacity in the UK, the Government are firmly committed to delivering geological disposal as the safest and most secure means of managing our higher-activity waste in the long term. We need a permanent solution following more than 60 years of producing radioactive waste from various sources, including electricity generation from nuclear power.

**Paul Flynn:**

The hon. Lady has been very generous to me. I think that she is probably too young to remember the Flowers report in 1968, which said that the nuclear industry in Britain was being irresponsible, because it did not have an answer on waste disposal, and it should not continue. That was 1968. The solution then was to dig a hole and put the nuclear waste in it. In 2015, the British answer is to dig a hole and put the waste in it. There has been no progress on disposal of waste, except at enormous cost.

**Andrea Leadsom:**

Let me very gently say to the hon. Gentleman that ever since I was a very small child, nuclear has been an enormous personal priority for me. In fact, it was the reason why I went into politics—I did so because of the threat of a nuclear world war—so I am slightly offended by his presumption that I do not know what I am talking about. I can assure him that a geological disposal facility is not as simple as digging a hole in the ground and stuffing a load of radioactive waste in it.

**Paul Flynn:**

What is it, then?

**Andrea Leadsom:**

As the hon. Gentleman will know, a geological disposal facility is internationally recognised as the safest and most secure means of permanently managing our higher-activity waste, and countries such as Sweden, Finland, Canada and the USA are also pursuing that route.

I would like to get on to answering the hon. Gentleman's specific questions. He talked about delays at other sites where there are EPR reactors. I can tell him that officials have visited Olkiluoto to get first-hand experience of the build programme there, as well as the other EPR builds at Flamanville in France and Taishan in China. Experience gained through the EPR family—it is a new technology, as he points out—is now being systematically shared between the three current build sites, and Hinkley Point will become part of that



arrangement. Experience in Finland and France, particularly in relation to the order in which key parts of the nuclear island are built and how they are fabricated, has benefited the project in Taishan, such that that project is now running to time and to budget.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the strike price potentially being too high in relation to the EDF plant. I can assure him that our estimate of the future price of wholesale electricity is that it will rise into the 2020s. That has been a careful assessment. Nuclear electricity is a key part of our energy mix. He will know that other technologies also involve a very high cost to the consumer right now. The mix is vital, so we believe that this is not too generous. EDF aims to have the plant up and running in 2023. We expect that, with a significant proportion of our power stations due to close over the coming decades, we will need that level of investment to replace that capacity.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about tidal power. Personally, I am as excited as he is about the prospects for marine and tidal power, but again he will accept, I am sure, that this is another new technology, as yet unproven. We have taken the first steps. We expect it to be a big contributor to our energy mix, but not the only one.

I emphasise that, as Energy and Climate Change Minister, I have two priorities: security of supply and keeping the lights on. In securing those priorities, I want to keep bills as low as possible. With new nuclear in the energy mix, I believe we can achieve all those things. Nuclear power is a low-carbon, proven technology that will increase the resilience of the UK's energy system and, rather than costing more money, the full nuclear programme will, on current projections, save households about £78 on their bills in 2030.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport West on his attention to this very important subject, but I want to be clear that the Government believe that developing energy from new nuclear is the right thing to do in the UK.

#### **Paul Flynn:**

There is time left. This is the normal practice. I just want to say that it was a very disappointing response from the Minister, who stuck to a civil service script that had been carefully manicured and presented by her, with a series of platitudes that we all know about. She is not facing up to the crisis that exists in nuclear power at the moment—

#### **Mr Peter Bone (in the Chair):**

Order. Before hon. Members go, I point out that the new procedure asks for the Question to be put. The Minister kindly sat down at the right time, but the hon. Gentleman in charge has talked himself out of that.

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 10(6)).*

**Comment:** Andrea Leadsom refers to the cost of decommissioning nuclear plant, including clean up of the Sellafield site, which she puts at £70 billion costed and £100 billion uncoded. These are the official estimates from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority over the decommissioning lifetime. They are substantial sums which electricity consumer will bear through higher prices. And given the history of nuclear cost runs they are likely to be higher than lower. She boasts that Britain's expertise in decommissioning provides overseas opportunities for similar work. But Britain has a long way to go to solve its own decommissioning of nuclear plant so her optimism is ill founded. She doesn't say anything about the cost to the consumer of electricity from new build. EDF, for example, have a guaranteed high price for its electricity over the estimated 35 year lifetime of the reactors it will build. Paul Flynn is entranced by the prospect of electricity from the proposed Severn tidal barrage. But this will come at a high price to consumers. Both new nuclear and the Severn tidal barrage will be heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. The latter will generate electricity for about 14 hours a day compared to, barring unforeseen shutdowns due to mechanical and other failure, 24 hours nuclear generation. Andrea Leadsom repeatedly says that Britain is open for business. Open that is to foreign investors and owners, and not only in energy provision. Although here, as in water, foreign ownership dominates the market.

#### **Charles Kennedy and Iraq**

The recent death of former Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy drew praise from a wide audience for his stance on Iraq. It was implied that he opposed the invasion as a matter of principle. In fact his opposition was practical rather than moral as his speech in the debate of 18 March 2003 clearly demonstrates. A number of interjections during his speech have been omitted in the interests of space.

#### **Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Skye and Inverness, West):**

Following the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), I acknowledge with thanks, through him, to the

right hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and to all those concerned in all parties in this House, that an honest option has been discussed and agreed in a cross-party way. In the previous debate, the right hon. Gentleman made a powerful contribution to that cross-party basis, which needs to be heard and discussed rationally today.

Although it is sad that we have lost a very good Leader of the House, there is no doubt, having listened to his brilliant resignation statement in the House yesterday evening, that those of us who are supporting the cross-party amendment in the Lobby tonight, as I and my right hon. and hon. Friends will do, have gained a powerful additional advocate for the case that we are sincerely making. Given the events of the past few days and the last few hours, there has been much understandable comment about the drama of the situation. In the next few hours and days, however, we are liable to see even more drama and trauma when what appears to be the inevitable military conflict against Iraq begins. Let us hope, as we all agree, that the conflict can be conducted as swiftly as possible, with the minimum of casualties: first and foremost, clearly, among our forces, but equally among innocent Iraqi civilians, with whom none of us has ever had any quarrel and who have suffered terribly under the despicable regime of Saddam Hussein.

As for those of us who remain unpersuaded as to the case at this time for war, and who have questioned whether British forces should be sent into a war without a further UN mandate having been achieved, there stands no contradiction—as the former Leader of the House and former Foreign Secretary put succinctly last night—between giving voice to that legitimate anxiety and, at the same time, as and when exchange of fire commences, looking to the rest of the country, and to all of us in the House, to give full moral support to our forces. They do not take the civilian political decision in relation to what they are being asked to do, but they must carry out that task in all our names. The shadow Leader of the House expressed that well last night, but, equally, Church leaders, who earlier expressed profound opposition to war in this way at this time, are making the same point. If, later tonight, at the conclusion of this debate, under the democratic procedures that we enjoy in this House, that is to be the decision, it is important that the whole House unites in that genuine support.

**Sir Patrick Cormack (South Staffordshire):**

Can I therefore take it that if the amendment is lost the right hon. Gentleman will vote for the substantive motion?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question, but the answer is no. I will not do so because our consistent line is that we do not believe that a case for war has been established under these procedures in the absence of a second UN Security Council resolution. That is our position — *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Duncan Smith :**

The right hon. Gentleman failed to answer my hon. Friend the Member for South Staffordshire (Sir Patrick Cormack). Will he clear up an inconsistency? On the one hand, he said that he wanted to support the troops, while, on the other, he said that he would not support the main motion. He has a split in his party. The right hon. and learned Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) has said that

“legally, no new resolution is required for the use of force to implement resolution 687.” — *[Official Report, 24 September 2002; Vol. 390, c. 43.]*

Lord Goodhart, however, has said that the existing resolutions on the Iraqi situation, particularly 1441, do not authorise armed intervention without a second resolution. Which position is that of the Liberal Democrats, and why do they travel across two separate positions?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

First, my noble Friend Lord Goodhart spoke with great authority as an international lawyer in the House of Lords debate last night. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for North-East Fife (Mr. Campbell) spoke on that issue in September, before resolution 1441 was passed, and 1441 has moved the position on. I want to return to the issue of legality in a moment.

The Leader of the Conservative party chose to open his contribution with one or two remarks about me and my hon. Friends, which is perfectly fair in this debate. In relation to consistency, however, let us remind ourselves about the position of the Conservative party, for instance, on weapons of mass destruction. After Saddam Hussein used such weapons in 1988, the Conservative Government continued to sell arms to Iraq. They provided him with anthrax and other chemical weapons, and they approved the construction of dual-use factories in Iraq. When it comes to humanitarian reasons —

**Mr. Crispin Blunt (Reigate):**

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If the right hon. Gentleman is in the act of misleading the House, given that the Scott inquiry made it clear that the Conservative Government did not sell any chemical weapons to the Iraqi regime during the 1980s, how can one make him withdraw his remark?

**Mr. Speaker:**

I can help the hon. Gentleman. These are matters for debate, and it may be that some hon. Member may be able to rebut the right hon. Gentleman's case.

**Mr. Kennedy:**

To be fair, I am in the process of replying to the right hon. Gentleman's party leader.

If Conservatives speak about the need for consistency on the international stage with respect to humanitarianism, as several have over many months, why did they not support the humanitarian intervention in Sierra Leone or the use of ground troops in Kosovo? Why did they veto 11 United Nations resolutions relating to apartheid South Africa when they were in government?

My concluding remark to the leader of the Conservative party is that if I saw the names of three former Cabinet Ministers who served in the last Conservative Government listed in support of the amendment on the Order Paper, I might try to sort out my own party before I started lecturing other party leaders.

As the activity of our armed forces progresses, legitimate questions —

**Mr. Lilley:**

Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

No, I am not giving way — *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:**

Order. The right hon. Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Mr. Lilley) is disrupting the speech. Take my word for it: the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Inverness, West (Mr. Kennedy) is not going to give way.

**Mr. Kennedy:**

When it comes to the further engagement of our armed forces, it would be proper for hon. Members to raise legitimate questions, as many have in all parties, on the supply and suitability of equipment, the eventual war aims, the participation of British forces and the bombs that might be used. It would be right to ask whether we would desist from resorting to cluster bombs or depleted uranium. It would also

be right to ask about the longer term role that we hope British forces will play, if the war ensues, in the humanitarian and reconstruction roles on which they have such a distinguished track record. That is why we have supported the UN route, and it will be a source of great regret if the motion is passed because British troops will be put into action.

There are, however, two specific things on which the Government are right to expect and deserve significant credit over the course of the past six months. The first is that they were instrumental in persuading a reluctant United States to go down the UN route. Everything that I have been party to and privy to over the past six months persuades me that that is the case. The second is that the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and other senior colleagues have been consistent in emphasising to the Americans and others the primary need to re-establish a meaningful middle east peace process.

What makes this week so sadly ironic is that the very moment when the Bush Administration at last embraced the fresh urgency over the middle east peace process was the very time when they chose to abandon the UN route. Let us face it, having taken the decision to abandon the UN route, the sudden embrace of the middle east peace process with refreshed urgency arouses the suspicion among many that the two are not unconnected and, perhaps, that if they are willing to do one, they may be willing to abandon the other or to go lukewarm at a later stage.

**Mr. Kennedy:**

I shall give way to the hon. Member for South Dorset (Jim Knight) first.

**Jim Knight:**

I am most grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, although it is tempting to ask why he gives way to some hon. Members and not to others. He pays tribute — rightly, in my view — to the Prime Minister for engaging with the United States, but he also believes that it is right to release them into isolationism, which makes progress on the middle east settlement less likely. Why is that?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

I do not accept that thesis, and I shall explain exactly why. It is best summed up by the words used by Kofi Annan over the past few days. In the absence of a further explicit United Nations resolution, which is obviously the position in which we find ourselves, he remarked last week:

“The legitimacy and support for any such action will be seriously impaired. If

the USA and others go outside the Council and take military action it will be not be in conformity with the Charter.”

That raises very serious questions on which we should reflect. Only yesterday afternoon, the Secretary-General said:

“If the action is to take place without the support of the Council, its legitimacy will be questioned” and the international support will be diminished. We are right to reflect on those considerations.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:**

The right hon. Gentleman has not answered the question asked by the hon. Member for South Dorset (Jim Knight). Having quite correctly praised the Prime Minister and the Government for the influence that they have exerted on the middle east peace process, will he please explain how his vote tonight will contribute to maximising British influence on that process?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

I think that I have responded to that. It is best for the process to proceed through the auspices of the United Nations itself. If we undermine the legitimacy and authority of the United Nations, that cannot assist us in re-establishing the middle east peace process.

Although I have never been persuaded of a causal link between the Iraqi regime, al-Qaeda and 11 September, I believe that the impact of war in these circumstances is bound to weaken the international coalition against terrorism itself, and not least in the Muslim world. The big fear that many of us have is that the action will simply breed further generations of suicide bombers.

**Mr. Mohammad Sarwar (Glasgow, Govan):**

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reason for the failure of the United Nations and diplomacy is not the threat posed by the French, Germans, Russians, Chinese and the international community, but the American Administration of hawks and oil merchants who have no intention of finding — and no reason to find — a peaceful resolution to the crisis?

**Mr. Kennedy:**

There is great anxiety in the country, especially about the more hawkish elements of the Bush Administration. If the people of this country were given the choice of whom they would prefer to vest their trust in, they would undoubtedly go for the present Secretary-General of the United Nations rather than the President of the United States.

Last night, the Foreign Secretary told the House that everyone knew what they were signing up to on resolution 1441.

However, we should consider what the British and American ambassadors said when they secured that unanimity. The British ambassador said:

“Let me be equally clear in response, as a co-sponsor with the USA of the text we have just adopted, there is no ‘automaticity’ in this resolution.”

The American ambassador—his counterpart—said:

“If there is a further Iraqi breach . . . the matter will return to the Council for discussions as required”.

With China, France and Russia, as permanent members, not acknowledging that an automatic trigger has taken place, it is clear that people agreed to resolution 1441 on different bases. The historians will have to judge why that came about, but that is the position in which we find ourselves. To circumvent the continuing legitimate task of the weapons inspectors, who say, and who have been instructed unanimously in the name of the international community, our own countries included, that they should be given extra space, to cut that process short, will cause all the international disorder, tension and potential chaos that we are warning against and have been for quite some time.

Before launching an almighty assault upon Iraq, is it not better to pursue the course of disarmament on the ground in the presence of weapons inspectors? No matter how sophisticated modern technology, even compared with at the time of the last Gulf war, is it not more precise to have weapons dismantled in the presence of inspectors rather than so-called precision bombing trying to take them out?

There is huge public anxiety in Britain. That is the mark of a fundamentally decent society. All of us, whatever our views, whatever our parties, know that the kind of people contacting us are very different from many of those with whom we deal regularly. They are the kind of people who say, “I have never contacted a Member of Parliament before,” or “I’ve never been politically active before.” They are the kind of people who have never gone on a march or attended a vigil before. Another significant point is that, whether or not they agree with the Prime Minister, only a tiny fraction ever call into question his sincerity in this matter. I have never done so and I do not do so today. But much as they detest Saddam’s brutality, they are not persuaded that the case for war has been adequately made at this point, they are worried about the new doctrine of regime change, they are wary of the Bush Administration’s motives,

and they do not like to see Britain separated from its natural international allies.

The cross-party amendment is the correct amendment. It is tabled at the correct time, and, if passed, would send the correct signal. It is on those grounds that the Liberal Democrats will vote for it tonight.

**Comment:** In his speech Charles Kennedy makes it abundantly clear that he would support military action against Iraq if a second UN resolution in support of such action could be secured. This is/was a bizarre position given his warning about the consequences of military action. He said: “Although I have never been persuaded of a causal link between the Iraqi regime, al-Qaeda and 11 September, I believe that the impact of war in these circumstances is bound to weaken the international coalition against terrorism itself, and not least in the Muslim world. The big fear that the action will have is that it will simply breed further generations of suicide bombers.” Just how military action without a second UN resolution would differ in its end effects from military action approved by a second UN resolution is not explained by Kennedy. Did he really believe that the latter would create a benign result? Apparently so, as he refers to the “impact of war in these circumstances”, that is without a second UN resolution.

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Italian public from rejecting the influx and causing civil unrest. On *Facebook* he said that his political adversaries should “*take a kick in the ass*”.

His political adversaries were then served another surprise. The Lega Nord is based in the north of Italy where it started as a separatist movement. But, with increasing Italian antagonism to Europe and to immigrants, Salvini has hit upon the idea of organising in other parts of Italy. This new party would then be in a position to threaten the current parties on a national scale. Even as far back as November 2014 Marco Venturini was writing in *Il Fatto* to say that a party restructuring might be forthcoming. Such a profound change, Venturi suggested, should be recognised with a change of name in much the same way as happened with Tony Blair’s New Labour.



# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## THE NEW MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

Matteo Renzi, centre-left Prime Minister of Italy since February 2014, and Matteo Salvini, leader of Lega Nord (Northern League), should represent different ends of the political spectrum. But Renzi's Partito Democratico's (Pd) pact with Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia (Fi) alienated the left wing of his party as well as many voters. However, it enabled him to pass *Italicum*, which changed the electoral system, as well as *The Jobs Act*, which reduced worker's rights. Only Renzi's deliberate choice of Berlusconi's old foe Sergio Mattarella as President, to replace the almost-nonagenarian Napolitano, finally carved an unbridgeable gap between this odd alliance. For the past few months Renzi has been struggling to impose radical changes to teachers' contracts. Teachers have reacted strongly to the threat of short-term contracts and even to the proposal to make their summer break an unpaid period.

Recent Regional elections in May 2015 surprised Italy with some interesting shifts in electoral support. Silvio Berlusconi's Fi party had also been unsettled by his pact (Patto del Nazareno) with Renzi and divisions had opened there as well. Importantly the old chancer is now tiring and his political strength has weakened visibly. As a result Fi did not do well. However, the Lega-backed Fi candidate in Tuscany shocked by taking 20% of the Tuscan vote. This was interpreted as a warning to Renzi because, as he was previously Mayor of Florence, Tuscany is his stronghold. There was also a particularly strong Lega showing in the Veneto where Luca Zaia took over 50% of the votes. Beppe Grillo's M5s did not do well anywhere. Although Renzi's Pd party won a majority of the votes there were clear signs of a leaching of support. Analysis of the Regional results suggested that Salvini's Lega took votes from the right and also from M5s.

Traditionally Berlusconi's party and Lega have cooperated and it is suggested that Salvini now sees himself as a successor to Berlusconi. There is no other politician on the right who has the ability to attract a following. Salvini's background is that he didn't complete his university studies, was involved in the Movimento Giovani Padani (the young northern separatists), and was also on Milan City Council from 1993 – 2012.

Similar in age to Renzi, the two have only their first name in common. Salvini can be seen to be the political heir to the colourful Umberto Bossi, the Lega leader who resigned after corruption allegations in 2012. *The Guardian* summed up Salvini as bombastic, and he is deliberately and shockingly direct, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* said that he doesn't use half-tones. Renzi's party call Salvini a *jackal*. Salvini is contemptuous of Renzi who he sees as *a pawn of Europe*. He is not alone as he echoes the increasing resentment, distrust and sense of humiliation of many Italians who perceive that Renzi allowed Europe to take over the control and administration of their country. A man, says Salvini in his forthright way, "*who would even tax f---ing*".

Salvini clearly sees himself as an anti-establishment non conformist who stresses his credentials by wearing tee shirts and hoodies. He works to make his message simple and aims to appeal to ordinary people in a strongly anti-intellectual way. *Huffington Post* of 28 Feb quotes him ridiculing intellectually cultured pursuits. He goes on to say, "*the men of the left read a bag of books but sadly don't understand them. I read two and I understand two*".

*Il Fatto* of 6 June defines Salvini's promotional tactics and shows him to be a highly shrewd political operator. The article says that he has sensed and appreciated the growing alienation with politics and politicians in Italy as well as wider Europe. He knows that he can use this in a way that other politicians can't compete with. Beppe Grillo's M5s party had tapped into the disenchantment when they first started, and their rise to prominence was swift. But their tactics eventually failed because they had not understood how to promote themselves in an effective way. They made limited use of new media. They did not appear on TV. The elected representatives, bizarrely, were not permitted to give interviews and Grillo publicised M5s by appearing at big, ancient-Rome style public rallies. But he and his party, however hard he tried to avoid it, has become identified with the establishment.

The article goes on to pinpoint Salvini's winning difference. His message is disseminated through the most popular and well-used medium – *il telefonino* – the

mobile phone. The idea behind this is frighteningly clear. He aims to grab the attention of the most impressionable people, even those with limited reading skills use their mobiles for text messaging and imaging. So Salvini shouts his short messages like adverts, spreading them loudly and frequently on *Facebook*, *YouTube* and other platforms. The message is obviously not profound but Salvini sees that its strength is the simplicity of its slogan. It "*hits where it must hit*". This kind of rabble-rousing is reminiscent of the way that demagogues such as Mussolini and Hitler capitalised on the festering grievances that ordinary people were powerless to change.

Unsurprisingly Salvini focuses on the current Italian problems of Europe and immigration. The same *Il Fatto* article on 6 June paraded some of his forthright views on the EU in his characteristically abbreviated form: "*It is the Forth Reich, the new Nazis*", "*The Union of Soviet Europe*" and "*The Technocratic dictatorship*". His alienation from the EU has not stopped him being a member of the European Parliament and he is currently allied with Marine Le Pen. Salvini says that the attitude to the new right should be, as reported in the *FT* on 2 Dec, "*we need to look it straight in the eyes without fear*." As an aside, Le Pen and Salvini once danced together at a celebration and Marine apparently said that she was in *ecstasies*. Renzi joked, "*Bravo, I imagine its not easy!*".

Salvini is quite unique in being able to tap into current commonly expressed fears. Both Salvini and fellow Lega member Luca Zaia, who recently topped the Regional polls in Veneto, have trenchant views on immigrants. Zaia said that his area of Italy was refusing to take any more immigrants. Following this he was quoted as saying that it was an "*exodus on a biblical scale*". Salvini made remarks in a similar vein, particularly that all boats should be stopped before they leave their port of departure. Meanwhile, the political establishment's attitude was to appear to be welcoming to the displaced and suffering. Salvini calls them hypocrites for the way that their attitude attempts to shame the

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