

Labour Affairs

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The 'One Nation' Speech That Ed Miliband Never Made

(This discarded draft was found by Labour Affairs in a Brighton gutter after the Labour Party's conference in October. It was probably written by a special adviser who has since been sacked. Labour Affairs thought that it was worth printing as an indication of 'what might have been').

I want to talk to you about the role that Labour can play in righting the wrongs so evident in Britain today. It will be done, not by dividing the country but by unifying it. I will take as my cue Disraeli's famous One Nation speech in Manchester in 1872. Although I am not a Tory, I recognise that in the past many Tories disliked excessive individualism and reliance on market forces and wished for a fairer distribution of economic rewards. This attitude hardly exists among today's Tories, who have morphed into Nineteenth Century Whigs, Disraeli's sworn enemies.

Disraeli's idea of one nation did not mean putting sticking plaster over real divisions in society. He recognised that the privileged would often resist making their fair contribution to society and would need pressure put on them to do the right thing. Above all, believing in One Nation means a sense of social responsibility from the major parts of society. It won't just happen by itself, Labour will have to work hard and build alliances with enlightened employers and trade unionists who wish to revive their movement to make it relevant once again to all those employees who are unable to see what trade unionism can do for them. We need businesses that are not just focused on shareholder value and unions that accept responsibility for their part in the wellbeing of firms and for the running of the economy. In other words, we need meaningful social partnership to manage conflict, resolve differences and identify common ground for devising solutions to the problems that this country faces.

However, this will mean tackling the interests of those who do not wish to move in such a direction. Businesses that have lazily assumed that they can reward senior managers as they please and are responsible to no-one else but their shareholders. Businesses that rip off the taxpayer by not paying their workers enough. Landlords who charge excessive rents. Unions that think that wages are their only legitimate concern and that they

have no responsibility for helping the economy back on its feet. We may need to legislate to bring the operation of businesses within the sphere of social responsibility. Landlords charging exorbitant rents will also need to be tackled through rent control. We will work tirelessly with trade unionists and unions that want a greater say in vocational education and in the governance and direction of their businesses, in the first instance making alliances with businesses that already recognise the value of employee involvement and putting pressure on the others through the dynamism that such businesses will generate.

We have a dysfunctional economy plagued by excessive addiction to a free market approach to practically every social issue and a lack of ability and willingness on the part of too much of business and the trade union movement to practise social partnership. This must change. We cannot go on allowing business to do what it wants without taking responsibility for its actions. Too much of our economy has an easy ride and not just the City. Low value added businesses that do not invest and who pay their workers less than they need to live on employ millions of people who are subsidised by the taxpayer. Often they live in properties owned by landlords to whom the taxpayer pays a rent subsidy. These businesses and landlords are extorting rents from taxpayers and by allowing this we are subsidising a failed model of doing business, thus reinforcing failure.

We cannot go on subsidising failure. Firms that do not pay their workers enough to live on are a failed business model which the taxpayer is actually encouraging rather than discouraging. They are distorting the economy and preventing us from moving to a high value added economic model. There is nothing wrong (unions please note) with paying an apprentice less than a qualified worker until he or she becomes fully productive, but far too many firms are not interested in providing skills to their workforce, they are happy to bumble along selling poor quality goods and services made by poorly paid workers. We should

be subsidising firms that are innovative, make good use of their workforce and are involved in developing the abilities of their workforce. The state should use its power to encourage better behaviour within its own supply chain. We can't withdraw subsidies from bad businesses overnight, but this has to be our long term objective. We simply cannot tolerate, let alone subsidise, failed business models.

How can we do this? Due to the failure of the banking sector we now own a substantial chunk of Britain's banks. We will use these banks to loan to the kind of businesses that we would like to succeed. Businesses that innovate, that train their staff and welcome employee participation. We will use these banks to generate economic confidence once more, encouraging firms that are hoarding cash to start investing it, providing incentives where necessary through our own 'people's banks'.

One Nation means a drastic lowering of high relative inequality which is one of the scourges of modern Britain. High inequality leads to poor health, education and social welfare outcomes. It blights mental health and leads to increased crime and low aspirations amongst a large proportion of the population. We will greatly expand the Inland Revenue to squeeze tax avoidance amongst the well off and make sure that the very rich are contributing to One Nation. The amount wasted on so-called 'scroungers' is dwarfed by the taxes avoided by the very rich, some of whom actually do very little work themselves. A new higher rate on income tax and the institution of a progressive property tax, plus higher banding on council tax will all be our priorities in our drive to create a fairer Britain. No doubt sections of the press will scream blue murder, but my job as Labour Party leader is to lead and persuade, not to cringe before press barons.

Labour will also exert pressure on the trade union movement to play a more constructive role in British society. Despite admirable grassroots initiatives there is too much inertia at the top of some unions. They prefer to remain within an oppositionist comfort zone instead of engaging with some of the important issues that affect their members. These include training and job security and the govern-

ance of the firms for which they work. In other words, they will need to act more like those unions in our neighbouring countries who see themselves as essential pillars of the society, taking their own responsibility, not just for looking after their members but for the well-being of the firms which employ their members. Social partnership also means taking a leading role in proposing solutions for society through negotiation over the future direction of the economy with business organisations and with the government. Some backward sections of business might resist some of these measures but Labour will work with enlightened employers and will legislate if unions can demonstrate that they are serious about these issues. When the time is ripe, hopefully within the next parliament, we will propose legislation to promote industrial democracy, selected levies for vocational education and a payroll levy to ensure that unemployment does not lead to the loss of workers during a recession. We cannot afford to lose skilled labour and firms need a way to retain it in tough times. How soon we can do these things depends to a great degree on how enthusiastically the union movement is willing to work with us.

We are serious about creating One Nation but are under no illusions that it will be easy. We will need to build alliances with like-minded individuals and groups and not be intimidated by those who feel that privileges are threatened or those who feel that they can dictate public opinion through their media outlets. We will start now by reaching out to and involving those who would like to work with us in building alliances for improving the workplace and modernising their businesses now. Creating a society in which everyone has a stake does mean overcoming some entrenched interests. Disraeli recognised this and described how it could happen through the collective action of working people allied with other sections of society who are not happy with the current worship of market forces by so many of the elite in politics, business and the media. Although unfettered market forces have manifestly failed this country, few have found the confidence and courage to challenge their hegemony. Our answer is that we can do this by building alliances with those who want change and isolating and then per-

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Are we all Thatcher's children?

The above was the title of a discussion (Bishopsgate Institute, 13/11/12) in its *Back to the 80s*, series. It involved Owen Jones, (author of *Chavs*), Clare Short, a former Labour MP, Mark Field (a current Conservative MP). The unannounced speaker was Lord (Cecil) Parkinson, now a silver-haired elder statesman, as oleaginous (mere 'oily' doesn't quite describe it) as ever. The Chair was Aditya Chakraborty, a *Guardian* columnist. There was a audience of hundreds, probably Jones was the attraction. The consensus was that Thatcher's – in Owen Jones's words – had the same impact as the Attlee-Bevin administration (he noted Bevin's positive contribution, and his leadership of the mighty T&G (Transport & General Workers' Union, named in emulation of Connolly's OBU (one big Union)), prior to being made internal dictator of Britain).

The most interesting contributions were from Jones and Mark Field, who said he sold his 'first business' during Thatcher's period of government. Field did not regret one action by Thatcher. Jones mentioned the 'heroic' miner's strike (in his book, he writes that Scargill did not ballot the membership, his 'get out of jail' card was that the President of the NUM was able to make a strike 'official', Jones refers Scargill's appalling generalship).

Clare Short's main contribution was somewhat baroque arm movements, and an acceptance of Jones's argument that the Blair / Brown government in essence continued Thatcher's policies. That was the destruction of industry, (mining, the fishing, and other basics) and an over-reliance on the City and financial finagling. Privatisation was touched-on, but nobody (and none of the three audience

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suaing those who do not.

Building One Nation is not about cheap references to Disraeli while ignoring the substance of what he said. It is not about slick public relations designed to do nothing more than wrongfoot the Tories for a few weeks. It is a long term project to reduce inequality, make the economy more efficient and just and to involve working people in the running of their own firms. A start on this project by the Labour Party is long overdue, but at last it is beginning.

Seán McGouran

members who were allowed questions at the end) asked why, if privatisation was so obviously the correct thing to do, were 'sweeteners' needed? And is it true that the North Sea oil revenues were used for these 'sweeteners', and not used in building the infrastructure of the UK state, and encouraging industry? (Short resigned from the Blair Cabinet, for honourable reasons. She has left the Labour Party.)

Jones is an interestingly aggressive speaker, (I got the feeling that if Parkinson were younger, he'd have been thumped). Jones, quite reasonably, ignored Field, he is an identikit Thatcherite back-bencher with nothing of real consequence to say. But he (Jones) got genuinely angry with Parkinson. Parkinson took two interlinked approaches, one was the old 'politician's' ploy of answering the questions he wanted to answer. The other was about a Thatcherite 'fact', to the effect that Council tenants were not allowed to paint their own front doors a colour they chose. The latter hardly seems a substantial reason for taking the right to provide reasonably-priced housing away from democratically-elected Councils. He also blethered about the old Tory bogey – 'bureaucrats' – who apparently delight in making rules for the sake of making rules. ('Health and Safety' really annoyed many landlords. And 'white van men', freed to be entrepreneurs by dumping laws on such things, and not scrutinising their tax-returns too closely.

They are now largely bankrupt because their banks were 'adventurous'.)

Parkinson responded to Jones's assertion that hundreds of thousands of families are homeless by claiming that "houses are being built!". He simply ignored the response that they are palatial apartments and mansions for the very wealthy. Presumably Parkinson, now the Director of many enterprises (he claimed he knew about house building because he is the Director of a building firm), thinks those on the National Minimum Wage, should simply save their surplus cash to buy. He lives in the Thatcherite fantasy where everybody has become middle-class. The information that many former Council tenants could not afford to buy their homes simply sailed over his head. (Maybe a few Directorships might have done the trick?)

Jones dominated this discussion (he has that sort of personality). It is interesting that most of the audience, a pretty 'mixed' one in terms of political affiliation, tended to agree with his central assertion. That was that there is no counter-'vision' to the Thatcherite consensus. That that is democratically unhealthy. And that Thatcherism has failed on its own terms. The Thatcher / Gordon Brown assumption that we would all become rich (though most of us were only going to get a 'trickle down') has been exposed as nonsense. A return to labour essentials is necessary. Building houses and creating jobs would be a good start.

Education And

Addressing educational underachievement in working class areas and the role of the community/voluntary sector

Speech to the WEA 16th November 2012, Malone House, Belfast

At the outset, I'd like to thank Colin and the WEA for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I have a great regard for the Workers Education Association and its history, its links to the Co-Operative movement, its belief in localism, in democratic organisational forms, in the collective learning – the power of the tutorial group, and the belief in excellence for working people. That you're still here over 100 years later, is testimony to the continuing need.

I've been asked to speak about Educational Disadvantage, and I will do that. However first, I thought we should reflect, philosophically, on what education's for.

As a trade unionist supporting teachers, classroom assistants, technicians and peripatetic staff, I get a strong sense that education as we experience it within the schools system, is a positional good - something that will “*get you ahead*” in a competitive, lifelong, nearly cut-throat race. It's more about results, coaching, ‘gaming’ the system, passing tests than it is about learning.

Our teachers regularly complain that they feel they're on a hamster wheel, the hamster wheel of a tightly strung and centrally prescribed curriculum, of teaching to the test, of cramming and pushing the grade boundaries, of striving to ‘make the stats’.

We're starkly divided along communal lines, of course, but ours is a “high stakes” system – a hyper accountable, test driven, data driven, competitive race. For teachers, it feels sclerotic, hectic, pressured, stressed. And all to no great end.

If education's end is to serve the

Mark Langhammer

economy, then we're not doing too well, are we? The UK economy is not remotely productive, and Northern Ireland is the least productive part of it. We make, produce, manufacture, grow and extract very little. Making useful things (like paying tax, it seems) is for the “little people”. People in Asia do that stuff for us, don't they?

We run our economy based on de-regulated, *laissez-faire*, “flexible” labour markets. We have 40-45% going to Higher Education competing for only 15-18% jobs requiring graduate skills. And the incentive of flipping burgers or stacking shelves doesn't do it for most young people.

So before I talk about **disadvantage**, I'm going to ask the age old ‘Jim Callaghan’ question – “What is education for?”

Education surely is not just about the economy. Nor is it just about schools, nor is it just for the young. Learning should be, formal, informal, in work, at home, in school, at College, throughout life.

Arguably, now, education should be about **change**, coping with and shaping change. Change is all around us - technological change, social change, political change, even that change that couldn't speak its name in the US Presidential election - climate change.

The change we are experiencing is ubiquitous, it is profound, and fast paced.

The world that my children will cope with is vastly different to that which I faced as a young adult. My kids are at University now. And we're paying through the nose to put them through. But to what end? What's for them?

Maybe the plane to Australia, Asia, the Gulf States or wherever there might be some decent jobs. But is that the best we can do? Families dislocated across the globe? Unless it's what they want for themselves, I don't really want my kids living on the other side of the world. Or staying home to fight for too few, and too routine “McJobs”? Or stuck on the dole? Are any of you in the same place as me? I'm sure there are many.

So education should be about equipping to cope and to shape – coping and shaping with change, with volatility, with uncertainty, with unpredictability, with unsustainability.

Isn't that what education should be for?

Of course we need more and better jobs. Educational Maintenance Allowance is one policy tool we use to tackle educational disadvantage. Yet the argument about EMA has been held in a strange vacuum, where jobs aren't mentioned. EMA was about tackling educational drop-out, particularly focussed on the poorest families.

But the thing, above all else, that encourages young people to continue learning is the prospect of interesting jobs, careers, in decently paid, properly regulated, trades and industries. But if the jobs on offer are stacking Mega-market shelves, who can be surprised at disengagement in secondary level schooling?

The Working Class

So better jobs count. But not just that.

We also need independent thinkers – with coping skills, yes – but also with **creative** skills - adaptable, inquisitive, active citizens trying to shape the change all around them.

In his 1995 UNESCO report, “Learning: The Treasure Within”¹, 16 years ago now, Jacques Delors suggested that Learning should be based on four pillars

- Learning to Know – learning to learn through general knowledge and understanding
- Learning to Do – through developing skills, competence and practical ability in a variety of settings
- Learning to Live Together – through tolerance, mutual understanding, interdependence
- Learning to Be – by way of personal autonomy and responsibility, memory, aesthetics, ethics, communication and physical ability
- And maybe we should add a fifth pillar since Delors time, Learning to Sustain

Education should be about finding the **treasure within**. Each one of us has our own peculiar treasures and it's the job of educators to find, cherish and grow it.

Let me give you an example.

I used to volunteer as a Youth Worker at Rathcoole Youth Centre. One of my colleagues was a teacher at Rathcoole Secondary School. It's not there any more. He managed to get one of his “hard to reach” kids to come down to the Youth Centre. A big lad, a good fighter (which had a certain *cachet* in Rathcoole), but who was just turned off by education. He fell behind in his studies and found

school embarrassing. It was just a place where he came up short, where he failed. And the more he failed, the more he disengaged; and started to take days off school. He couldn't take the constant rejection.

What this teacher did was he tried to find out what engaged the boy. Eventually he found that the boy liked animals. He kept ferrets. (and there's a high correlation between kids who keep ferrets and subsequent involvement in paramilitaries; ferrets are useful for hunting; hunting requires an interest in guns, and so on).

So the teacher took the boy out of class. Initially, he got him to feed the dog that turned up at school dinner time, got the school cooks in on it. They let him help them at dinners; showed him to cook rudimentary things. Then he let the boy set up a rabbit hutch in the school, to build it and look after the school rabbit. He got the lad to talk to other kids about what was involved. He then built a bigger rabbit run, learnt how to fence it, maintained it. And nobody messed up the rabbit patch because this kid could fight. And the kid became engaged again; his attendance improved – but here's the thing - that wouldn't happen today, probably couldn't happen. Remember, this kid wasn't going to get any exams. He was nowhere near a grade boundary that would count. There's no room for rabbit hutches, because they don't show in the stats. And the Inspectors would have the school's guts for garters if they tried. (The dinner ladies probably can't cook either – due to PFI regeneration kitchens, but maybe that's for Jamie Oliver to deal with).

Finding the treasure within! Does our system do that?

Our current system, set beside the challenges around us, isn't at the races. To describe it as “ossified” doesn't come

close. It's the most socially segregated system in the developed world, bar none. We're 34th out of 34 OECD countries on that measure². And this brings us onto educational disadvantage.

Put simply, the worst performing systems in the world are the most unequal. The best education systems are built in more equal societies. The voluminous, cross cultural research of Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson³ show is that the more unequal a society

- the less competitive and economically productive
- the higher the prevalence of crime
- the higher the numbers in jail
- the higher the infant mortality rates
- the worse the incidence of mental health
- the less at ease the society
- the worse the educational performance.

There's very little doubt about this. There is near academic consensus on it – but what is lacking is political traction.

I recently received some statistics from the Education and Training Inspectorate, the ETI⁴. The inspectorate grade school in 6 categories (those are Outstanding, Very Good, Good, Satisfactory, Inadequate, Unsatisfactory). You would expect that if the Inspectorate really took account of social class, and the advantages or disadvantages that particular schools face, that you'd find that schools in each social band would show the same broad range of inspection grades – if they really took account of social disadvan-

tage.

What you actually find, is that schools with the most advantaged intake band are twice as likely to get an “Outstanding” or “Very Good” inspection grade than those from the least advantaged – and that schools from the least advantaged social band are four times more likely to receive an “Inadequate” or “Unsatisfactory” grade than those from the most advantaged intake band.

Northern Ireland isn’t alone here. These findings mirror a recent very high quality research study done by the RSA and OfSTED into the characteristics of satisfactory schools⁵.

The report reveals that schools stuck in the ‘satisfactory’ grade have a higher number of disadvantaged pupils and working class pupils. Outstanding schools take their fair share of neither.

This finding is important. Outstanding schools disproportionately have advantaged pupil intakes. Satisfactory schools have proportionately disadvantaged intakes.

Research evidence in the UK has repeatedly demonstrated that social class is the key determining factor in educational attainment. Most studies put its effect as a factor of ten above any other – race, gender, parental involvement or community culture for example.

Given that disproportionate pupil intakes are a key feature of satisfactory and outstanding schools, you would think that would be a policy pointer. However, instead of considering the implications of unbalanced school intakes on school performance, education policy usually races to the tired conclusion of more weighing and measuring – more inspections, reclassification and more vilification of schools struggling to make the grade.

So why do policy makers take a pass on unbalanced intakes and their effects on individual and school performance? I’ll hazard a guess. They judge that there was no point in evaluating the impact of school intakes upon school performance because any findings they might come

up with, through examination of the evidence, would have no political traction. Let’s be clear, no political party in the last 30 years has tackled the issue of unbalanced school intakes because to do so would be to take on the powerful vested interests, particularly middle-class parents who vote.

In Northern Ireland, only Sinn Féin have tried, putting a Free School Meals threshold into the Admissions criteria for Post Primary Schools. Well done, I’d say, except that the Admissions criterion are advisory, not compulsory.

Last year, I chaired Dawn Purvis’s working group into educational disadvantage in controlled schools and within the Protestant working class⁶ – an embarrassing, “sore thumb” issue here because of the communal cleavage in our politics.

But the core conclusions of their working group should be listened to. Here’s what Dawn Purvis’s “Call to Action” said

“Our principal finding, based on local, UK and international research, is that differentials in educational performance lie (to a degree of 80% or more) outside schools and the classroom. Therefore, systemic educational improvement will require comprehensive, long-term responses to inequality.

Initiatives to address inequality may include moves towards increased health spending, better housing..., robust and innovative early years and childcare strategies, reductions in wage differentials, moving towards a living wage or cracking down on corporate tax evasion.”

The Department of Education here have produced a detailed response to Dawn’s work – but it’s no surprise that the key measure of social balance in intakes is not one that the Department responded to – nor do they seem keen to tackle it.

Yet when we look at the Scandinavian countries whose educational successes we all admire, we look to everything rather than to the most important factor in their educational success. Michael

Gove, for instance, looks to the Swedish “Free Schools” model. The glaring fact that is missed is that Sweden and Finland have far less wealth inequality, fewer children living below the poverty level and far more balanced school intakes. In Finland you still go to your local comprehensive school – how quaint is that.

It is difficult for evidence-based education policy to have any traction in this country where educational debate is so toxic and polarized that to speak of the effect of poverty and inequality upon educational performance is to run the risk of being accused of low expectations, of condoning failure. We won’t tolerate “excuses” is the usual response.

So, what’s to be done

Let’s start with the evidence, and the international academic consensus, that improvements in overall performance are best achieved in schools with **balanced intakes**. In Northern Ireland, even within our toxic debates on Transfer, I’m struck by how much social mobility has been an argument for both those favouring academic selection, and those opposed to it.

Achieving balanced intakes, both in terms of ability and in social class, is not easily achieved, particularly in Northern Ireland. We’re a largely rural community with a high proportion of small, sectorally balkanised schools. And we’re not fussed on “social engineering”. In broad terms it can only be achieved by having larger schools, with a more collegiate approach to inter school collaboration, and a “hands on” and interventionist Government policy to monitor social balance. Schools funding should penalise social segregation. We have made this point to Sir Bob Salisbury’s school funding review.

Interestingly, one of the Salisbury review team researchers told me that Northern Ireland’s school travel budget was greater than the Republic of Ireland’s! **Think about that.** How can we spend more on school transport than a jurisdiction three times larger. We can only do it by supporting excessive transportation and bussing of pupils away from their locality. Is that not social engineering?

In schools with mixed intakes pupils learn about each other; they see different dispositions to learning; they recognize each others' skills – and those pupils who suffer the most deprivation and exclusion see that education can provide them with the skills and knowledge to make a different life for themselves.

For the most disadvantaged young people, the most important role model is someone who looks like them, who is their age, but who has different attitudes to learning and different aspirations for life. So, if we are really to make a difference, if standards really are to rise for all, we need schools which are socially mixed, in which peer group pressure can be used effectively to open minds, change outlooks and raise aspirations.

And here's the nub. Social balance helps everyone. It helps the disadvantaged kids most, but it also improves the performance of the better off too.

Let me illustrate this a bit. Some of you will know me as an Independent Labour political representative in Newtownabbey. My ward stretched from the Belfast boundary at Bawnmore to Whiteabbey village along the shoreline. It included Rathcoole, Northern Ireland's largest housing estate.

My Mum taught music in Hopefield Secondary School, at the bottom of the estate (there were three secondaries in Rathcoole at the time, each with over 1000 pupils). One of her pupils that showed promise at music came from a dirt poor family. His family surroundings were chaotic. This pupil wasn't sporty, but stuck with it anyway, because he could get a hot shower. The family was "underclass" before such a term existed. But school gave him access, in those days, to a musical instrument. He joined the school orchestra. Outside school, he joined the Army Cadets because they had a band, and subsequently joined the Army to play in the Army band. He was no more 'military'; than the man on the moon.

This pupil progressed in the Army Band, took a teaching qualification and worked in the Northern Ireland educa-

tion system for more than thirty years as a music teacher. From desperate circumstances, he made a success of life.

So why do I tell this story.

I tell it because it couldn't happen today. Why? Because schools like Hopefield 40 years ago had a degree of social balance in their intake and could support a school orchestra, and put on Shakespeare productions. They couldn't today! They just face too many challenges, with no leavening of social balance, just a constant uphill battle.

In the case of Hopefield, it merged with Rathcoole Sec School back in the 90's and now, under the new wave of Area Plans, is likely to disappear altogether. So an estate like Rathcoole which used to support 3 secondary schools all with over 1000 pupils, will soon have none. And the school facilities, gyms, meeting rooms, computer suites, playing fields that previously were open to the community to some degree, now won't be. There will be a net loss of community facilities because the schools that close will – overwhelmingly – will be those within and closest to working class communities.

By way of pointing some directions for the voluntary and community sector, I thought I'll finish with an international comparison. Six years ago I went to Venezuela with an Irish Labour Party and trade union delegation. In addition to our duties as election monitors, we organised a programme of visits to learn about the politics, economy, culture and education systems of the country.

Visiting Venezuela to study its education system was a humbling experience, particularly the new, less formal, system of social 'Missions' aimed primarily at education and health, all focused on the most poverty stricken in society.

The *Robinson Mission* launched in July 1st 2003 aimed to reduce literacy levels and pull millions of Venezuelans from the shadows of ignorance. Within 10 years they claim to have eradicated illiteracy to the statistically insignificant. The program uses volunteers to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic to the more than 1.5 million Venezuelan adults

who were illiterate prior to the programme. The program is military-civilian in nature, and sends volunteers and soldiers to, the most remote and dangerous 'barrios' to reach the most undereducated and marginalized adult citizens to give them regular schooling and lessons.

The *Ribas Mission* is a progression route from "Robinson" aimed at remedial high school level classes to the millions of people who were forced to drop out of high school. The *Sucre Mission* is aimed at providing university access route focused on the disadvantaged. The *Vuelvan Mission* is a "back to work" mission aimed at preparing people for work, notably work in local co-operative business and agricultural enterprises.

These missions have been underpinned by other social missions such as *Barrios Adentro* - a health support scheme for poor 'barrios' (neighbourhoods), the *Mercal* mission aimed at producing cheap basic foodstuffs for poor families through a very basic network of Co-Operative shops, and a veritable revolution in self help through local, barrio level, community councils. All this vital work has been funded by the Government via the oil company PDVSA, but was undertaken almost entirely outside the Ministry for Education.

I met with Damelyn Yeguez, sub Secretary of Education in one of the 5 Caracas municipalities to learn about the formal education system. She talked about the same things we do - quality of learning, low enrollments, the poor conditions of school buildings and the health of the children. In addition the content of education had little emphasis on reflecting local, national and Latin American culture and history.

She stressed again and again the degree to which **nutrition** is a key educational priority in tackling low enrollment. This reflects the impoverished nature of many of the 'barrios' and is also tackled through the social missions' networks of soup kitchens - providing a wholesome midday meal.

In response, the Municipality has tackled the problems in a range of ways. continued from page 7

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



A Bill allowing « Marriage for All » will be discussed in the French Parliament in Spring 2013.

The Catholic Church in France believes we are on this earth not as mere individuals with personal desires, but as members of a community with duties to each other. Therefore it has a standpoint from which to speak on the subject of homosexual marriage. The Conference of Bishops has assembled comments on the subject which are published on its website.

The most obvious comment is that it is not the most urgent problem of today by a long way. The debate is imposed by a minority of a minority on the rest of the population. Another obvious point is that the slogan “marriage for all” as used in the media is meaningless, since some marriages are still forbidden.

The bishops agree that the word ‘marriage’ has always meant: The union of man and woman. Therefore, they say, by definition homosexuals are excluded from marriage, unless you change the meaning of the word.

They ask, Why call it marriage? The answer is, So that homosexual couples can be treated the same as heterosexual couples in that respect, and so that children can have legal parents. But the question remains, how do the children come to be born? It can only be through the contribution of a third person of the opposite sex; in a homosexual couple, there will always be “parent number 3”. Marriage that produces children supposes sexual difference and can never be homosexual. The third parent however in most cases has no existence as far as the child and the family are concerned.”

The bishops believe that one’s sex

is fundamental to identity, and that identity cannot be constructed freely, without regard to biological differences. The individual is not free in this respect. Therefore the absence of role models does matter. It is not right to expect children to develop their identity without reference to models of both sexes.

The bishops stress that the desires of the individual are not paramount when it comes to the institutions that make up society. Desires do not create rights. There is no right to have a child. Having children is not a right.

They point out that the law will impose the fact that on some children that they do not have a mother and a father.

Here follow translations of some of the bishops’ comments, from the

There has been a growth of Bolivarian schools, introducing a new “Bolivarian Curriculum” to include more accurate historical information on Venezuelan and Latin American history. With population growth, a new school system was growing around the old.

But one of the most successful interventions in improving school attendance has been a system of **insurance**, linked to school attendance, for children providing cover (in or out of school) for major health and accident costs (in or out of school), for funeral costs and other benefits. The real benefit of insurance cover bought in parental involvement.

More than anything, the system of Missions and improvements to access to the mainstream system have provided hope. Aspirations were palpably rising.

The Venezuelans got, then, what we don’t – that Education performance is

linked to inequality, income policy, tax policy, health, housing, the living wage – in short, tackling educational disadvantage is substantially a class issue. And to succeed, we need to join those dots....all the dots.

Thank you.

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(Footnotes)

¹ Learning: The Treasure Within, UNESCO 1995 http://www.unesco.org/delors/delors_e.pdf

² See OECD’s annual report, Education at a Glance, October 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2012%20-%20Country%20note%20-%20United%20Kingdom.pdf>

[%20Country%20note%20-%20United%20Kingdom.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2012%20-%20Country%20note%20-%20United%20Kingdom.pdf)

³ The Spirit Level: Wilkinson R & Pickett K: Penguin, London 2009

⁴ Letter, Education & Training Inspectorate to Mark Langhammer on 2 November 2012

⁵ Becky Francis RSA (Un)Satisfactory? Enhancing Life Chances by Improving ‘Satisfactory’ Schools, December 2011, see <http://www.thersa.org/action-research-centre/education/social-justice/satisfactory-schools>

⁶ A Call to Action: Educational Disadvantage and the Protestant Working Class, see <http://www.nicva.org/news/community-activists-and-education-policy>

website of the Conference of the Bishops of France

Mgr Georges Pontier, archbishop of Marseilles 12 November 2012

Why do we oppose this law?

Because marriage is an institution which organises and supports relationships and mutual rights and duties within society: it rests on relations between men and women, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister. It looks to its future.

Because marriage is not the place where society recognises love relationships between citizens.

Because children are the fruit of love between a man and a woman; children find around them a mother and a father who bring to them their rich complementarities.

Because there does not exist a right to marriage, nor a right to have children, and even less a right to acquire children by any sort of means. Because children have the right to know those who engendered them, thus to be made a part of a line; to be educated by them and to call them: Mum and Dad. Because this project is a bad response to the expression of a suffering, a response that will create many other sufferings and weaknesses by destroying fundamental markers and points of reference.

Because something very deep is in question in this cultural and anthropological upheaval.

Because all this is done in a hurry, without a debate in depth, whereas the question is serious and is not one that needs to be dealt with extreme urgency

Mgr Michel Pansard, bishop of Chartres, 19 September 2012.

Marriage is not just the utilitarian or romantic celebration of a love. By concentrating our attention on the individual and his or her feelings, we risk limiting marriage to a private and intimate affair, in which it is then not clear

why the State should be involved.

Mgr Roland Minnerath, archbishop of Dijon, 14 September 2012.

The phrase “homosexual marriage” is contradictory. Marriage presupposes sex differences. There is no discrimination in excluding from the category of marriage other sorts of unions. It is not inequality to treat different realities differently.

The institution of marriage is not the recognition by society of the love of two persons, but of their will to commit to each other, to give stability to their union and to guarantee affiliation [family origin].

The phrase “right to a child” is confusing. It is the child who has rights, including the right to have a connection with a mother and a father, a connection which will allow him or her to develop his or her personality. The child is not an object designed to fill a gap or fulfil a desire.

Mgr Olivier de Germay, bishop of Ajaccio 1 August 2012.

Let us not forget the red thread which runs through this type of law. At the time of the debate on PACS [official pact giving rights to any couple cohabiting], we were told it was just a question of defending the dignity of homosexuals, and that adoption was out of the question. Today, still under cover of non-discrimination, the law on adoption is on the agenda. Preventing a child outright from having a mum and dad is not seen as a discrimination But let us make no mistake, this is not the end. We are following an ideological trend which does not intend to stop there.

The next step has begun to reveal itself through gender theory. We will be asked to accept the idea that sexual difference is only biological and does not concern the deep and fundamental identity of the person. One can therefore choose one's sexual orientation (hetero, homo, bi, trans, etc) independently of one's gender. In consequence it will be forbidden—because it will be considered as brain-washing—to give

a boy an education including masculine points of reference and to give a girl an education with feminine points of reference. This would go against the all-powerful individual freedom that wants to free itself from nature...

The ideologies of the last thirty years have worked on society and led in large part to the breakdown of the family; new ideologies will allow the destruction of the person. In both cases it is society in its entirety that is falling apart.

Mgr D'Ornellas, archbishop of Rennes, Dol et Saint-Malo, 20 November 2012.

The Catholic Church is respectful and loving towards the weakest. In this case it is particularly mindful of the children and their upbringing. The law is particularly unjust in creating a discrimination: it will be imposed on some children to be without a mother or without a father .

Mgr Philippe Gueueley, bishop of Langres, 9 November 2012

Sexual difference, the foundation of marriage from its origin, would be weakened if marriage for homosexual couples was inscribed in law. The union of two women and the union of two men is not fertile without the intervention of a third party. If what is in question is taking into consideration, the love which unites two women and the love which unites two men, there is no legal necessity to call this situation a marriage. Another word must be found.

The stakes are far higher than appears in the proposed law : the law strikes at the family in its anthropological nature, and relativises sexual differences which are the source of fecundity. It makes yet another tear in the social cohesion of our country, which does not need new sources of divisions. It creates new conflicting duties and does not respect conscientious objections. It is not a mark of progress in our civilisation.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M Williams

Osborne Being There

The Tory idea is “look after the money and all will be well”.¹ Tory policy during a recession that was brought on by globalised speculation and gambling has been to cut government spending. They also do as much as they can to ensure that the speculators and hedge funds lose as little as possible. They want nothing that will hinder such people from getting “back to normal” as soon as things pick up.

This is entirely right according to Thatcherite ideology. Edward Heath upheld traditional Tory values when he spoke of the “unacceptable face of capitalism” regarding some much milder wheeler-dealing. Thatcherism enshrined the notion that every part of capitalism is absolutely beautiful. No one must stop them following market signals. And the state is a gigantic burden that has grown beyond all reasonable bounds for no good reason.

Thatcherism failed to shrink the state. She transferred some industries from public ownership to private, much of it ending up controlled by foreign companies. But she and her successors bumped up against the reality that a big tax-funded state is actually essential for a modern economy.

She also shifted power away from workers and back towards owners and managers, by allowing massive unemployment and weakening trade unions. And to shift the blame onto the people who could no longer get the sort of well-paid manufacturing jobs they had been used to. The same thing happened in the USA, but even more drastically.

The New Right succeeded brilliantly in what they set out to do. But this led to an unhealthy society, one in which everyone distrusts everyone else.

When Thatcher and Reagan broke the dignity of labour, they broke something fundamental in the society. This was fatal to their broader conservative intentions. There had always been a Chav or ‘Chancer’ element within the working class, but it was unionised labour that kept it in check. With work devalued, it multiplied greatly.

Keeping capitalism in check under the Mixed Economy from the 1940s to the mid-1970s was fairly successful. There were problems that sounded alarming at the time, but they seem tiny compared to what we have now. Letting capitalism rip produced high unemployment and greater inequality, without in fact improving on Britain’s rather sluggish growth-rate. The USA appeared to do better, but in fact production *per head* did not improve. They did let in vast numbers of immigrants, many high-quality and well-educated, so actually they should have done rather better than they’ve done. And of course, the addi-

tion of so many immigrants has bust the assumptions that the USA once ran on and has encouraged the roar of despair that the “Tea Party” movement actually amounts to.

What should be said – and so far is not being said by Labour politicians – is that Thatcherism was an enormous wrong turning. The Mixed Economy is the best system anyone has yet devised. Attempts to get away from it have now created a Great Slump that shows no sign of ending.

A “Campaign for Real Taxes”?

“Last week’s cave-in by Starbucks, which has agreed to pay £20m in corporation tax over the next two years, was one of those giddy moments when grassroots campaigners get a taste of their own power.

“The US-based corporation, which is blamed for driving hundreds of independent cafes out of business, appeared to decide that avoiding a consumer boycott – and being seen as a corporate baddie – was worth £20m. But aside from revealing how sensitive even multinationals are to jibes about ethics, the move underlines the arbitrariness of the international tax code.

“A new paper from the Tax Justice Network by Professor Sol Picciotto of Lancaster University suggests ditching the long-established ‘arm’s-length principle’ under which multinationals are allowed to treat subsidiaries in different companies as distinct firms, and pay tax accordingly.

“‘The present system treats transnational corporations [TNCs] as if they were loose collections of separate entities,’ he says in the study. ‘There is currently only weak co-ordination between tax authorities, and this ‘separate entity’ approach gives TNCs tremendous scope to shift profits around the globe.’...

“With help from well-paid advisers, international companies use a network of ‘transfer payments’ between subsidiaries. The UK arm of Starbucks, for example, pays hefty ‘royalties’ to its operation in Luxembourg – a conveniently low-tax location – for use of the Starbucks brand. While this is completely legal, it is all but impossible for HM Revenue & Customs to establish whether such payments are being made at a fair price.

“Picciotto argues instead that multinationals should be taxed ‘not according to the legal forms that their tax advisers create, but according to the genuine economic substance of what they do and where they do it’.

“He says tax authorities should insist on ‘unitary’ accounts, showing a multinational’s worldwide operations. They could then assess where their profits are really made, using three factors: the number of staff the company employs in each country;

its fixed assets, such as factories and machines; and its sales. That would prevent large profits being attributed to, say, Luxembourg or Ireland if there is nothing there but a glitzy headquarters and a few staff. Use of this unitary approach has a colourful precedent: the US state of California used it for decades from the 1930s to prevent Hollywood film studios from routing profits through lower-tax Nevada.

“Picciotto offers the example of Amazon, which claims that all its UK affiliate does is order-fulfilment, deliveries and logistics; sales are actually made by its Luxembourg operation, where most of its profits are booked (though George Osborne’s latest cut in corporation tax, to 21%, means the rate in the UK will be the same as that in Luxembourg’s from 2014).”²

It would need a mass campaign – one based on the general thesis that the heavily regulated system we had up to the 1970s was better than the Thatcher / Reagan alternative. But also recognising that times have changed and we need to move on. Call it the *Campaign for Real Taxes*, maybe. A simple system based on actual wealth and not the surreal nonsense dreamt up by lawyers and accepted by the authorities.

Replacing Capitalism With Capitalism

The New Right view of 20th century history might run as follows:

Capitalism, expanding from its original base in Britain, was liberating humanity up until 1914, when it suffered from an inexplicable outbreak of Trench Warfare. It bounced back, but then a fairly normal economic slump at the end of the 1920s caused unjustified panic and capitalism was in the 1930s replaced by capitalism. Then after World War Two, in an admiration of excessive admiration for the Soviet Union after it had merely saved the West from Nazism, there were still more drastic changes and capitalism was replaced by capitalism. But in the 1980s, Thatcher and Reagan rescued us by replacing capitalism with capitalism. Of course there is still much more that needs to be done to replace capitalism with capitalism in the West. And

China, while owing all of its successes to capitalism, faces all sorts of disasters unless it urgently replaces capitalism with capitalism.

They don’t put it like that, obviously. But the label ‘capitalist’ is stuck onto almost all of the various political-economic systems that the West has had in the 20th century. It is also applied to the post-Mao system in China, which has actually been changing continuously and has always been massively dominated by central, regional and local government.

All successes are credited to capitalism, but at the same time each of the actually-existing systems is condemned for deviating from the ideal capitalism devised by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. And they slide different bits of history from ‘capitalism’ to ‘socialism’ and back again for different parts of the story.

The 20th century actually saw a number of alternative and rival economic systems. Most included a strong element of capitalism: the exceptions were the Soviet Union under Stalin and China under Mao. All without exception put curbs on capitalism, to differing degrees. But if you view them as different and alternative systems, you’d conclude that heavily regulated capitalism tends to work better than capitalism unleashed.

Let’s try giving names to the main alternatives, arbitrary names that avoid the half-theological question of whether a particular system is or is not capitalist:

System A, from Britain 1760s up to 1914, fairly smooth-running but based on a dominant ruling class that believed itself to be above capitalist values. It was also very slow by modern standards, with an annual growth-rate of 1% to 2%.

System B, Bolshevik alternative. Shifting from War Communism to the semi-capitalist New Economic Policy, and then Stalin’s highly successful planned economy. The first two kept things together but failed to raise the economy above its pre-war level. Stalin’s work produced the massive economic base that produced the war machine that did at least two-thirds of the work in the war that broke Nazi Germany.

System C, Original Mixed Economy, as practiced by Fascism in Italy from the 1920s and Germany from the 1930s. Fairly successful, and Hitler’s power and prestige rested on his success in getting Germany working again after the Weimar system had led to stagnation and slump.

System D, USA, the New Deal copied Mussolini’s Mixed Economy model within the existing multi-party and pluralist system. This got the USA working again, after speculation had jammed the economic system.

System E, an expanded New Deal system and with a military-industrial complex that was highly successful economically, whatever you think of it morally. This was the system that gave the West its key advantage from the 1940s to 1970s. The system that successfully incorporated former foes in West Germany, Italy and Japan and enabled the West to pull ahead of the Soviet Union economically.

System F, the replacement for System E promoted by Thatcher and Reagan when System E was in trouble in the 1970s. It was sold as a return to solid “System A” values. In fact it keeps the substance of System E, just adjusts it to give most of the benefits

System F has no less tax-and-spend than System E. But the bias is to tax the working mainstream and spend as much as possible on things valued by the rich, armaments and warfare and bailing out failed banks.

System E favoured the utterly simple concept of welfare based on need regardless of income, and tax based on income regardless of need. This has been complicated on a pretext of fairness, and is now much more of a muddle. Tax avoidance is a big part of the success of the current business class. And they are moving towards a poor-law system that will keep the bottom of the society quiet and letting it offend the working mainstream.

(With all the talk about ‘scroungers’, you might wonder why it’s never been fixed. It’s not been fixed, firstly because a lot of it is exaggerated, and second because the dominant Overclass find it use-

ful for keeping the working mainstream irritated at those below them rather than those above them.)

What about the Soviet failure, which gave a big boost to the credibility of "System F"? Stalin's system was highly successful and could have been continued with some relaxation and reform. Khrushchev got greedy, he tried to change everything and create a Soviet version of "System E", but messed it up. In China, Deng did something similar but succeeded, creating what might be called System G, a successful variant on System E that keeps Leninist politics. Note also that Mao's version of System B had managed to get China modernised, tripling the economy during his quarter-century of rule, after China being invaded by System A had failed to do so.

One major difference between Khrushchev and Deng is how they understood the success of the West's System E. Khrushchev was one of the first believers in the "miracle of the market", only he believed that this must be a market operated by state entities. Deng allowed actual private enterprise, but believed that markets were not to be trusted, and proved correct.

In China nowadays, the central government can stop anything, and a foreign investor needs to first check that whatever they plan is acceptable. But the successful foreign investor will then talk to lower levels of government at the provincial and county level, get them positive about whatever it is that is being planned. And it seems also that China is increasingly able to do it all for itself.

Deliver Us From Stalinism...

A lot of the weakness of the Left since the 1970s has been down to the remarkable success of the Trotskyist movement in moulding the minds of 1960s radicals. The common left-wing assumption till the 1970s was that both Stalin's Soviet Union and the 1945 Labour government had been major successes, even though you might find faults. Trotskyist influence managed to convince most of the new generation that both had been failures and disastrous betrayals. This attitude was mostly retained as those individuals

moved on from Trotskyist influence.

The Trotskyist movement split from mainstream Leninism in the 1920s, claiming to be the true upholders of International Revolution. Their Leninist achievements since then have been essentially zero. Their closest to a serious revolutionary movement was in Argentina, where however they were reduced to insignificance by a military junta that practiced mass murder of suspected militants with the general approval of the West and of most Argentines. Elsewhere they never got further than being Armed Nuisances. Other movements have grown from small beginning: some part-socialist Nationalists, various Maoist groups and more recently a great variety of Islamists. Trotskyism has remained a sink of militancy, a place where young radicals accumulate and achieve nothing very much. They reject in principle the idea of reform, but are nothing like ruthless enough or realistic enough to actually overthrow any of the state machines that they have written off as unreformable.

But their failure as Leninists didn't stopped them being hugely influential on generations of young people. The two are connected: they preserved the romance of revolution by denying the brutal reality. That justifies sabotaging reform when it is possible, and it was very possible in the 1970s. But such negative tactics get nowhere and paved the way for the success of the New Right, to which a significant fraction of the former Trotskyists defected. (This last has perhaps been useful for socialism, because those people mostly bring with them the same "wisdom" that made them worse than useless as leftists.)

Die Hard With A Tea Party?

The old and white mostly voted for Romney, the young and non-white for Obama. Will that mean a collapse of Tea Party Politics? I rather think not. I understand it as a "roar of despair" by people who figure that their world is dying. And if you see it like that, you might as well go down fighting.

The US has a tradition of fighting to the bitter end. That was how they won

their War of Independence, and it was the thing that kept the Confederacy fighting till there was nothing left. Abraham Lincoln proposed compromises that would have included keeping slavery till 1900, and might have accepted an extension if the Confederacy had been willing to compromise. Instead they fought on and suffered far more than they needed to.

Though the Republicans were Abraham Lincoln's party, they are now more or less the party of the Former Confederacy, joined by similar but weaker elements in the North. I'd also say (flatly against what US liberals will tell you) that the Tea Party's implicit racism and defence of the rich makes them truer to the Founding Father and Early Republican tradition than the Centrists. The USA was moved a long way left by the New Deal: the tragedy was that it was done independently of socialist ideology, which therefore remains marginal in the society.

There is a looming crisis at the end of 2012, when certain budget compromises run out. As I write (10th December), it remains uncertain if there will be a deal. I'd say "maybe not", even "probably not". Maybe both sides recognise that the current compromise is not working. Maybe each would accept a major crisis and hope to emerge from it in control of the future direction of the USA. And I can't see the Tea Party winning, though they may continue to frustrate whatever radical notions Obama may possess.

A country called Europe?

The current slump began with collapsing banks and bad debts discovered from 2007 onwards. But somehow the business-dominated media have managed to shift the blame onto governments and suggest more of the same financial poison. And they have the International Money Markets to back them up, flowing in line with New Right opinions as to what's good economics.

But there is also quiet resistance, especially from Germany. This was helped by Cameron blundering and taking too hard a line. Under Thatcher, Major and Blair, Britain was able to disrupt and open up the European Communist on the

pretext of helping it. Cameron let himself be seen as an open enemy.

The crisis of the Eurozone is not the fault of the Euro, it is backwash from the mass of bad debts and speculations that have accumulated since the 1980s. But to survive, the Euro needs more economic integration. And it seems now that it will get it. There was an interesting commentary on this recently:

“Cameron was brutally clear when he foresaw the need to intensify EU union. Such concerns may force a UK exit

“As brave europhile Brits walk in fear of Brexit and Tory Eurosceptics and their UK Independence Party cousins inhale the sweet smell of success, other Europeans watch with bemusement how Britain, after decades of obstreperous membership of the European club, may finally pick up its armoured handbag and go...

“Whether Brexit should be dreaded or welcomed as the exit of a poisonous flatmate has become a matter of serious examination in European capitals. Would British withdrawal badly weaken the economic and ideological foundations of the single market, allowing excessive statism a free rein?”³

I assume that “excessive statism” means a return to older and more successful methods, what I called System E. It’s better for ordinary people, both socially and economically. It would hurt only the rich Overclass that has flourished since the 1980s, and has made a complete mess of managing the wider world.

(I don’t rate them as the sinister conspiratorial oligarchs of some left-wing descriptions. I rate them as small-minded characters with a very limited vision. Reading the attempts at philosophy by Soros and by Nassim “Black Swan” Taleb suggests no oligarchic vision and not much understanding of the processes they are operating.)

To get back to the future of Europe:

“Most of Europe’s media ignored the comment because it was made on the Letterman show and most of the Brit-

ish media predictably zeroed in on Mr Cameron’s amusing failure to remember his Old Etonian Latin. They glossed over the far more important and astoundingly frank assertion by their prime minister that the euro zone, unless it disintegrated, must effectively become the United States of the Euro and that the United Kingdom under his stewardship would not wish to be part of ‘a country called Europe’.

“Confront British officials with this moment of prime ministerial candour and they will give you a pained look. It is a rare moment indeed when it is the head of government himself who publicly lays out a matter of fundamental political import in such starkly simple – or, as some critics would say, simplistic – terms as to leave no room for diplomatic subterfuge or political compromise.

“But if Cameron is right and the euro zone must basically become like a country called Europe if it is to survive (with which this author happens to agree), then, barring some unforeseeable economic cataclysm, a vast majority of Britons will choose to stay outside it for decades to come.

“Equally predictably, the European Union would then be reduced to some kind of glorified European free trade area encumbered with too many obsolete institutions. Whether the UK would remain in it or negotiate some other form of access to its single market would be a secondary issue.”⁴

It may be the best way forward. And I’d expect such a European project to succeed, especially if the USA self-destructs, as could easily happen. I’d be sorry to see Britain separate from it, but it’s also likely that Britain would have to re-join and accept European values at a later date. Better for ordinary Britons than what we have now.

Keep Calm, It’s Only An Iceberg

Since last month, we’ve had floods in Britain. Expect more bad weather to come. The old norms have vanished for ever. Climate change is here.

The British attitude of “Keep Calm

And Carry On” has its merits, but only when you’re already on the right lines. The captain of the Titanic refused to let himself be bothered by a mere ice-field: it seems his vast experience of the oceans didn’t include experience of floating ice and how deadly it could be.

Likewise people seem to think they can ride out all of the fuss about climate change, as if it were merely a matter of some people having the wrong opinion. How long it will take them to learn is anyone’s guess.

Egypt: liberals punch the Islamist fist with their noses

Even before Mubarak was overthrown, I gave my opinion that the mostly-liberal protestors were being a bunch of fools. As I write (10th December), President Morsi has withdrawn his brief attempt to rule by decree, but insists on keeping the planned referendum due on 15th December. And no one doubts that he will win that vote/

The liberals demanded Western-style democracy. This duly happened, and the Islamists won overwhelmingly. This was completely foreseeable: secular liberalism never has amounted to much as a grass-roots movement. In Britain, the top liberals were skeptics but the base were devout Puritans, and liberalism withered when this base did. In Egypt they had nothing much outside of the ranks of the privileged and Westernised, and should have known it.

Here, as in Iraq and Libya and now Syria, they seem to learn nothing and forget nothing. The liberals want to punish large sections of the army and police: the ruling Muslim Brotherhood have wisely decided to forgive them. So the protestors are confronting a combination of the legally elected authority, the mass of the population and the security apparatus. Sensible?

Syrian End-Game?

I recently heard a Western minister hoping that the Syrian opposition will exclude “violent, extremist people”. Which is hardly realistic: those are the sort of

people who take to war like a duck to water.

When you see a brutal and intolerant government, you usually find a brutal and intolerant citizenry. Or occasionally a citizenry outraged at bad treatment, as with Germany and Italy. Regardless, when you remove a repressive regime you find yourself face to face with all that it's been repressing.

It's quite possible that the Assad government will lose Damascus and retreat to the Alawite heartland. This would be likely to be followed by total chaos, with Islamists likely to emerge on top. And Western pundits will once again view this as utterly unexpected and not the fault of the West.

Murderous Pranks

If it hadn't been for one of the victims taking her own life, I suppose that the impersonation of the Queen by two Australian DJs would still be viewed as a grand joke. And any attempt to crack down on such things would be "interference with the free press".

"Free Press" originally related to the right of the press to criticize the government. It had to be fought for in Britain, with the Tory Party as the main resistance to such freedom and the judges taking a mixed line. It was actually extended quite gradually and there are still limits. But in the end, it established a fairly general right to criticise.

"Freedom of the Press" should not extend to a right by the press to intrude on ordinary people for the brief entertainment of their audience. Humiliating innocents. Wrecking ordinary lives.

Unless you are harsh about any breach of the rules, you'll let things drift until someone gets hurt. Broken rules are slow to heal and may in fact perish.

If it were up to me, I'd forget about the DJs, who were only doing what was expected of them. You don't expect DJs to be sensible: you do expect their managers to put limits on them. So blame the organ grinder, not the monkeys.

The guilty station is *2Day FM*, and it has gone beyond decent limits before now. Also suffered some penalties, but not enough to stop them doing worse.⁵ Maybe we should be asking ordinary Australians to boycott that station, put it out of business, wipe out the investment of its owners. That would teach the whole "shock jock" branch of the media an unforgettable lesson. Unless you do that (or else lynch a few of them) then you are giving them implicit permission to go on and offend again.

The Media As Anti-Thought Police

The Leveson Report was unexpectedly mild. It was quite clear that a lot of existing laws had been breached, including paying money to police officers. But all that was proposed was a statutory back-up to the "self-regulation" that has already failed.

Depressingly, everyone has allowed the debate to shift to whether Leveson's Mouse should be put into law, or whether we trust the media to voluntarily give up their long-established bad habits. One must suspect a successful diversion of interest rigged by the establishment, defusing what should have been an explosive issue.

Critics let the press get away with saying "freedom" to describe a situation where there is already some government regulation, mostly on military / security matters. And where vicious libel laws work so nicely to protect the guilty-but-rich that it seems likely this was the intention. And where business interests dominate.

There also seems no serious questioning of 'Investigative Reporters', which amounts to reporters as Secret Police. Of course people say 'Undercover Agent' when they rate the investigator as on their side. And they seem happy for reporters to poke their noses into private lives when it is really no one else's business.

It's all part of the Coolheart mentality, a belief that individual acts of trickery and deception will somehow produce a better world. It has visibly not happened.

Make War Not Sport

Horrible incidents like the killing of a Dutch linesman in an amateur football game will obviously be condemned. But who will condemn the hyping of competitiveness that has led to a great many such incidents?

Violence and dishonest protests have become part of modern sport, it was allowed to happen. In tennis, John McEnroe should have been disqualified when he started making excessive protests against every unfavourable decision. In football, it was bloody obvious who was doing the 'professional fouls' and it could have been stamped out. But it made for good entertainment, which brought in money. It also encouraged the general attitude of all-against-all, which has been so useful for the New Right. So it has carried on and contaminated even sporting fixtures where there is no money involved. Places where the game would once have been seen as just a game, a matter of enjoyment and sporting spirit.

"While prosecutors continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the linesman's death, the events that took place at this small club have sent ripples of unease across a football-crazy nation.

"Huub Bellemakers, an amateur referee and blogger for thepost.nl website, tells us about his own experience of violence.

"He came at me, calling me all kinds of stuff, then I showed him the red card and then he just boom, he gave me a headbutt.' He shrugs, like it's nothing.

"This kind of thing happens all the time. Kids who are six see their parents screaming at the ref and questioning every decision, the lack of respect just starts early and it gets worse,' he says.

"It's partly the culture, we Dutch people don't like being told what to do and can't accept when we are wrong, but maybe now this will make us think about the rules and how we can protect people.'...

"We have to look at the whole culture, not just the top players but every-

one, the parents, the clubs - football is our beautiful game and we want to keep it this way.'

"Last month a Dutch player was jailed for killing a fan after karate-kicking him in the chest.

"Now, the actions of a few amateurs in Almere have penetrated the heart of the country's most popular sport. But many are asking, will the death of one linesman actually change the culture?"⁶

China moves on smoothly

We've now seen the second peaceful hand-over from living leaders to agreed successors. The first was when Jiang Zemin handed over to Hu Jintao. Jiang himself had been Deng Xiaoping's choice, and Deng was the real leader until his death in 1997, having pushed out the man Mao chose as successor. Deng also hand-picked Hu Jintao to be Jiang's successor, but it seems it was the Central Committee that selected Xi Jinping. Hu Jintao would probably have preferred Li Keqiang, who has the number two spot. But the whole process has gone very smoothly.

Back in 1997, there was serious doubt about whether Jiang Zemin would last long. Western experts who'd been predicting chaos after Mao were then predicting chaos after Deng. But the Chinese Communist Party is a highly efficient political machine, and it seems increasingly at ease with itself.

The current Western comment is about 'Princelings', power going to the offspring of senior Communists. The term first came into use during Deng's opening-up, when there was a pattern of the offspring of senior Communists using their political connections to grow rich in the newly opened-up economy, mostly without any official position. But it then got applied rather senselessly to any senior leader who had family connections, even if they had risen normally within the hierarchy. Most notably to Li Peng, Jiang Zemin's deputy. He was the adopted son of Zhou Enlai, but he showed every sign of having earned his place in the hierarchy by being successful in his various jobs.

In the leadership team led by Hu Jintao, there was really no one who could be called a 'princeling'. In the new generation, four of the seven are from very ordinary families. Li Keqiang is the son of a local Communist official, and Yu Zhengsheng's father was a mid-ranking official: not really that privileged. Yu Zhengsheng is also the only engineer among the new leadership. This is a marked contrast from Hu Jintao and his colleagues, who were mostly engineers of one sort or another. Xi Jinping studied Chemical Engineering but graduated in Humanities. He gets called a 'princeling' because his father was in the second echelon of Communist Party leaders. But as I said, he is the only one and there must have been dozens of others with equal or better backgrounds. China is working out as largely a meritocracy.

It also seems disinclined to copy Western politics or to increase the percentage of capitalism in its mixed economy. And to be doing very nicely on this basis.

A Boringly Normal Higgs

When the probably discovery of the Higgs Boson was announced, people asked "what use is it". If there had been an immediate prospect of anti-gravity, or of a method to modify inertia so that vehicles could stop and start very fast without jolting their passengers, people would have seen the merits. Current theory does not suggest that either of these things are possible. But if they *were* possible, they would become possible thanks to more advanced theories based on a definite knowledge of what the Higgs Boson really is.

It's still no more than a probably discovery. We're waiting for a confirmed measurement of a subatomic property called Spin (similar to but distinct from spin in the everyday world). The Higgs Boson is supposed to have Spin Zero, and if the new particle has anything else, it is an irritating mimic that would be inexplicable under current theories. Such things have happened before – a particle now called the Muon broke all the rules and was one of the things that required an expanded theory that was finalised in the 1970s and is currently known as the

Standard Model. When the Muon was discovered in 1936, it looked rather like a predicted particle that is now called the Pion. At one time they were known as the Mu-Meson and Pi-Meson, but they are actually very different.⁷ This is unlikely to happen again with the apparent Higgs Boson, but would be very interesting if it were true.

Particle physics can sometimes resemble an old game called *Battleships and Cruisers*. In this game, each player marks squares on a grid with their vessels, occupying one, two, three or four squares. Then each would 'fire' by calling out a grid reference, and be told if they had hit something. They would also not know what they had hit or where the rest of it was and would need to explore more to find out.

Researchers had been looking for the Higgs Boson for some time, and had proved definitely that it *wasn't* in some places. They've now hit *something* with most of the features of a Higgs Boson, but more data is needed to confirm it. And also to work out if it is exactly like the Higgs predicted by the Standard Model.

Disappointingly, the new particle looks like being just that. It cannot be directly detected by current science, but its existence and nature can be deduced from the various things it can decay into. All of these can be produced by other things besides the Higgs Boson, which is why the search was tough. And while some of the outcomes suggested a particle different from the Standard Model, more data was needed. Hopeful signs of a difference in the decay to something called a Tau have vanished as more data has been accumulated.⁸ Other anomalies may still there but need more data for a definite yes-or-no answer.

To have found a Higgs exactly like the Higgs predicted by the Standard Model would be slightly disappointing, because there would be no clues to better theories beyond the Standard Model. No one thinks the Standard Model is the last word: it has oddities like quarks that have exactly one-third or two-thirds of the charge of the electron. This would make sense if there are a deeper layer of particles that make up the particles we know, but there are currently many rival

theories and few solid facts.

Also resembling *Battleships and Cruisers* is the search for Super-Symmetry. This is a cluster of theories that would have explained Dark Matter, had they been correct. But most versions of Super-Symmetry predict things that the Large Hadron Collider should have found and so far has not found. The theory is not yet discredited, but it's been described as "running out of places to hide".

There is also the possibility of something totally unexpected turning up. One might call this the Sedna Effect, after the mysterious planetoid that was found during the search for objects in the Kuiper belt. From as far back as the discovery of Pluto in the 1930s, there had been suspicions that Pluto was just a large member of something that could be called an 'outer asteroid belt'. From the late 1980s, other members turned up, including one larger than Pluto, and Pluto was downgraded to the status of Minor Planet. But Sedna is something else: it goes vastly further from the sun than any Kuiper belt object and it's a real puzzle how it got there.

The Large Hadron Collider will be shut down in 2013 and upgraded to use even higher energies when it resumes in 2014. Till then, things may go quiet. But there is also a mountain of accumulated data that may yield an interesting result to some clever investigator.

"References

(Endnotes)

¹ CF "look after the roots and all will be well" from the Peter Sellers film *Being There*.

² [http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/dec/09/starbucks-deal-international-tax-reform]

³[http://www.irish-times.com/newspaper/opinion/2012/1203/1224327390161.html]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ [http://www.channel4.com/news/kate-radio-prank-radio-disciplined-over-rape-show]

⁶[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20631515]

⁷ The Muon is a second-generation lepton, a heavy-weight cousin of the electron and an elementary particle, not composed of anything smaller according to current theories. The Pion is composed of two first-generation quarks. Both are short-lived: both are much heavier than an electron but lighter than a proton. If you want to know more, there are good accounts on the Wikipedia.

⁸ Higgs boson is too saintly and supersymmetry too shy: From issue 2892 of New Scientist magazine, page 12.

A Prayer For Gaza

Give them F16 fighter-bombers, drones.

Give them warships, artillery and tanks then they will face Israel with equal rank.

Give the kids rifles then they won't need stones.

Give them Goebbels then they'll learn how to lie.

Give them US support as a solution then they can ignore UN resolutions and world opposition to their tricks defy.

Give them friends like remorseful Germany who has a history of killing Jews and now kills Muslims via simony.

Or that UK even-handedness ruse between this Third World Strip and hegemony.

Above all make petro-dollars their muse.

Wilson John Haire.

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Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

Selective (EU) Immigrants Please!

There is something odd about MPs who remain silent about the takeover of British businesses by European companies, electricity, gas and water are prime examples, but object incessantly and vociferously when people from other EU countries come to live and work in the UK. They claim they are simply responding to the concerns about immigration expressed by their constituents. It is of course laudable that MPs take account of their constituents' concerns, but it is unfortunate, to put it mildly, when they refuse to acknowledge that hostility to immigration is largely based on fear. That is not to say that their fears are not genuine. There is deep resentment in working class communities towards immigrants, who are seen as spongers living on state benefits to which they are not entitled. But many immigrants work and pay taxes. There is evidence that employment of EU migrant workers depresses wage levels, but that is simply employers exploiting the labour market. And it should not be forgotten that most UK born people are descendants of immigrants and millions of people born in the UK live and work outside the UK. But this is forgotten among the hysteria, largely generated by the tabloid press, about immigrants and immigration.

Two recent debates typified the anti-immigrant lobby in the Commons. The first, on 31 October, was introduced by Tory backbencher Stewart Jackson. Jackson begged to move "That leave be given to bring in a Bill to disapply the European Union Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC." In support of this he said, "I am pleased to introduce the Bill, which is intended to restate a basic tenet of national sovereignty – the control of our borders, and the principle that who comes to live and work in our country from foreign countries should be a matter largely for the British people and their elected representatives in this House, and not solely at the discretion and by leave of a foreign political entity. Free movement between sovereign countries should first and foremost be dictated by our own national interests." One can almost hear the clank of the drawbridge between the UK and continental Europe being raised here.

Jackson went on to explain the purpose of his Bill, but first he had a go at Labour and claimed that their refusal to impose a moratorium on the free movement directive had resulted in widespread opposition to immigration among Labour voters. "Few," he said, "would deny that it was a major error of judgement for the Labour Government not to exercise their right to a moratorium on the free movement directive for seven years, as most other EU countries did. It could be argued that it retarded efforts to tackle welfare dependency, low educational attain-

ment and problems with skills and social mobility among many indigenous British workers. A recent YouGov poll found that 78% of voters who had deserted Labour since 1997 wanted net migration to be reduced to zero. Even 67% of voters who had remained loyal to the party believed the same thing. There is no evidence to suggest that they regarded EU migration differently from non-EU migration."

It may not have escaped the reader's notice that Jackson is playing the race card here, blaming immigrants for the failure of successive governments. But of even greater interest is Jackson's reference to an opinion poll that displays the ignorance expressed by those polled. If proof were needed that anti-immigrant feeling is also based on ignorance one need look no further than the YouGov poll quoted by Jackson. The reduction of net migration to zero would not end immigration. It would simply mean that the number of people (mostly foreign immigrants) entering the UK would equal the number leaving (a mix of immigrants returning home and British citizens emigrating). If, for example, 150,000 people a year left the UK, 150,000 would enter the UK. That would be zero net migration. But PNs has a feeling that was not explained to those polled.

Jackson told MPs that his Bill "is about ensuring that the most talented and hard-working foreign workers and their families come to this country from the EU to help our economy grow and thrive in a highly competitive global marketplace.... The free movement directive is primary legislation that governs the right of member state nationals, and their families, to move or reside freely in other member states for up to three months, without any conditions other than that they hold a valid passport or identity card. The directive specifically makes it clear, inter alia, that people should have 'sufficient resources' for themselves and their family members so as not to become a 'burden' on the 'social assistance cover' in the host country, and that they should hold comprehensive sickness insurance. The host state is not obliged to provide social assistance during the first three months of residence, and UK law precludes EU citizens and family members from residing purely on the basis of that initial right to reside."

"Under my Bill, EU nationals and their family members would have the right to reside in the UK for up to three months, on the basis of a valid passport or ID card. That would facilitate tourism, and give those willing the opportunity to find work. With the right to reside for three months, EU nationals would have to be in work or self-sufficient, and they would gain access to benefits only in exceptional circumstances. EU nationals and their family members would need to be registered, and they

would have no access to public funds during the first 18 months of residence. After 18 months, British citizens would be given priority over EU nationals for local authority housing allocation, which is in particularly scarce supply. There would be no right to reside based solely on being in vocational training until the EU national in question had completed five years' continuous employment. The right of permanent residence would typically be granted only after a continuous 10-year period of legal residence, rather than five years as at present. EU nationals and family members would be deported after being convicted of a crime in the UK and sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment, or more, in the same way as other foreign nationals."

Why anyone currently living in another EU country would want to live and work in the UK under those conditions is anyone's guess. Jackson's Bill would do great damage to the UK economy and by highlighting immigration as a problem it could exacerbate race relations in the UK. One of Denis McShane's last acts as an MP before his demise was to oppose Jackson's bill. McShane, a former European Minister, referred to it as a sad bill. "The Bill is sad," he said, "because I find it uncomfortable to hear in the House remarks about our fellow Europeans that cast them in a uniformly negative light. There are more British citizens living and working in other EU member states as a share of our population than there are EU member states' citizens living here. The Bill is a message to the 700,000 to 800,000 British citizens who are made to feel welcome in Spain despite complaints that they are taking advantage of Spanish health care, old age care and social security services; it is gravely worrying to the many British citizens who are opening businesses all over the EU; and it is an insult to the many EU citizens who live and work in our country and contribute enormously to all levels of our economy."

"This is a bad Bill, and I wonder whether the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr Jackson) has discussed it with employers in Peterborough and the wider region, which is one of the great agricultural food processing centres of our economy. The east Europeans are there, as they are in Hull, which is also a great food processing centre in the English

national economy, because local employers cannot find local workers to do the work. That has been the pull of immigration throughout the ages. Enoch Powell had to allow many people from different Afro-Caribbean countries into the NHS, and the textile factories of west and south Yorkshire had to invite many people from Pakistan, because they could not get the legendary indigenous working class to do the jobs. Mr Evan Davis of the BBC made a programme on that very subject. He went to King's Lynn and the region and tried to find local workers who were willing to get up at 5am to fill the sandwiches or to pick fruit and vegetables in uncomfortable conditions, but he could find none."

"Let me turn to my more fundamental objection. The Bill is part of the growing attempt by the Conservative party to break apart our relationship with the EU. The four freedoms – the movement of goods, capital, people and ideas – are fundamental. We cannot sustain the other three freedoms and say that we cannot have the free movement of people. In the 1980s, we were grateful for the free movement of people, when the 'Auf Wiedersehen Pet' generation had to leave their own country because of the disastrous economic policies of the Prime Minister – I forget her name – and go and find jobs in Germany. If the hon. Gentleman wants to destroy our freedoms, he should come out and say so, but he should not think we can have sauce for the British goose, but not sauce for the German gans or French oie – I do not know what the Polish word for goose is. We cannot have a rule that says we will control every EU citizen who comes into our country and not have the 26 other EU member states saying exactly the same thing. The Minister for Immigration has made that point repeatedly in Home Office questions."

Stewart Jackson's Bill was supported by Heather Wheeler (Con.), Frank Field (Lab.), Priti Patel (Con.), Philip Hollobone (Con.), Gordon Henderson (Con.), Henry Smith (Con.), Andrew Turner (Con.), Zac Goldsmith (Con.), Caroline Noakes (Con.), Kate Hoey (Lab.), and James Clappison (Con.). It was due to be read a second time on Friday 14 December.

McShane's point about sauce for the

British goose is exactly the way many British people view the movement of people. They see no contradiction in their attitude to immigration, which they believe should be severely restricted or ended altogether, and their attitude to emigration which they assume to be the right of every free-born Englishman. This attitude was on display in the second of the debates on immigration on 4 December. Conservative backbencher Philip Hollobone initiated a debate on immigration from Romania and Bulgaria in which he painted a nightmare scenario of "the prospect of unlimited immigration from two new accession countries to the European Union – Romania and Bulgaria, the so-called A2."

"My job is humbly to stand up and speak out on behalf of my constituents in Kettering," he said, "and one of their biggest concerns is the level of immigration into the United Kingdom." All well and good, but standing up and speaking out on behalf of one's constituents should mean recognising their concerns, but being prepared to voice them with facts, not supporting them with falsehoods. Hollobone went on to say, "A large part of the inward migration flows are from the European Union, over which, seemingly, we have virtually no control whatsoever. The numbers are getting completely out of hand, and my constituents will be horrified to learn that, from December 2013, yet another hole will be opened in Britain's border controls with the prospect of unlimited immigration from two new accession countries to the European Union – Romania and Bulgaria, the so-called A2."

"Romania and Bulgaria, the so-called A2, acceded to the EU in 2007. Once again, the treaty allowed for transitional restrictions for up to seven years. This time, thank goodness, the UK did apply transitional restrictions on the free movement of Bulgarian and Romanian workers, with the result that such workers normally need authorisation before they start work. Thank heaven for small mercies. The problem is that those seven years are almost up – they end on 31 December 2013.....In the UK there are now almost 1.1 million eastern Europeans from the A8 accession countries, which have a combined population of 72.8 million. That is a rate of some 1.5%. If

we apply that same rate to the entry of Romania, with 21 million, and Bulgaria, with 7 million, the 155,000 presently resident in the UK would climb to some 425,000. That means that we can expect three times more Romanians and Bulgarians than are currently resident in this country, an increase of some one third of a million over present levels, possibly within two years."

Hollobone's observations on the numbers of Bulgarians and Romanians likely to come to the UK in 2014 and 2015 are pure conjecture. We simply do not know. From what has happened so far they are more likely to go to Italy and Spain. And the Immigration Minister Mark Harper made this point later in the debate. Hollobone is scaremongering, knowing that Romanians in particular are blamed for most crimes committed by immigrants in the UK. Underlying his concerns about immigration from the EU accession countries is hostility to the EU itself. This journal has deep concerns about the EU, but let's be clear about one thing: Hollobone's solution to the free movement of people within the EU would make it difficult for UK citizens to live and work abroad, if other EU countries acted in kind. He should ask his constituents for their opinion on that. Those who have no desire or need to live and work abroad, may see it as irrelevant. But there are some who would regard it as infringement of their rights.

The Minister for Immigration Mark Harper, made a gallant attempt to explain the Government's position on immigration. He said, "To give some context, the Government's overall position on immigration is clear. We want to bring down the unsustainable levels of immigration – net migration – that we have seen, and we are taking a range of measures. The Office for National Statistics figures published last week show that the net migration figures, including EU citizens, have actually fallen by a quarter, from 242,000 to 183,000 in the year ending in March.....On the latest figures, about a third of the people coming to the United Kingdom are from the EU, but 55% are from outside the EU, where our policy changes are bearing down, and about 14% are British citizens returning home. The bulk of our net migration, therefore, is from outside the EU and not from our

EU neighbours. It is saying that to put the matter in context."

"Under the current regulations, Bulgarian and Romanian nationals have to retain authorisation from the UK Border Agency before they take employment in the UK and they must also get authorisation to take lower skilled employment in the agriculture and food processing sectors, under the seasonal agricultural workers scheme and the sectors-based scheme. The numbers given permission to work under those arrangements have not increased over the period in which they have been enforced. Excluding SAWS, the number of Bulgarian and Romanian nationals issued with accession worker cards was 2,618 in 2011, 2,776 in 2008 and 2,097 in 2007. That has been fairly consistent.....To paraphrase my hon. Friend, the point is to use all the tools at our disposal. First, to put matters into context, Bulgaria and Romania may be different to the A8 countries. For example, 1.7 million of the 2.2 million Romanians who live in another EU member state have chosen to live in just two member states: Italy and Spain, notwithstanding all their economic difficulties. People can draw from that what they want; I am not making a forecast off the back of it."

No Smoking Please!

A lot of public space is, by decree, smoke-free. As a non-smoker, PNs is happy to accept this, and it has to be said that the policy has been largely successful. Smoking is said to be a habit, but for many it is an addiction they find difficult to abandon. It seems to be more prevalent among women, particularly image conscious young women, than among men. It also appears to be more widespread among working class men and women. It is certainly more common among low-income groups. This may be due to the pressures and stresses of their lives. And it is usually the case that children of parents who are smokers adopt the habit/addiction themselves.

The health effects of smoking are well known, and the cost of treatment to the NHS (the taxpayer) is high, but then so is government income from tobacco tax. The health effects of smoking is what has driven successive governments

to discourage smoking. High tobacco tax is one instrument used for this purpose. A ban on advertising is another, although this was waived temporarily for Formula One motor racing by Tony Blair when his friend and Labour Party donor Bernie Ecclestone protested. The most recent government decree disallows tobacco to be on public display in supermarkets, and there is a 'proposal' to ban colour packaging of tobacco. All these are what could be termed public measures. But now politicians want to enter the private sphere and ban smoking in privately owned vehicles. This, at least, is the aim of the 'Smoke-Free Private Vehicles Bill (Lords)', the Second Reading of which was introduced in the Commons on 2 November by Labour's Alex Cunningham.

Cunningham said his main concern was "to protect children from the harmful effects of smoke, by banning smoking in private vehicles." But if this is so, one can think of other reasons to be concerned about the dangers to children than smoking in private vehicles. Private vehicles themselves are the cause of the deaths of hundreds of children every year, yet little fuss is made of this. They are mere statistics. The deaths are simply accepted as a price worth paying for the freedom to drive one's vehicle whenever and wherever one chooses. No one would suggest that private vehicles should be banned.

Cunningham is clearly aware of all this. Consequently he focused on objections to the Bill and in doing so raised a dubious analogy. "Opposition to the Bill is largely based on libertarian grounds. It is claimed that the motor car is a private vehicle in which it would be wrong for the state to intrude. That ignores the myriad ways in which the state already intervenes. We are required to wear seat belts, abide by speed limits, stop at red lights, give way to pedestrians and not use our mobile phones while driving." But there is clear evidence that these 'intrusions' protect people from harm and save lives. Smoking in vehicles may damage the health of children, but adults are aware of this and ought to exercise restraint. Those who don't should not be forced to do so. Parents who smoke in the privacy of their home damage the health of their children. Does Cunningham be-

lieve the state should intrude here?

The difficulty of enforcing the law on a smoking ban in private vehicles was accepted by Cunningham and so he said that “The primary goal of legislation is to build awareness and social norms, and I remain confident that this law would become largely self-enforcing.” “This Bill”, he said, “is intended to raise awareness of the risks of smoking in cars where children are present and to drive home the message that we, as adults, are responsible for the safety and protection of our children.” But adults accept their responsibility for the safety and protection of children. Sometimes they fail and children are harmed or killed. Parents, mothers in particular, are very protective and resent intrusion by strangers who believe they are failing in their duty. Cunningham’s Bill will be seen as an intrusion too far and another example of politicians telling people how they should conduct their lives.

Bugsplats!!!

Rehman Chishti, Conservative MP for Gillingham and Rainham, was born in Muzaffarabad, the capital city of Azad Kashmir, in 1978. He was raised in England and studied law at Aberystwyth University. He was called to the bar at Lincoln’s Field in 2001. Between 1999 and 2007 he was an adviser to Benazir Bhutto. On 6 November he led a debate on the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, often referred to as drones, although the military prefer the term remotely piloted aircraft. UAVs, or at least those who control them from a remote distance, are responsible for the deaths of possibly thousands of civilians. The official figure for civilian deaths in Pakistan alone is 885. But this is undoubtedly an underestimate as the United States regards all males of fighting age – the term is “military-aged male” – killed in UAV/drone strikes as combatants and not civilians. In other words, legitimate targets.

Opening the debate Chishti said, “In recent years, we have witnessed the proliferation of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, better known as drones. These remotely piloted aircraft are predominantly used by states to conduct intelligence and surveillance, and, increasingly, to carry out armed strikes. This debate

looks at the military use of armed drones by the United Kingdom and the United States. It appears that the Government see drones as having an even greater role in our armed forces. According to the vice-chief of the defence staff, General Nicholas Houghton, we may see a tipping point by the mid-2020s, when the UK will ‘move away from manned fast jets to Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and missiles.’ The Government recently announced that the number of Reaper drones the UK operates in Afghanistan was to double to 10 and that operations were, for the first time, to be conducted from RAF Waddington, in Lincolnshire. Currently, the UK’s five Reaper drones are operated by British personnel from Creech air base in Nevada, and the latest figures show that those drones have flown 40,000 hours and fired 345 missiles in Afghanistan”

“Although drones offer the potential to target insurgents without having to put our armed forces in harm’s way, we need to ensure that all steps are taken to prevent civilian casualties. Despite the growing significance of drones, there has been little debate about this issue, and the time is right for a review into how they are used and how they may be developed and deployed in future. The first question I would like the Minister to address is, what is the Government’s policy on the use of drones, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan? My second question is, how many civilians have been killed by UK drone strikes in Afghanistan? My third question is, which is linked to that, is, does he agree that the death of civilians in Afghanistan undermines the aim of winning hearts and minds, and feeds anti-west feeling? If civilians cannot be protected, does he agree that we should consider suspending the use of drones?”

“Earlier this year, I visited Pakistan, having been a former adviser to Benazir Bhutto, and I met President Zardari, senior Ministers and many local people. Everywhere I went, concerns were raised about the use of drone strikes in Pakistan by foreign countries. There were real concerns that such strikes would feed into the anti-west attitude played on by radical elements. Although the UK has operated drones only in Afghanistan, the United States has used them as part of its counter-terrorism strategy in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. According to

reports, that has resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism believes that more than 350 strikes have taken place in Pakistan since 2004, and 3,378 people may have been killed, including 885 civilians. That has fed into anti-west feeling, with 74% of Pakistanis now seeing the US as an enemy, and only 17% supporting its use of unmanned strikes.”

“One victim was Daud Khan, a local tribal elder from Datta Khel, who was killed in March 2011, along with 40 other people, while attending a jirga, which is a peaceful council of elders. His son, Noor Khan, has launched legal proceedings in the United Kingdom, alleging that the British Government provided locational intelligence to the CIA about individuals of interest to the United States and that this intelligence is then used to direct drone attacks in Pakistan. The legal statement for the case asserts that if Government officials assisted the CIA to direct armed attacks in Pakistan, they are, in principle, liable under domestic criminal law. Such allegations damage our relationship with Pakistan, which will draw its own inference from the Government’s refusal to confirm or deny whether intelligence has been shared with the United States.”

“I recently asked the Secretary of State in the House a question about locational intelligence and his reply raised more questions than it answered. He said: ‘The United States operates in Afghanistan under a different basis of law from the one under which we operate.’ (Official Report, 22 October 2012; Vol. 551, c 696.). As I understand matters, there is only one basis for international law, so my next question to the Minister is, under what legal basis do the Government believe the United States to operate, and why is that so different from international law? Drone use by the United States raises several legal questions. It has been argued that drone strikes in Pakistan have been carried out in violation of international humanitarian law. The high number of civilians killed in such attacks who were not participants in armed conflict raises questions about whether their use is proportionate. Christof Heyns, the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, has even suggested that some of the drone attacks may constitute war

crimes. A recent report by Stanford university and New York university called 'Living Under Drones' describes the strikes' effects on cultural, religious and community life in Pakistan, where some families even refuse to send their children to school, in case they are attacked. The authors also describe the use of double tap strikes where the same area is attacked multiple times, deterring humanitarian assistance."

The sentiments expressed in Labour's relatively short contribution were broadly similar to those of Chishti. Bolton South East MP Yasmin Qureshi said, "Our argument for using drone attacks in the countries in question has always been that we are trying to get rid of the Taliban or al-Qaeda. According to some statistics - and these were in a recent American study - only 2% of people killed in all drone attacks could possibly have been called al-Qaeda or Taliban; 98% of the people were civilians and not involved in armed conflict. It is fine to protect our country. I live here, and want to be protected as well; but is it really fair that we should engage in actions that lead to that proportion of deaths of ordinary innocent civilians? I am sorry to say that is not right, and the reason is the way drones are used. I entirely accept the fact that if they are used properly and targeted at people who are known to be involved in illegal or criminal activities, there could be a justification. Under article 2.4 of the United Nations charter, force can be used if the host nation agrees, and the action is in self-defence. From everything that we have heard from the Pakistan Government, they do not agree to the use of drones in their country. Recently at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Pakistan Foreign Minister Hina Rabhani Khar said that they object. There is therefore a question of the legality of the weapons."

The Government's case for the use of drones by the British military in Afghanistan was set out by Under-Secretary of State for Defence Philip Dunne. He of course defended their use and claimed that they actually saved lives. He refused to be drawn on the use of drones by the US. Dunne said, "The UK has a number of UAV systems currently deployed in support of operations in Afghanistan, and they are vital to the success of the

mission. I recognise that their use is often emotive, but we can use this debate to dispel some of the misapprehensions that surround their deployment. UAVs are saving the lives of both British and coalition personnel and Afghan civilians on a daily basis. Their use is predominantly as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance - ISR - assets and, when weapons are deployed, the decision-making process leading to the identification and engagement of a target is identical to that for manned aircraft. The ability of UAVs to loiter over areas to survey for enemy activity, feeding video and imagery intelligence to commanders in real time, makes them an invaluable asset on the ground in Afghanistan and allows coalition forces to stay one step ahead of the enemy."

So UAVs are saving lives in Afghanistan? Well something is killing civilians and it is incumbent upon Dunne to make enquiries as to what or who is responsible. Perhaps it's his friends in the north (of America) but Dunne won't comment on that. When Dunne talks about lives being saved, he probably has in mind those of ISAF forces threatened by the Taliban. That is the purpose of intelligence and surveillance. On civilian deaths by British drones Dunne said, "I am aware of only one incident of civilians having been killed by weapons deployed from a UK Reaper. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham and Rainham may know, on 25 March 2011 a strike on two pick-up trucks carrying a significant quantity of explosives resulted in the death of four Afghan civilians, as well as two insurgents. That incident was highly regrettable, but the subsequent report concluded that the actions of the Reaper crew had been in accordance with extant procedures and UK rules of engagement."

It seems that the targeting of the enemy by British forces is so accurate that only four Afghan civilians have been killed by drones since their first use in 2005. If that is the case then perhaps they should give their American allies lessons in accurate targeting. His only observation on the use of drones by the US was, "I am not going to comment on the operations of our allies and - this is long-standing Government policy - for reasons of operational security, the Ministry of Defence does not comment on

its intelligence-sharing arrangements with coalition partners. Countries can, of course, make their own interpretation of what they are permitted to do under international law, and it is a matter for the US Administration, whoever they are after today's election, to assure themselves that the actions they undertake are lawful." Dunne describes international law as if it were a pick and mix. He is effectively saying that countries can pick and choose which aspects of international law to abide by and which to disregard. As this renders international law superfluous, we might as well revert to barbarism.

Afghanistan And The Return Of Al-Qaeda.

The Government are confident that al-Qaeda will not return to Afghanistan, but does it really matter? Prime Minister David Cameron thinks it does, but he would say that wouldn't he? On other occasions Cameron and Hague have admitted that al-Qaeda are capable of launching an attack on the West from a number of its bases in Africa, the Middle East and Pakistan, so confidence in its non return to Afghanistan really doesn't matter. It simply supports the UK's case for involvement in the ISAF invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and 'justifies' the deaths of 438 (at 11/11/12) British military personnel. Without this confidence, the case against sending young men (and a handful of women) to their deaths would be unanswerable.

Cameron expressed his confidence in the non return of al-Qaeda to the Commons on 5 December. In answer to a question from Tory backbencher Dr Julian Lewis on the Government's strategy to deal with any re-emergence of al-Qaeda after 2014, he said, "....the threat to global security from the al-Qaeda presence in Afghanistan has been significantly reduced. This is in large part the result of the brave work of UK, international security assistance force and Afghan armed forces. We remain committed to Afghanistan for the long term, and we will continue to support the development of the Afghan national security forces after 2014 through continued funding and involvement in training. Our continued contribution to aid and the political process,

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It's A Fact

The estimated amount of money lost through benefit fraud in each of the last ten years (and the percentage of total expenditure) is: 2004-05, £0.8 billion(0.8%); 2005-06, £0.6 billion(0.6%); 2006-07, £0.8 billion(0.6%); 2007-08, £0.8 billion(0.6%); 2008-09, £1 billion(0.8%); 2009-10, £1.1 billion(0.8%); 2010-11, £1.2 billion(0.8%); 2011-12, £1.1 billion(0.7%). Parliamentary Written Answer 29/10/12.

The amount of benefit overpayments classified as fraud that have been recovered since 2007-08 is: 2007-08, £25 million; 2008-09, £25 million; 2009-10, £28 million; 2010-11, £33 million; 2011-12, £39 million. PWA 29/10/12.

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combined with our armed forces' efforts, underpin a state that is capable of policing its own lands. It is by this path that al-Qaeda will, I believe, be unable to re-establish itself in Afghanistan."

It is the view of Julian Lewis and many on the Government and Opposition benches that the Taliban may help al-Qaeda to return to Afghanistan, although it is not explained how al-Qaeda's return would benefit the Taliban, unless it helped to overthrow the Afghan government. And it is difficult to see why the Taliban would welcome their involvement in running Afghanistan, as it risks potential conflict between the two forces. Julian Lewis argued that sanctions against the Taliban were needed if they helped al-Qaeda to return. For Cameron the presence of 335,00 Afghan national security forces was the only sanction necessary, supported by the UK through an officer training academy and a strong (unspecified) American relationship. Will the UK officer training academy and the unspecified American relationship be a cover for a continuing military presence in Afghanistan? This question has yet to be put to Cameron.

As of 31/10/12 the UK has the following naval vessels deployed in the Gulf region (including the Red sea, Arabian gulf and Indian ocean): One Type 45 Destroyer; One Type 23 Frigate; Four Mine Countermeasure vessels; Four Royal Fleet Auxiliary support vessels; One Echo-class survey vessel. Trafalgar class submarines are also deployed periodically in the Gulf region. The UK does not have any bases in the region. However, there are currently just under 2,000 UK military personnel in the region serving on current operations, of which the majority are royal naval personnel based predominately at sea. PWA 1/11/12.

The total male prison population in England & Wales at 30/9/12 was 81,501. Of these 70,200 were British nationals, 9,532 were Foreign nationals 1,769 were nationality not recorded. The total female prison population was 4,213. Of these 3,451 were British nationals, 616 were Foreign nationals and 56 were nationality not recorded. PWA 8/11/12.

In the last decade there have been two estimates of the illegal migrant population in the UK, giving central estimates of 430,000 (range 310,000 to 570,000) in 2001. (Woodbridge, J. "Sizing the Unauthorised (Illegal) Migrant Population in the United Kingdom in 2001." Online Report 29/05, Home Office, London, 2005) and 618,000 (range 417,000 to 863,000) in 2007 (Gordon I., K. Scanlon, T.Travers, and C.Whitehead. "Economic Impact on London and the UK of an Earned Regularisation of Irregular Migrants in the UK." GLA Economics, Greater London Authority, London, 2009). The 2012 European Migration Network report, 'Practical Measures for Reducing Irregular Migration' (Toms and Thorpe, 2012) sets out the the current UK evidence on the illegal migrant population. PWA 8/11/12.

The number of families in receipt of child benefit in 2011 by number of children in England and the UK was: Total England 6,606,285. Of these 3,097,540

had one child; 2,473,090 had two children; 758,735 had three children; 202,020 had four children; 74,900 had five plus children. Total UK 7,884,760. Of these 3,720,160 had one child; 2,940,120 had two children; 902,250 had three children; 236,890 had four children; 85,340 had five plus children. PWA 20/11/12.

In 2011-12, housing benefit and council tax benefit expenditure on working households with children totalled £3,513 million. Of this, housing benefit accounted for £3,117 million and council tax benefit for £396 million. PWA 21/11/12.

The number of full-time equivalent qualified nurses and midwives employed in the NHS in England in May 2010 was 310,793, and in August 2012 it was 304,566. The number of full-time equivalent health visitors in May 2010 was 8,092 and in August 2012 it was 8,067, with an additional 226 health visitors employed by organisations not using the electronic staff record. PWA 27/11/12.

The number of apprenticeship programme starts in England by age group in each year from 2006/07 to 2011/12 was: Year 2006/07, 16 to 24 years, 184,170; 25 to 49 years, 250; 50 plus, 10. Total for 2006/07, 184,400. Year 2007/08, 16 to 24 years, 197,610; 25 to 49 years, 24,550; 50 plus, 2,610. Total for 2007/08, 224,800. Year 2008/09, 16 to 24 years, 184,080; 25 to 49 years, 50,490; 50 plus, 5,380. Total for 2008/09, 239,900. Year 2009/10, 16 to 24 years, 230,540; 25 to 49 years, 44,280; 50 plus, 4,860. Total for 2009/10, 279,700. Year 2010/11, 16 to 24 years, 275,130; 25 to 49 years, 152,600; 50 plus, 29,480. Total for 2010/11, 457,200. Year 2011/12 (provisional), 16 to 24 years, 282,680; 25 to 49 years, 186,660; 50 plus, 33,210. Total for 2011/12 (provisional), 502,500. PWA 3/12/12.

The number of households who will be affected by the household benefit cap in April 2013 in each housing tenure in England, Scotland and Wales continued on page 23

A gloomy picture from the Old Lady

For the past five years of the financial crisis, Bank of England inflation reports have often painted a bleak picture of the economy. Few, however, have been quite as gloomy as the one published this week.

Weak global demand and subdued spending by consumers and businesses mean that economic growth will be weaker than previously thought. The bounce enjoyed during the summer – when the economy grew by 1 per cent – is expected to peter out. The economy is unlikely to return to its pre-crisis peak until late in 2015.

To add insult to injury, inflation – which the Monetary Policy Committee thought it had well-nigh tamed – has crept up again. The consumer price index rose by 2.7 per cent in the year to October. True, much of the acceleration was due to one-off factors, such as the near-trebling of university tuition fees. However, rising energy prices mean the BoE now expects inflation to stay above the 2 per cent target until 2014.

Stubborn inflation and shy growth create a dilemma for policy makers. So far, Britain has pursued an expansionary monetary policy to compensate for the government's programme of fiscal consolidation. But given the MPC's pes-

simistic view that there is limited slack in the economy, the BoE is likely to be increasingly reluctant to pursue new rounds of quantitative easing until inflation is brought back under control.

The admission of near impotence by the monetary authorities will no doubt trigger calls for George Osborne, chancellor, to use next month's autumn statement to relax fiscal policy. This would be a dangerous move. The BoE says there is little spare capacity in the economy. If so, expanding demand via tax cuts or higher spending would make it harder for the MPC to meet its inflation target.

The key challenge for the coalition is lifting the rate of growth of productivity, which has been stagnant. This means ensuring the flow of credit to businesses, so that they can invest. While the "Funding for Lending" scheme, which offers banks financial incentives to extend more credit to UK borrowers, may mitigate the problem, it will not solve it altogether.

In the longer-term, the problems run deeper. Banks are not lending because much of their credit is locked in unproductive companies and impaired assets, artificially kept alive by bank forbearance. Eventually more losses will have to be realised for the economy to grow sustainably again.

This means girding the system for another wave of losses – in companies and banks. The government need not become directly involved. But there may need to be further restructuring of RBS, the largely state-owned bank. Another option, put forward by bankers this week, is that all existing senior unsecured debt should be available to absorb losses. The government should consider this.

Monetary and fiscal policy cannot alone end stagnation without more reform of the banking sector. How Mr Osborne plans to do this is more important than what he says about deficit cuts.

Yes You

Charged with murder when murder is your trade, but when *you* are hit it's unlawful killing, uninvited guests so unfulfilling those expectations when you invade.

Take five soldiers for public relations, they who trod over a million graves, scapegoats for a reputation to save, or some sort of twisted flagellation.

Five soldiers of whom one is guilty, he'll get ten years but serve ten months to sneer, back to the ranks and out for a balti, smash someone down the High Street when on the beer.

Put it all down to human frailty that you should die for this killer's career.

Wilson John Haire.

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is estimated to be: England, Private rented sector, 22,800; Social rented sector, 19,600; Temporary accommodation, 5,100. Total England, 47,500. Scotland, Private rented sector, 700; Social rented sector, 1,300; Temporary accommodation, 400. Total Scotland, 2,400. Wales, Private rented sector, 500; Social rented sector, 700; Temporary accommodation, 0. Total Wales, 1,200. Note: In England, London accounts for 13,700 households in the private rented sector; 10,500 in the social rented sector; and 4,600 in temporary accommodation. PWA 6/12/12.

Silence for Gaza

Gaza is far from its relatives and close to its enemies, because whenever Gaza explodes, it becomes an island and it never stops exploding. It scratched the enemy's face, broke his dreams and stopped his satisfaction with time.

Because in Gaza time is something different.

Because in Gaza time is not a neutral element.

It does not compel people to cool contemplation, but rather to explosion and a collision with reality.

Time there does not take children from childhood to old age, but rather makes them men in their first confrontation with the enemy.

Time in Gaza is not relaxation, but storming the burning noon. Because in Gaza values are different, different, different.

The only value for the occupied is the extent of his resistance to occupation. That is the only competition there. Gaza has been addicted to knowing this cruel, noble value. It did not learn it from books, hasty school seminars, loud propaganda megaphones, or songs. It learned it through experience alone and through work that is not done for advertisement and image.

Gaza has no throat. Its pores are the ones that speak in sweat, blood, and fires. Hence the enemy hates it to death and fears it to criminality, and tries to sink it into the sea, the desert, or blood. And hence its relatives and friends love it with a coyness that amounts to jealousy and fear at times, because Gaza is the brutal lesson and the shining example for enemies and friends alike.

Gaza is not the most beautiful city.

Its shore is not bluer than the shores of Arab cities.

Its oranges are not the most beautiful in the Mediterranean basin.

Gaza is not the richest city.

It is not the most elegant or the biggest, but it equals the history of an entire homeland, because it is more ugly, impoverished, miserable, and vicious in the eyes of enemies.

Because it is the most capable, among us, of disturbing the enemy's mood and his comfort. Because it is his nightmare. Because it is mined oranges, children without a childhood, old men without old age and women without desires. Because of all this it is the most beautiful, the purest and richest among us and the one most worthy of love.

We do injustice to Gaza when we look for its poems, so let us not disfigure Gaza's beauty. What is most beautiful in it is that it is devoid of poetry at a time when we tried to triumph over the enemy with poems, so we believed ourselves and were overjoyed to see the enemy letting us sing. We let him triumph, then when we dried our lips of poems we saw that the enemy had finished building cities, forts and streets. We do injustice to Gaza when we turn it into a myth, because we will hate it when we discover that it is no more than a small poor city that resists.

We do injustice when we wonder: What made it into a myth? If we had dignity, we would break all our mirrors and cry or curse it if we refuse to revolt against ourselves.

We do injustice to Gaza if we glorify it, because being enchanted by it will take us to the edge of waiting and Gaza doesn't come to us. Gaza does not liberate us. Gaza has no horses, airplanes, magic wands, or offices in capital cities. Gaza liberates itself from our attributes and liberates our language from its Gazas at the same time. When we meet it—in a dream—perhaps it won't recognise us, because Gaza was born out of fire, while we were born out of waiting and crying over abandoned homes.

It is true that Gaza has its special circumstances and its own revolutionary traditions. But its secret is not a mystery: Its resistance is popular and firmly joined together and knows what it wants (it wants to expel the enemy out of its clothes). The relationship of resistance to the people is that of skin to bones and not a teacher to students.

Resistance in Gaza did not turn into a profession or an institution.

It did not accept anyone's tutelage and did not leave its fate hinging on anyone's signature or stamp.

It does not care that much if we know its name, picture, or eloquence. It did not believe that it was material for media. It did not prepare for cameras and did not put smiling paste on its face.

Neither does it want that, nor we.

Hence, Gaza is bad business for merchants and hence it is an incomparable moral treasure for Arabs.

What is beautiful about Gaza is that our voices do not reach it. Nothing distracts it; nothing takes its fist away from the enemy's face. Not the forms of the Palestinian state we will establish whether on the eastern side of the moon, or the western side of Mars when it is explored. Gaza is devoted to rejection... hunger and rejection, thirst and rejection, displacement and rejection, torture and rejection, siege and rejection, death and rejection.

Enemies might triumph over Gaza (the storming sea might triumph over an island... they might chop down all its trees).

They might break its bones.

They might implant tanks on the insides of its children and women. They might throw it into the sea, sand, or blood.

But it will not repeat lies and say "Yes" to invaders.

It will continue to explode.

It is neither death, nor suicide. It is Gaza's way of declaring that it deserves to live. It will continue to explode.

It is neither death, nor suicide. It is Gaza's way of declaring that it deserves to live.

By Mahmoud Darwish. Translated from the Arabic by Sinan Antoon, from Hayrat al-'A'id (The Returnee's Perplexity), Riyad al-Rayyis, 2007.