

# Labour Affairs

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## Parliament's Willingly Deceived

Parliamentary democracy only functions when the contending political parties are in substantial agreement. This applies to both domestic and foreign policy. In British foreign policy there are two distinct but related objectives. The first is to be chief assistant to the United States in matters military and diplomatic (an aspiration recently put in jeopardy by the House of Commons vote against intervention in Syria). The second and connected one is to disrupt the EU through expansion, so that it becomes nothing more than a glorified free trade area rather than a European political force in its own right.

This is why the Americans react with irritation at Europhobic attempts to leave the EU. The loss of Britain's disruptive influence within the EU damages the American strategic objective of keeping Europe weak and divided and thus incapable of independent military and diplomatic action. The vast majority of MPs from all parties are not interested in inconvenient facts that might undermine these strategic objectives.

Currently it is the earnest wish of the United States that Russia have NATO and the EU right up against its borders. Doing so in the Ukraine would be a major prize for American military and diplomatic policy. Britain is fully in accord with this aspiration, although it has to move cautiously, both because of its own financial interests and because it does not want any hint of the possibility of Ukrainian immigration into the EU, thus giving UKIP an enormous boost.

In order to keep up the pressure against Russia, the recent American supported and financed putsch against the democratically elected government headed by the Ukrainian President Yanukovich needs to be portrayed as a democratic revolt and the resulting government in Kiev as legitimate. Otherwise, President Putin would seem to have a cast iron case for intervention in the Crimea. Hence Foreign Minister William Hague told the House of Commons that the new Kiev regime is in fact legitimate. The House did not question his claim. Thus, in a statement on 4 March 2014, William Hague deceived the House of Commons about the legitimacy of the new regime in Ukraine.

He led the House to believe that the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, had removed President

Yanukovich from power on 22 February in accordance with the Ukrainian constitution.

"It is wrong to question the legitimacy of the new authorities", he said.

It is simply untrue that the Rada followed the [procedure laid down](#) in the Ukrainian constitution to impeach and remove a president from power.

Article 108 of the Ukrainian constitution specifies four circumstances in which a president may cease to exercise power before the end of his term. Those are:

- resignation;
- inability to exercise his or her powers for reasons of health;
- removal from office by the procedure of impeachment;
- death.

The procedure for removal from office by impeachment [is laid down in Article 111](#). It is not unlike that required for the impeachment and removal from power of a US president, which could take months.

Thus, Article 111 obliges the Rada to establish a special investigatory commission to formulate charges against the president, seek evidence to justify the charges and come to conclusions about the president's guilt for the Rada to consider. To find the president guilty, at least two-thirds of Rada members must assent.

Prior to a final vote to remove the president from power, the procedure requires

- the Constitutional Court of Ukraine to review the case and certify that the constitutional procedure of investigation and consideration has been followed, and
- the Supreme Court of Ukraine to certify that the acts of which the President is accused are worthy of impeachment.

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

The Rada didn't follow this procedure at all. No investigatory commission was established and the Courts were not involved. On 22 February, the Rada simply passed a bill removing President Yanukovich from office.

Furthermore, the bill wasn't even supported by three-quarters of Rada members as required by Article 111

- it was supported by 328 members, when it required 338 (since the Rada has 450 members).

Nevertheless, justifying UK support for the new regime in Kiev in the House of Commons on 4 March, William Hague said:

"Former President Yanukovych left his post and then left the country, and the decisions on replacing him with an acting President were made by the Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament, by the very large majorities required under the constitution, including with the support of members of former President Yanukovych's party, the Party of Regions, so it is wrong to question the legitimacy of the new authorities."

That gives the impression that the procedure prescribed in the Ukrainian constitution for the removal of a president from office had been followed, when in fact it hadn't and therefore the new authorities in Kiev are illegitimate.

President Putin questioned the legitimacy of the authorities in Kiev at his press conference on 4 March, just before William Hague spoke in the House of Commons:

"Are the current authorities legitimate? The Parliament is partially, but all the others are not. The current Acting President is definitely not legitimate. There is only one legitimate President, from a legal standpoint. Clearly, he has no power. However, as I have already said, and will repeat: Yanukovych is the only undoubtedly legitimate President."

"There are three ways of removing a President under Ukrainian law: one is his death, the other is when he personally steps down, and the third is impeachment. The latter is a well-deliberated constitutional norm. It has to involve the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Rada. This is a complicated and lengthy procedure. It was not carried out. Therefore, from a legal perspective this is an undisputed fact."

There is a fourth way - ill health - but, aside from that, Putin is undoubtedly correct.

Anyone with an internet connection could easily have checked the veracity of Hague's

claim and found it wanting. But the members of the House of Commons are not interested in checking its truth, or at least they are not interested in questioning his claim if they have already found it to be false. It is much more convenient to be willingly deceived than to unpick the basis of the American offensive against Russia.

To question Hague's lies would be to raise uncomfortable questions about the UK's independence as a sovereign state, something all three liberal parties are very unwilling to do. The US cannot abide states with a will of their own and Britain's MPs are unwilling to annoy the US by appearing to be independent. The vote against intervention in Syria was an exception and the US has already punished the British by temporarily promoting France to the position of chief assistant. You can bet that British efforts to re-establish themselves as first among US poodles will now be redoubled.

The US is out to undermine Russia because that country has the nerve to run its own version of capitalism and conduct its own foreign policy in what it takes to be its own interests. That cannot be allowed and every means possible must be taken to undermine Russia and its interests, including conducting putsches in countries on its doorstep, recklessly threatening the lives and interests of millions of people. We are expected to be assistants in this enterprise and the vast majority of MPs agree. This is why they are willing to be taken for a ride by Hague and, even when it is pointed that they were, as it was recently by Peter Osborne in the Daily Telegraph, they find it convenient to keep schtum. This is what it is like to live in a vassal state run by vassal legislators.

You can't hold a man down without staying down with him.

*Booker T. Washington*

When the rich wage war, it is the poor who die.

*Jean-Paul Sartre, The Devil and the Good Lord*

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# Kosovo & Crimea: the West's double standard

By David Morrison

In 1999, Yugoslavia consisted of two republics – Serbia and Montenegro. According to Serbia's constitution, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia, but with an overwhelmingly Albanian majority that favoured separation from Serbia, and a Serb minority that opposed separation.

(In 2006, Montenegro seceded and Serbia became an independent state in its own right. Yugoslavia was no more.)

That Kosovo would remain an integral part of Serbia was one of the principles enshrined in the agreement of 2 June 1999, which brought to an end NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia and the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. Point 8 of the agreement envisaged:

"A political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ..." [1] (Annex 2)

Kosovo was to have "substantial self-government", but not going to be allowed to secede. The Security Council endorsed the agreement on 10 June 1999 when it passed Resolution 1244 by 14 votes to 0 (with China abstaining). This reaffirmed "the commitment of all [UN] Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" [1]. So, in June 1999, the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia was sacrosanct to the international community, wasn't it? There could be no question of an independent state of Kosovo, recognised by the international community, could there?

Fast forward to 17 February 2008: "We, the democratically elected leaders of our people, hereby declare Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state. This declaration reflects the will of our people ..." [2]

These words are taken from the

declaration of independence endorsed by the Assembly of Kosovo on that day with the unanimous support of those members present. 11 Serb representatives boycotted the proceedings. There is no doubt that an overwhelming majority of the people living in Kosovo supported independence from Serbia, but no referendum took place to confirm this.

The following day, 9 states (including the France, the UK and the US) recognised Kosovo as an independent state. Today, over a hundred states recognise it, including 23 out of the 28 members of the EU (an exception being Spain, which fears that approval of Kosovo's secession would encourage its own secessionist movements) [3].

These states were undeterred by earlier commitments by the Security Council, binding all UN member states, to support the territorial integrity of Serbia, or by the fact that, according to the Serbian constitution, Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia.

Serbia asserted that Kosovo's declaration of independence was contrary to international law. It persuaded the UN General Assembly to exercise its powers under Article 96 of the UN Charter to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the matter. Thus on 8 October 2008, the General Assembly passed resolution 63/3 [4] which requested the Court to render an advisory opinion on the following question:

"Is the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo in accordance with international law?"

On 22 July 2010, the Court delivered the (majority) opinion that "the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law" (see [5], Paragraph 123).

## Crimea

On 11 March 2014, the Parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea resolved that it would

declare Crimea to be an independent state, if the people of Crimea voted to join the Russian Federation in the referendum to be held 5 days later. The resolution, which was passed with the support of 78 out of the 100 members of the Parliament, included the following:

*"We, the members of the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the Sevastopol City Council, with regard to the charter of the United Nations and a whole range of other international documents and taking into consideration the confirmation of the status of Kosovo by the United Nations International Court of Justice on July, 22, 2010, which says that unilateral declaration of independence by a part of the country doesn't violate any international norms, make this decision."* [6]

On 16 March the people of Crimea voted overwhelmingly to join the Russian Federation and, following this, the Crimean Parliament declared Crimea to be an independent state, which has now been recognised by Russia. The Crimean Parliament has applied to become part of the Russian Federation and the application has been accepted in principle by Russia.

The US and the EU have been asserting that the declaration of independence by Crimea's Parliament is illegal under Ukraine's domestic law.

It is true that the Ukrainian constitution states:

"The Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an inseparable constituent part of Ukraine." (Article 134)

and

"Alterations to the territory of Ukraine shall be resolved exclusively by the All-Ukrainian referendum." (Article 73) [8]

But the Serbian constitution stated something similar with regard to Kosovo in 2008 and the Serbian authorities vigorously opposed the proposition that Kosovo had a right to declare independence. This hasn't stopped the US and most states of the EU recognising the declaration of independence by Kosovo's Assembly in 2008



(which unlike Crimea's wasn't the subject of a referendum).

The question is: why was it permissible for the US and most states of the EU to recognise Kosovo as an independent state in 2008 but, according to these states, it is not permissible for Russia to recognise Crimea as an independent state in 2014? Dare I suggest that a double standard is being applied?

If, as now seems certain, Crimea becomes a part of the Russian Federation, would that be in breach of international law? This is been talked about in the West as the "annexation of Crimea", which implies that Crimea is being forced to become part of the Russian Federation against the will of its people. In reality, the union is voluntary – and that cannot possibly be contrary to international law.

### What about Israeli occupation?

There are real instances of forcible occupation and annexation in this world, in particular, Israel's 47-year occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Syrian Golan Heights against the wishes of the people who live there, and its annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The US and the EU have been remarkably indifferent to these over many years, resisting any suggestion that it would be appropriate to apply sanctions to Israel to persuade it end its occupation.

On the contrary, Israel receives about \$3bn per annum in military aid from the US, more than any other country in the world, even though its GDP per head is around the EU average. And since 2000, the EU has given it privileged access to the EU market for its exports through an Association Agreement.

### What about the unconstitutionality removal of the President?

The US/EU are concerned that the Ukrainian constitution has been breached by Crimea's secession from Ukraine. Or so they say. But they are fickle in their concern. On 22 February, the democratically elected President of the Ukraine was removed from office without

following the impeachment procedure laid down in Article 111 [9] of the same constitution (see my *How William Hague deceived the House of Commons on Ukraine* [10]). Were the US/UK concerned then? Of course, not – since they wanted the removal of the President. So they pretended to the world that the proper constitutional procedures had been followed.

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### TAKE FOR EXAMPLE

Russians in the Crimea want it back, Muslim Tartars again await their fate. 1783, Catherine the Great annexed the peninsular for the craic. The Tartars came seven hundred years ago with Genghis Khan, liked it so much they stayed, then Hitler Khan whom the Tartars obeyed. Jailed to Uzbekistan, wrong the West crows while drone-bombing Muslims everywhere. But they know the art of hypocrisy - brass neck, brazen attitude, steady stare, the very essence of democracy. Could they carry on if the truth was to flare. Much better then to live in degeneracy.

Wilson John Haire. 10th March, 2014

## Campaign Against Glorification of World War One

In 2014, *Stop the War, No Glory* and a range of peace organisations are organising meetings, debates and cultural events to mark the First World War centenary.

We oppose the attempt by David Cameron, Michael Gove and others to use the centenary to "celebrate" a slaughter that killed 15 million people as a "just" and "noble" cause.

Here is our calendar of events organized by Stop the War and other organisations. The latest events will be updated on the Stop the War web site.

The Great Debate: How Should We Remember World War One?

03 April 2014 London Stop the War

Portsmouth: Carving Up the Globe - the Real Causes of WW1

09 April 2014 Portsmouth Stop the War

Somerset No Glory in War

22 April 2014 South Somerset Peace Group

London WW1 Cultural Event

30 April 2014 North London Stop the War

St Albans WW1 Debate

12 May 2014 St Albans Stop the War

Cold Stars Lighting... First World War Poetry Readings

15 May 2014 London No Glory in War

Nottingham CND: WW1 Debate

29 May 2014 Nottingham CND

Frome: Oh! What A Lovely War!

09 July 2014 Frome Stop the War

No Glory in War Folk Night

18 July 2014 London: No Glory

Manchester Peace Conference: Peace History Lecture: No Glory

20 Sept. 2014 Manchester Peace Conference

World War 1914 - What are the lessons for World Peace 2014?

16 October 2014 Bath UN Association

The "Stop the War" website is at [<http://stopwar.org.uk/>]

If you would like help setting up a debate or cultural event in your area, please telephone 020 7561 4830.

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Ukraine – Kiev’s Five Day War Machine

Fascism is unacceptable everywhere, except Ukraine. Crimea has been eternally part of Ukraine since 1954. Putin allowing Crimea to join Russia means he wants to conquer all Europe. That’s the picture the Western media have been giving us.

Western accounts leave out Kiev’s “Five Day War Machine”, the provocative government created by an intimidated parliament between Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February and Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>. Having overturned a sensible compromise that had been reached on the 21<sup>st</sup>, parliament then repealed a 2012 law that gave official status to languages other than Ukrainian in regions where at least 10% spoke it. Rights for minority languages is in line with European norms, but this was ignored.

Russian was the main issue. At least a third of the population view Russia as their native tongue, and a lot more speak it sometimes. Very few people speak Russian in the west of Ukraine, and it seems they are trying to remake the whole country in their own image.

There are also other minority languages, some of these in the west. “Hungarian, Moldovan and Rumanian were declared official languages in several towns in Western Ukraine.”<sup>1</sup> And a quarter of a million Greek speakers.”<sup>2</sup>

It’s always sad when yesterday’s victim becomes today’s oppressor. But it is also a hugely familiar pattern. Familiar too is the failure by outsiders to notice that people who behaved badly in the past now have an excellent case. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet Union held down Middle-Europe, at a time when they wanted to assert their own national identities and would probably have opted for Moderate Socialism, given a choice. But in Crimea, as in Georgia, Russia was opposing an aggressive small nation that was trying to oppress one of its own minorities.

It is normal for a caretaker government to avoid anything controversial until there are elections to determine the will of the people. But the

politicians who led the original Orange Revolution were rejected by entirely fair elections in 2010 and 2012 and clearly don’t intend to risk it. The promise of a “unity” government was met by a government composed just of anti-Russian parties and including five ministers from an overtly Neo-Nazi party. It also did not include one notable anti-Russian party, the group led by the ex-boxer. I take this as an early sign that this “Brown Revolution” will produce leaders as useless and squabbling as the previous Orange Revolution, which is generally admitted to have failed.

What did the West do? The West did nothing.

For five days the Kiev regime behaved like conquering heroes. They must have supposed that with NATO’s mighty war machine behind them, they could do what they liked. And failed to notice that since the 1980s, the Anglosphere has typically been tough in the face of weakness and weak in the face of someone tough.

Everything changed on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when anti-Kiev forces took control of vital centres in Crimea, which had already expressed an ambition to quit Ukraine and perhaps join Russia. Putin had been content to see President Yanukovich’s rule end, but noted that the opposition had just declared him removed without bothering with the checks and balances in the existing constitution.<sup>3</sup> His reaction, presumably, was to give the green light to Crimean separatists. If regular Russian forces were involved, then there was a real effort to disguise this.

It looks very much as if Putin was open to compromise and would have settled for much less than annexing Crimea. But I have found just one article in the mainstream Western press that notices this. It’s from *The Guardian*, which is mostly stuck in Cold-War thinking, but does sometimes contain sense:

“According to Sergei Markov, a Kremlin-linked analyst who has been taking part in official meetings with local politicians in Crimea, the initial plan was not to annex Crimea, and the final call to do so was taken only a fortnight ago.

“‘There are two major factors that played a role in the decision,’ he says. ‘The first was the demands of the Crimean elite, who did not want to end up like Abkhazia in international limbo and really pushed strongly to be part of Russia, and the second was the position of the west, who did not want to listen to any compromise.’”

“Markov says Putin laid down several conditions to western leaders which he saw as a compromise solution but they viewed as unwarranted meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. The conditions included ensuring that Ukraine’s interim government involved a coalition of all political forces, including Yanukovich’s Party of Regions, disbanding all armed revolutionary factions and making Russian an official state language.

“‘If this had happened, Crimea would still be part of Ukraine,’ says Markov.

“As well as merely reacting to events in Ukraine, there was also a sense that the Crimea situation is a culmination of many years of grievances with what Putin sees as an unfair international system...

“The events of recent months have also solidified the hold of ‘Eurasianism’ on the imaginations of Russia’s top lawmakers. This ideology envisions Russia’s re-emergence as a conservative world power in direct opposition to the geopolitical hegemony and liberal values of the west... Upset with western criticism of him when he returned to the presidency for a third term in 2012, Putin realised that an independent Russia could never be part of the ‘western club’ as he had previously wanted.”<sup>4</sup>

The same article cites Michael McFaul, who was US ambassador to Russia until last month, saying that Russia’s reaction surprised the USA, and indeed many top Russians. He blames it on Putin, of course, not seeing anything wrong in the way the USA treated Russia after it renounced its global-hegemony ambitions by dissolving the Soviet Union.

The bill overturning the 2012 language compromise was vetoed on the 27<sup>th</sup>, but it was too little and too late. The basic anti-Russian stance was

maintained and the Fascists remained in government, with major clashes in Eastern Crimea.

How did the West react? With bluster. They blamed everything on Putin. They declared that the West was so powerful and superior that Putin would have to back down.

If for some nefarious reason they wanted to ensure that the Crimean take-over would end with Russian annexation, then it was well calculated to force Putin to do just that, to avoid looking weak. But I seriously doubt this was the case: I'd call it yet another blunder by the conceited fools who currently make Western foreign policy.

## Time and Truth

In the ten years since the Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian Opposition (now in power) have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They don't do compromise, they expect the other side to submit. The West had the option of pressurising them behind the scenes, and evidently did not. Instead the West changed the story of what had just happened. The BBC's "Timeline" stopped mentioning the Compromise of the 21<sup>st</sup>,<sup>5</sup> just as if their role was to be a "Ministry of Truth" for the British establishment. The BBC also say as little as possible about the brief attempt to impose monolingualism on multi-lingual Ukraine.

The current version of the BBC timeline places great emphasis on the mysterious shootings that happened on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. But ignores the curious fact that demonstrators and the security forces opposing them seem to have been shot with the same weapons.<sup>6</sup> Or the very odd choice of targets – an out-of-control security force will typically shoot men of military age, as happened on Bloody Sunday in Derry, but this incident had all sorts of people shot, including women.<sup>7</sup> Even more strangely, while 18 members of the moderate-fascist Svoboda were killed, none of the Hard-Right militias died.<sup>8</sup> This makes no sense unless they did the shooting. (The CIA used to do such things and perhaps still does, but would probable have had an impeccably different and plausible set of weapons to shoot the two sides.)

Since the fascists have very different aims than the pro-Western mainstream, shooting people who thought they were allies would not have caused them any calms. Nor shooting a few rival fascists: that sort of thing is common among such people.

The strategy of carrying through a

second Orange Revolution depended on Russia being overawed by the power of the West, and this failed to happen. One reason the West can't take a hard line is that critical voices would get listened to when the costs to ordinary Westerners became significant, as happened in the USA with their Vietnam War. When the going gets tough, the weak start wilting, and there are a lot of weak wilting people about. The West is ready to fight to the last Ukrainian, but not to suffer any significant economic pain to inflict similar pain on Russia.

In general terms, it is not a good idea to try to out-tough a Russian: something more subtle would be better. Britain and France did indeed manage to out-tough Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Crimean War, but in those days a lot more of them were willing to trust their leaders, bungling though they often were. They saw the matter as worth suffering for, as they did in the Great War and World War Two. But that was a feature of a traditionalist and hierarchical society, the sort of thing that capitalism has undermined in favour of a fluid and asocial inequality.

Nowadays, huge numbers of people in the West are demoralised, frightened and greedy. The New Right has no large body of enthusiasts for its own creed. A "Book of New Right Martyrs" would have remarkably few entries: none I can think of from the New Right elite. In the USA they need to draft in a bunch of right-wing pseudo-Christians, yet the USA is now following Europe with a gradual decline in all sorts of Christianity. Beyond that there are mostly those deluded enough to still see New Right as functional conservatives, and they too are a dying breed.

A recent poll showed six out of ten US citizens felt no need to do anything about Ukraine losing Crimea. And two-thirds of them are against giving Ukraine military aid.<sup>9</sup>

Speaking from an older tradition, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger also knows better. He was part of the tail-end of the successful Keynesian era. His achievement in making peace with China with Mao's approval paved the way for the overthrow of Maoism by moderates within Chinese Communism after Mao's death. Elements of the New Right appeared under Nixon, but Nixon mostly knew better and Kissinger always showed shrewd judgement. So it is unsurprising that he said:

"The Ukrainians are the decisive element. They live in a country with a complex history and a polyglot

composition. The Western part was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939, when Stalin and Hitler divided up the spoils. Crimea, 60 percent of whose population is Russian, became part of Ukraine only in 1954, when Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian by birth, awarded it as part of the 300th-year celebration of a Russian agreement with the Cossacks. The west is largely Catholic; the east largely Russian Orthodox. The west speaks Ukrainian; the east speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other — as has been the pattern — would lead eventually to civil war or break up. To treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation would scuttle for decades any prospect to bring Russia and the West — especially Russia and Europe — into a cooperative international system."<sup>10</sup>

Actually it is only the numerically stronger West that has attempted to dominate the East. The East has mostly sought compromise.

My guess would be that the polarisation suits both the Ukrainian fascists and Kremlin hard-liners, whom Putin has now joined. It disables any possible opposition — even Gorbachev has now supported taking Crimea.<sup>11</sup> Of course Gorbachev has long been insignificant, but the Russian Communist Party and other major alternatives also have no choice currently except to back Putin.

## Ukraine: a Campaign by Real Fascists

The terms "fascist" or "neo-Nazi" are often used loosely and inaccurately. In the Ukraine, most Western commentators try to cast a slur on the Russian and Russian-Ukrainian use of the term. But turns out to be turning a blind eye to facts that a serious journalist could have discovered in an hour or two.

Ukraine's Neo-Nazis now have five ministers in the "Unity" government. They nowadays call themselves Svoboda, meaning Freedom. But they began in 1995 as the Social-National Party of Ukraine<sup>12</sup>, with a logo highly similar to the Nazi swastika, though it was based on one version of an ancient heraldic element called the Wolfsangel.<sup>13</sup> (Wolf-hook, based on an actual device hidden in meat to catch wolves.)

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This group cleaned itself up in 2004, adopting the name Svoboda, meaning Freedom. Of course Nazis and other Far-Right groups including the Klu Klux Klan do genuinely regard themselves as upholders of freedom. But their leader has in the past made remarks showing that he believes the Nazi notion of an International Jewish Conspiracy.<sup>14</sup>

Svoboda became an electoral force in the Far West of Ukraine in local elections in 2009. (The part of the Ukraine ruled by Austria-Hungary before World War One.) In the parliamentary elections, they came 4<sup>th</sup> in terms of seats, 35 out of 450. With 13% of the votes they were about level with the Communist Party of Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

That Svoboda are currently willing to work with Jews and give reassurances to Israel means very little. Italian Fascism was initially not anti-Jewish, and had a large Jewish membership before the link-up with Hitler. One lady, Margherita Sarfatti, was even known as 'the Jewish mother of Fascism'.<sup>16</sup> There were also Jews who fought in alliance with the Nazis, as part of the Finnish Army.<sup>17</sup> Quite possibly Hitler could have had a lot more Jews on his side if he'd been willing to give them a chance, instead of treating them all as enemies when he still had a war to win.

Harder-line than Svoboda are Right Sector, right-wing paramilitaries.<sup>18</sup> Their leader, Dmytro Yarosh, is currently Deputy Secretary of National Security.<sup>1920</sup>

The mainstream anti-Russian parties of the original Orange Revolution show great respect for Stepan Bandera and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). This was a home-grown Far-Right organisation that emerged in the chaos of the overthrow of Tsarism, and were driven into exile when the Soviet Union consolidated itself. In the run-up to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, they were trained by the Germans as either allies or auxiliaries. But in 1940, they split into the OUM-M and the more radical OUM-B, which was led by Stepan Bandera. Eight days after Germany's invasion of the USSR, on June 30, 1941, they proclaimed the establishment of Ukrainian State in German-occupied Lviv, (known as Lvov in Russian). This ethnic-Ukrainian area had been part of Poland and then taken by the Soviet Union when Poland was defeated, along with other areas that were not ethnic-Polish.

The Germans had not authorised an independent Ukraine – they acted very much as if Hitler's original idea of replacing Ukrainians with German settlers was still the intention. Definitely, they suppressed it OUN-B and arrested its leaders. Meantime the OUN-M remained loyal supporters, including helping to suppress their former comrades in the OUN-B. But it too was suppressed later on, when the Germans decided it was too strong.

The remnants of the OUM-B formed a genuine third force, actually managing to be "against Stalin and Hitler", which elsewhere was just a vain dream. They were the main such force in Ukraine. And were primarily anti-Russian and anti-Polish: much less concerned with Jews, though they did not accept Ukrainian Jews as fellow-citizens. They did shelter and protect Jews whom they found useful, doctors and skilled workers.

In September 1944, Bandera was released by the German authorities, to strengthen his resistance movement as the Red Army recovered the Ukraine. It tried to carry on but was suppressed in a few years, with Bandera assassinated by the KGB in 1959 while in exile in West Germany.

That Stepan Bandera was a fascist cannot be seriously disputed. He was not the only fascist to be at odds with Hitler: Otto Strasser was another and there were many more minor instances.

In 2010, the then-President of Ukraine and Orange Revolution leader Viktor Yushchenko awarded to Bandera the title of Hero of Ukraine. Understandably there were many

protests, and not just from Russians or pro-Russian elements. It was annulled in 2011, after Yushchenko had been replaced by Viktor Yanukovich.

Why are the parties of the Orange Revolution in alliance with modern neo-Nazis? They failed before when they were in government, and perhaps fear losing votes to their own hard-liners: this is one of the problems of Representative Democracy. If elections get to be held in Ukraine, don't be surprised to see the Svoboda emerge much stronger.

Why does the West allow it? These are the same geniuses who allowed al-Qaeda to emerge out of the US-funded resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

## NATO's "March to the East"

NATO as it existed up until 1989 was mostly defensive. The idea of the Soviet Union invading Western Europe was far from ridiculous. I supported NATO at the time. But I also suspected that NATO would misbehave given the chance.

Gorbachev inherited an ailing superpower and left behind a political wilderness. He let things drift until the entire system collapsed. He could have asked for the dissolution of NATO and neutral status for Poland and the rest of Middle-Europe as the price of ending the Cold War. He could have asked for this and more for those portions of the Soviet Union that wanted to separate. Instead he got nothing, apart from a verbal promise that NATO would not go east of United Germany.

The reality of the promise has been disputed. The German magazine *Spiegel* investigated and decided that such a promise had been made:

"For years former US Secretary of State James Baker, Shevardnadze's American counterpart in 1990, has denied that there was any agreement between the two sides. But Jack Matlock, the US ambassador in Moscow at the time, has said in the past that Moscow was given a 'clear commitment.' Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister in 1990, says this was precisely not the case.

"After speaking with many of those involved and examining previously classified British and German documents in detail, SPIEGEL has concluded that there was no doubt that the West did everything it could to give the Soviets the impression that NATO membership was out of the question for countries like Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia...

"What the US secretary of state said

on Feb. 9, 1990 in the magnificent St. Catherine's Hall at the Kremlin is beyond dispute. There would be, in Baker's words, 'no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east,' provided the Soviets agreed to the NATO membership of a unified Germany. Moscow would think about it, Gorbachev said, but added: 'any extension of the zone of NATO is unacceptable.'

"Now, 20 years later, Gorbachev is still outraged when he is asked about this episode. 'One cannot depend on American politicians,' he told SPIEGEL."<sup>21</sup>

Gorbachev should have known that a verbal promise from one politician means nothing. It does not bind the next administration or the USA as a whole. His failure is in marked contrast to the deal Stalin got when he pulled out of the portion of Austria that he had been occupying and the conquest of Nazi Germany:

"As well as general regulations and recognition of the Austrian state, the minority rights of the Slovene and Croat minorities were also expressly detailed. Anschluss (political union) with the new Germany, as had happened in 1938, was forbidden. Nazi and fascist organisations were prohibited.

"Furthermore, Austria announced that it would declare itself permanently neutral after the enactment of the treaty. The USSR had expressed its wish for such a declaration of neutrality as a guarantee that Austria would not join NATO after Soviet troops had been withdrawn. Austrian neutrality was not actually in the original text of the treaty, but it was added by the Austrian parliament."<sup>22</sup>

During the Soviet collapse of 1989-91, it could all have been done differently. Binding treaties of Neutrality could have been the price for Soviet troop withdrawal. Ukraine and other places could have been required to recognise minority languages in exchange for independence. Gorbachev was amazingly naïve, as was Yeltsin after him.

But why did the West choose to harass Russia, rather than trying to win over this former foe, as previous generation of US politicians won over West Germany, Italy and Japan? This must have been due to a new generation that accepts the drastically false New Right analysis of world politics, even when they doubt other New Right ideas. Everything Soviet is bad and must be eliminated, whatever the cost, just so long as they don't pay that cost. This is more important than

small matters like keeping your word or telling the truth.

Common among the New Right is admiration for Machiavelli. And no recognition of the awkward historic fact that no stable politics resulted from Machiavelli's methods. Machiavelli had a point when he noted that a lot of successful politicians used unscrupulous methods to achieve their aims. What he missed was that this only works when dishonesty is used carefully and for dire necessity, not as a matter of routine.

### **Benn: the Pursuit of Heroic Failure**

"For a moment in the mid-1970s, Benn appeared to be the man of the age, able to say what was wrong with it and how it should put itself right. His problem was that people mostly refused to listen.

"Stagflation and industrial militancy destroyed Edward Heath's Tory government in 1974. The battle between Benn's ideas and those of the new right for addressing the crisis of British capitalism and democracy shattered the centre of British politics. Public opinion was more receptive to the views of Margaret Thatcher: she captured first the Conservative party, in 1975, and in the election four years later the British state."<sup>23</sup>

So spoke the *Guardian* obituary, and it's not quite accurate. The Labour government of 1974-79 was doing the sort of things Labour governments had traditionally done, improving the lot of ordinary workers. Benn successfully broke the consensus, pushing Labour Left policies so hard that there was a mass defection by the traditionalist Labour Right as the Social Democrats. This then unwisely merged with the corrupt old Liberal party and vanished with barely a trace. Meantime many of those who had risen as part of the Labour Left suffered a total ideological collapse in the face of Thatcherism. They reinvented Labour as New Labour, almost a clone of Thatcherism.

All of this was avoidable. Elsewhere in Europe, it either did not happen or did not go so far. And while the Labour Party might still have self-destructed in the 1970s without Benn, no single individual did more to bring this about.

As many have noticed, Benn drifted from Labour mainstream to Labour Left. But at no time was he very realistic. He backed Concorde without realising that it would be a dead end, which the USA did correctly note and dropped their own supersonic plans. As

Postmaster General, his biggest idea was to have the Queen's head removed from stamps, pointlessly offending many Labour voters. He was against both the European Union and Wage Restraint, helping the system to self-destruct. And though he did a small amount of good work promoting some short-lived Workers Cooperative, he was pretty much inactive on the key matter of the 1977 Committee of Enquiry on Industrial Democracy (Bullock Report). Presumably he was neutralised by the vehement opposition to the report by Ken Coates and the "Institute for Workers Control", who applied the usual Trotskyist trick of rejecting what was possible in the belief that this would lead to something even better. Though Benn was no Trotskyist, you could say that he let them dominate his understanding of politics.

A lot of talent and idealism, but basically a wasted life. Such a pity.

### **Snippets**

We are coming up to the 111th anniversary of the May Coup in Serbia, in which the Serbian monarch, his wife, several relatives and the Prime Minister were murdered in a sudden coup.<sup>24</sup>

From the time Serbia was freed from Ottoman Turkish control, there was rivalry between the rival Obrenovich and Karadjordjevic dynasties, both of them home-grown. The Obrenovich family tended to seek compromises, the Karadjordjevic family to take a hard line.

The coup of 28-29 May 1903 restored the Karadjordjevic dynasty, and was organised by Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijevic. By 1914, he was both the leader of "Unification or Death" (Black Hand) and Chief of Serbian Military Intelligence. There was good reason for Austria-Hungary to suspect that he sent the assassins who killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne. And entirely reasonable to ask that outsiders investigate the matter. Since the Serbian government had broadly the same aims as Dimitrijevic, it was sensible to doubt they would be willing to find anyone guilty beyond those already under arrest. There have been remarkably few cases of the intelligence services of any nation being punished for actions against foreign powers.

This was the key demand that Serbia refused, causing the war. A point that no one would have guessed from the recent BBC drama *37 Days*, which left the sticking point unspecified.

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“Older people vote – that’s why George Osborne’s budget is for them

“Less than half our younger generation go to the polls. So it’s no surprise the chancellor is increasingly hanging them out to dry”.<sup>25</sup> (Polly Toynbee)

The 1970s showed that radical change for left-wing ends is difficult and slow. And that it is disastrous to give up on it. Currently there are too many little smart-arses who go on saying “they are all the same”, when things have actually shifted massively against people like them.

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Every day, the BBC has been using at least a quarter of its news bulletin for live coverage of several different people explaining that they know nothing more than they knew yesterday about the tragic disappearance of a Malaysian air liner. And for live shots of empty ocean where nothing has so far been confirmed as coming from the lost aircraft.<sup>26</sup>

Since I don’t watch all of this non-news, I’m not sure how much coverage has been given to proposals to improve automatic reporting that were made when an Air France plane went missing. The airlines didn’t feel like doing it, and the regulators have mostly lost their nerve about overriding the wishes of business.

The issue has now been raised again by the British team who used new methods to work out where the Malaysian aircraft had actually gone.

“McLaughlin told CNN that there was no further analysis possible of the data. ‘Sadly this is the limit. There’s no global decision even after the Air France loss [in June 2009, where it took two years to recover the plane from the sea] to make direction and distance reporting compulsory. Ships have to log in every six hours; with aircraft travelling at 500 knots they would have to log in every 15 minutes. That could be done tomorrow but the mandate is not there globally.”<sup>27</sup>

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Modern business likes risks and resents regulation. This probably contributed to the Washington mud slide disaster. “A scientist who documented the landslide conditions on a Washington hill that buckled last weekend in a massive mudslide warned in a 1999 report filed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers of ‘the potential for a large catastrophic failure.’”<sup>28</sup> And was shocked to later see houses being built in the danger area.

As of the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> March, 16 people are confirmed dead and another 176 missing under the mud.

It’s the same spirit that has led the USA to do as little as possible about greenhouse gases, on the grounds that it might not be as bad as forecast. Ignoring the much greater chance that it will be as bad or worse.

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“Open in his criticism of the Chinese government, Ai was famously detained for months in 2011, then released to house arrest. ‘I don’t see myself as a dissident artist,’ he says. ‘I see them as a dissident government!’”<sup>29</sup>

Which is entirely true. Ai Weiwei is one of many, in China and elsewhere, who are overawed by the power of the USA and uncritically respectful of it. He objects to the current Chinese government failing to share these sentiments.

He fails to look at what happens to governments that have been overawed by US power and failed to dissent. This worked for some governments in the era when New Deal values were the norm, though it meant junking a lot of cultural distinctiveness. But since then it has failed badly. A messy break-up for Former Yugoslavia. Massive economic decline for both Russia and Ukraine, with a recovery in Russia when Putin started disrespecting US power, but a continuous mess in Ukraine. Not to mention massive chaos and religious extremism in Iraq, and now in Libya.

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In Thailand, the courts have just rewarded the people who sabotaged an election they knew they could not win.<sup>30</sup> It had confirmed the popularity of the current government, but is now treated as invalid. Part of a ding-dong battle between Red and Yellow factions, with the Reds representing mild radicalism favoured by a clear majority and the Yellows representing the old order.

What has the West being doing? Basically nothing, just as they ignored popular protests against all the big and little monarchies in Arabia.

#### (Endnotes)

1 [http://rbth.com/news/2014/02/23/ukraine\_abolishes\_law\_on\_languages\_of\_minorities\_including\_russian\_34486.html]

2 [http://www.newgreektv.com/index.php/world/item/3910-new-ukraine-government-seeks-to-ban-minority-government]

3 [http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article37889.htm]

4 [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/23/ukraine-crimea-what-putin-thinking-russia]

5 For instance [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26643141]

and [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26680250]

6 [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/ukraine-bugged-call-catherine-ashton-urmas-paet]

7 I could find nothing available in English giving details of the demonstrators who were shot, despite them being hailed as martyrs. I asked ([http://www.quora.com/What-sort-of-people-were-the-protestors-shot-during-the-final-stages]) and got few details. This in itself is highly suspicious: it is normal to give praise to victims of a brutal regime. Suggesting that someone somewhere knows something was wrong, and no one else dares to challenge them.

8 [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/13/ukraine-uprising-fascist-coup-grassroots-movement]

9 [http://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-most-say-us-doesnt-have-a-responsibility-in-ukraine/]

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11 [http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article37985.htm]

12 [http://www.channel4.com/news/svoboda-ministers-ukraine-new-government-far-right]

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15 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukrainian\_parliamentary\_election,\_2012]

16 [http://www.haaretz.com/the-jewish-mother-of-fascism-1.192344]

17 [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/museums/10682975/The-Jews-who-fought-for-Hitler-We-did-not-help-the-Germans.-We-had-a-common-enemy.html]

18 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right\_Sector]

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20 [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/03/03/ukraine-government\_n\_4889063.html]

21 [http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/nato-s-eastward-expansion-did-the-west-break-its-promise-to-moscow-a-663315.html]

22 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian\_State\_Treaty]

23 [http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/mar/14/tony-benn-obituary]

24 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May\_Coup\_(Serbia)]

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# Parliament And World War One.

By Dick Barry

On 3 August 1914, Britain's Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey presented a statement to the House of Commons in which he set out the Government's position on the crisis in Europe. At that point Britain had not declared war on Germany. However, Grey's statement, while initially claiming that Britain had done everything possible to support peace in the early years of the century – Grey uses the word peace 15 times in his opening remarks – set out a range of scenarios which could justify Britain's entry into the war.

The official line, currently deployed in discussions about the causes of WW1 and Britain's involvement, is that Britain entered the war to honour its obligations under the 1839 Treaty of London which guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium. But it seems on a closer reading of Grey's statement that another, more obvious, reason was to protect "vital British interests." and to uphold the "honour" and "respect" Britain was held in throughout the world. The 1839 Treaty was the peg on

which to hang British interests and Britain's honour and respect.

Grey's statement is very long but most of it is essential reading for those who wish to understand the attitude and mind of Grey and most Members of Parliament who supported the war. Consequently, the key part of his statement, relating to Britain's relationship with France and the 1839 Treaty of London, is published below, followed by a response from Ramsay MacDonald who opposed the war.

**Sir Edward Grey:-**

"Well Sir, I will go further, and I will say this: The situation in the present crisis is not precisely the same as it was in the Morocco question. In the Morocco question it was primarily a dispute which concerned France – a dispute which concerned France and France primarily – a dispute, as it seemed to us, affecting France, out of an agreement subsisting between us and France, and published to the whole world, in which we engaged to give France diplomatic support. No doubt we were pledged to give nothing but diplomatic support; we were, at any rate, pledged by a definite public agreement to stand with France diplomatically in that question."

"The present crisis has originated differently. It has not originated with regard to Morocco. It has not originated as regards anything with which we had a special agreement with France; it has not originated with anything which primarily concerned France. It has originated in a dispute between Austria and Serbia. I can say this with the most absolute confidence – no Government and no country has less desire to be involved in war over a dispute with Austria and Serbia than the Government and country of France. They are involved in it because of their obligation of honour under a definite alliance with Russia. Well, it is only fair to say to the House that that obligation of honour cannot apply in the same way to us. We are not parties to the Franco-Russian Alliance. We do not even know the

terms of that Alliance. So far I have, I think, faithfully and completely cleared the ground with regard to the question of obligation."

"I now come to what we think the situation requires from us. For many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France. (An HON. MEMBER: "And with Germany!") I remember well the feeling in the House – and my own feeling – for I spoke on the subject, I think, when the late Government made their agreement with France – the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations, who had perpetual differences in the past, had cleared these differences away. I remember saying, I think, that it seemed to me that some benign influence had been at work to produce the cordial atmosphere that had made that possible. But how far that friendship entails obligation – it has been a friendship between the nations and ratified by the nations – how far that entails an obligation let every man look into his own heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. I construe it myself as I feel it, but I do not wish to urge upon anyone else more than their feelings dictate as to what they should feel about the obligation. The House individually and collectively may judge for itself. I speak my personal view, and I have given the House my own feeling in the matter."

"The French fleet is now in the Mediterranean, and the Northern and Western coasts of France are absolutely undefended. The French fleet being concentrated in the Mediterranean the situation is very different from what it used to be, because the friendship which has grown up between the two countries has given them a sense of security that there was nothing to be feared from us. The French coasts are absolutely undefended. The French fleet is in the Mediterranean, and has for some years been concentrated there because of the feeling of confidence and friendship which has existed between the two

## Continued from page 9

25 [<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/21/older-people-vote-george-osborne-budget>]

26 As at 25<sup>th</sup> March

27 [<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/24/flight-mh370-inmarsat-aib-analysis>]

28 [<http://www.newsdaily.com/science/1c2cde7f4feab2cdad46a571e3eb31ed/scientist-says-he-knew-wash-hillside-would-fail>]

29 [<https://artsy.net/artist/ai-wei-wei>],

30 [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-26677772>]



countries. My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet engaged in a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing! I believe that would be the feeling of this country. There are times when one feels that if these circumstances actually did arise, it would be a feeling which would spread with irresistible force throughout the land."

"But I also want to look at the matter without sentiment, and from the point of view of British interests, and it is on that that I am going to base and justify what I am presently going to say to the House. If we say nothing at this moment, what is France to do with her Fleet in the Mediterranean? If she leaves it there, with no statement from us as to what we will do, she leaves her Northern and Western coasts absolutely undefended, at the mercy of a German fleet coming down the Channel, to do as it pleases in a war which is a war of life and death between them. If we say nothing, it may be that the French fleet is withdrawn from the Mediterranean. We are in the presence of a European conflagration; can anybody set limits to the consequences that may arise out of it. Let us assume to-day we stand aside in an attitude of neutrality, saying, 'No, we cannot undertake and engage to help either party in the conflict.'"

"Let us suppose the French fleet is withdrawn from the Mediterranean; and let us assume that the consequences – which are already tremendous in what has happened in Europe even to countries which are at peace – in fact, equally whether countries are at peace or at war – let us assume that out of that come consequences unforeseen, which make it necessary at a sudden moment that, in defence of vital British interests, we should go to war and let us assume – which is quite possible – that Italy, who is now neutral – (HON. MEMBERS:

"Hear, hear!") – because, as I understand, she considers that this war is an aggressive war, and the Triple Alliance being a defensive alliance her obligation did not arise – let us assume that consequences which are not yet foreseen – and which perfectly legitimately consulting her own interests – make Italy depart from her attitude of neutrality at a time when we are forced in defence of vital British interests ourselves to fight, what then will be the position in the Mediterranean? It might be that at some critical moment those consequences would be forced upon us because our trade routes in the Mediterranean might be vital to this country.?"

"Nobody can say that in the course of the next few weeks there is any particular trade route the keeping open of which may not be vital to this country. What will be our position then? We have not kept a fleet in the Mediterranean which is equal to dealing alone with a combination of other fleets in the Mediterranean. It would be the very moment when we could not detach more ships to the Mediterranean, and we might have exposed this country from our negative attitude at the present moment to the most appalling risk, I say that from the point of view of British interests. We feel strongly that France was entitled to know – and to know at once! – whether or not in the event of attack upon her unprotected Northern and Western Coasts she could depend upon British support. In that emergency, and in those compelling circumstances, yesterday afternoon I gave to the French Ambassador the following statement:-

*"I am authorised to give an assurance that if the German Fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping, the British Fleet will give all the protection in its power. This assurance is, of course, subject to the policy of His Majesty's Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding His Majesty's Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German Fleet takes place."*

"I read that to the House, not as a declaration of war on our part, not as entailing immediate aggressive action on our part, but as binding us to take aggressive action should the contingency arise. Things move very hurriedly from hour to hour. Fresh news comes in, and I cannot give this in any very formal way; but I understand that the German Government would be prepared, if we would pledge ourselves to neutrality, to agree that its fleet would not attack the Northern coast of France. I have only heard that shortly before I came to the House, but it is far too narrow an engagement for us. And, Sir, there is the more serious consideration – becoming more serious every hour – there is the question of the neutrality of Belgium."

"I shall have to put before the House at some length what is our position with regard to Belgium. The governing factor is the Treaty of 1839, but this is a treaty with a history – a history accumulated since. In 1870, when there was war between France and Germany, the question of the neutrality of Belgium arose, and various things were said. Amongst other things, Prince Bismarck gave an assurance to Belgium that, confirming his verbal assurance, he gave in writing a declaration which he said was superfluous in reference to the Treaty in existence – that the German Confederation and its allies would respect the neutrality of Belgium, it being always understood that that neutrality would be respected by other belligerent Powers. That is valuable as a recognition in 1870 on the part of Germany of the sacredness of these treaty rights."

"What was our own attitude? The people who laid down the attitude of the British Government were Lord Granville in the House of Lords, and Mr Gladstone in the House of Commons. Lord Granville on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1870, used these words. He said:-

*"We might have explained to the country and to foreign nations that we did not think this country was bound either morally or internationally or that its interests were concerned in the maintenance of*



*the neutrality of Belgium, though this course might have had some conveniences, though it might have been easy to adhere to it, though it might have saved us from some immediate danger, it is a course which Her Majesty's Government thought it impossible to adopt in the name of the country with any due regard to the country's honour or to the country's interests."*

"Mr Gladstone spoke as follows two days later:-

*"There is, I admit, the obligation of the Treaty. It is not necessary, nor would time permit me, to enter into the complicated question of the nature of the obligations of that Treaty; but I am not able to subscribe to the doctrine of those who have held in this House what plainly amounts to an assertion, that the simple fact of the existence of a guarantee is binding on every party to it, irrespectively altogether of the particular position in which it may find itself at the time when the occasion for acting on the guarantee arises. The great authorities upon foreign policy to whom I have been accustomed to listen, such as Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, never to my knowledge took that rigid and, if I may venture to say so, that impracticable view of the guarantee. The circumstance that there is already a guarantee in force is of necessity an important fact, and a weighty element in the case to which we are bound to give full and ample consideration. There is also this further consideration, the force of which we must all feel most deeply, and that is, the common interests against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any Power whatever."*

"The Treaty is an old Treaty – 1839 – and that was the view taken of it in 1870. It is one of those Treaties which are founded, not only on consideration for Belgium, which benefits under the Treaty, but in the interests of those who guarantee the neutrality of Belgium. The honour and interests are, at least, as strong to-day as in 1870, and we cannot take a more narrow view or a less serious view of our obligations, and of the importance of those obligations than was taken by Mr Gladstone's Government in 1870."

"I will read to the House what took place last week on this subject. When mobilisation was beginning, I knew that this question must be a most important element in our policy – and a most important subject for the House of Commons. I telegraphed at the same time in similar terms to both Paris and Berlin to say that it was essential for us to know whether the French and German Governments respectively were prepared to undertake an engagement to respect the neutrality of Belgium. These are the replies. I got from the French Government this reply:-

*"The French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other Power violating that neutrality that France might find herself under the necessity, in order to assure the defence of her security, to act otherwise. This assurance has been given several times. The President of the Republic spoke of it to the King of the Belgians, and the French Minister at Brussels has spontaneously renewed the assurance to the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs to-day."*

"From the German Government the reply was:-

*"The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs could not possibly give an answer before consulting the Emperor and the Imperial Chancellor."*

"Sir Edward Goschen, to whom I had said it was important to have an answer soon, said he hoped the answer would not be too-long delayed. The German Minister then gave Sir Edward Goschen to understand that he rather doubted whether they could answer at all, as any reply they might give could not fail, in the event of war, to have the undesirable effect of disclosing, to a certain extent, part of their plan of campaign. I telegraphed at the same time to Brussels to the Belgian Government, and I got the following reply from Sir Francis Villiers:-

*"The Minister for Foreign Affairs thanks me for the communication, and replies that Belgium will, to the utmost of her power, maintain neutrality, and expects and desires*

*other Powers to observe and uphold it. He begged me to add that the relations between Belgium and the neighbouring Powers were excellent, and there was no reason to suspect their intentions, but that the Belgian Government believe, in the case of violation, they were in a position to defend the neutrality of their country."*

"It now appears from the news I have received to-day – which has come quite recently, and I am not yet quite sure how far it has reached me in an accurate form – that an ultimatum has been given to Belgium by Germany, the object of which was to offer Belgium friendly relations with Germany on condition that she would facilitate the passage of German troops through Belgium. Well, Sir, until one has these things absolutely definitely, up to the last moment, I do not wish to say all that one would say if one were in a position to give the House full, complete, and absolute information upon the point. We were sounded in the course of last week as to whether a guarantee were given that, after the war, Belgium integrity would be preserved that would content us. We replied that we could not bargain away whatever interests or obligations we had in Belgian neutrality."

"Shortly before I reached the House I was informed that the following telegram had been received from the King of the Belgians by our King – King George:-

*"Remembering the numerous proofs of your Majesty's friendship and that of your predecessors, and the friendly attitude of England in 1870, and the proof of friendship she has just given us again, I make a supreme appeal to the Diplomatic intervention of your Majesty's Government to safeguard the integrity of Belgium."*

"Diplomatic intervention took place last week on our part. What can diplomatic intervention do now? We have great and vital interests in the independence – and integrity is the least part – of Belgium. If Belgium is compelled to submit to allow her neutrality to be violated, of course the situation is clear. Even if by agreement she admitted the violation of her

neutrality, it is clear she could only do so under duress. The smaller States in that region of Europe ask but one thing. Their one desire is that they should be left alone and independent. The one thing they fear is, I think, not so much that their integrity but that their independence should be interfered with. If in this war which is before Europe the neutrality of one of those countries is violated, if the troops of one of the combatants violate its neutrality and no action be taken to resent it, at the end of the war, whatever the integrity may be the independence will be gone."

"I have one further quotation from Mr Gladstone as to what he thought about the independence of Belgium. It will be found in 'Hansard,' Volume 203, Page 1787. I have not had time to read the whole speech and verify the context, but the thing seems to me so clear that no-context could make any difference to the meaning of it. Mr Gladstone said:-

*"We have an interest in the independence of Belgium, which is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee. It is found in the answer to the question whether under the circumstances of the case, this country, endowed as it is with influence and power, would quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participants in the sin."*

"No, Sir, if it be the case that there has been anything in the nature of an ultimatum to Belgium, asking her to compromise or violate her neutrality, whatever may have been offered to her in return, her independence has gone if that holds. If her independence goes, the independence of Holland will follow. I ask the House from the point of view of British interests, to consider what may be at stake. If France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great Power, becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself – consequences which I do not anticipate, because I am sure that France has the power to defend herself with all the energy

and ability and patriotism which she has shown so often – still, if that were to happen, and if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark, then would not Mr Gladstone's words come true, that just opposite to us there would be a common interest against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any Power?"

"It may be said, I suppose, that we might stand aside, husband our strength, and that whatever happened in the course of this war at the end of it intervene with effect to put things right, and to adjust them to our own point of view. If, in a crisis like this, we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian Treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost. And do not believe, whether a great Power stands outside this war or not, it is going to be in a position at the end of it to exercise its superior strength. For us, with a powerful Fleet, which we believe able to protect our commerce, to protect our shores, and to protect our interests, if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer even if we stand aside."

"We are going to suffer, I am afraid, terribly in this war whether we are in it or whether we stand aside. Foreign trade is going to stop, not because the trade routes are closed, but because there is no trade at the other end. Continental nations engaged in war – all their populations, all their energies, all their wealth, engaged in a desperate struggle – they cannot carry on the trade with us that they are carrying on in times of peace, whether we are parties to the war or not. I do not believe for a moment, that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the West of Europe opposite to us – if that had been the result of the war – falling under the domination of a single Power, and I am quite sure

that our moral position would be such as to have lost us all respect. I can only say that I have put the question of Belgium somewhat hypothetically, because I am not yet sure of all the facts, but, if the facts turn out to be as they have reached us at present, it is quite clear that there is an obligation on this country to do its utmost to prevent the consequences to which those facts will lead if they are undisputed."

"What other policy is there before the House? There is but one way in which the Government could make certain at the present moment of keeping outside this war, and that would be that it should immediately issue a proclamation of unconditional neutrality. We cannot do that. We have made the commitment to France that I have read to the House which prevents us from doing that. We have got the consideration of Belgium which prevents us also from any unconditional neutrality, and, without those conditions absolutely satisfied and satisfactory, we are bound not to shrink from proceeding to the use of all the forces in our power. If we did take that line by saying, 'We will have nothing whatever to do with this matter' under no conditions – the Belgian Treaty obligations, the possible position in the Mediterranean, with damage to British interests, and what may happen to France from our failure to support France – if we were to say that all those things mattered nothing, were as nothing, and to say we would stand aside, we should, I believe, sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world, and should not escape the most serious and grave economic consequences."

#### **Mr Ramsay MacDonald:-**

"I should, bad circumstances permitted, have preferred to remain silent this afternoon. But circumstances do not permit of that. I shall model what I have to say on the two speeches we have listened to, and I shall be brief. The right hon. Gentleman, to a House which in a great majority is with him, has delivered a speech the echoes of which will go down in history. The speech has been impressive, but



however much we may resist the conclusion to which he has come, we have not been able to resist the moving character of his appeal. I think he is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see. The effect of the right hon. Gentleman's speech in this House is not to be its final effect."

"There may be opportunities, or there may not be opportunities for us to go into details, but I want to say to this House, and to say it without equivocation, if the right hon. Gentleman had come here to-day and told us that our country is in danger, I do not care what party he appealed to, or to what class he appealed, we would be with and behind him. If this is so, we will vote him what money he wants. Yes, and we will go further. We will offer him ourselves if the country is in danger. But he has not persuaded me that it is. He has not persuaded my hon. Friends who cooperate with me that it is, and I am perfectly certain, when his speech gets into cold print tomorrow, he will not persuade a large section of the country."

"If the nation's honour were in danger we would be with him. There has been no crime committed by statesmen of this character without those statesmen appealing to their nation's honour. We fought the Crimean War because of our honour. We rushed to South Africa because of our honour. The right hon. Gentleman is appealing to us to-day because of our honour. There is a third point. If the right hon. Gentleman could come to us and tell us that a small European nationality like Belgium is in danger, and could assure us he is going to confine the conflict to that question, then we would support him. What is the use of talking about coming to the aid of Belgium, when, as a matter of fact, you are engaging in a whole European War which is not going to leave the map of Europe in the position it is now."

"The right hon. Gentleman said nothing about Russia. We want to know about that. We want to try to find out what is going to happen,

when it is all over, to the power of Russia in Europe, and we are not going to go blindly into this conflict without having some sort of a rough idea as to what is going to happen. Finally, so far as France is concerned, we say solemnly and definitely that no such friendship as the right hon. Gentleman describes between one nation and another could ever justify one of those nations entering into war on behalf of the other. If France is really in danger, if, as the result of this, we are going to have the power, civilisation, and genius of France removed from European history, then let him so say."

"But it is an absolutely impossible conception, which we are talking about to endeavour to justify that which the right hon. Gentleman has foreshadowed. I not only know but I feel that the feeling of the House is against us. I have been through this before, and 1906 came as part recompense. It will come again. We are going to go through it all. We will go through it all. So far as we are concerned, whatever may happen, whatever may be said about us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts we believe that that was right and that that alone was consistent with the honour of the country and the traditions of the party that are now in office."

Later that day, the Foreign Secretary came back to the Chamber with a further message for MPs.

**Sir Edward Grey:** "I want to give the House some information which I have received, and which was not in my possession when I made my statement this afternoon. It is information I have received from the Belgian Legation in London, and is to the following effect:-

*"Germany sent yesterday evening at seven o'clock a Note proposing to Belgium friendly neutrality, covering free passage on Belgian territory, and promising maintenance of independence of the kingdom and possession at the conclusion*

*of peace, and threatening, in case of refusal, to treat Belgium as an enemy. A time limit of twelve hours was fixed for the reply. The Belgians have answered that an attack on their neutrality would be a flagrant violation of the rights of nations, and that to accept the German proposal would be to sacrifice the honour of a nation. Conscious of its duty, Belgium is firmly resolved to repel aggression by all possible means."*

"Of course, I can only say that the Government are prepared to take into grave consideration the information which it has received. I make no further comment upon it."

For reasons of space, the responses by Philip Edward Morrell (Liberal) and Keir Hardie (Labour) to this further statement will be published in the next issue of *Labour Affairs*.

Any society does not consist of individuals but expresses the sum of relationships [and] conditions that the individual actor is forming.

*Karl Marx, Grundrisse*

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.

*Karl Marx, Capital*

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.

*Karl Marx, Capital*



# Workers on company boards makes sound economic sense, says TUC

Allowing workers to sit on company boards would not only mean top executives' pay was set at more reasonable levels, but would also encourage the long-term success of individual firms, as both employees and directors worked together in the best interests of company performance, according to two reports published today (Tuesday) by the TUC.

The TUC has long argued that corporate governance laws in the UK are missing a trick by preventing worker representatives from sitting on remuneration committees. It also sees an important role for workers on boards as a way for companies to emerge stronger from the economic crisis.

In the two reports – one looking at the European experience and the other setting out the arguments why the UK should set out on a similar path – the TUC argues that the UK's short-termist approach (based on a model relying solely on shareholders to hold companies to account) has delivered neither economic success nor social justice.

Instead a fixation with short-term gains has led to poor productivity, low investment and wages falling as a share of GDP. This, say the reports, has had the end result of hitting demand and hurting companies in the long run.

*Workers on Board* – which looks at how the UK workforce might become more involved in the running of companies they work for – says that the UK's corporate governance rules have failed to keep pace with the new world of share ownership.

With over 50 per cent of UK shares held by overseas investors, and with UK institutional investors increasingly reliant on short-term share trading as a route to profit, deciding what lies in the best long-term interests of a company can no longer be left to shareholders alone, says the report.

Instead *Workers on Board* suggests that involving employees in the running of companies would not only

be a genuine break with the past and the UK's failed system of corporate governance, but would also harness the contribution of people who have the long-term development of the company at heart.

*Workers on Board* says that countries which have included the participation of worker representatives within their company structures are also economies with higher R&D investment, better employment rates, stronger economic success and lower rates of poverty.

The report says that allowing workers seats on company boards wouldn't be a solution to all the UK's economic problems, nor would it mean workers having a veto on decisions.

But as it is in the interests of staff that the company they are employed by does well, and their experience will have given them vital knowledge of the organisation and the environment in which it operates, employees' involvement could bring benefits not just for the workforce but for their employers as well.

The accompanying report, *Workers' Voice in Corporate Governance: A European Perspective*, looks at the ways in which workers are involved in the management of European companies – from being a part of the top team to having a voice at annual general meetings and a seat on company boards.

The report finds that far from simply being a German phenomenon – as is the common perception – employees have formal roles to play in the management of companies right across Europe, with workers being represented on company boards in 19 European countries including the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Austria.

Both reports note that the financial crash and its economic fallout have led to an increased interest in pursuing the option of worker voice in corporate governance in the UK. Both say there's a growing recognition of the limits, if not the failure, of the traditional shareholder model and that a new

united front involving workers and managers might just be the solution to put companies on a firmer footing for the future.

Commenting on the reports, TUC General Secretary **Frances O'Grady** said: "Achieving a true worker voice across Britain's workplaces is at the heart of the TUC's new campaign plan. Seats for the workforce on company boards would help inject a much-needed dose of reality into boardrooms and put the brakes on the multi-million pay and bonus packages which are fast becoming the norm in corporate Britain.

"The move would also help put firms on a clear trajectory out of the economic difficulties many UK companies are currently facing and assist boards to focus on the strategies and investments needed for long-term company success.

"The European experience shows that involving workers in management structures is not something for UK firms to fear. Instead, it's a concept companies should be embracing as the clamour for a more sensible, strategic approach to industrial democracy becomes ever popular."

The reports set out a number of changes that are also needed if the UK's system of corporate governance is to better help businesses focus on long-term success. These include:

Directors' duties should be changed so their main responsibility is the long-term success of the company, rather than the interests of shareholders.

To help minimise the influence of short-term share traders, anyone holding company investments should have to do so for a minimum of two years before being allowed a vote at company AGMs.

A mandatory system for the representation of workers on company boards. The TUC is looking at different options for putting this into practice

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## Continued from Page 15

in the UK and could help develop a network (and training) for worker representatives to help individual employees understand what would be required of them and give them the skills to take part effectively in company decision-making.

### NOTES TO EDITORS:

- *Workers on Board* is available at [https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Workers\\_on\\_board.pdf](https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Workers_on_board.pdf) and *Workers' Voice in Corporate Governance: A European Perspective* at <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/A-European-perspective-on-corporate-governance.pdf>

- The TUC's campaign plan can be downloaded from [www.tuc.org.uk/campaignplan](http://www.tuc.org.uk/campaignplan)

- All TUC press releases can be found at [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

- Follow the TUC on Twitter: @tucnews

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Press Release

Issued: 22 October, 2013

# Osborne's Mad March Hare

By Martin Dolphin

George Osborne's proposed change to pension law that will no longer require people to buy an annuity with their pension pots is a scam designed to win a few votes in next year's general election. It is not a real attempt to ensure that people are not poor in retirement.

But like all populist utterances it is based on a certain amount of truth. In this case the truth is that the market has failed pensioners. The financial institutions that had to be used by people to build up pension pots to provide an income in retirement had abused their powerful position to impose excessive charges. Providing pensions has long proved to be a very profitable activity for the City of London. At today's annuity rates a pension pot of £50,000 will buy a person of 65 an annuity with some inflation protection of only £2,000 per annum.

People were unimpressed by this return on their investment and Osborne has tapped into this dissatisfaction. But it is cheap popularism because it in no way addresses the central problem of how you ensure that people have a standard of living in retirement that is not dramatically different from what they had while working. Indeed quite the opposite. It increases the likelihood that they will be poorer in retirement since Osborne's cynical move increases the risk people will mismanage their retirement fund either by spending it too rapidly or investing it unwisely. The British Pension system was broken. But Osborne's solution will not improve the situation.

Steve Webb, the government's Liberal-Democratic pension minister, had been pursuing an alternative way of fixing the British pension system through the legalization of Collective Defined Contribution systems (CDC). In a CDC risk is pooled among a large number of workers and costs are reduced through economies of scale. Furthermore members do not buy an annuity on retirement. Instead their pension is automatically determined based on their contributions over their working lives and the economics of their collective fund.

It is generally agreed that the pension of someone in a CDC will be higher than a person in an individual scheme. A figure of 30% higher seems to generally accepted. Holland and Denmark run CDC type systems. There, a worker on the average wage can expect a pension of close to 100% of his pre-retirement net income. Such a good pension system is only partially explained by its collective nature. The other reason the pension system is so good is because each year close to 20% of a workers gross salary is paid into the pension pot - half by the employer and half by the employee.

Steven Webb's move to legalize CDCs was a limited move in the right direction. It remains to be seen whether it will survive Osborne's cynical electoral ploy which showed no interest in ensuring that people had a good standard of living in retirement. Certainly the City of London will be well pleased if Webb's proposed move to CDCs is buried.

## Bob Crow: A Tribute by Chris Smith

Bob Crow, who died on 11 March at the early age of 52, left school at 16 and started work on maintenance at London Underground. He joined the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR), which later became the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT). Following the death of Jimmy Knapp in 2001, Crow became the RMT's General Secretary. Bob Crow was unashamedly working class and was hated all the more for it. During his life he was viciously attacked by his opponents, particularly in the media. He was even blamed for strikes called by ASLEF! (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen). However, he proved himself more than capable of handling his critics, which only made them more irate of course.

He was largely responsible for a significant increase in membership of the union, something in the region of 20,000. This was quite a remarkable achievement given the political climate for trade unions over the years he was General Secretary. Under Crow's leadership (and let's not forget the activists within the RMT) many members had their standard of living improved. So it's no surprise that RMT membership increased.

Politically, he was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) until 1995 when he left to join the Socialist Labour Party, (SLP), run by Arthur Scargill. I don't know what Bob Crow thought about his time in the SLP, but I have heard other members say it is an experience they would not wish to repeat. After leaving the SLP he became involved in various movements, including No to EU, Yes to Democracy and the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which contested local and Parliamentary elections. Whatever about his politics, as a trade union leader he will be very difficult to replace. R.I.P. Bob Crow.

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Desecration of Paris churches.

The group calling itself Femen originated in Ukraine; they have now left that country and based themselves in Paris.

The standard French stamp shows the face of Marianne (the Republic); the artist who won the competition for the current stamp (competition judged by school children) used the face of Inna Shevchenko, one of the founders of Femen, to represent the French Republic.

As a sign of gratitude, on 12 February 2013 Femen desecrated Notre Dame in Paris in their trademark way and on 20 December they staged the abortion of Jesus Christ in the Madeleine church also in Paris, declaring Christmas was thereby cancelled. Nothing was done in either case, except some weak general statement by Hollande during a speech, about 'unacceptable acts'. Femen knew they were quite safe in their provocation. The Republic was founded against the Church, both in its origins in the 1790s and in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic incarnation in the 1880s. Indeed an Irish writer in the 1920s called France 'the infidel nation'. The French government seems to be going through an other anti-religious phase at the moment. The State is meant to guarantee freedom of worship, but it does so in a lukewarm manner.

There is a petition to withdraw the stamp from circulation.

### No French white feathers

The English are experts at turning shame into glory; the best example must be Dunkirk, but another one is votes for women in 1918, as compared to the tardy and reactionary French who waited till 1945. In fact giving women the vote in 1918 was

a reward for women's despicable role in the First World War in the white feather movement.

Ordinary women as well as prominent Feminists and Suffragettes blackmailed boys and men to enlist for the slaughter. At the start of the war, before conscription, Admiral [Charles Fitzgerald](#) founded the Order of the White Feather with support from the prominent author [Mrs Humphrey Ward](#). The idea was that women put pressure on men by handing them a white feather if they were not in uniform. This became so successful and widespread that the government had to issue a silver badge of active service to protect men in civilian clothes from this assault.

In 1914 France had conscription; the war took place on her territory, therefore less desperate measures were needed to get the men to fight. England had no obviously vital need to be in the war, hence the need for intense propaganda, and blackmail in which women joined with enthusiasm, hence their reward.

### Local government

An article in the *Irish Times* recently complained that voters in Ireland knew personally those they voted for. How awful. MPs canvassed voters, knocked on doors and knew the voters by name! The writer, one must suppose, much preferred the English system where people have no idea who is standing and don't bother to turn out on polling day. London is at the moment discussing another way for citizens and government to connect: water canon.

France is between Ireland and England, nearer to Ireland but leaning dangerously towards the English model. The campaign to destroy local democracy is ongoing.

There are more ways than one to destroy local involvement in public affairs. Stop MPs from being involved in local affairs, by being Mayors as well as MPs. This is an old campaign.

But here is a new one, dating from 2007 and expanded in 2013. To stand for local election you have to present a list of people who will form the municipal Council if elected; the Municipal Council will vote for the Mayor, usually the first person named on the list. Electors vote for a list, list headed by a personality of a party or coalition of parties. From 2014 all lists have to include 50% women; indeed it is obligatory to list men and women's names alternately, one man, one woman etc. It is like decreeing that 50% of First Division Football players should be women. You would do that if you wanted to destroy the sport. Needless to say, such a decree would not have a chance. But local democracy not being lucrative, you can do what you want with it.

There is a humiliating element in this. With colleagues who might be men or women, you are trying to do a serious and demanding job, that matters to your fellow citizens. But an absurd and arbitrary regulation handicaps you in the performance of that task. You could be excused for thinking that your efforts are not taken seriously. This new regulation applies for the elections taking place Sunday 23 March and Sunday 30 March. It has caused a lot of difficulty in making up lists. Social engineering is all very well, but many women are not interested in taking up politics, especially in smaller towns and villages.

The comparison with First Division Football is not totally apt, as each player is equally important in the team, unlike in a municipal council, where there are more or



less important posts. The mayor is most often a man, and the important posts, finance in particular, occupied by men. Martine Aubry is by all accounts a very good mayor of Lille, nevertheless fewer than 14 % of the 36,769 mayors in France are women.

A commentator discussing this issue on Europe 1 radio pointed out that same sex marriage had done away with gender differences in law, when they were being rigorously applied in politics. The Civil Code, the ancient text that regulates life in France, was altered in 2013 to remove all mention of men and women, mothers and fathers, grand-mothers and grand-fathers. But suddenly municipal lists must have men and women specifically.

In the past, by definition, as many men as women got married. Now more men get married, as there are 3 men-only marriages for 5 same-sex marriages. Parity that existed naturally is done away with, and an artificial one is attempted.

### Standing in local elections

Another way to weaken local democracy is to make the job of Mayor so hard that it becomes an intolerable burden. One way to do that is to prosecute or threaten to prosecute Mayors. Mayors are personally legally responsible for things they can't really control and they face prosecution when things go wrong. Normally 30% of Mayors stand down at each election. This year it is 40%.

### A piece of good news

An opinion poll, commissioned by *le Parisien Magazine* in March 2014, has come up with such an unacceptable answer for the media that it has not been published by that magazine. People were presented with 14 names of politicians and asked who in their opinion would do a better job than François Hollande as president. The name of Dominique Strauss-Kahn came up first (56%); Alain Juppé was in second place with 53%. Then Nicolas Sarkozy and Manuel Valls (the present interior minister) 49% and 48%. DSK's name was included in the list because he had been

spontaneously mentioned by the population in previous polls.

This shows that the population can think for itself, and is not the helpless victim of propaganda. They are able to distinguish the important from the unimportant. They realise that finance is a vital element in the future of the country and that the country needs experts in this field. They still believe, despite media hammering, that private life is private life and not of vital interest to the country, whether you are a politician or not.

Attacking politicians ostensibly for their use of prostitutes is a manoeuvre, generally a political attack masquerading as a moral crusade (DSK was working on an alternative to the dollar, so had to be eliminated, Eliot Spitzer was working on tax on business; in each case the presumed crime concerned irregularities regarding payment). Being able to use prostitutes without being exposed is one

of the perks of towing the line, in particular the pro-dollar line. And it's risky behaviour if you want to step out of line at any point. Women are indeed exploited, when they are used to whip up indignation against politicians who might be doing important political work that goes against prevailing interests.

It is wonderful news therefore that the French population polled that weekend were able to ignore the red rags presented to it by the media and see reality as it is. The reaction of the spurned media is comical.

### Result of First Round in local elections.

65% went to the polls. The average turn out in England for local elections is around 40%. The UMP (Centre Right coalition) was ahead, then the Socialist Party. The National Front won 4% of votes. The second round will decide the final result.

## Going German in Royal Mail? by Larry Elliott

The following article by Larry Elliott appeared in the *Guardian* 9 December 2013:

Unions and management have found a grown-up way to conduct industrial relations

Struggling to get a decent pay rise? Unhappy about being on a zero-hours contract? Concerned about the size of your pension pot for when you retire? Then join a union and get organising. That's the clear message from the deal struck between the Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union.

It's not just that the agreement offers CWU members a 9% increase in pay spread over three years, although an above-inflation package is certainly not to be sniffed at when average earnings growth is running at less than 1% a year. Nor is it simply that the Royal Mail has pledged to avoid compulsory redundancies, outsourcing and the use of zero-hours contracts, a commitment that will remain valid provided the union does not call a national strike.

It is also that the company and the union are trying to forge a grown-up relationship in which the union will have the right to make representations to the Royal Mail board and there will be monthly chinwags between Dave Ward of the CWU and Moya Greene, Royal Mail's chief executive.

Higher pay, better working conditions, co-operation between workers and management. It sounds positively Germanic, and none the worse for that.

*Notes and Comments by Tom Doherty*

*This deal was subsequently endorsed by 96% in a membership ballot.*

*This is apparently a legally enforceable agreement. Also talks are proceeding on a company charter to enshrine this post-privatisation agreement so it can only be changed by a share-holders vote.*

*Larry Elliott is one of the few national journalists who understands the TU movement and is familiar with the CWU in particular. Some years ago he addressed the National Executive Council of the CWU on the subject of the UK's possible entry into the Euro (he was against).*

*Not so long ago Royal Mail had a disastrous industrial relations record: according to the Guardian in 2007 and 2009 two thirds of all strike days in the UK were at Royal Mail. For at least the last two decades, to my knowledge, it has seemed like guerrilla warfare in Royal Mail. A ritual of effectively "wild-cat" local action, followed by national repudiation (to avoid sequestration or whatever) and instruction to return to work (sometimes complied with).*

*Dave Ward is one of the most sophisticated Trade Unionists I have met: it did not surprise me, in fact it gave me great pleasure, to read that he has accomplished this deal.*

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## National Minimum Wage

On 12 March, Business Secretary Vince Cable announced to the House of Commons that the Low Pay Commission's 2014 report and recommendations to the Government were being published in full that day, alongside the Government's response. His statement is of interest as it highlights the paltry increases in what are already low rates of pay.

"The commission has recommended that the adult hourly rate of the national minimum wage should increase from £6.31 to £6.50. The commission has recommended increasing the development rate, which covers workers aged 18 to 20-years-old, from £5.03 to £5.13 and increasing the rate for 16 to 17-year-olds from £3.72 to £3.79. It recommends that the apprentice rate should increase from £2.68 to £2.73. It is recommended that these changes take place in October 2014.

The commission has also recommended that the accommodation offset increases from the current £4.91 to £5.08 in October 2014.

The Government accepts all of the rate recommendations.

## Other recommendations

Migrant Domestic Workers

We recommend that the Government should review the law, and take the next

available opportunity to legislate and clarify the entitlement of migrant domestic workers to the national minimum wage.

## Government Response

The Government fully agree that non-compliance in this area needs to be reduced. As suggested by the Low Pay Commission, the Government will look at this area of national minimum wage legislation and consider the full range of options to reduce non-compliance."

## Ukraine:

### To War Or Not To War?

On 18 March, Foreign Secretary William Hague presented a further statement on Ukraine to the House of Commons. (The previous statement was presented on 4 March.). There were two particularly contrasting responses to this:

from Labour's Chris Bryant and from the Conservative's Sir Edward Leigh, a noted right-winger. Bryant's speech contained a litany of 'crimes' committed by Vladimir Putin, for which Bryant believed he should be punished, by military force if necessary. For when one regrets, as Bryant did, that Britain has surrendered its military capacity to intervene, one is effectively saying military force should be used if circumstances dictate. (This was not the position of Shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander, who

urged effective diplomatic engagement with Russia.). Leigh's speech on the other hand, was that of someone who understands Russian history and as such empathises with its plight.

## Chris Bryant:

"What more do we really need to know about Vladimir Putin? Even if we leave aside for a moment his self enrichment, which would put Victor Yanukovich, Imelda Marcos and Mummar Gaddafi to shame; the way in which misinformation, media manipulation and the repression of independent journalists are a standard part of the Putin package; the perversion of the criminal justice system in Russia, which means that more than 95% of all prosecutions lead to conviction, because they are determined by political persuasion, rather than justice; what more do we need to know?"

## Mr Newark:

"He seems to have forgotten one important point. You can add targeted assassinations on British soil to your list."

## Chris Bryant:

"That was one of the other things I was leaving aside for a moment. We know how Putin reacts in a crisis. That is what really worries me. He always reacts with extreme force. In Beslan the state used such force to resolve a hostage crisis that 334 of the hostages, including 186 children, were killed. When terrorists from the Chechen republic took over a theatre in Moscow, the state's intervention ended up killing not only all of the terrorists, but 130 of the hostages. We also know about his territorial ambition. I can do no better than quote the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois). During a debate on Georgia in the previous Parliament, he said:

*"Whatever one may think of*

*Georgia's actions on 7 August, Russia used grossly disproportionate force in response, and by subsequently recognising its supported regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia is attempting to redraw the map of Europe by force".*---(Official Report, 20 January 2009; Vol 486, c, 686.)

"That is exactly what we are hearing again today. What more do we need to know?"

"In Syria, Putin actively prevented an early resolution to the conflict and assisted Assad's barbarous regime in repressing its people, and all for the strategic advantage that accrues to Russia, as has already been said, from its naval base in Tartus, which is vital for access to the Mediterranean. Now, after trying to bribe, bully and coerce the whole of Ukraine into aligning itself with Russia and against the European Union, he has effectively annexed part of an independent country."

"I am afraid the international response, as the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) said, has thus far been pitiful and spineless. People have even trotted out in this Chamber the argument that most of the people in Crimea are Russian speaking and wanted to join Russia in the first place. Can Members not hear history running through the decades? In 1938 the British apologists for Hitler, combined with those who felt that Germany had been treated badly after the first world war, combined with the British mercantilists who wanted to do more business with Germany, and combined with the British cowards who wanted to avoid war at all costs, argued, using the same argument that has been advanced today, that the vast majority of the people in the Sudetenland were really German and wanted to be part of Germany."

"I have no desire for us to be at war, or for there to be a war of any kind. I opposed the proposed military intervention in Syria for the simple reason that I could not see how bombing that country would help. However, we should be ready for any eventuality. I was saddened that when I formally asked the

Foreign Secretary on 30 November 2011 whether he would rule out the use of force in tackling Iran's nuclear ambitions, he refused to do so. Others agreed with him. I was told, including by Members on my side of the House, 'Don't be silly. You simply can't rule things like that out.' Well, perhaps they were right, but I want to ask now why on earth we ruled out any military intervention, in whatever set of circumstances and at whatever stage, from the very beginning of Putin's advance into Ukraine. I am not arguing for war; I am simply asking why we do one thing for Iran but say exactly the opposite when dealing with Russia. I think that the EU has shown little honour in this. The Ukrainian Government have behaved with extraordinary and admirable restraint."

#### **Mark Hendrick:**

"My hon. Friend makes a very good point. In the last but one Foreign Office questions, I asked the Foreign Secretary what the fact that NATO has a co-operation agreement with Ukraine means, and he gave the impression that I was asking for war. I was not asking for war; I just wanted to put the military options on the table."

#### **Chris Bryant:**

"I completely agree with my hon. Friend. I think he also agrees with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who spoke earlier. There has been little honour in the way that Britain, France and the United States, having signed up to the Budapest memorandum, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine, now make lots of great speeches but introduce the measliest level of sanctions and targeted interventions against Russian individuals. The real problem is that we all know where this might all too easily be leading:

to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Belarus. What will we say then; what will we do then? We have done far too little to safeguard European energy supply over the years. We have surrendered our military capacity to intervene. We have let commercial interests alone determine our foreign policy. We have failed to tackle deep Russian corruption within the EU,

especially in Cyprus. It is not so much that we have let Russia pick us off country by country but that we in the European Union, country by country, have gone begging to Russia to try to do more business with it and left aside too many other issues."

"There are things that we could and should be doing. We should target a much longer list of Russian officials. The Foreign Secretary referred, I think, to Leonid Slutsky. He should not be a member of the socialist group in the Council of Europe, and nor, for that matter, should his party. I am delighted that the Conservative party has now taken the action that it has, for which I had been arguing for some time. I cannot see for the life of me why the Government still use their slightly weaselly language about the potential of a Magnitsky list. It has been implemented by the United States of America, the European Union has called for it, and the Council of Europe is calling for it, and we should go down that route. A Russian friend of mine says that Putin is not yet mad. That may be true, but what will our surrendering and our appeasement do for his sanity?"

#### **Sir Edward Leigh:**

"My hon. Friend the Member for Esher and Walton (Mr Raab) quoted John Quincy Adams who famously warned against his country going out seeking 'monsters to destroy'. I declare an interest:

I have been interested in Russian culture and history ever since my Russian Orthodox wedding to my Russian Orthodox wife. I have visited Kiev, and I want to explain to the House how important Ukraine is to the Russian people. In our island, secure as we are, we sometimes do not understand the importance of history and of fear, and of the great fear of the Russian people. I am neither pro-Russian nor pro-Ukrainian, because I am also sympathetic to Ukrainians living in western Ukraine who are Catholic Uniates, and I understand the division of that country."

"History is everything. My wife's grandmother escaped through Crimea in 1918, and her first husband was dragged out of



the woods and shot by Bolsheviks, simply because of his name and title. The Russian people---this is seared into their soul---went through the most appalling suffering during the second world war, not least in Crimea. When one goes to Kiev, as I have done, and walks around the Russian Orthodox cathedrals, one understands the Kievan Rus', which was founded 1,000 years ago. Ukraine is not just some settlement. I am not apologising or being an apologist for Putin or what he has done; I am just trying to explain to the House how importantly Russians feel about the future of Ukraine, and how sensitive we must be to their sensibilities. That particularly applies to Crimea, which has been Russian since the time of Catherine the Great, and Russian speakers are the dominant part of the population. I know that the Tatars have been treated appallingly, but---again, the House will not like what I say---many Russians believe that some elements of the Tatar population collaborated with what they call the fascist invaders."

**Angela Smith:**

"We must remember that Finland, too, was occupied by Russia for a considerable period. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Russians have an affinity with Finland that perhaps gives Russia the right to think what to do in a place like Finland? It still holds some Finish territory."

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

"No, of course I do not. Finland was also occupied by Sweden, but there is no time to debate that. Ukraine is a completely different ball game to Russians than Poland. My point is that Ukraine is an extraordinarily divided country. This is not a simple, liberal argument about a long-standing independent united country and a foreign aggressor. Western Ukraine is fiercely anti-Russian. As I said, it is Catholic Uniate, its capital city is Lviv, and formerly it was largely inhabited not by Ukrainians but 80% by Poles who were forcibly removed by Stalin. Before that it was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and was called Lemberg. The whole question of western Ukraine is

therefore passionately opposed to Russia---quite understandably---and wants to break free."

"The eastern part of the country around Donetsk and Crimea is a completely different state of affairs. We must be aware that however many speeches we give, and however many sanctions we impose, this is not just about a tyrant--Putin--invading a foreign country. A great proportion of the Russian population feels very strongly that the west is imposing double standards. The west insisted on self-determination for the Kosovans, and Serbia is very close to the Russian heart as a fellow Orthodox country. The House may not agree with that, but that is their point of view, and imposing any amount of sanctions will not change it. We must stop playing power games. It is too dangerous a situation, and the west must realise that it cannot tear Ukraine away from Russia. We must stop these games of Ukraine ever joining NATO---thank God Ukraine is not in NATO because we would be involved in a war. We must stop these games."

**Dr Julian Lewis:**

"My hon. Friend said yesterday in Defence questions what a different position we would be in had we let Ukraine become part of NATO. We must realise and impress on Russia that membership of NATO involves the criterion that an attack on one is an attack on all. If we are not prepared to protect a country in that way, we must not give it bogus guarantees."

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

"Absolutely. An attack on one NATO country is an attack on all of them. Poland is a completely different state of affairs from Ukraine. As I have said, we must stop the power games of trying to detach Ukraine from Russia. It is not going to happen. Russia will not allow it to happen, any more than we would allow an integral part of what we consider to be important to our soul and our history to be detached from us. It is a dangerous game (*Interruption*) Well, somebody has to give an alternative point of view. There is no point in the House of Commons if we all agree with each other all the time. I am trying to explain the

Russian point of view."

"Encouraging Ukraine to join NATO is obviously absurd, but it is also extraordinarily dangerous to encourage Ukraine to join the EU. As I said, I am neither pro-Russian nor pro-Ukrainian, and I am in favour---this may be a cliché---of peace and humanity. I want Ukraine to have a developed system of administration so that the west can run itself, as can the east. Ideally if we can think in terms of free-trade areas and Ukraine having some sort of free-trade agreement with the EU, that is positive, sensible and acceptable to Russians. However, we should please not take any step further, because we will be indulging in extraordinarily dangerous power games."

**Tributes To Tony Benn**

MPs from the Labour and Conservative benches (13 Lab, 5 Cons.) paid tribute to Tony Benn (nee Anthony Neil Wedgewood Benn) on 20 March. Benn, who died on 14 March at the age of 88, was Labour MP for Bristol East from 1950 to 1983 and for Chesterfield from 1984 to 2001. Among those who came to praise him were, David Cameron, Harriet Harmon, Sir Peter Tapsell, Michael Meacher, Dennis Skinner, William Cash, Diane Abbot, the Leader of the House Andrew Lansley and, of course, his son Hilary, currently a member of the Shadow Cabinet. All of them spoke of his love of Parliament, his humanity and his personal generosity, but Labour's John McDonnell best summed up his political agenda. It's often forgotten that Benn, referred to by the right-wing press in the 1980s as "the most dangerous man in Britain," set out policies to address the weakness at the heart of Britain's economy at the time. That was the easy part, however. The difficult part was working out the detail and overcoming the inevitable opposition to the practical application of his ideas. The opposition included a substantial proportion of the electorate who stubbornly elected the Tories during the 1980s, although offered Benn's socialist programme.

McDonnell reminded the House of these ideas.

**John McDonnell:**

“Tony, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner), founded the Socialist Campaign Group, of which I am the chair. I apologise on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), who cannot be here today because he is in Geneva as part of a human rights delegation.”

“Tony inspired my generation. We did not just respect him; as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said, we loved the man. I want to go back to what my hon. Friend said about the longest suicide note in history, because it is interesting that it has come up time and time again among the commemorations of the past week or so. I want to go back, not to the manifesto of 1983, but to Labour’s programme of 1982, which was the Bennite programme, and virtually all of it was written by Tony Benn. It is worth looking back at what it said. It was absolutely prophetic. It basically said, ‘We will create a society that is more democratic, more just and more equal.’ How would we do it?”

Tony’s ideas in that programme were straightforward:

we would undertake a fundamental, irreversible shift in the redistribution of wealth and power. How would we do that? Through a fair and just tax system, tackling tax evasion and tax avoidance, taking control of the Bank of England, preventing speculation in the City and the banks because it could be dangerous to our long-term economic health, and creating full employment. That is what he was about. That is what he inspired to do.

“It is interesting that he said we should invest in housing, health and education, give all young people the opportunity to stay on at school with an education maintenance allowance; and make sure that they had a guarantee of an apprenticeship or training and the opportunity to go to university, not by paying a fee but on a grant. That was his programme in 1982. It was prophetic and years in advance of its time. He said that what we needed to create the wealth was an industrial strategy---a manufacturing base based on new technology and skills. Actually, I remember him talking in one of his speeches about alternative energy sources, well in advance of the debate about climate change. The programme also included equal rights for women and

for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.”

“What else was he committed to? He lost a brother in the war, so he was committed to peace. And bravely, courageously, he called for inclusive talks in Northern Ireland---for everyone to get around a table to secure peace. He also said that we needed to control the arms trade and that no more arms should be sold to dictators in the middle east for them to use as weapons against their own people and to destabilise the region. Of course, he also argued for unilateral nuclear disarmament, which I continue to support and which remains a popular cause for many.”

“He was a European---sceptical about the European Union, but a true European. I found that inspiring. He inspired my generation and he inspired generations to come. What a world we would have created if we had listened to him. But more important, what a world we can create now if we listen to him. Solidarity and go well, comrade. You made a significant contribution to all our lives. I hope we will be able to implement the lessons you taught us, when Labour next gets back into power.”

When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.

*Helder Camara, Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings*

When each citizen submits himself to the authority of law he does not thereby decrease his independence or freedom, but rather increases it. By recognizing that he is a part of a larger body which is banded together for a common purpose, he becomes more than an individual, he rises to a new dignity of citizenship. Instead of finding himself restricted and confined by rendering obedience to public law, he finds himself protected and defended and in the exercise of increased and increasing rights.

*Calvin Coolidge, speech, May 30, 1924*

What is free trade, what is free trade under the present condition of society? It is freedom of capital. When you have overthrown the few national barriers which still restrict the progress of capital, you will merely have given it complete freedom of action. ...

But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.

*Marx & Engels, On Free Trade (1848)*

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In-person (non-postal voter) turnout 25%;  
2012 Police and crime commissioner elections –

Postal voter turnout 48.2%;

In-person turnout 9.2%;

2012 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 68%;

In-person turnout 24.2%;

2012 Greater London Authority elections –

Postal voter turnout 68.8%;

In-person turnout 34.4%;

2012 Scottish local elections –

Postal voter turnout 69.7%;

In-person turnout 34.9%;

2012 Welsh local elections –

Postal voter turnout 68.2%;

In-person turnout 33%;

2011 Parliamentary voting system referendum –

Postal voter turnout 71.9%;

In-person turnout 37.5%;

2011 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 72.8%;

In-person turnout 36.7%;

2011 Scottish Parliament elections –

Postal voter turnout 77%;

In-person turnout 47%;

2011 National Assembly for Wales elections

– Postal voter turnout 71.1%;

In-person turnout 35.8%;

2010 UK parliamentary general election –

Postal voter turnout 83.2%;

In-person turnout 62.6%;

2010 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 80.9%;

In-person turnout 59.7%;

2009 European Parliament elections –

64.4%;

In-person turnout 30.4%;

2009 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 68.7%;

In-person turnout 35.2%;

2008 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 71.5%;

In-person turnout 28.7%;

2008 Welsh local elections –

Postal voter turnout 71.4%;

In-person turnout 40.7%;

2007 Scottish Parliament elections –

Postal voter turnout 73.5%;

In-person turnout 51.4%;

2007 National Assembly for Wales elections

– Postal voter turnout 78.2%;

In-person turnout 39.3%;

2006 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout 63%;

In-person turnout 32%;

2005 UK parliamentary general election –

Postal voter turnout 78.6%;

In-person turnout 59.5%;

2004 European Parliament elections –

Postal voter turnout 64.8%;

In-person turnout 34%. PWA 10/3/14.

Employment in the UK commerce and manufacturing sectors in 2012 was:

Commerce sector – Motor trades 511,600;

Wholesale 1,136,400;

Retail 2,931,900;

Transport & storage (inc postal) 1,270,000;

Accommodation & food services 1,943,800;

Information & communication 1,069,500;

Financial % insurance 1,065,400;

Property 507,500;

Professional, scientific & technical 2,188,700;

Business administration & support services 2,311,200;

Total commerce 14,936,00. Manufacturing sector 2,417,200. Total commerce and manufacturing sectors 17,353,200. PWA 13/3/14.

The number of fuel poor households (millions) in 2011 and the proportion of the population fuel poor was:

England 3.2m and 15%;

Scotland 0.58m and 25%;

Wales 0.37m and 29%;

Northern Ireland 0.29m and 42%. PWA 17/3/14.

The number of prisoners on a life sentence in the prison population as at 31 December 2013 broken down by date of sentence, England and Wales, was:

Before 1980 – 111;

From 1980 to 1989 – 357;

From 1990 to 1999 – 1,093;

From 2000 to 2009 – 4,255;

From 2010 to 2013 – 1,483;

Sentence length not recorded – 164. Total – 7,463. PWA 19/3/14.



## It's A Fact

The number of foreign national offenders in custody (including those held on remand and under immigration powers) is as follows:

Year 2010 – 11,135;

Year 2011 – 10,779;

Year 2012 – 10,861;

Year 2013 – 10,786. Parliamentary Written Answer 3/3/14.

Local government receipts from sales of housing (gross fixed capital formation) 1997 to 2013 for England, Scotland and Wales, were:

1997 - £1.3 billion;

1998 - £1.3 billion;

1999 - £1.8 billion;

2000 – £2.1 billion;

2001 – £2.2 billion;

2002 - £3 billion;

2003 - £4 billion;

2004 - £3.7 billion;

2005 - £2.6 billion;

2006 - £2.2 billion;

2007 - £2.1 billion;

2008 - £1 billion;

2009 - £0.5 billion;

2010 - £0.6 billion;

2011 - £0.6 billion;

2012 - £0.9 billion;

2013 - £0.7 billion. PWA 4/3/14.

Average income from self-employment in financial year 2011/12 was:

North East Region – Male £12,700, Female £8,230;

North West and Merseyside – Male £13,900, Female £8,950;

Yorkshire and the Humber – Male £13,700, Female £8,940;

East Midlands - Male £13,800, Female £8,670;

West Midlands – Male £13,100, Female £8,850;

East of England – Male £18,200, Female £9,740;

London – Male £25,700, Female £12,400;

South East – Male £19,100, Female £10,000;

South West – Male £13,900, Female £8,370;

Wales – Male £12,400, Female £8,060;

Scotland – Male £16,500, Female £11,100;  
Northern Ireland – Male £12,000, Female £9,300;

United Kingdom – Male £17,000, Female £9,8000. PWA 4/3/14.

Central Government tax revenue in January of each year 2001 to 2014 was:

2001 - £40,060 million;

2002 - £39,200 million;

2003 - £38,603 million;

2004 - £39,982 million;

2005 - £46,254 million;

2006 - £52,146 million;

2007 - £52,868 million;

2008 - £59,227 million;

2009 - £53,480 million;

2010 - £50,941 million;

2011 - £58,288 million;

2012 - £60,192 million;

2013 - £60,801 million;

2014 - £60,659 million.

N.B. The following taxes are included in this total:

taxes on production (e.g VAT);

taxes on income and wealth (e.g. PAYE, corporation taxes);

other taxes (mainly capital taxes from other sectors) and National Insurance Contributions (NICs). PWA 5/3/14.

Military personnel establishment in the following British Overseas Territories is:

British Forces Cyprus, including Sovereign Base Areas – 2,825;

Falkland Islands – 1,060;

Gibraltar, includes UK Military and Royal Gibraltar Regiment – 400;

British Indian Ocean Territories – 40;

Ascension Island – 20. The other UK overseas territories have no permanent UK military presence. PWA 5/3/14.

Voter turnout in elections held in England, Scotland and Wales from 2004 to 2013, in date reverse order was:

2013 English local elections –

Postal voter turnout (postal ballots returned) 67.1%;

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