

# Labour Affairs

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## Britain Needs Good Jobs

On the back page of this issue of *Labour Affairs*, there is a page of job advertisements from the *Oldham Chronicle* for 1979. It is just one of three pages of such adverts. By 1979 the great days of industrial employment were already behind us, but the Thatcherite devastation of Britain's mining and manufacturing and mining base had yet to occur. This was still a time when a young person with average talents and an ordinary willingness to work could count on getting a job in his or her home town. Places like Oldham were still living, thriving communities.

Thirty six years later, the position is much bleaker. Net job growth in the private sector over the past decade outside the south east has actually been negative, with one private sector job disappearing for every ten created in the south east. Even this figure makes things look rosier than they actually are. First, many of these 'jobs' are nominal self employment which effectively signify withdrawal from the labour market. Second, many of them are part time. Third, many are casualised agency jobs, with very poor terms and conditions.

For example, at any one time 250 of 900 jobs at Jacob's Biscuits at Aintree are agency jobs with no holiday pay, lower hourly pay and no long term prospects. Aditya Chakraborty, writing in the *Guardian* estimates that nearly half the jobs advertised last year on Merseyside were agency jobs. The economy of some post-industrial towns like Corby is dominated by agency work. We should also bear in mind that these are the parts of Britain particularly dependent on public sector employment, which is subject to a financial squeeze not seen since World War Two. It is no exaggeration to say that much of Britain (including parts of the South East) have decayed to the point that they have become places where it is not possible anymore to live a decent life.

All section of the workforce are suffering, but the prospects for young people are particularly dire. The consequences of unemployment early in life are likely to be more severe and long-lasting than for people who've already made the transition from education and living at home to paid work and an independent life.

In a decent society, it should be taken for granted that care of the young as well as the old is one of the first duties of all members of that society.

Look what's been done to the transition from teenage life and education to adult status and work. The Careers Service combination of careers teachers and careers officers who brokered relationships between schools and prospective employers. Since 1979 it has been gradually run down by Labour, Conservatives and the Coalition to the point where, in 2011 it effectively ceased to exist except as a tatty website. At a time when the need was never greater, our political parties deliberately destroyed an institution that was capable of at least assisting young people to make choices about their future and to find a job. The Careers Service could not create jobs, but in the absence of anyone else who was prepared to do so it at least tried to help.

Anyone who is surprised at the decline of the main political parties and the disgust that many people feel for them should ponder on these facts. The Labour Party, as the principal political party representing such areas is particularly culpable, and has consistently failed to make the case for revival of areas which have suffered since the 1980s. They are terrified of being seen as class warriors, of offending the South East and of appearing 'dogmatic' by having some principles. They are likely to pay the price for their neglect in Scotland at the next election. They cannot expect to remain secure indefinitely in their strongholds in the North, Wales and the Midlands if they continue to neglect the people whom they are supposed to represent.

Labour used to represent the society as a whole, 'workers by hand and brain'. A majority of MPs began in ordinary jobs and went into politics only after making a secure life in the world most of us inhabit. What happens now is that most future MPs go from university to political research, think-tanks, lobbying agencies or something else that is close to the political elite. They don't share the experiences of ordinary people.

There is growing awareness of the scale of the problem with some reporting of the plight of economically depressed parts of Britain breaking through into the 'quality' press such as the *Independent* and the *Guardian*. There is also a growing realisation of the fiasco of the abolition of the careers service. The government has responded by setting up a

new employer led careers advice company headed up by the current Chairman of CapGemini a finance firm. It is putting the princely sum of £5million into this company. For comparison, the government saved around £220 million per annum by abolishing what remained of careers provision in 2011. To gauge the detachment from reality that this policy implies, here are the words of Vince Cable:

“Employers are best placed to inspire our young people into the world of work. The new company will play a vital role in creating that bridge between businesses and schools and inspire young people with exciting career prospects.”

Just put that against what we know of the labour market in most of Britain and you can see that this is a tawdry confidence trick which should be exposed by a Labour Party worth its salt. This is a ‘let them eat cake’ viewpoint of the worst sort.

The TUC by contrast has put forward alternative proposals which at least attempt to address the scale of the problem of giving young people and their parents sound advice about careers. The *House of Commons Select Committee on Education* held hearings into careers advice last week in which Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education, was grilled. At least she was grilled by the Tory Chair of that Committee, Graham Stuart. The Labour members were pathetic, afraid to inject either passion or reality into the debate. They failed to even lightly toast

Morgan. By contrast, Stuart put his finger on a problem to which neither Morgan or anyone else has an answer. If the only incentives for teachers and schools are to get good GCSE exam results and if it costs a school £50,000 a year to provide adequate careers advice, then what prospect is there of them devoting any attention to the future employment and careers of their pupils?

In 2013 the school inspectors found that careers advice in 80% of secondary schools was inadequate. This is hardly surprising given what the government has done. The government has adopted policies that actually encourage schools not to spend what little cash they have on giving careers advice to pupils. The old brokerage service between schools and employers, the Careers Officers virtually disappeared some years ago.

In a way this is a sideshow compared to the big event which is the collapse of decent employment in large parts of Britain. But it is symptomatic of the lack of concern for working people which appears to characterise the two and a half liberal parties which still dominate politics in Britain. Under Labour in government we can look forward to more cynical neglect and the further decline of employment in Britain unless the trade unions step up to the mark and demand something better for the money that they give to the Labour Party.

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The government is us; we are the government, you and I.

*Theodore Roosevelt*

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

The first virtue in a soldier is endurance of fatigue; courage is only the second virtue.

*Napoleon Bonaparte*

The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## Compulsory Military Service

Last month's *Labour Affairs* carried contributions on the subject of compulsory military service from Liberal Member Captain Guest and Labour's J.H. (Jimmy) Thomas. On 15 September 1915, John Dillon, Irish Nationalist Member for East Mayo, offered another perspective on an issue that engendered fierce debate for the remainder of the year.

The following is a truncated account of the life of John Dillon. It covers the early part of his life and the period from 1914 to 1918. The information is derived from Wikipedia.

**John Dillon** was born in Blackrock, Dublin, on 4 September 1851, the son of the former "Young Irelander" John Blake Dillon. He was educated at Catholic University School, at Trinity College, Dublin and at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. He afterwards studied medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, then ceased active involvement in medicine after he joined Isaac Butt's Home Rule League in 1873. He became a Member of the UK Parliament in 1880 as member for County Tipperary. He travelled to the United States with Charles Stewart Parnell on a fund-raising mission for the Land League of which he was a member of the original committee. On his return he denounced Gladstone's Land Act of 1881 as achieving nothing for small farmers. His views on agrarian reform and on Home Rule resulted in being branded an extremist and he was arrested from May until August 1881 under the Irish Coercion Act.

Imprisoned for agitation in October 1881 together with Parnell, William O'Brien and others in Kilmainham Gaol, he signed the No Rent Manifesto in solidarity although not fully in agreement with it. Parnell sought to end the Land War by agreeing the Kilmainham treaty after which they were released from prison in May 1882. Unhappy with Parnell's "New

*Departure"* and because his health had suffered, he resigned his seat in Parliament on 6 March 1883, and retired from politics to Colorado in the US where his brother lived. Returning in 1885, Parnell nominated him as the Irish Parliamentary candidate for East Mayo in the general election in November 1885, where he was returned unopposed. He represented the constituency without a break until 1918.

With the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914 Dillon accepted Redmond's decision to follow Britain's support of the Allied war effort, but he abstained from recruiting for the Irish divisions. The 1916 Rising took the Irish Party by surprise. He intervened with Lloyd George to halt the 90 sentences of execution pronounced by "field court-martial" (in camera without defence or jury) under martial law by General Maxwell after he declared the rebellion "treason in time of war". He was involved in May 1916 with Lloyd George's futile attempt to implement Home Rule after the Rising. After Redmond's death on 6 March 1918, Dillon followed him as leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. When the allied armies on the Western Front collapsed in the wake of the German Spring Offensive and decimated the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Irish divisions, the Government attempted a month later to extend conscription to Ireland, which Dillon opposed with tenacity and in protest withdrew all Irish Members from the House of Commons.

It was left to Dillon to fight a last campaign in the general election of December 1918. After a failure to reach a pact with Sinn Féin, his Party was swept into oblivion. He was defeated in East Mayo by Eamon de Valera's 8975 votes to his 4514. He died in a London nursing home at the age of 76, on 4 August 1927, and was buried in Glasnevin cemetery, Dublin.

## Mr Dillon:

The speech just delivered is one of

the gravest to which I have listened in this House for many a long day. That speech, the speech of the hon. Member for South Birmingham (Mr Amery), and the whole course of the Debate, have made it clear beyond all question that those who are championing the cause of Conscription, of compulsory military service, and, as I understood them, of compulsory labour in this country, are determined not to allow that cause to rest for a moment, but to press it with all their energy and with all their earnestness, which I fully recognise, upon the attention of the House and of the country. They are determined---I do not quarrel with them, I fully recognise their right---not in any degree to listen to the appeal addressed to them by the Prime Minister at the opening of the Debate. I hope the hon. and gallant Gentleman did not misunderstand what I said yesterday. I do not know whether he meant any of his observations to apply to what I said; but I never for a single moment hinted at, or questioned his right, or the right of any gallant officer on active service who is a Member of this House, to address this House and to give us in the fullest and frankest way his opinions on the War. What I did find fault with, and what I still find fault with, is the publication in the newspapers of a manifesto signed by men who specifically declare themselves to be officers on active service, in such a form as is calculated to convey to the people of this country---and is meant to convey!---that they come with a mandate from the Army, and are speaking on behalf of the Army to the public. I say that the publication of that on the eve of the meeting of this House was evidently with the intention of overawing its Debates, or, at any rate, of making a strong appeal to the House to pass a certain law. That is, I think, a clear violation of the words of---

## Captain Guest:

There seems a misunderstanding between the hon. Gentleman and myself.

I was only anxious to dissociate our movement from any manifesto that has appeared.

**Mr Dillon:**

Then I will say no more about that. I only wanted it to be quite clear in the mind of the hon. and gallant Member that nothing I said yesterday amounted to a challenge to his right, whatever the regulations laid down, at a time like this, to speak to the House of Commons in the frankest possible way. He has spoken frankly and very gravely. I regret that in the concluding passages of his speech he undoubtedly meant to convey the impression that he distinctly spoke on behalf of the Army. He said, and I deeply regret it, and let me remind him before he corrects me, and then I will give way to him if he likes, he said if we did not change our methods and put ourselves---the very words he used---if the country and this House did not throw their full energy into the new methods recommended, that the Army would be bitterly disappointed. Is that not speaking for the Army? ("An HON. MEMBER: "What about the others?") Ah, yes, but many of us are not officers on active service come straight from the Army; that makes a great difference. I think it would have been better not to have made that observation.

**Captain Guest:**

Will the hon. Gentleman allow me. I merely said it was my opinion.

**Mr Dillon:**

That was not the form of the hon. and gallant Gentleman's statement. But let me draw attention to the points of the speech of the hon. and gallant Gentleman. He commenced by a criticism of the Prime Minister. He said, as I understood him, that he was distressed by the fact which he had observed, that on another occasion a large section of this House had been soothed by the statement of the Prime Minister---soothed into placidity, or something of that sort. He went on to recite a number of causes which, in his judgement, were the causes for uneasiness. It was a most singular thing, which I recommend most earnestly to the attention of the Labour party, who will have to take a part in these Debates in future.

What is the first cause for uneasiness that the hon. and gallant Gentleman submitted to this House for their consideration? The high wages paid to munitions workers, which interfered with the operations of agriculturists in this country. What has that got to do with compulsion, unless the purpose of the hon. and gallant Gentleman is to use compulsion to make these men work for lower wages? Does anybody doubt that that is one of the first uses of compulsion?

**Captain Guest:**

No, no! I cannot let that pass, but the Government is paying in some of these districts wages three times in excess of the wages paid normally. I did not ask for less wages.

**Mr Dillon:**

I did not say---for I want to be perfectly fair---that the hon. and gallant Gentleman recommended the lowering of wages, but I said he commenced his long catalogue of causes of uneasiness by stating the higher wages which were being paid to munitions workers. Who is responsible for the wages of munitions workers? That is an indictment of the Minister for Munitions. (An HON MEMBER: "No!") Yes, because the Minister of Munitions gets a free hand in his own Department, and acts, I have no doubt, according to the best of his judgement in very strenuous and difficult circumstances, and in endeavouring to administer the very difficult task with which he has been entrusted. I have some reason to know the nature of the work the right hon. Gentleman has undertaken. That is the first cause. What is the second cause for uneasiness? Let us note it. The hon. and gallant Gentleman cannot get out of it. These are the causes for uneasiness which he gave us to understand, by the method of his delivery, were the causes of uneasiness in the ranks of the Army. The second cause is the surrender to the trade unions. That, too, is a rather sinister indication of what we have before us. I shall endeavour, as briefly as possible, to bring home to hon. Members of this House that we are engaged in debating one of the widest, most far-reaching, and vital

subjects that ever have been discussed. Now that hon. Members have insisted on bringing this subject to the tribunal of debate in this House, and have distinctly refused to leave it to the Government and Lord Kitchener, I say to the Government by all means let the subject be debated, and fully debated. They have told us that in this matter they will not trust the Government; therefore it must be debated fully, because it is a subject of the most deep and far-reaching importance.

I was astonished to hear the hon. and Gallant Gentleman's distinction. He had experience of civil life before he went on active service. Then the hon. Member for Birmingham (Mr Amery) delivered a most powerful speech if he will permit me to say so, though I differ from him intensely. I have listened to the whole of this Debate and I am amazed to hear these hon. Members debating this subject in so superficial a manner, and without any consideration for the historical or wide-reaching complications which surround it. The hon. and Gallant Gentleman went on to draw a picture of what the soldier seemed to see in England. He spoke for the soldiers, not for the officers. The soldiers, he said, seemed to see capital entrenched behind complicated company rules, amassing millions, and strikes on all hands on the part of the workmen for higher wages. He drew a most lurid picture, giving us to understand that the Army was in a state of discontent at the lack of support it was receiving from home. I do not think that it is just to the people of this country. I know something of the sentiments of the common people of this country, and I do say that there was never an Army in the history of the world which had more the heart of the country behind them, and which was better cared for.

Why, my God, was ever there an Army---did ever anybody read in history of an Army---which was fed, clothed, attended to medically as is this Army? I know what the Duke of Wellington would have said if he could have seen the present time. What would he have given in the Peninsula if he could have got from his countrymen

at home, I will not say the same, but one-tenth part of the consideration and generosity with which the people of this country have met all the demands of the Army? Is it a generous and a fair thing to the Army itself to attempt to tell us of their feeling here in this House today? Is it a fair thing to this House, which has never for a single moment found fault with any one of the millions which have been voted, or has criticised in any way the call of the Executive in support of this Army in every particular from the beginning of the War down to now? I have met a good many soldiers home from the trenches---I refer now to the rank and file and to non-commissioned officers---and I never heard any difference of opinion in their declaration of belief that there has never been an Army cared for like this one. Yet the hon. and Gallant Gentleman comes here, from the Army, and draws a picture of the feeling there of the men.

**Sir F. Banbury:**

Their feelings against strikes!

**Mr Dillon:**

No, no! I am speaking now of the picture the hon. and Gallant Gentleman drew of the feeling of the soldiers. Might he not, when he was drawing that picture for this House, have said something of their feelings as to the interest and care---I might almost say loving care---of the people of this country. (An HON. MEMBER: "Oh!") Is it not true? Who said it was not? Does anybody in this House doubt what I am saying, that the people of this country and this House have done everything they can for the Army? I did not say that we were not bound to do everything we could for the Army, but I do say that this country and the House are entitled to the credit for what they have done; that they have treated the Army better than the army of the Duke of Wellington was ever treated, or any other army, and it ought to be known. The hon. and Gallant Gentleman, coming to the conclusion of his speech, repeated a formula to which I have listened in this House and read in the newspapers ad nauseam---we need more men! There is a certain class of gentleman in this country who appear

to think that they have given us the sum total of wisdom when they point out that we need more men. (An HON. MEMBER: "So we do!") Of course we do. If we could put ten millions of men into the field tomorrow the War would be at an end, and our troubles would be over. The absurdity of putting it that way, of saying we need more men, as if that were everything! These gentlemen seem to forget a good old homely maxim, that we must cut our coat according to our cloth. We need more men.

An HON. MEMBER made an observation inaudible in the Press Gallery.

**Mr Dillon:**

That is a very long question, and I do not propose to go into it to-day. I trust we shall have a full opportunity of debating that important question later. With all his military knowledge and having come straight from the front, the hon. and gallant Gentleman's observations as I understand him were inconsistent. But we all we endeavour to get as much information as possible. I listened with strained attention to his speech, and I understood him to say, first of all, that he would avoid giving the mileage of the British front. He spoke of 125 miles, and he based his calculation as to the number of men needed in the field in the immediate future on that front of 125 miles. That is a large extension, because thirty-five miles was what we heard of when the matter was last revealed to the public. But accepting the 125 miles, the hon. and gallant Gentleman went on to say that according to his calculation, and in order to be ready to make an advance in the spring, to carry out what he was pleased to describe as our treaty obligations---that is, to hurl the Germans out of Belgium and to restore Belgium uninjured to the Belgians---a very difficult task---we should require 5,000,000 men. That gives one an idea of what comes of trusting yourselves without reserve to military men. Five millions of men! It is very easy to talk about five millions of men, but I think if you undertook to produce an Army of five millions of men by conscription in this country you would find you were up against a

very large proposition.

I want to emphasise what is the programme put before us. If we were to produce an Army of 5,000,000 men this winter, we should be in the position we were in a few months ago: most of them would be going about with wooden sticks on their shoulders and without uniforms. Why, within the last few months--- I think I am right in saying the last few weeks---it is perfectly notorious that you had splendid units without rifles at the time these champions of compulsory service were clamouring for more men. It may be very funny, but it is a fact. Let me turn for a moment to the other right hon. Gentleman, who exhibited a most extraordinary ferocity of patriotism. I was not aware until I came back to this House that he had become a compulsory service man. When last I knew the House he took up a quite different attitude, and in that direction went far beyond anything I myself had ever ventured upon.

**Sir F. BANBURY:**

He has seen the error of his ways.

**Mr Dillon:**

We all know the zeal of converts puts believers to shame very often. He was historical. He said that we know all about this: Conscription is no new thing in England; Pitt tried it during the Napoleonic Wars, and, therefore, without going very minutely or microscopically into history, he argued from that proposition that therefore we ought to go through it again. Yes, Pitt tried it in the Napoleonic Wars, and I have here a very interesting record of some of the results of Pitt's experiments. I will read from the famous Memorandum prepared for the War Office in 1870 on the Militia Ballot by one of your greatest Generals, Sir Henry Havelock. I trust the Government, before the next debate, will reprint this Paper. It is an invaluable Paper. It gives on the highest military authority the whole history of the Conscription experiments made in England, and they are extraordinarily interesting and valuable, and it would be madness for this country to commence over again this experiment of Conscription before the House and the country are thoroughly informed of the

history of this matter in England. It is true, as the right hon. Gentleman told the House, that England is no stranger to Conscription. It is true that she has tried it more than once; but it is true that with full knowledge, and after full trial, this country turned down Conscription and resolved to have nothing to do with it, as being wholly and absolutely impossible in the conditions of this land. In that judgement she was led by the opinion of all her greatest military experts.

Conscription was tried by Pitt, but here is one of the paragraphs in this report:---"This Militia scheme met with no favour in the country. The people rose against the conscription, and their hostility proceeded to such an extremity in the north of England that at the York Spring Assizes for 1758 four persons obstructing the Militia Acts were convicted and some of them executed for high treason." Is England less democratic now than in 1758? But they tried it again under Pitt at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, and it had no better effect. I have here the opinion of the Duke of Wellington himself. There are many other opinions which I might quote, but I cannot give a higher authority. This is what he said:---"It is quite clear that the British Regular Army cannot be raised by conscription nor ballot. The right of the country to the services of all its subjects for its defence can be well understood. It is on the principle of defence that the seafaring man is liable to be impressed for service in the King's ships. But the force called the Regular Army, which is liable to be sent to any part of the world, not for the defence of the land of England"---(HON MEMBERS: "Oh!") The meaning is quite clear. was not Wellington defending England in the Peninsular just as much as you are defending England now in Flanders? Does any hon. Gentleman mean to tell me Wellington was not defending England in the Peninsular? It was based on his experience in the Peninsular that he used this language: "not for the defence of the land of England, but of a colony or a settlement, or for the conquest of a colony or a settlement, or for the defence or for the conquest of any

foreign territory, cannot be considered in the same light. Men cannot, with justice, be taken from their families and from their ordinary occupations and pursuits, for such objects. The recruits for the Regular British Army must be volunteers."

Lord Palmerston and all the great Ministers of that day endorsed that opinion, and it is there recorded--- Lord Palmerston's own words that Conscription or forced military was wholly unsuitable to the circumstances of England. They gave reasons and they compared it with the military conscription of the Continent and said that, while that system might work very well in foreign lands, it was wholly unsuited for England. Now those hon. Members and gentlemen outside in the Press, without reference to the history of this country, without, as I have contented, making any real well-considered case of necessity or even expediency, propose lightly that we should plunge into one of the most tremendous revolutions ever attempted in the history of England.

There is one thing I want to impress clearly on the Members of this House. I have noticed quite lately for the first time that, under the stress of debate, hon. Members who are eager for this compulsory service have got into the habit of speaking "for the War only." They used not to say so at the beginning. It is only lately, when they find the strength of the opposition to compulsion, that they speak of the War only. Does any sane man believe that if the Conscriptionists succeed in fixing this yoke on the neck of England, you will shake it off without something approaching a revolution? I do not say it of Members of this House, but I say deliberately with regard to some of the men who are engineering this thing outside, and who are far more formidable than any hon. Members sitting in this House, that they are engineering it for ulterior and sinister objects. They are not calling for compulsory service because they honestly believe it is necessary. They are not looking for compulsory military service and compulsory service in the workshops because they think the War can only be

ended in that way. It is impossible to dismiss from your mind, after reading some of their articles, that they would be deeply mortified if the War was won without compulsory service. That is the impression conveyed to my mind. I have never said a single word that I attribute such motives to any man in this House. Everyone knows to whom I attribute it---(An HON. MEMBER: "Who is the traitor?")---and I say this is, in my opinion, one of the most sinister and abominable campaigns ever instituted.

Take this one illustration of the nature of this campaign, and to a certain extent a justification of what I have said. Will it be denied that this particular Press has done everything in its power to obstruct voluntary enlistment? Many men in Ireland have been rent to gaol for less than Lord Northcliffe has done. Many newspapers in Ireland have been suppressed without protest from us for far less than the "Daily Mail" has done. I say that by every foul means, by openly and audaciously refusing to print Lord Kitchener's appeal, by pouring ridicule on every attempt of recruiting sergeants, by open, ill-concealed incitements to men to refuse to enlist until they are fetched, over and over again they have done their very best to break up the voluntary system, and if it were not for the connections and power of Lord Northcliffe he would have been in gaol long ago. (HON. MEMBERS: "He ought to be!") We who are opposed to conscription--- and I have never in the course of this controversy, and I do not think I have ever in my life, committed myself to the principle of National Service one way or the other---to me it is a question of expediency, and of all the circumstances I have never committed myself on the principle. If I were a Frenchman, or German or Russian, I dare say I should be a strong supporter of National Service. It is not a question of final principle, but a question of its suitability to the conditions of this country, and a question of its suitability to the present circumstances of this country. I am convinced in my heart and soul that it is unsuited to

them, and that you will commit one of the greatest blunders in history if you abandon the voluntary system, which has done miracles for us and surpassed the wildest anticipations of all the people of this country and of the world.

Let me say one word of remonstrance, and I do so without any bitterness, against one passage in the speech of the hon., Member for South Birmingham. So great was his zeal in his opening speech that, in drawing a picture of the present personnel of the Army, he said that the halt, the lame, and the blind, now mainly composed the New Army, and that the officers in France were throwing them out and sending them home as totally unfit. All I can say, if that is said of the English troops, I do not believe it. I do not believe that you ever had a finer Army in Europe. In fact, I do not believe that any nation in the world ever has a finer Army. If that is true of the English troops I know it is true of the Irish troops, because a finer body of men I never saw. Really I think it is an example of the kind of spirit with which this controversy is carried on when men like the hon. Member for South Birmingham (Mr Amery), to whom I give credit for absolute zeal and deep conviction, are so blinded by their zeal for this cause that they pour scorn and contempt on the Army.

**Mr Ronald McNeill:**

The hon. Member is entirely misquoting my hon. Friend the Member for South Birmingham, who simply read from a letter which he had received from a commanding officer at the front, and did not give what he quoted as his own opinion.

**Mr Dillon:**

The hon. Member's interruption makes the case much worse. If you quote from a letter and refuse to give the name of the writer, you adopt his opinions. You should not quote from a letter unless you think it contains an opinion which ought to be known, and which gives a fair view of the facts of the case. In conclusion, I want to say this word of warning. Some months ago I got into rather hot water by taking a very limited part in the discussion

upon the Munitions Bill, and I incurred the anger of some of my greatest friends in this House for some of the things which I said about the Compulsory Clauses in that measure. Those clauses were afterwards modified and redrafted, but even as they now stand, I ask, have they been an unqualified success? I ask the Labour Members themselves how they like the Munitions bill? Have they no grievances already under that Bill, and have they not had already on more than occasion a sample of the spirit which officials inevitably will adopt when armed with such complete powers. With regard to those compulsory Clauses, I have had cases of gross grievances brought to my notice under the Clause which forbids a man to leave his employment. If you had compulsion, how do you know what state the labour of this country would be in before long? Believe me, if we go in for compulsion, and submit to compulsion---I understand the hon. Member for Birmingham and the hon. and gallant Member opposite attach equal importance to naval compulsion as to military compulsion---(HON. MEMBERS: "Yes")---remember the proposition: it is not alone military but it is labour compulsion, and if you submit to that in this country I warn the working men of England that they will have to begin again at the bottom of the ladder and fight their way up all over again.

Later in the debate, Dillon clashed with Commander Wedgewood over compulsory service in Ireland. Wedgewood made references to compulsory service in Ireland to which Dillon responded.

*Commander Wedgewood was born Josiah Clement Wedgewood on 16 March 1872. He was the great great grandson of the famous potter Josiah Wedgewood. He represented Newcastle-under-Lyme as a Liberal from 1906 to 1919. In that year he switched to Labour and continued to represent the constituency until 1942. He died on 26 July 1943.*

**Commander Wedgewood:**

I sometimes think that we in this House are the best set of actors imaginable. I listened to the speech of

my hon. friend the Member for East Mayo (Mr Dillon). A very able and fiery speech it was, but it seemed to me like nothing so much as the speech of the hon. Member for Dublin University (Sir E. Carson) in opposition to Home Rule. There was the same exaggeration, the same fire, and the same air that the world was coming to an end should this contemptible measure pass into law. Then, fortunately, there was at the end of his speech the able statement that should circumstances demand compulsion he had no objection to it in principle, and therefore directly the Government said they wanted compulsion, compulsion there should be. That was a complete change in tone. I think it would be of advantage if we could discuss this subject, not from the point of view of a play actor opposing a horrible crime about to be perpetrated---

**Mr Dillon:**

Do I understand the hon. Member to be alluding to what I said?

**Commander Wedgewood:**

Yes.

**Mr Dillon:**

He is absolutely wrong.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

I was referring to the statement that you had no opposition to the principle.

**Mr Dillon:**

You put into my mouth the words that I had no objection to Conscription in principle, and that if the Government said they were in favour of it I would support it. I never said anything of the kind. I said that if I were a Frenchman, German or Russian I should no doubt be in favour of National Service, but that I thought that for this country it was wholly unsuitable.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

It was unsuitable from the point of view of expediency.

**Mr Dillon:**

Yes, expediency.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

That is the objection of an Irishman to Conscription in England.

**Continued On Page 8**

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



In March 2012 in South West France, Mohamed Merah killed three soldiers and three Jewish children and a teacher. There are many parallels between this and the January killings in Paris.

In both cases the killers were young French Muslims; they killed first people connected with the State, and then people who were Jewish. The killers were themselves killed, and before their death they gave interviews to television stations where they said they were motivated by France's foreign policy. Each time official reaction was that they were criminals motivated by religious fanaticism and

a hatred of civilised values. Each time the government declared a minute's silence to be observed nationally for the victims. Each time a number of school pupils refused to obey.

### Connection with the State

In Merah's case, the victims were soldiers. In Paris the victims were the editorial board of a magazine. The magazine was connected with the State because it had an aggressively racist and anti-Muslim line which needed and got police protection. Its line of open Islamophobia gave a justification for the government's aggression against

the Muslim and Arab world, which is the reason, presumably, why it got police protection. It was a political choice. In 2012 because of cartoons published by the magazine France was obliged to close embassies, schools and cultural centres in 20 countries. Banning the magazine would have furthered the cause of peace and the cause of France. It's not as if banning is impossible since a few months later shows of the comic Dieudonné were banned. The government chose to support the magazine instead. Further proof of this state sponsoring is that the government paid for the publication of 7 million copies, complete with more offensive cartoons. The enemy is weak and despicable and not worthy of respect was the message.

## Continued From Page 7

**Mr Dillon:**

And Ireland.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

It has not been proposed in Ireland.

**Mr Dillon:**

Why not?

**Commander Wedgewood:**

The Irish people can govern themselves, and they have decided against it. I am a little surprised at the fiery opposition raised by an Irishman to Conscription in England. I recollect that at the beginning of this War, when I still thought that peace might possibly be preserved, I made a speech from this bench which was howled down by Members of the Irish Party because they wanted the War. I do not know how much they want the War still; whether they are getting tired of it or whether they still intend to prosecute the War to a successful conclusion. I am sorry to say that I think a great deal of the opposition to compulsory service comes from a gradual slackening in the spirit of this country and a gradual slackening of its determination to bring this War to a successful conclusion. (HON. MEMBERS: "No, no!")

**Mr Alden:**

That will be printed in the German papers.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

That is the same old game.

**Mr Alden:**

That is exactly what is printed.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

It is the game of the ostrich---never speak the truth for fear the Germans will repeat it.

**Mr Aldren:**

I do not call that the truth.

**Commander Wedgewood:**

Do you not think you had better leave the Germans to pick and choose---leave them to print what they like, and at the same time in this House to voice our views and to explain exactly how determined we are to see this War through.

### Foreign policy motivation

The killer, Mohamed Merah, said that he was avenging the law against wearing the burqa, the participation of France in the war of Afghanistan, and the children killed in Gaza. He said that to a journalist of France 24 television which he had contacted before his flat was surrounded.

One of the Paris killers had given an interview to BFMTV hours before he was himself killed; he said he had become motivated by seeing the American intervention in Iraq in 2003, and the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison.

France did not participate in the American-British war in Iraq in 2003. But it has since then joined this alliance and contributed to the destruction of several countries in the Middle East and North Africa. How can the about 6 million Arab and Muslim people in France be expected to witness this destruction without feeling involved?

The consequences of these wars are felt in France, much more so than in America.

It is easy to forget that there was a time when France had a foreign policy which turned away from attacks on Middle Eastern countries. In 2003 Jacques Chirac refused to join the Americans and British in attacking Iraq. France was vilified then (remember the “Freedom Fries”, the “Cheese Eating Surrender Monkeys”). Today the Iraq war is almost universally seen as an unmitigated disaster and the reason given for starting it (Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction) is now known to have been a complete fabrication.

If others had followed the French lead, we would not be in such a dangerous world today, where one war follows another without an end in sight, and the break up in the world is reflected in the break up of French society. Instead the French joined the Americans and British in their wars. Indeed in the case of Libya, they led the attack.

The attack on Libya created unanimity among all the political parties.

Why this unanimity? Of course there is the unanimity created by an appeal to the emotions: we must save these people in Benghazi from being massacred. These emotions do not last; very soon they evaporate, and a few months later, who remembers what the situation was that necessitated our involvement? The media does not ask if these people we wanted to save were actually saved, and at what cost. There was an extensive inquiry after the Iraq war but it is doubtful if the present roller coaster of urgent aggressions will stop to make time to inquire about the war against Libya.

One worry that lasts on the other hand is the one about the economic and financial crisis. The French are worried that the government seems unable to do anything about it. The bankers receive bailouts and then continue their activities as before. Politicians are also helpless in the face of deindustrialisation. Hollande visits stricken industrial sites, promises to save them, and they promptly close forever.

The one field where the government seems able to act effectively is in foreign policy. Hollande’s popularity, at an all time low, rose by 20 points after the Paris killings. The last time such a jump occurred in presidential popularity was at the time of the first Gulf War.

Thanks to Sarkozy the Chinese were driven out of the Libyan oil fields by French fighter planes. One can but suspect that French people are aware of the material advantage to themselves of this result. Hence the lack of a political movement to protest against the crimes and atrocities involved. We are stronger militarily, so we get the contracts, and there is no more to be said.

And we still justify using superior force towards the providers of raw materials with the same old argument that their civilisation is inferior to ours—they don’t have democracy, they treat women badly, they don’t respect human rights, and they take religion seriously.

The French of almost every description display narrow self-interest when it comes to foreign policy. Owning the resources of Algeria was once too precious to abandon just because the Algerians wanted independence, after fighting with France for democracy in WW2.

When Algeria was a colony, “part of France”, when people said that “the Mediterranean flows through France like the river Seine through Paris”, the Algerian post war struggle for independence found no support even among the virtuous WW2 Resisters, Communists or Gaullists. They were only brought round when the war was almost won and the terrorist group fighting to keep Algeria French (the OAS) intensified a bombing campaign in Paris.

At the time of the Merah killings, Froggy hoped that if France will not return to a peaceful foreign policy, weaker countries would find someone to defend them. Russia and China might help return us to a more pacific situation; they might play a role as brake on war mongering by acting as protectors for weaker states who

are potential victims of aggression. Otherwise we will continue in a war-infested world, and a Europe where acts of violence mirror those committed by Europeans and Americans in the Middle East.

Two years later America and Europe have brought war to Russia’s immediate neighbour, and created an even more dangerous world.

### Other interpretations

France has changed its foreign policy since 2003; but those who upheld a policy of alliance with the Middle East and Russia are still there and there is still a modicum of discussion

Froggy will end with a summary of these discussions in order to give a more positive idea of France, rather than mention the absurdity of ‘the defence of free speech’ (Raif Badawi, Dieudonné, Alain Michel) and the defence of ‘civilised values’ (childish salacious cartoons mentioned in the same breath as Voltaire).

Because the state sponsored the Charlie Hebdo provocation, the state stepped in when the provocation had the expected result. (The magazine had tweeted days before the killings: ‘2015: No attacks yet!’). The state stepped in to say: “We were right to sponsor this stuff, and we will continue to do it” and it called on the population to approve.

The population approved. Obviously not the part of the population that suffers anti-Islam abuse; they were told clearly that they would have to continue suffering it, several million times over. Not just in 60,000 copies of a little read magazine, but in 7 million copies of blasphemous cartoons, and more to come.

The state stepped in quickly and with massive force, all media were mobilised and Western and other leaders invited. It did this in order to stifle public discussion of possible reasons for these attacks, and to impose one reading: forces of evil were at work against Western values.

### Other possible interpretations

There were other possible interpretations, which had to be kept

out of sight and mind.

The National Front, credited with the support of 30% of the population, says that the attacks (and other more minor ones last December) are due to uncontrolled immigration and to French foreign policy. The National Front General Secretary, Nicolas Bay, said (16.1.15, after the events, but similar things were said before):

“By following the irresponsible chaos strategy dictated by the short term interests of the United States, our leaders have methodically eliminated or weakened all those who in the land of Islam still managed to contain fundamentalism. It is the price of these irresponsible policies that we are paying today.”

The National Front was therefore excluded from the Paris march, which had been called by the Socialist Party. Marine Le Pen marched in a small provincial town instead.

Besides the National Front other personalities had voiced similar opinions on major radio stations. For example after three more minor incidents in December when several people lost their lives, Alain Marsaud, ex judge of terrorist cases and now MP for the French abroad in Africa and the Middle East, said on December 23 on Europe 1 (one of the popular radio stations), that French policy in Iraq would lead to attacks on French soil. Mentioning the forthcoming vote on 13 January for the continuation of French intervention in Iraq, he said he would vote against, and predicted he would be the only one to do so. (In the event he was absent that day, and another UMP deputy was the lone voice against.)

Marsaud said also that jihadist sites would have an appeal as long as France offered nothing to its young people to aspire to. He refused to vote a law to stop these sites, saying that this was not the way to go about reducing their popularity. France had to stop bombing in Iraq, and offer a future to its young men.

The lone ‘no’ voter on the 13<sup>th</sup> January, Jean-Pierre Gorge, interviewed on Europe Matin two days after the vote, asked the question, why the young French were attracted by

fundamentalism, and what was France offering them as an alternative? Gorge said France should stop playing the gendarme of the world.

Before the march, on 10 January, Europe 1 in its usual Saturday lunchtime debate between journalists discussed the negative consequences of France’s interventions in the Middle East. One journalist said:

“When you talk with young Muslims, whether in Beirut, Damascus or Baghdad, they say to you, when you have gained their confidence: “You come here, you destroy our system, you shouldn’t be surprised if we come to your country to destroy your system.”

The journalist continued:

“Some heads of state allied to us feed international terrorism, like Saudi Arabia. We die, but who else dies before us? Other Muslims, Shiites or Sunnis, and they die by the hundred, not a dozen. Some say we shouldn’t be in the Middle East. Some say Chirac was right; he said, if we remove Saddam Hussein we will open a Pandora’s box and create terrorism. This is what has happened. Al Qaida did not exist when the US invaded. We have continued to destabilise the Arab world with our intervention in Libya. We are paying for this intervention. We had prepared nothing for what would happen after the bombing, and now it’s chaos and

a breeding ground for terrorism. The present situation is the result of very grave mistakes committed.”

The journalist is not anti-government however; his conclusion is that in 2015 we must intervene, in places where 15 years ago we should never have gone. The Saturday debate the following week made similar points.

Given that these ideas, both from journalists and from the National Front, are expressed and heard, how come so many people supported the government march?

They supported it because they were giving way to their emotions, rather than thinking. The only political party that consistently opposes aggressive foreign policy is the National Front, and they were silenced on that occasion, and many don’t want to agree with the National Front as a party, even if they agree with part of what they say. There are no other significant political parties challenging the government on foreign policy.

There are individual voices. François Fillon, a possible presidential candidate for 2017, gave an interview to *Le Monde* on 21 January saying that Western policy in the Middle East was a failure, and that France must talk with Russia and Iran if it wants to solve its problems. We can only hope his voice becomes dominant.

The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement. *John Stuart Mill*

The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis.

*Dante Alighieri*

The battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemies.

*Napoleon Bonaparte*

The activist is not the man who says the river is dirty. The activist is the man who cleans up the river.

*Ross Perot*

That a peasant may become king does not render the kingdom democratic.

*Woodrow Wilson*

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Visible and Invisible Hands

“We should make good use of the roles of both the market, the ‘invisible’ hand, and the government, the ‘visible’ hand. The market and the government should complement and co-ordinate with each other to promote sustained and sound social and economic development.”

That’s from a recent speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping.<sup>1</sup> It sums up what China has actually been doing since Deng moved China away from the system of total state planning that Mao had created. It wasn’t ever capitalism, but a Chinese version of what used to be called the Mixed Economy.

Note that Mao’s system had been doing very nicely. Under Mao, China cut itself off from the rest of the world, received no aid or investment after the break with the Soviet Union, but managed to equal the average global growth during the same period.<sup>2</sup> The economy tripled, though living standards didn’t go up as much because the population doubled. But most Chinese accepted this, because things had been dreadful for most of them before 1949. China when it was open to global capitalism had broadly failed to modernise. Limited growth in the coastal cities was matched by an actual decay of rural industries exposed to cheap foreign goods. Net growth was essentially zero, apart from a small amount of growth in the early years of the Kuomintang.

China’s Opening-Up over the past 30 years became possible after Nixon dropped the USA’s long-standing hostility, which had begun when China kicked out a US-backed government that the USA had been expecting to make China into something similar to but subordinate to the USA. The USA spent more than 20 years pretending that the Kuomintang remnant on Taiwan was the real Republic of China, keeping the real China out of the United Nations and generally hampering and threatening it. The Kuomintang remnant made repeated threats to take back Mainland China, which might have been feasible with US participation. It was probably failure in Vietnam that persuaded Nixon that the policies he had helped start were pointless.

Had the USA taken a softer line, Mao too might have been more moderate. He had taken great care to include moderate elements in his new People’s Republic, even though the victorious People’s Army was (and still is) totally loyal to the Communist Party. Significantly, Mao delayed proclaiming a new People’s Republic until October 1949, despite having captured Beijing at the end of January and the

Kuomintang capital Nanjing in April. There were also covert messages sent to the USA that perhaps the new China didn’t want to be entirely dependent on the Soviet Union. But the USA then was in no mood to treat the Chinese as equals. Even after their later defeats in Korea this attitudes persisted, with US troops told that they should not be letting ‘Chinese Washermen’ defeat them. (Laundries were a Chinese niche occupation in California, where most of them settled.)

That is past history, but history necessary to understand the present. Both Western experts and Chinese dissidents tend to take a sycophantic view of US power, not daring to suppose that it might have messed up massively in the 1950s and inflicted needless suffering on those close to it. (Not so different from the mess-up they have created for pro-Western Arabs, come to think of it.)

Deng had lived through that history and it seems he understood it, though he was understandably cautious about what he said in public. The biggest impact on him and other leaders was made by Japan, which had massively increased its lead over China. And he was wise enough to follow the Japanese example of keeping a large role for the state. He basically ignored the Thatcher / Reagan notion of the state as a burden and of unregulated businesses seeking profit as the key to wealth. The nonsense that Boris Yeltsin later took seriously and applied to his fragment of the Soviet Union, with disastrous results.

(The Russian economy contracted from the comfortable stagnation of the Late Soviet era, and the death rate went up. But hardly anyone in the West now remembers the details of the Western-inspired botch, or how it sunk the weak little growth of pro-Western liberalism in Russia. Putin’s attitudes are seen as baffling, not as the predictable result of Western greed and incompetence.)

China refused to swallow New Right values and continues to prosper, whereas Japan was eventually persuaded to modify its successful formula and has been floundering ever since.

It was big news recently when China’s yearly growth fell to a mere 7.4%, below their norm.<sup>3</sup> Note that regular 7.4% growth would still mean an economy that doubles every ten years. Of course it has often been faster than that, and China successfully improved on its previous period of growth in the 7% to 8% bands, which happened in 1998 to 2001.

Most Chinese would be getting incomes about double what they had ten years ago,

and this has been true continuously from the 1980s. Interestingly, an infographic from the Chinese on-line newspaper *Global Times* showed that both rural and urban incomes have grown above average. And both imports and exports have relatively low growth, 3.4%, which is probably due to export opportunities drying up when export markets suffer austerity.<sup>4</sup>

The global crisis that began in 2008 threatens to discredit New Right policies. If you classify China today as a Mixed Economy, then it becomes obvious that all of the alleged successes for capitalism since 1945 have been successes for the Mixed Economy, for an intelligent mix of ‘Visible Hand’ and ‘Invisible Hand’. And would discredit the entire attempt to return to Classical Capitalism, which has anyway been much more talk than action.

The reality of New Right power has been a continuation of the Mixed Economy, but with different priorities. More for the military. More subsidies for farmers, who get gigantic amounts of state support but vote for right-wing parties that promise to squeeze the rest of society. And since 2008, a vast bail-out for wobbly banks with very little attempt to make them behave better.

## Greece – the Left Renews Itself

The rise of Trotskyism in Europe and the USA coincided very nicely with the decline of the left in general. The claim that Leninism was perfect but that Stalin was an aberration was never very plausible outside of a relatively small number of enthusiasts for Marxist ideology. It was Lenin who decided to establish a one-party dictatorship: Stalin simply made it functional and successful. All of this could be justified in the context of the First World War, the rise of Fascism and the Great Slump. It should also be admitted that even though Social-Democracy had failed in the 1920s and 1930s, it had succeeded brilliantly from 1945 onwards, meaning that Lenin’s original decision to treat them as enemies was simply wrong. Also that Stalin’s decision to work with them in various United Fronts and with non-socialists in Popular Fronts had been correct and should not have been abandoned after the defeat of Fascism.

What happened instead was a growth of Fantasy-Leninism. A Hard Left determined to prevent reforms like Workers Control, that were very possible in the late 1970s. People determined to undermine any idea of an Incomes Policy, because they thought it would prop up a system just about to collapse.

At the same time, we had what Russians now call the 'Period of Stagnation', with Brezhnev preserving a kind of frozen chaos after cracking down on serious and hopeful reforms in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The last 21 years of the Soviet empire were disastrous for socialism, in part because too many people on the left failed to say at the time that this wasn't at all what socialism should be about.

As we all know, what happened in the 1980s was the rise of right-wing populism with considerable working class support. People had wanted some sort of radical change, but only a small minority wanted an actual overthrow of the existing system. Fantasy-Leninism supposed that continuing the crisis would lead to a collapse of capitalism, but this was never realistic. The system was anyway not capitalist but Mixed Economy, and very much open to change.

The chance was missed, and socialists were then appalled by the vigour and success of right-wingers like Thatcher and Reagan. They began to doubt everything. Now, perhaps, the left is recovering from its ideological sickness.

In Greece, the electorate split three ways. Just over 36% supported Syriza. 32.5% supported the previous pro-austerity parties, the centre-right New Democracy and the shrunken centre-left PASOK. The rest supported a mixed bag of anti-austerity parties, including old-style Communists and Neo-Nazis. But since Greek electoral law awards an extra 50 seats to the biggest party, Syriza ended up with very nearly half the seats.

Out of six other parties that got seats in the new Parliament – which has a 3% three percent threshold that keeps out very small parties – four were not realistic coalition partners. The Greek Communists, former rivals on the Far Left, ruled out in advance any possible coalition. The Neo-Nazis were inherently enemies. So were "New Democracy" and PASOK, coalition partners in the government that accepted austerity. PASOK had anyway been ruined by it: it got votes of between 38% and 48% between 1981 and 2009, but fell to 13% and then 12% when it accepted austerity in 2012, and has now fallen to 4.68%. A split led by former leader Papandreu for rather hazy reasons got 2.46%, below the threshold for seats.

The only realistic coalition partners for Syriza were the right-wing Eurosceptic "Independent Greeks" and the centrist pro-Europe but anti-austerity "The River". They were also likely to be a sympathetic opposition if Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras had chosen to try a minority government. But by choosing the Independent Greeks, he is in a position to have a massive confrontation with the European Union, or even to leave the Euro. "The River" would have been likely to take a soft line, and negotiators would have known this.

He is also in a strong position in partnership with the "Independent Greeks", who have been losing seats and votes ever since 2012, when they split from "New Democracy" on the issue of austerity.

Making a success of the coalition may be their last chance of surviving.

What about the matter of electing a President, which brought down the last government? The last government fell because it could not get a super-majority of 200 or 180 out of 300 MPs after three rounds of voting. The rules say that there will now be three more rounds, with requirements relaxing and a simple majority being enough on the 6th round<sup>5</sup>. Tsipras would probably be able to place whoever he wants in the Presidency, which has a five-year term – but it seems now (28<sup>th</sup> January) that he intends to give the job to a Greek EU Commissioner from his "Independent Greece" allies, perhaps just to get the matter settled quickly. He also placed a right-winger as Minister of Defence, which seems a sensible precaution.

It also leaves him well placed to accept a deal with the rest of Europe if he can get one. His party includes people who don't want any sort of compromise. Syriza began as a coalition that included Trotskyists, notably the "Internationalist Workers' Left".<sup>6</sup> It is now officially a single party, while retaining the original name, which translates into English as the Coalition of the Radical Left, but with a diversity of opinion. Not everyone accepts the idea of renegotiating. Some of the current Syriza MPs might split, but he could then change partners and form a coalition with "The River". Or call a new election, ejecting uncooperative members of his party. And if he gets any sort of deal, he could hope for the complete disappearance of PASOK and its offshoots, who would be seen as hopeless failures who should have made their stand in 2012.

Meantime in Spain, a new party called Podemos has come from small beginnings to move ahead of the ruling party and the socialist opposition, and also eclipsing the United Left, which is grouped around the Spanish Communist Party. Elections must be held by December 2015 and Podemos may be following the same trajectory as Syriza.

Reasons to be hopeful.

### Austerity and Plutocracy

I'd previously described New Right policies as 'Feed the Rich', and this has become even more blatant since the crisis of 2008. What should have happened would have been massive losses for the speculators and hedge funds, plus money pumped into the society to boost consumption by ordinary people. Also nationalisation of banks that had blatantly put profit before people. Instead we have had 'quantitative easing', which has meant money given to financial institutions to prop them up, along with austerity to limit debts. President Obama claimed that this was a good idea because money would mysteriously multiply itself when passed through commercial banks. Instead it mysteriously stayed within the banking system, avoiding a financial panic but also allowing an actual decline in lending to small businesses. Many small businesses have gone bankrupt or had to sell out to

larger concerns, following the pattern that Marx predicted for capitalism.

(Theoretically, a Mixed Economy might conserve small business. Only some versions of fascism managed to do this, to a degree. Socialists tend to favour modern big industries, while right-wing parties get influenced by big business. Also small business interests tend to be fragmented and selfish, demanding that their own particular interest be looked after but mostly opposing the same generosity for other people. You could break your heart trying to convince a significant number of such characters that this is a suicidal policy: many have tried and generally failed. With certainty they will not be breaking *my* heart: it would be truly astonishing if they ever got their act together and I am currently assuming they remain doomed.)

In the face of Thatcher / Reagan populism, Europe's centre-left mysteriously lost faith in the Mixed Economy and started accepting the New Right notion of letting business interests dominate. This despite the failure of the New Right to do more than get the Mixed Economy back on track after its 1970s crisis. And despite a massive skewing of benefits to the rich. Even the crisis of 2008, caused by speculation in deregulated financial markets, was twisted to justify huge subsidies to financial institutions and cuts for ordinary people.

"The wealthiest 1% will soon own more than the rest of the world's population, according to a study by anti-poverty charity Oxfam.

"The charity's research shows that the share of the world's wealth owned by the richest 1% increased from 44% in 2009 to 48% last year.

"On current trends, Oxfam says it expects the wealthiest 1% to own more than 50% of the world's wealth by 2016."

### Feudal Democracy

It was fair enough for the BBC to celebrate the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the origins of parliamentary government, with the meeting of Simon de Montfort's Parliament on 20 January 1265.<sup>8</sup> It did establish the English Parliament as something with an independent voice, not just a body that the King summoned when it pleased him. What was ridiculous was calling it 'Democracy Day'.

The earliest date on which Britain could be called a democracy would be 6th December 1884, when 60% of adult males in the British Isles got the vote. It might be better to cite 6<sup>th</sup> February 1918, when all British men and some women got the vote. Or maybe 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1928, when women got formal equality. But in 1928, Britain was the core of a vast Empire. Mostly-white Dominions like Canada and Australia had their own parliaments with considerable rights, but non-white colonies had either no vote or a vote with little significance. During World War Two, the Congress Party were the elected representatives of the vast majority in British India, but were given no say in India's participation in the

war. They were jailed when they refused to support that war without some definite promise of independence after the war.

Another thing that the BBC failed to mention was that a gathering including elected representatives of the knights and burgess was an extension to England of a Continental European system. A system that was mostly abolished later on, or else lapsed as royal power became greater. It was definitely not an English invention.

Back in 1265, the body that met was arguably not the first English Parliament. There had been “moots” before the Norman Conquest, which abolished such things. It’s doubtful that these moots were very democratic, they were probably dominated by big landowners, but they were something. There was also intermittently a Kings Council, consisting of big nobles and royal appointees, and basically including whoever the King felt like listening to or else needed on his side. And in the decades before de Montfort’s parliament, the King would on occasions summon the Knights of the Shires to try to get a consensus for new taxes. The innovation in 1265 was to also include “burgess”, people from the growing towns and cities, and also to have them elected.

Elected by who? Not by ‘the people’ as we would understand it now. A majority of the population were serfs, agricultural slaves with some useful customary rights, and freely referred to as ‘slaves’ at the time. This majority had also not benefited from Magna Carta, which specified rights just for Free Men. It may have been this free minority that elected the two knights to be sent from each shire in 1265 and afterwards. The rule for the towns and cities was “forty shilling freeholders”. In today’s money, 40 shilling (£2) could be anything between £1000 and half a million, depending on what comparison you use. In money as it existed in 1430, when this became the norm for all elections, it would be about 31,000 in terms of economic status, but nearly half a million in terms of economic power.<sup>9</sup>

The rule for “forty shilling freeholders” was actually retained in the 1832 Reform Act, which cleared away Rotten Boroughs and other anomalies. By that time, forty shillings was worth somewhere between one tenth and one fiftieth of its value in 1430, and the country was also richer, so it would have been a wider electorate. Even so, the reform produced an electorate of about one in seven adult males, at a time when few people owned much property. Even that was seen as dangerously democratic by some of the ruling class, including the monarch.<sup>10</sup> It took decades of struggle to get the vote extended beyond that.

Stable parliamentary democracies are mostly countries that had learned to live with competitive elections and a parliamentary system for a very long time before the electoral system became democratic. And which retained habits of compromise and tolerance, which do not come naturally when a similar system is plonked on top of a society that has no previous experience of such things. Bad history of the sort

the BBC pushes makes for bad politics, as with the total mess in Iraq.

### A War Without Borders

The murder of the cartoonists at satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* occurred in the context of a global war against those aspects of Islam that the West finds inconvenient. Very few people wanted to face up to this.

It’s not really about Human Rights. Saudi Arabia does not respect the Western concept of Human Rights, but Saudi Arabia also helps the West by keeping oil prices low and pumping most of its funds into the Western financial system, ignoring the needs of other Arabs and other Muslims. It maintains a highly traditionalist culture at home and tries to encourage it abroad, but at critical moments its rulers act as Western agents rather than sincere Muslims. This was blatantly obvious after Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Saddam had vast debts that he’d accumulated from his war against Iran, which had been useful to the West and to the rich oil-landlords like Saudi Arabia. There was an excellent chance he would have pulled out again in exchange for those debts being written off. But Thatcher and Bush Senior decided it was an excellent chance to show that the Anglosphere was now dominant and would slap down anyone who angered them, ignoring the United Nations if it did not fall into line. Saudi Arabia allowed this, starting a process that led on to sanctions that cost vast numbers of Iraqi deaths, and then an invasion which wholly shattered the structure of what was a fairly artificial country.

Western intervention has been both brutal and ineffective, and a lot of Muslims have died. The West has also allowed Israel to oppress the Palestinians and take more and more Palestinian land for new settlements in places of historic significance to Israelis (and also sacred to Islam). In the light of this, it is not at all unexpected that hard-line anti-Western versions of Islam are vastly stronger than they were in 1991. The West had fostered them in Afghanistan, and then let the place turn to chaos once the Soviet effort to take it over had been clearly defeated. Of course Muslims were going to be offended.

Among Muslim immigrants in Europe, austerity had also played a role, increasing the number who are jobless and without hope of regular progress within the society, as was the case with the men from Frances’ downtrodden Algerian-origin community who murdered the cartoonists. But many have opted for Islamic extremism despite having excellent personal prospects, including Osama bin Laden himself and large numbers of British Muslims who’ve gone to fight in Syria. The West has failed to integrate them and has destroyed most of the secular Arab regimes, the realistic alternative to Islamic extremism. People take it as an insult to their culture, which it indeed is.

*Charlie Hebdo* were a bunch of fools who wilfully took sides in a war without borders. They call themselves ‘Journal

Irresponsable’, translated on the English version of their website as ‘Irresponsible Journal’,<sup>11</sup> and they were truly that. But also selective in what they attacked, treating Islam as such as the enemy by mocking Mohammed.

Existing Muslims are not likely to suddenly cease to be Muslims. They are likely to be strengthened in their faith in the face of vulgar attacks by outsiders.

If the Western establishment had clearly and strongly condemned anti-Islamic satire, both the original Danish cartoons and the *Charlie Hebdo* republication, things would have been different. People may talk about some unlimited right to be offensive, but they don’t really mean it. The entire establishment will typically react to condemn and marginalise anything that appears racist, anti-Semitic or sympathetic to terrorism. Or flippant about rape or child abuse, or even voluntary under-age sex. Everyone knows this, so for Muslims it was further evidence that they are not treated as equals.

The Western mainstream demands complete freedom for things that don’t bother them, but not for things that they are seriously offended by. There was a long struggle over which category criticism of Christianity should be in, and in the 1960s and 1970s this was decisively won by the secularists. And at the time it went along with a more tolerant attitude to other religions. Among other things, people stopped using the term ‘Mohammedan’, which some Muslims found offensive. This was not the view of all Muslims, and was maybe as arbitrary as the rule against depicting the Prophet in any manner whatever, however respectful. But it was people’s actual viewpoint, and back then the West was wise enough to respect it.

What you are now getting is arrogance and chauvinism. You could call it the Sinatra Principle – I’ll do it my way, and you’ll do it my way.

The point about anti-Christian satire is that it is a “family quarrel”, people criticising their own tradition. I defended Salman Rushdie’s right to be blasphemous about his own Islamic faith back in 1988, because it was internal to Islam. And because the West was not at that time waging war on Islam in general, even though it had backed secular and Sunni-dominated Iraq in its long war against theocratic and Shia Iran. I didn’t ever say that there was an unlimited right to be offensive: I just felt (and still feel) that Rushdie had a right to be heard, even though a lot of what he said was silly and vulgar.

The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* was probably intended to increase polarisation and mobilise more of Europe’s immigrant Muslim minority for the wider struggle. The way most people in the West have reacted have played right into their hands.

There were many alternative small voices talking sense on the matter, including this one:

“There is an expression in Russian: spitting in somebody’s soul. It fully

applies here. Muslims worldwide have been unambiguously clear about that. They take blasphemy very, very seriously, as they do the name of the Prophet and the Quran. If you want to really offend a Muslim, ridicule his Prophet or his Holy Book. That is not a secret at all. And when Charlie Hebdo published their caricatures of the Prophet and when they ridiculed him in a deliberately rude and provocative manner, they knew what they were doing: they were very deliberately deeply offending 1.6 billion Muslims world wide. Oh, and did I mention that in Islam blasphemy is a crime punishable by death? Well, it turns out that of 1.6 billion Muslims exactly three decided to take justice in their own hands and kill the very deliberately blaspheming Frenchmen."<sup>12</sup>

There was also the matter of the Muslim policeman Ahmed Merabet, intentionally killed by the attackers when he was no threat to them.<sup>13</sup> A potential propaganda gift, but mostly treated in a very mean-spirited way. It's no wonder more and more Muslims are feeling alienated.

### Rebels Without a Clue

Outside of the human species, the primate norm is for an angry male to get randomly destructive. But a less bold individual may throw dung instead.

Inside of the human species, we have overwritten our basic ape nature with much more complex patterns. But most of us will go 'back to basics' on occasions. Some people do it more than others.

*Charlie Hebdo* seems like an updated version of the dung-throwers. Whereas *Private Eye* has managed some genuine satire against Islamic extremism – and republished them along with some additions in its latest issue.

*Private Eye* also had the main "*Charlie Hebdo*" march on its front cover, but has them saying "*Je Suis Charlatan*". There would have been sincere opponents of censorship on that march, but the front row included many who use repression freely. (I'm not sure the front rank included anyone who *wasn't* like that, but since I didn't recognise all of them I will leave it open.)

All of this is part of a dangerous power-game that *Private Eye* seem to understand but *Charlie Hebdo* did not. Muslims are not going to cease to be Muslims, and the general trend towards emptiness and stress in Western culture is tending to make them more devout. But terrorism and extremism can be plausibly seen as deviations from Real Islam. Sensible Westerners should go with this flow rather than being randomly insulting.

Behind every Great Man there is a Great Ape. And a visible pattern for the Beta Males who are aiming for Alpha Male status, which they may or may not achieve. There is also female violence, but mostly personal and directed against someone weaker, except when it is a matter of self-defence. A woman who tries getting violent in public is likely to find that there is at least one nearby man who could

pick her up and render her helpless. So women tend to use more indirect methods, mostly by persuading or tricking men into doing her work for her. This, incidentally, would seem to be a purely human pattern: it requires careful thought about a chain of consequences and seems to be beyond all other species. And may well be nastier than simple violence: being human is a complex business.

Note also that there is more than one pattern of violence. Alpha males mostly step in to keep order, though they will inevitably react savagely to a serious challenge to their authority.

Beta males were the original 'rebels without a cause'. They oppose what exists, but without bothering much about what might replace it. Bits of fancy philosophy may get attached to this animal behaviour, but it is recognisably an old ape and broad-primate approach re-surfacing. Authentic rebelliousness is something else, distinguished by being carefully targeted, idealistic, self-sacrificing and having some hope of success.

Nowadays, senseless beta-male violence gets glamorised in a society that has mostly disarmed itself. (But not in those cultures that still have personal violence as the norm for males, where similar stuff always gets hedged about with slightly improbable adherence to rules of honour and fair play.)

People confuse power and dangerousness. Gangsters are both highly dangerous and highly vulnerable, with few of them lasting long. They also tend to be useful shock troops for right-wing politics, when they are allowed in at all. The most powerful forms of violence are military machines, where people trust each other but are alienated from the rest of society – is something different from and sometimes much worse than the versions inherited from our ancestral apes.

### Ukraine and Poland

Ukrainian Neo-Nazis played a big role in the fighting round Donetsk airport, though you'd never guess it from Western news reports.

"Lawmaker and leader of the Right Sector nationalist party Dmytro Yarosh was wounded in the fighting in Pisky village near Donetsk airport on the morning of Jan. 21."<sup>14</sup>

Their presence must be polarising an already unhealthy split which began with the "Blood Orange" revolution of 2014 making common cause with neo-Nazis, Right Sector and Svoboda. If they don't nowadays get many votes, that may be because sympathy for Ukraine's pro-Nazi past runs right through the ruling group.

*The Guardian* did allow a small mention, speaking of "Right Sector, a militant nationalist group fighting with Ukrainian forces".<sup>15</sup> Much less than the whole truth.

Meantime Poland has also behaved foolishly, renewing the conflict with Russia that has existed for about as long as Poland and Russia have existed as historic entities, often with the Poles as aggressors. And

also trying to rewrite history:

"Russia has accused Poland of engaging in a 'mockery of history' after the Polish foreign minister credited Ukrainian soldiers, rather than the Soviet Red Army, with liberating Auschwitz 70 years ago.

"The exchange underlines the deep tensions between Russia and Poland, which is hugely critical of Russian actions in Ukraine. Those strains are casting a shadow over the 70th anniversary commemorations of the liberation of the Nazi death camp, which will be held Tuesday in Poland.

"Poland has apparently snubbed Russian President Vladimir Putin, who will not attend even though he was at the 60th anniversary event in 2005. The situation is particularly awkward since Auschwitz was liberated by Soviet troops on Jan. 27, 1945, and some of the more than 1.1 million victims were Soviet citizens, including Jews and prisoners of war.

"In a radio interview Wednesday, Polish Foreign Minister Grzegorz Schetyna was challenged over what the journalist called the 'pettiness' of not inviting Putin, given that he is the inheritor of the Soviet Union and that the Red Army freed Auschwitz.

"Schetyna replied that 'maybe it's better to say... that the First Ukrainian Front and Ukrainians liberated (Auschwitz), because Ukrainian soldiers were there, on that January day, and they opened the gates of the camp and they liberated the camp.'

"In Russia, Schetyna's comments were seen as a cynical insult and drew an avalanche of angry official comments. The Foreign Ministry accused Schetyna of 'anti-Russian hysteria' and disrespecting the memory of those who died liberating Europe from Hitler.

"It's common knowledge that Auschwitz was liberated by the Red Army, in which all nationalities heroically served,' the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. 'We believe that the mockery of history needs to be stopped.'

"The group of forces involved in the liberation of Auschwitz was called the First Ukrainian Front after it pushed the Nazis back across the territory of then-Soviet Ukraine before moving into Poland.

"Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called Schetyna's comments 'sacriligious and cynical.'

"Auschwitz was liberated by the Red Army, which included Russians, Ukrainians, Chechens, Tatars and Georgians, among others,' Lavrov said."<sup>16</sup>

### Snippets

Some interesting elections since the last Newsnotes:

In Japan, the Liberal Democrats are firmly in control after an election in December 2014. The Japanese Communist Party made gains, though it has not yet recovered to its high point in 1996.

In Tunisia, secularists won both the general election and the presidential election, which concluded in December with some minor rioting. There are signs of polarisation, with the secularists stronger in the north and Islamists stronger in the south. But for the time being, the last

survivor of the Arab Spring holds together.

In Moldova, an election in November saw the Socialists gaining seats at the expense of both the Moldovan Communists and the Liberal Democratic Party. This socialist party is eurosceptic.

In Uruguay, a second round of voting at the start of December confirmed a victory for the left.

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Meantime Hong Kong has gone quiet again. The protestors were gradually worn down to nothing. Ordinary people on the mainland stayed out of it – protests tend to be on local issues, and many of them see Hong Kong citizens as over-privileged and ungrateful.

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In Nepal, politics continue to be incoherent and ineffective. The Maoists were briefly dominant and are now in opposition after the Constituent Assembly elections of 2013. But that Constituent Assembly still cannot decide anything.<sup>17</sup>

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The magazine *New Scientist* recently carried an article about the important part that rituals play in human life:

“Rituals are often complex and nonsensical. Yet every culture has them – and for good reason. ‘Rituals provide a very visible means of identifying who is a group member and who isn’t,’ says developmental psychologist Cristine Legare from the University of Texas at Austin. ‘They help define us as a group, reflect our group values, and demonstrate shared commitment to the group.’ For a species like us, that is dependent on social support, this is crucial for survival – so much so that, Legare believes, we are born with a mind for ritual. Her studies with children suggest that the nonsensical nature of ritualistic behaviour triggers a mode of thinking distinct from the logical cause-and-effect approach. This ritualistic thinking, in turn, prompts us to copy actions that make no apparent sense.

“Rituals come in a bewildering variety, and that makes it difficult to define exactly what counts as one.... However, they do have certain characteristics in common. In particular, they tend to involve several discrete, specific steps that follow a defined script (see ‘Complexity rules’), and the actions are often hard to make sense of in terms of cause and effect, unlike other multi-step behaviours such as changing a tyre or baking a cake. ‘To an outsider, ritual behaviours seem utterly useless,’ says psychologist Matt Rossano at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond. ‘You have to do things in a very rigid, arbitrary way, but this is completely tangential to achieving any practical goal.’”<sup>18</sup>

Rituals are also probably older than religion, which tends to organise them and try to explain them as part of a single system. And no society has so far been able to do without them.

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As expected, 2014 was the warmest year on record. And 14 of the 15 warmest years on record have occurred since the turn of the century.<sup>19</sup>

As usual, details are complex. Much of the east of the USA was cooler than average. But Alaska and other arctic regions were unusually warm, and that’s where the ice is melting.

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## References

### (Endnotes)

1 *The ‘Invisible Hand’ and the ‘Visible Hand’*, speech by Xi Jinping, May 26th 2014. Page 128 of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, Foreign Languages Press Beijing, 2014.

2 Current Western books about China will give you everything except hard facts about the entire society. You can get the whole picture from *The World Economy: Historical Statistics* by Angus Maddison. He was not at all pro-Communist or pro-Chinese, but his project was to give accurate estimates of growth wherever these could be found.

3 [<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/902951.shtml>]

4 [<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/902951.shtml>]

5 [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_presidential\\_election,\\_2014%E2%80%9315](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_presidential_election,_2014%E2%80%9315)]

6 [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalition\\_of\\_the\\_Radical\\_Left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coalition_of_the_Radical_Left)]

7 [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-30875633>]

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9 Calculated using a website, [<http://www.measuring-worth.com/>]

10 [[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty\\_Shilling\\_Freeholders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty_Shilling_Freeholders)]

11 [<http://charliehebdo.fr/en>]

12 [<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article40651.htm>]

13 [<http://www.vox.com/2015/1/11/7527697/ahmed-malek-merabet-eulogy-charlie-hebdo>]

14 [<http://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/right-sectors-leader-yarosh-wounded-near-donetsk-377987.html>]

15 [<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/21/russia-ukraine-war-fighting-east>]

16 [[http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article40811.htm#\\_VMZCVbeODpY.gmail](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article40811.htm#_VMZCVbeODpY.gmail)]

17 [<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/23/nepal-political-crisis-parliament>]

18 [[http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22530041.000-rite-reasons-why-your-brain-loves-pointless-rituals.html#\\_VMITNClyA00](http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22530041.000-rite-reasons-why-your-brain-loves-pointless-rituals.html#_VMITNClyA00)], issue 3004 of *New Scientist* magazine, page 36-39.

19 [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30852588>]

## LIBERTÉ EGALITÉ FRATERNITÉ

### (C’est pour vous?)

Merkel helps to light the fire in  
Paris,

and tries to put it out in

Berlin.

Mahmoud Abbas isn’t

embarrassed

to be with Netanyahu

though it could be his

banana skin.

They who murdered journalists

and imprisoned them

were there,

they who destroyed Libya and Iraq

were there

in the media glare

as democracy at work,

they who killed millions

were there,

though their visit to Paris was

a quirk

they met up with Hell’s Angels USA

to ride pillion.

Wilson John Haire. 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2015

## Reader's letter: Bernstein rules ok

In *Labour Affairs* Number 253 (December 2014) in his Notes on the News, Gwydion Williams says the following:

*Successful small businesses are an increasing rarity. The Internet and the World Wide Web – both of them pioneered by state-funded research far removed from any commercial motive – have not helped. The new technology has allowed a few small businesses to grow gigantic and crashed most of the rest. The trends described by Marx in the 1848 Communist Manifesto has continued quite smoothly: independent small production continues to decline.*

In asserting this Williams is intervening in an old debate which started with Eduard Bernstein's revisionism in the 1890s, where he claimed, amongst other things, that the small business sector, rather than disappearing as forecast by Marx, was thriving. He was attacked by a variety of figures including Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg.

Much of what Williams writes is interesting and stimulating, but the above paragraph is seriously misleading, and unhelpful in understanding the economic background to current British politics, and doubtless the politics of other advanced countries.

It feels intuitively wrong. If you visit a newsagent today there is a massive proliferation of magazines made possible by computer-based technology – *Labour Affairs* itself looks much more professional than its predecessors from the 1970s. Just thinking of women's magazines, there were about three or four titles in the 1950s, whereas there are dozens today.

If you engage in shopping online, apart from very big retailers such as Amazon, who fit Williams' quotation, there is a huge range of very small enterprises, some of them very specialised, who are able to cater to a worldwide customer base.

It would be interesting to look at statistics dating back to 1848, but those produced by the Office for National Statistics for the years from 2002 up to 2013 suggest a relatively thriving and growing small business sector. The ONS use the definition of a Small or Medium Enterprise (SME) as one which has 250 employees or less. The numerical majority of such businesses actually employ just one person, but presumably "small businesses" in what Williams writes, and under 250 employees, are roughly the same thing. The sector has been growing since the year 2000: "The increase in the overall business population since 2000 was largely driven by SMEs - their estimated number increased from 3.5 million to 4.9 million (41.0 per cent) between the start of 2000

and the start of 2013." What about their role in the economy overall?

At the start of 2013 these 4.9 million enterprises employed almost 14 ½ million people and had a turnover of £1.5 trillion. The economy may be dominated by giant enterprises, but given that the total workforce employed by the private sector was 24.3 million people the small business sector remains highly significant and appears to be growing if anything. 4 million people are simply self-employed with no employees – doubtless this covers a very varied group of people from window cleaners through to solicitors, accountants, independent consultants to businesses and governments, web designers etc. A look at the voting patterns of people in this sector would be interesting and worthwhile.

Source of the statistics: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/254552/13-92-business-population-estimates-2013-stats-release-4.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254552/13-92-business-population-estimates-2013-stats-release-4.pdf)

Take time to deliberate, but when the time for action has arrived, stop thinking and go in.  
*Napoleon Bonaparte*

Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.  
*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Property as compared with humanity, as compared with the red blood in the American people, must take second place, not first place.  
*Woodrow Wilson*

Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.  
*Mao Zedong*

Politics I conceive to be nothing more than the science of the ordered progress of society along the lines of greatest usefulness and convenience to itself.  
*Woodrow Wilson*

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## **Rail Franchising: InterCity East Coast**

On 10 December last, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin informed MPs that the contract for operating the East Coast line was completed. He had previously announced his intention to award the contract to InterCity Railways Ltd, a joint venture of Stagecoach Transport Holdings Ltd and Virgin Holdings Ltd.

### **Patrick McLoughlin:**

On 27 November 2014 I announced my intention to award the InterCity East Coast rail franchise to Inter City Railways Ltd, a joint venture of Stagecoach Transport Holdings Ltd and Virgin Holdings Ltd, following the completion of a standstill period. I am happy to confirm to the House that the standstill period has now ended and that we completed the contract after the markets closed last night---9 December 2014. This means that Inter City Railways Ltd can now begin the mobilisation process that will mean the new franchise will start on 1 March 2015.

The new InterCity East Coast franchise will last for eight years and will deliver massive benefits for passengers, taxpayers and staff. Inter City Railways Ltd will oversee and facilitate the introduction of the new state of the art Intercity Express programme trains and will increase total capacity on the franchise by around 50%. They plan to deliver new services, including providing direct connections to London to five destinations that have not had services on the franchise before---Huddersfield, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Dewsbury and Thornaby---and faster journey times to many destinations along the route. Passengers will benefit from an investment of £140 million in improving facilities at stations and on trains and the taxpayer will benefit from around £3.3 billion of premium to be paid to Government over the lifetime of the contract.

InterCity Railways have great long-term plans for the Intercity East Coast and are the right company to take them forward with passengers at the heart of the franchise. I am delighted with this award and look forward to working in partnership with the new operator for the benefit of

passengers, taxpayers and the industry.

### **Comment:**

Directly Operated Railways, a public company, which took over the running of the East Coast line from National Express in 2009, and which was barred from bidding for the new franchise, performed outstandingly and ploughed back millions into the Exchequer. National Express had failed to meet its promises, similar to the promises which McLoughlin now says will be delivered by the new franchise holder. The £3.3 billion payment to the Government over 8 years referred to by McLoughlin will largely come from new business created by government-funded improvements. McLoughlin deliberately misled MPs on this. The massive benefits promised by McLoughlin will come, if at all, about 23 years after privatisation. It's interesting that McLoughlin fails to include the shareholder in the massive benefits. An odd omission given that the franchise holder is a private sector company.

## **Ukraine (UK Relations With Russia).**

On 11 December, Conservative Backbencher John Whittingdale introduced a debate on Ukraine and UK relations with Russia. His speech is of little interest. Of much greater interest are the speeches of two other Conservative Backbenchers, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown and Sir Edward Leigh. Extracts from their speeches are published below.

### **Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale) for securing the debate. He and I went to Ukraine about a month ago and visited the Prime Minister, Mr Yatsenyuk. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway) when he says that the situation in Ukraine is extremely serious. I have used parallels before, and there are parallels with the German annexation of the Sudetenland. First, they caused trouble with their own German speakers, then they used that as a pretext to go in with military force. That is exactly what has happened with Ukraine.

Let us see where this might go.

### **Sir Edward Leigh:**

I must intervene. It is a grotesque insult to Russia, which suffered appallingly at the hands of the Nazis, to equate in any way the Russian Government, for all its faults, with the Nazis. That is just the sort of remark that fills the Russian people with absolute despair. They were raped and pillaged and there were 50 million dead. I hope that my hon. Friend is not making any kind of equation.

### **Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:**

Well, I'm afraid I am. Actually, if we look at what happened to the Russian people after the war, we see that they experienced significant suffering, just as some of the German people did during the war. I am just pointing out that what the Russians have done in Ukraine is just as unacceptable as what the German Nazis did during the war. As long as we understand that, we will appreciate which way we should go forward.

Ukraine is resolute against more land grabs by Russia. The Ukrainian Government are maintaining solidarity, as we heard, with their citizens in Crimea by continuing to supply them with food and water. The Prime Minister was most resolute that most Russian speakers in the east of Ukraine did not want to secede from Ukraine and be reunited with Russia, and that in the west of Ukraine there was almost 100% support for closer relations with Europe. Given that support for a united Ukraine, the Government are and should be committed to maintaining their territorial integrity, and we should support them in any way we can in that.

However, Russia, has until now not been listening to the democratic results in Ukraine. The universal view we found in Ukraine was that Putin is not finished yet. So what is likely to happen? A minority thought he would carry out a big military offensive, including establishing a Mariupol corridor to supply Crimea. That is difficult in the winter because the barges cannot go across the Black sea. We were told that in such circumstances Ukrainians would defend themselves with whatever they had. However, as my

hon. Friend said, we were also told that 70% of their tanks had already been taken out by the Russians. The majority view, and possibly the one to which I would subscribe, is that Putin will keep causing relatively minor trouble wherever he can in order to destabilise the whole country, with the aim of bringing about a failed state. At this point, the Americans and the EU would have to decide whether they wanted to bail Ukraine out. Many people think that Putin's aim is to gain control of the whole of the north coast of the Black sea, including Odessa, and eventually, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Sir Gerald Howarth) said, move along to Transnistria in Moldova. Certainly, the Romanians and the Poles, in neighbouring states, are very alarmed by that prospect.

If tensions between Ukraine, Russia, the UK and the rest of the EU are to be reduced, we must develop a more intelligent relationship between all these players. **We must recognise that deep within the Russian psyche is the perception that their hegemony is being encroached on by the west; the Russians' fear is that if Ukraine integrates further with the EU, their geopolitical influence will diminish. Geopolitics is incredibly important to Russia, perhaps more important than economic success. That could be why, despite the deteriorating economy, Putin's personal approval ratings are running at 80%.** (my emphasis).

To improve relations between Ukraine, the UK and Russia, we must remind Russians that we are all Europeans and that, instead of suffering from sanctions, we could all enjoy much greater economic success by putting geopolitics to one side and co-operating. Allowing Ukraine to flourish, as Poland did, could be a huge benefit to Russia. We should be encouraging closer economic co-operation, which will in turn develop into closer political relations.

#### **Comment:**

The ignorance of these comments is breathtaking. According to Hollobone, the enclosure of Russia by NATO military power is not an actual fact; it is simply a perception within the Russian psyche. And geopolitics is an activity specific to Russia, in which the West doesn't indulge. Moreover, how are the people living in the Asian territory of Russia to be reminded (and persuaded) that they are Europeans? Finally, Hollobone is expressing the policy of the Americans, the UK and the rest of the EU that Russia conforms to

their demands. Putin refuses to do so and that is why he is demonised. The British press carries regular anti-Putin comment. Fortunately, his colleague Sir Edward Leigh was on hand to remind Hollobone of the political history of Russia and the reality of the current conflict. Leigh is not a Putin supporter but he has a better understanding of him, Russia and Ukraine than any of his colleagues.

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

What we are witnessing over Ukraine is a clash between two systems of international relations; the western liberal system held up by the US, the UK and Europe versus the more traditional power politics epitomised by Russia. That was highlighted by a comment by the US Secretary of State who said: "You just don't in the 21<sup>st</sup> century behave in a 19<sup>th</sup> century fashion." With all respect to Mr Kerry, Russia has, quite simply, proved him wrong. We in the west like to imagine that our liberal system is the universal way, but the reality is that traditional power politics is much more dominant in the rest of the world. I make no defence of that; I just make the comment. Although our own actions are coated in thick veneers of liberalism and democracy, to which we no doubt generally adhere, this idealistic terminology masks the reality that we ourselves deal with the world through old-fashioned power politics.

For years, the EU, the US and the west generally have interfered in the internal politics of Ukraine in an effort to draw that country away from Russia and towards us---Ukraine has for three centuries been part of Russia. Russia has tried to counter these moves, and even though we might demonise Mr Putin, there is no conceivable leader of the Russian Federation who would not have done the same. The fact is that we are the liberal democrats and they are the strong men, but that is incidental to what is being done. We should also recall that Russia, Ukraine and other nations of the former Soviet Union do not enjoy the same advantages that we have enjoyed, so it is inherently unfair to judge them by the same yardstick.

We know that the Whig narrative of history is a myth. Anyone who believes in the myth of progress after Auschwitz and Hiroshima must be wearing blinkers. Look at those photographs of modern free women studying in the universities of Tehran and Kabul in the 1960s and 1970s and then witness their condition, rights and appalling position today. Our rights and freedoms do not just arise out

of the primordial fundamental; they are contingent on certain circumstances. We in Britain are not destined to be a parliamentary democracy with a prosperous economy; it has taken centuries of slow and gradual development with often quite arbitrary situations that has allowed our tradition of parliamentary democracy to emerge.

Seventy years of communism perverted the spirit of the people of the former Soviet Union and prevented them from developing the institutions, the habits and the traditions that we all too easily take for granted, whether here in the House or in the United Kingdom as a whole. It is precisely why we traditionalists and Conservatives have been so defensive and circumspect when it comes to altering the traditions of this House or the British constitution. To alter, change or abolish one portion thereof, no matter how small, may have numerous unintended and unforeseen consequences, with the potential to wreak havoc on the rights and freedoms that we have inherited from those who came before us.

Taking this into account, we must recognise how important it is to understand the Russian mentality. Russia suffered for decades under communist rule. Russia has experienced at first hand the future that we are marching towards and rejected it. We here all believe we are wonderful, enlightened, modern liberals, and of course we have totally and wholeheartedly rejected nationalism and all those nasty things, but the Russians feel very keenly that they have been wronged. They were allowed to sit at the western table only when they were weak and ineffective under Yeltsin as their economy was plundered by criminal oligarchs.

Moscow has definite security concerns regarding NATO expansion in Ukraine. Likewise, I am sure we would have had definite security concerns had Ireland or Belgium considered joining the Warsaw pact. The US would have similar concerns if, for instance, Mexico had tried to join some Russian sphere of influence.

#### **Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con):**

I want to back up my hon. Friend's point. Twenty years ago, as the chief of policy at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, I repeatedly sent in papers saying that the expansion of NATO eastwards was poking the Russians in the eye, when we consider their history. That is exactly what we have done. Might it not be worth at least attempting to see things from the perspective of others and the perspective of most Russian people? Is it not wise to

try to understand how we and our actions are perceived by them? How can we possibly make correct decisions about what to do if we have zero understanding of what makes other people tick? That is especially true if those people have extraordinarily different histories, not the least the fact, as I said before, that Russian people suffered the most appalling tribulations as a result of invasion by the west within the lifetime of many Russian people.

**Sir Gerald Howarth:**

I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend, but he is trying to paint Russia as a victim. What would he say about what Stalin did to the people of Ukraine? He starved them to death when that country was the bread basket of the Soviet Union. What about the Ukrainian people who have that deeply seared in their memory? Are they not victims too?

**Sir Edward Leigh:**

Absolutely right. I agree entirely with that. I am not pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian. I fully accept the appalling suffering of the Ukrainian people, particularly under Stalin, and the dreadful suffering that they experienced from the Nazi invasion. I am not making that point; I am simply trying to explain that the Russians have a point of view, and if we are to do the right thing, we must understand that. We may not agree with it. Nothing I say militates against a free, independent and prosperous Ukraine. We have to wake up to the reality that many Russians think, act and feel differently from us, and that no amount of bullying on our part with sanctions will turn them into western liberals with our point of view.

Not all Russians agree with what I am saying but many do. Many take quite the opposite point of view from us. We in the west seem to have lost our critical facility. We make the fatal error of believing our own propaganda and, worse, expecting other people to believe it too. None of us here believes Mr Putin's propaganda. I do not support him or believe in him or defend him to the remotest degree, but why do we expect people in Russia, the Crimea or eastern Ukraine to believe our propaganda? They judge us not by our words but by our actions. Why should they do otherwise? Look at our immediate recognition of the seizure of power in Kiev this past February, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale). I make no defence whatever of the previous corrupt Ukrainian regime, but we preach respect for the law then completely disregard

the Ukrainian constitution, article 111 of which lays out specific provisions for the impeachment and replacement of the President of Ukraine. These provisions were not applied, thus a secession, in the view of many, is at best irregular, at worst unconstitutional.

Let us remember 1993 in Russia. Yeltsin unconstitutionally dissolved the Duma and sent in tanks against a democratically elected Parliament, and the west backed him. What may have been the beginnings of a Russian idea of parliamentary sovereignty and the accountability of the Executive were nipped in the bud, with western powers nodding approvingly. It is all very well to pronounce the sacred inviolability of the borders of sovereign states, but when one does so, having undermined the borders of sovereign states as we did in Serbia, which many Russians point to, when we went to war over Kosovo, whose independence we now recognise, in their view it begins to look hypocritical.

Russia, we know, is certainly involved in the supply of weapons to the rebels in eastern Ukraine, but in Kosovo NATO forces---this is often mentioned in Russia---effectively acted as the air force for the Kosovan Liberation Army. In the war against Serbia, NATO forces bombed hospitals---this is what many Russians say---bridges, journalists' offices, public markets and even the Chinese embassy. Russia has done wrong, but it has not done what the Nazis did in Ukraine.

Economically speaking, we are continually arguing for globalisation, the integration of world economies, free trade, allowing everyone to grow in prosperity together---all things that I and everyone else speaking in this debate agree with. Why, then, are we allowing politics to interfere with our economic links to Russia, which are very strong, and to frustrate Russia's further integration in the world economy? Those who seek to undermine Mr Putin would be much wiser to seek to strengthen these links, to incorporate Russia much more closely in the wider world. Surely that would strike more deeply at the heart of Mr Putin's separate way of doing things, drawing the Russian people in rather than casting them out. Instead, we are playing into Mr Putin's hands. Our cack-handed sanctions allow him to portray us as anti-Russian, thus further legitimising his position as the defender of Mother Russia.

Global economic recovery, we know, is extraordinarily precarious. Provoking crises with Russia risks unsettling the

recovery, not just that of Russia but ours. With all due respect to Ukraine, for Britons is it worth this possibility? One need not add BP's significant investment in Russia, the billions of pounds of Russian money involved in the City of London, and European reliance on Russian energy. We must always remember that the existential threat to us is global Islamic jihadism, and Russia is an absolute crucial ally in that. Why put that at risk? Particularly at this time of commemoration, when we are looking back to the events of a hundred years ago, we must force ourselves to learn the lessons of 1914. Does anyone really think that the assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne was worth the suicide of Europe? We do not want to sleepwalk into a war, the likes of which we cannot imagine.

Ukraine is a beautiful country. It has deep traditions, a proud culture, a long history. We should wish the Ukrainians all the best in their journey as an independent people. But it is obvious, I am afraid, that there is no intrinsic British interest in Ukraine. Ukrainian relations with Russia, Belarus, Poland and others are for Ukrainians to sort out, no matter how divided a people they are, and they are divided. But there is unequivocally no single shred of a reason why the United Kingdom should risk war over Ukraine. Our priority should be de-escalation, and then facilitating dialogue between the warring Ukrainian factions and between Ukraine, Russia and the west. We need to foster a breathing space in which Ukraine can make suitable constitutional reforms to allow for autonomy, as has been said. We should not put the global economy at risk, and we certainly should not risk a European war---1914 is ever present.

Perhaps I have been a bit too harsh on liberal democracy. Let me finish on a positive note. I am profoundly pro-life and anti-war. I want, if it is not too naive a thing to say, for Ukraine to be at peace. I really believe in this noble theme. I believe there is a role for Britain and France, in particular. We have no historical axe to grind. Unlike Poland and the Baltic states, we have not been invaded or suppressed by the Russians. As for the Russians, they still harbour some justifiable historical fear of German expansionism, and with some reason today in economic terms. Unlike some Americans currently in power, we also have a sense of history. We recall from Woodrow Wilson's time that good intentions are not always enough and can lead to war. We know that western Ukraine around

Lviv was never part of Russia; it was part of Austria-Hungary and then Poland. We know that in western Ukraine they 100% want to be part of Europe. However, many of us are also sensibly sceptical about the expansion of NATO and the EU into former Russian lands.

I believe a solution can be brokered, and I believe that we can play a role. We must convince Russia that we have no intention of trying to detach Ukraine from Russian influence to bring it under our own. We want Ukraine to be what it should be: free, independent; not part of the Russian sphere of influence or the NATO or EU sphere of influence; and with a strong federal structure and home rule for the east. Why should we want to break the Russian economy? Why should we want to destroy Mr Putin? If he goes, we could get somebody far worse. No feasible Russian leader would ever accept the permanent loss of eastern Ukraine. Let us be a honest broker. Let peace be our watchword, not war without end.

#### **Falkland Islands: South Atlantic Medal**

The following statement was made to the House of Commons on 18 December last.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Hugo Swire):** I am pleased to inform the House that in 2015 the South Atlantic Medal will be presented, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, to the Falkland Islands, in recognition of the assistance provided to the forces of the United Kingdom during the liberation of the Islands in 1982. The islander's individual acts of courage exemplified the indomitable will and personal commitment to defending the islands' right of self-determination.

#### **Comment:**

And some say satire is dead. What else could the people of the Falkland Islands do in the circumstances but assist the UK forces who put their lives on the line to defend a people who claim to be British but who made no financial or military contribution to the defence of their islands? And who continue to make no contribution.

#### **An Act Of Treason?**

Conservative Backbencher **Philip Hollobone** wants British jihadists to be tried for treason. On 6 January he asked the **Attorney General, Jeremy Wright**, "if

he will take steps to encourage the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute people for treason in cases where that offence is suspected to have been committed." To which the Attorney General replied, "In all cases referred for a charging decision, the CPS should use whichever offence, including treason, is appropriate to the facts of the case. However, modern criminal offences, including terrorism offences, usually offer a better chance of a successful conviction than would a prosecution for treason."

However, Hollobone's question was aimed specifically at British jihadists. He said, "British jihadists who go abroad to support ISIS are aiding and abetting the Queen's enemies, and now that we have the horrific spectacle of British citizens beheading other British citizens and citizens of allies on international television, should it not be made clear to these people that it is worse than murder and terrorism---it is treason---and that should they ever be apprehended they should be prosecuted for such?"

#### **The Attorney General:**

"I have a good deal of sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. The point I would make is a purely practical one. I think it important that treason remains available to prosecutors in appropriate cases and I wish to see that continue, but I also think it important to recognise that there are specific practical difficulties in the prosecution of treason---whether it be the establishing of the direct or constructive levying of a war under one limb of the offence or indeed defining the sovereign's enemies under the other. It is important that we prosecute effectively."

#### **Comment:**

Hollobone's question contains an elephant in the room: Saudi Arabia. "Allies" in the so-called war against terror, Saudi Arabia is simultaneously responsible for the export of Sunni Wahabism which is fuelling the war. It therefore stands accused of aiding and abetting the Queen's enemies, Hollobone's words to describe the actions of British jihadists, and yet not a word is spoken against the Kingdom. Such is the hypocrisy and double standards of western politicians. The same politicians who stood shoulder to shoulder in Paris in protest against the killing of twelve journalists by Islamic jihadists, but barely said boo to Netanyahu, who shamelessly protested in Paris alongside Cameron and co., when the Israeli military killed thousands of civilians in Gaza, including hundreds of children.

#### **Transatlantic Trade And Investment Partnership (TTIP).**

Who does one believe when TTIP is discussed? Politicians in particular seem to have a different take on its potential effect on key public services, including the NHS. This much was revealed when it was debated in the House of Commons on 15 January. Labour/Co-op's Geraint Davies moved "*That this House believes that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and any investor-state dispute settlement provisions should be subject to scrutiny in the European Parliament and the UK Parliament.*"

Davies spoke in general terms about the TTIP but two other Backbenchers focused on the potential impact on the NHS from very different perspectives. They were Dr Sarah Wollaston, Conservative Member for Totnes and Liz McInnes, Labour Member for Heywood and Middleton. ISDS, frequently referred to in the debate, is the investor-state dispute settlement.

#### **DR Sarah Wollaston:**

"I share the sentiment, which was expressed by many hon. Members, that trade is the cornerstone of our national wealth. We heard my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Mr Walter) speak about its impact on our economy. Without that trade and our national wealth, there would not be funding for vital services such as our NHS; it is that long-term economic plan that will guarantee its future. However, I would like to speak today about the NHS and express some of my concerns.

The Leader of the Opposition has spoken about his desire to weaponise the NHS. It is shameful in itself, but it also detracts from some of the genuine arguments and important issues that we need to raise about health within the TTIP. Initially, I would like to clear up the points raised by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. They are important and I would not support the deal if I thought that it would have the effects she outlined, but I think that they have been rather used as part of that weapon to try to damn this partnership and to damn the Government's record. That is regrettable.

After reading the letter from the European Commission about the NHS, I wrote back because I wanted to clarify some points. As Chair of the Select Committee on Health, I heard back from Jean-Luc Demarty, the director-general for trade. He wrote to me on 11 December and a copy of that letter is available on the Health Committee's website if people want to look at it in detail. He made it

absolutely clear that all publicly funded health services, including NHS services, would be protected under TTIP.

I pressed him further on that point, asking about the definition of publicly funded health services---in other words, would they include organisations such as those in the third sector? He was very clear that as long as the services are publicly funded it does not matter how they are delivered. That is an important point of clarity. He also made the point that any investor-state dispute settlement provisions in TTIP could have no impact on the UK's sovereign right to make changes to the NHS. In other words, that deals with the concerns that have been raised that this is somehow a one-way street and that no future Government would be able to change policy. He is very clear on that point and I urge Members to look at his letter. The issue of ratchet clauses is also very important, and the ratchet clause will not apply in this case.

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

If an incoming Government decided to terminate a contract in the NHS or in the public social care sector under which that company claimed that a very large investment had been made in building a care home or something similar, would the company be able to use TTIP to prosecute the Government for the potential loss of investment?

**Dr Wollaston:**

Already within domestic contract law there are provisions that mean that one cannot arbitrarily reverse a contract. A state would be able to announce that it was changing policy and moving forward, but the point about TTIP is that it works on both sides of the Atlantic. We would not wish to have British companies arbitrarily lose their investment in the US. It is about that; it is not some conspiracy of an evil empire, which is how it has been portrayed. I think that would be a reasonable process.

**Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con):**

May I make the point that an ISDS tribunal is empowered to award compensation for genuine loss but is not empowered to overturn policy or national regulation?

**Dr Wollaston:**

Indeed, and that is the point that we want to make clear. The concern is legitimate and if the NHS were threatened by TTIP we should be explicit about that, but it is not. We need to be clear about that and it would be helpful if Opposition Members withdrew the insinuation that is constantly being put out to our constituents that this

is a conspiracy to do so. I also pressed the Commission on whether it would be sensible for the Government explicitly to ask to exclude the NHS, and it could not have been clearer that it was not necessary because it was going to do so itself. May we please bring that aspect of the debate to an end and focus on the issues that matter?

The issues I think are important are those to do with public health in areas such as smoking and alcohol. Other Members have pointed out the impact on the Uruguayan Government of their being sued by a tobacco company. The company's profits dwarf the domestic product of Uruguay. We cannot allow that to happen. This has serious implications. I would like the Minister to respond specifically on whether, during these negotiations, the tobacco industry---an industry that kills half its customers---can be specifically prevented from using the investor state dispute procedures in such a manner.

I would also like protections in relation to alcohol. Of course, part of our transatlantic trade should legitimately cover alcohol, a product enjoyed by many. However, the Scotch Whisky Association has been able to use legal mechanisms to delay the proposed minimum pricing measures which are desperately needed in Scotland and which I fully support. I would like further detail on what measures the Government propose to protect public health as TTIP goes forward.

**Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab):**

In my previous employment as an NHS scientist, I was extremely concerned about the implications of TTIP for our NHS, and for all public services, and I remain so. In my new job, I have been contacted by many constituents expressing their concern about TTIP, which is a subject on which the public appear to be very well informed.

**Mr Slaughter:**

My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. Members of Parliament are not putting pressure on their constituents, as the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) claimed; constituents are saying they are concerned. They are concerned, for example, that small businesses are being advantaged in comparison with large businesses, that monopolies are being encouraged among pharmaceutical companies, and that the NHS is in danger of privatisation. We have a duty to give them an explanation. There is huge disquiet out there among the public, and we ought to

address it. There is terrible complacency among Government Members about this.

**Liz McInnes:**

I thank my hon. Friend for his comments; he has pre-empted what I was going to say. I am not going out scaremongering; my constituents and my previous colleagues are expressing to me their real and legitimate concerns about this agreement. As I said, this is a subject on which the public appear to be very well informed. That surprises me, given that a major concern expressed to me is that the negotiations seem to be taking place in secret. Perhaps there is a lesson here: the more secretive a deal appears to be, the more effort people will make to try to seek out the truth. If ever we needed an argument for openness and transparency, this is it.

We have already heard a lot about the ISDS mechanism, which is causing my constituents and ex-colleagues major concern, particularly in relation to public services---specifically, our NHS. People are telling me---again, this is not about me going out scaremongering---that they are really worried that this could result in private companies seeking compensation from our public bodies for loss of potential earnings. We have already heard about mechanisms in agreements in other countries whereby those countries are being sued for things such as regulating medicines and energy prices, raising minimum wages, and putting health warnings on cigarette packets, to name but a few. There is a real fear that this mechanism is not about enforcing contracts but about giving businesses huge new powers to intimidate policy makers. There is a major concern that the ISDS provisions could lead to enforced privatisation of our NHS and other public services. Governments have a right to be able to legislate in the public interest, and that should be protected in any dispute relation mechanisms.

The European Commission has instigated several changes that have improved the transparency of the agreement, and that is welcome. However, it is right that the Commission has decided temporarily to suspend negotiations on ISDS until the final stages of the negotiations. I urge the Government to use this opportunity to call for greater transparency on exclusion for legislation that is in the public interest, such as that relating to the NHS.

**Continued on Page 22**

# Listening to Italy

## by Orecchiette

### PURE THEATRE

*This article was written before the first vote for the next President of the Republic of Italy took place on 29 January.*

Italy's 89 year old President Giorgio Napolitano resigned as expected at the start of the year. He had allowed his name to be put forward in 2013, for an unprecedented second term. This was a way of avoiding the inevitable instability following the short-lived Monti and Letta administrations. Matteo Renzi had ousted the quiet, open Enrico Letta in February 2014 to become Prime Minister. Since then Renzi, the energetic and astute Blair admirer, has been working cunningly to consolidate his power. Not only can he be seen calculating his rise in Italy but also in Europe where he

has ingratiated himself particularly successfully with Mrs Merkel.

His sharp operating has, of course, caused political divisions. Beppe Grillo of the M5S, ally of our own Nigel Farage, can always be relied upon for colourful and apposite comments. Barred from political office and lacking a parliamentary platform, he can frequently be seen fulminating as he leads his dwindling faithful in outdoor rallies. *La Repubblica* (24 Jan) quoted him: *Renzi Buffoncello*, he shouted ....*we've got a little lightweight buffoon who blackmails us.*

The blackmail that Grillo refers to is real. Europe, Italy, the parties and the politicians, with their positions to cling onto, all want stability. Renzi, states confidently that he will serve a full term. His political opponents,

particularly in his own Pd party, protest just sufficiently to keep their jobs by not precipitating a fall of government. Currently dissent focuses on three main issues. The election of the President of the Republic, Italicum (the wide-ranging and significant changes to the electoral law) and the secret "Nazareno" pact with Berlusconi. Renzi keeps his cool in this ferment.

All three contentious issues are inextricably and inevitably linked within the passionate and complex Italian political caste. Renzi has said that the party's current Italicum proposals are distinct and separate from the election of the President. But as Gianluca Luza says in *La Repubblica* (22 Jan), *it is not only difficult to believe this, but it is evident that it isn't so.*

Italian politics have similarities with our children's' parties; everyone comes away with something. Winning a point means conceding something to the loser. So, Berlusconi will add his party's votes to boost Renzi's support, because the Pd's left wingers have withdrawn theirs. Berlusconi then gains something in return. And the root of opposition to the Renzi/Berlusconi Nazareno pact is not understanding what Berlusconi is getting out of it. Renzi, breathtakingly, absolutely refuses to discuss this.

It is said that Romano Prodi, who is a successful, respected politician, amply qualified to be President, is Anglo-Saxon in his political dealings. In Italy this is unusual. It means being open and fair, and Prodi actually lives the Christianity that he espouses. He doesn't operate the give-and-take way of working with adversaries, so is tipped not to be successful in the elections. Why should others support him if they didn't gain from him! He also beat Berlusconi twice.

The media group *Tiscali* floated a fanciful list of 28 possible Presidential candidates, ranging from Romano Prodi, through Mario Draghi, the

### Continued From Page 21

An online consultation by the European Commission has revealed huge public opposition to TTIP. Again, this is not about me or any other member of my party going around scaremongering. The Commission received an unprecedented 150,000 responses, more than a third of which were from the UK, mainly opposing TTIP and many calling for the NHS and other public bodies to be exempt from it. Other countries have sought to exempt areas from the agreement, but this Government have not done so. Instead, their position on the NHS and TTIP has been muddled. They have told the British Medical Association that the NHS will be "protected", and the Department of Health have said: "We have no intention of allowing the TTIP to dictate the opening up of NHS services to further competition, and it will not do so." However, the Minister for Trade and Investment, Lord Livingston, said in September that TTIP would not have any impact on the NHS and therefore the UK negotiating team would not be pushing for its exclusion. Those mixed messages are of great concern and are troubling. This Government need to commit to the NHS being exempt from the final TTIP agreement and look carefully at its impact on other public services.

#### Comment:

Liz McInnes is right: there is confusion about the impact the TTIP may have on the NHS. The obvious question to ask is: if the NHS will not be affected in any way by the TTIP agreement, why is it there within the negotiations? Why not simply exempt it, thus satisfying the public that it remains safe from predators? Dr Wollaston implied that the Commission is going to exempt the NHS. Well, we shall see. Assurances from the Commission and this Government that the NHS is not in any danger are not enough. It is not unknown for Commissioners and politicians to mislead the public.

#### Note:

It was resolved "That this House believes that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and any associated investor-state dispute settlement should be subject to scrutiny in the European Parliament and the UK Parliament."

The reply by The Minister for Business and Enterprise, Matthew Hancock, will appear in the next issue of *Labour Affairs*.

obvious and possible, to Berlusconi (*he will find it difficult* (to be nominated)) and on to architect Renzo Piano and Maestro Riccardo Muti. (No, said Muti.) Beppe Grillo was not alone in protesting that Renzi was drawing up a list for discussion, but had probably already made up his mind. He criticised the lack of democracy saying that Renzi should be publishing names openly on the internet, as is his own *modus operandi*. Grillo was then pictured, puffer jacket on, suggesting dom Luigi Ciotti as a Presidential Candidate. Ciotti is a cleric who founded the anti-mafia, pro-social justice Association *Libera* in 1995.

The Presidential election process is interesting. The 630 Deputies and 315 Senators have a vote. The 19 regions have three voting members each. The Valle D'Aosta has one member, making a total of 1003 votes. There can be seven ballots and everyone meets together to do this. There will only be a winner in the first three ballots if someone receives 2/3 of the votes. After that the majority vote wins. There is a lot of dark talk about *scheda bianca*, i.e.: white ballots or abstentions in the first three rounds. These are a typically Italian complex political tactic. But Renzi is obviously working to conclude this as swiftly and easily as possible. He wants to be the only dealer here.

Renzi programmed 27 January as the day to have discussions about the nomination, or nominations. Berlusconi called them *consultations in the dark* (*La Stampa*, 29 Jan). Aptly the day started at 7 with lesser groups. Meanwhile Grillo was starting to set out his consultation on the web. His list of candidates grew from 9 – 14. Was Renzi listening to him? Different names popped up during this consultation day, notable among them were Giuliano Amato. (aged 76, twice Prime Minister, a subtle political operator nicknamed *dottor sottile*) and Sergio Mattarella (Sicilian, aged 73, who drafted a new electoral system law in 1993, the *Mattarellum*). By the end of the day Mattarella had been proposed by Renzi and rejected by Berlusconi. One of Alfano's men, Cicchitto said that this was like Renzi inaugurating a monarchy in Italy. Anna Finocchiaro was Berlusconi's suggestion, as being *serious and balanced* (*La Stampa*, 29 Jan). *Il Foglio* (29 Jan) called the whole process *Il chess boxing*.

In Renzi's own Pd a small left-leaning group are making a stand against him. Pippo Civati and Nichi Vendola the SEL (Left Ecology Freedom) leader (also a LGBT activist) were pictured together recently. Civati said *we are the N-Ns, the non-Nazareno party* for those *who love the constitution* (*La Stampa*, 23 January). He believes that when Renzi finds a Presidential candidate by *agreement* it means there will be one real candidate only - his choice.

There is also opposition in Berlusconi's own Forza Italia party, some of whom do not want to be sullied by dealings with what they view as the left. Angelino Alfano, once Berlusconi's right-hand man, worked in coalition as Letta's Deputy Prime Minister. He now leads the Ncd, the New Centre-Right party and offers ineffectual opposition: *It would be arrogant and unrealistic to say no to the Pd's candidate* (*La Stampa* 23 January).

On 23 January, the Weekly *L'Espresso*'s Marco Damilano discussed a breathtakingly simple solution for Renzi and one that the earthquake caused by Syriza suggests might be a way forward. He mentions that Anna Finocchiaro had been under consideration for the Presidential position by Renzi himself and that he could go forward comfortably with a President like this. But, and this is significant and revolutionary, he could then eradicate opposition by forming a completely new party. Those who support him: the enthusiastic and the willing, (women are frequently chosen by both Renzi and Berlusconi) would all win a place under his sun. Those who don't would lose, in a very northern European way.

### SIGNED: PLASTERED OF PARIS

They bomb you and call it  
peacekeeping,  
they jeer and sneer at your  
faith and call it  
satire,  
now the reaping and the moralising  
liar.  
They demonstrate for free speech,  
the free speech that can't be  
yours,  
be moderate they beseech while  
backing those on bombing raid  
tours.

By all means shoot and  
kill  
but not on French soil.  
For this we opened the armoury and  
the till!

So, as a secular nation you put other  
seculars on the boil?

Excuse us if we appear  
brazen  
to you dissidents,  
do our views  
emblazon  
the attitude of our  
citizens?  
No, we give them what they want  
to hear.  
Could we have enhanced Libya  
if they weren't our  
peers.

Wilson John Haire

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Evening Chronicle, Oldham, Wednesday March 21, 1979

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If you are aged over 21 and a car owner, please ring Mr. Kennedy on 0161-279-4880 (0900) between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

**DO IT NOW!**

### JOHN BRIGHT AND BROTHERS LIMITED

have the following Staff vacancies:

**WORK STUDY OFFICER**

To carry out work measurement, general work study duties and project work. Applicants should have received formal work study training and some practical experience. Knowledge of the textile industry would be an advantage.

**SALES CORRESPONDENCE CLERK**

Applications are invited for a post of Sales Correspondence Clerk in our Industrial Textile Division office. The successful applicant will be between 25-40 years of age and educated to at least 'O' level standard, preferably with a good working knowledge of selling goods and customer service. This position is a Staff appointment with corresponding pension scheme, initially three weeks' holiday plus statutory holidays, salary negotiable.

Application in writing to the Personnel Manager, Fieldhouse Mills, Rochdale, giving career to date, education and current salary. Tel. No. ROCHDALE 64011.

### PACKER WAREHOUSE Person

required for WOLFEAR CRYSTALLINE. Age 18 plus for packing and general warehouse duties. Previous warehouse experience desirable. Please for interview to: LAWTEX LTD., Lancing House, Hall Lane, Parnworth, Tel. 682 7055.

### BOILER SERVICE ENGINEER REQUIRED

for all gas installations. Electrical background would be an advantage. Must have clean driving licence. SALARIES & CARPENTERS LTD. HODDLE. Telephone 640000/01 4902

### EXPORT CLERK TYPIST

required.

Experience in all aspects of typing documents desirable. We offer the chance to work in a modern, friendly office with excellent conditions of employment and the usual benefits combined with a progressive company.

Please apply in writing, giving details of employment to date, to the Personnel Manager, SETON GROUP OF COMPANIES, REDLOCK STREET, OLDHAM, OL3 5BE

### DEW CONTRACTORS PLANT OPERATORS

Experienced Operators required for all types of contractors plant.

Applicants must be prepared to work away from home.

Apply: J. M. Ingham, G. DEW & CO. LTD., CHADWICK STREET DEPOT, OLDHAM. Telephone 624 8291

### MOTOR MECHANIC WANTED

**Hughes & Bolton**  
We are looking for a Motor Mechanic to join our team. Must have City & Guilds III. Apply to: 42-44 Drake Street, Rochdale, Tel. 64211

### PROFESSIONAL Architectural Technician

Required for the design of a new building. Must have City & Guilds III. Apply to: 42-44 Drake Street, Rochdale, Tel. 64211

### WORK WANTED

INTERESTED in work in the textile industry. Must have City & Guilds III. Apply to: 42-44 Drake Street, Rochdale, Tel. 64211

### NURSING WELFARE

Interested in work in the textile industry. Must have City & Guilds III. Apply to: 42-44 Drake Street, Rochdale, Tel. 64211

In 1979 the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* was still carrying three pages of advertisements for real jobs in the industrial sector. That was the year Margaret Thatcher came to power and put Britain on a new course. The industrial sector was deliberately run down in favour of finance capital with the object of breaking the power of the Trade Unions. Nowadays, the area is depressed and the paper might carry two or three job advertisements. Thirty six years on large tracts

of the UK remain without any meaningful economic activity and have fallen into long term decay. This is the result, not only of Thatcher's desire to break the power of the unions, but also of the union's failure to defeat her and save Britain's traditional industries, which she and her government helped to destroy. The young people of Oldham and many other cities around Britain are paying the price today in terms of blighted prospects.