

Labour Affairs

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All Shook Up?

In the last issue of Labour Affairs we said that a Corbyn victory would be the catalyst for a long overdue shake up of Labour. Even a very good showing might make a difference. Well, he won decisively, and the shake up has certainly begun. 'Democratic socialism' has always in practice included a habit of getting slippery when a clear democratic vote produces the 'wrong' result. Corbyn's election was immediately resented within the parliamentary Labour party and scorned by the parasitical press. The press acted true to form but it is astonishing that a man, whose political style and support for public ownership resembles that of Attlee and the much admired post-war Labour government, can generate such opposition from his parliamentary colleagues. What are they afraid of? They claim that under Corbyn Labour will lose the next election. But they are the people who lost Labour the last two elections. And yet they still persist in promoting the same policies, albeit honed to suit the current political scene. They differ only marginally from the Tories. Corbyn on the other hand wants Labour to move in a distinctly different direction.

Corbyn has resurrected Labour as the Party of the people, reaching out to those who had given up on it as their natural party. He has rejuvenated Labour, attracting thousands of young voters alienated by the politics of Blair's New Labour and Cameron's rich Bullingdon Club aristocrats. What is there to dislike about him? His victory was overwhelming with almost 60% of first preference votes. He said politics would be done differently and so far has been true to his word. He is replacing the irritating bear pit politics of Westminster with a politics that connects with the lives of real people. His is a more conciliatory style of Westminster politics, without losing sight of the need to call the Tories to account for their callous, divisive policies.

His first Prime Minister's Questions, in which he raised issues requested by the public, was a decent start. However, his leadership will be judged, not on his performance at an elaborate Parliamentary ritual which few voters follow, but on his ability to unite the parliamentary Labour party. Given the initial and continuing hostility it will be a difficult task. It will require him to compromise on his perceived voter-

alienating positions. He has already done so on Europe, displaying a political realism his colleagues believed was absent. However, his position appears ambiguous. There is much to be said for keeping the Tories guessing on Europe and making support conditional on support for worker's rights. This would strengthen Corbyn's hand and make right-wing Tories very unhappy.

Corbyn showed his realism consistently during the campaign, insisting the Party would reach policy agreement through consultation, not imposition. In spite of this, a number of his colleagues, including two of his election opponents, declared they would not be part of his shadow cabinet team, citing irreconcilable political differences. Liz Kendall said it was essential to bring the Party together and then immediately announced she would never serve under Corbyn's leadership. Kendall, and those like her, one thinks of Baron Mandelson serial resigner, are clearly determined to make Corbyn's tenure as difficult as possible, while claiming loyalty to the Party. By doing so they seek to split the Party and may make their prophecy of defeat at the next election under Corbyn's leadership a near certainty. And they will not lack the support of the Tories and the right wing press in doing so. But the 'free' press is much more right-wing than the electorate, being dominated by the views of wealthy owners and advertisers. There is a lot of resentment towards the press. Most of it is ill-focused, but it could be harvested by a bolder Labour Party that was willing to say that the press are crooked.

What about the main enemy, the Tory party? Within hours of Corbyn's victory Cameron claimed that, "The Labour Party is now a threat to our national security, our economic security and your family's security." An accusation that can be more accurately levelled at Cameron's governing party. And the press headlines screamed "Bye Bye Labour", with the Mail claiming a poll showed that under Corbyn Labour would lose the next two elections! But none stooped as low as Matthew D'Ancona in the London Evening Standard of 16 September who, referring to the challenges ahead, wrote, "Yet Corbyn and his team, like a cuddly version of the Khmer Rouge, appear determined to declare the arrival

of Year Zero.”

Criticism of his shadow cabinet was directed at the three key positions of Chancellor and Foreign and Home Secretary filled by men, but half of the thirty members are women and seventeen supported Burnham and Cooper. Just three are declared Corbyn supporters, one of whom, Diane Abbott, is one of just two non-white members. This point was missed by media commentators, or else intentionally ‘not seen.’ Had Cooper agreed to serve under Corbyn she would no doubt have filled one of the three key positions, although her ideal role would have been shadow business secretary. By no stretch of the imagination, therefore, can it be said that the shadow cabinet will bend to the will of the leader. Corbyn has pledged that agreement will be reached by consensus. He will do whatever is necessary to ensure the election of a Labour government.

In an Observer article of 30 August, Blair wrote “Corbyn’s policies are fantasy — just like Alice in Wonderland.” But the Cheshire Cat failed to spell out the policies he believes are fantasy, merely asserting “Corbyn’s programme is exactly what we fought and lost on 30 years ago.” Except that it isn’t, but it suits Blair and Corbyn’s opponents to pretend that it is. Britain is a different place to what it was in the early 1980s. His proposal of people’s quantitative easing to stimulate growth through investment in job creating programmes is pure Keynesian. He has proposed that rail services will be returned to public ownership when the current franchises run out. He has spoken about the misuse of power by the banks and utilities and the need for rich individuals and business to make a greater financial contribution through changes to the tax regime. And he has questioned the role of NATO and Britain’s possession of nuclear weapons.

None of these are policies set in concrete. In fact Labour’s recent conference failed to discuss the renewal of Trident at the insistence of the unions who fear job losses. Policy will continue to be discussed within the shadow cabinet and among the wider party membership. This way of agreeing policy is anathema to Blair who formed policy with a small coterie of political friends, forced it through the cabinet and browbeat the party into acceptance at staged managed conferences.

Lord Kinnock too joined in the attack. He is the 1970s left-wing firebrand who

supported public ownership, advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament and was a critic of NATO. He deserted the left on becoming Labour leader and led Labour to two successive general election defeats. His criticism of Corbyn cannot be taken seriously.

Under Corbyn, Labour is acknowledging the key role unions play in the workplace and in society as a whole. His speech at the TUC conference was one of his first acts as leader. And within days Labour opposed the second reading of the draconian Trade Union Bill and the cuts in tax credits. It will oppose the Welfare Reform Bill when it returns to the Commons, having abstained on the second reading under Harriet Harman’s leadership. Labour is changing, as Corbyn promised it would. There are signs, at last, of it returning to its historic core values.

Can Labour win with Corbyn? To do so it needs to win back voters who deserted it for the Greens and UKIP in England. The Midlands and the South East in particular are the key to a Labour victory in 2020. And it must appeal to the voluntary disenfranchised, the non-voters, giving them a reason to vote and to vote Labour. It is consistently said Labour must appeal to the centre ground, to so-called middle England. But the centre is not a fixed entity. It is constantly shifting. It is said Labour must attract the support of aspirational voters, but their aspirations are never defined.

Corbyn understands the importance of aspirations to voters. “Everybody,” he said, following his election, “aspires to an affordable home, a secure job, better living standards, reliable healthcare and decent pension. My generation took those things for granted and so should future generations.” He should have added ‘free education for everyone who can benefit from it’. But nevertheless his simple message will be conveyed to voters. It will, inevitably, be distorted and diluted through the prism of the press. If voters understand that, they should rally to Corbyn’s and Labour’s anti-austerity cause. But only if they believe Labour can be trusted with the economy. That is the enormous task it faces under Corbyn and his Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell.

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Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry.

PROGRESS OF WAR.

On 22 August 1916, Winston Churchill, at that time a Backbench Liberal Member for Dundee, a constituency he had represented since 1908 (he won the seat in a by-election) addressed the Commons on the progress of the War. (He had switched from Tory to Liberal in 1904, been a minister but lost his position as First Lord of the Admiralty after the disastrous Gallipoli landings.) His speech, published below, focused largely on the effect of the War on prices and in it he advocated government control to curb excessive rises. A reply to Churchill by Philip Snowden will feature in the next (November) issue of Labour Affairs.

Mr Churchill:

I wish to take advantage of the Motion for the Adjournment to draw the attention of the Government and the House to several questions of considerable importance concerning a large number of persons and large classes in this country, particularly the questions relating to the cost of food, the position of freights, and also to those questions relating to the use of manpower by the War Office which I have several times referred to in the course of the present Session. Firstly, I desire to deal with those particular questions in relation to the general situation of the War. During the last three months we have had a great deal of good news from the different theatres of the War, and, coming as it did in contrast with all that had gone before, this produced a very real and marked feeling of satisfaction and even of optimism, and people have been inclined to spring to conclusions, some of which, at any rate, are not warranted by the facts of the situation. Nothing has happened either in the East or in the West which affords us any certainty of a speedy end to this conflict. The progress in the East against Austria has been brilliant, but we must never forget that very large distances have to be traversed in those regions. In the West at Verdun and on the Somme the strategic deadlock continues. The intense fighting, which has now lasted for more than six months, has not produced any sensible change in the general strategic alignment of the Armies. The losses on each side are largely a debatable question, but this, at any rate, is true, that the German Armies in the field on all fronts were never more numerous or better equipped than they are to-day. They have more divisions in the field to-day than at any other moment in the War. We have against us a larger German Army than at any previous time. What is behind that Army is quite

another question. The diminution of the German Reserves, as I said three months ago when I ventured to address the House on these general questions, in relation to the growing power of the Allies constitutes the secure foundation upon which we may build our just hopes of a certain victorious conclusion of the struggle. But the actual fighting formations of the German Army are fully maintained at the present time in every respect.

We have the marked demoralisation of Austria; we have the wonderful recovery of Russia and General Brussiloff's victory, a victory unequalled in importance since the turn at the Marne in 1914; we have the increasing exertions of Italy; we have the unflinching resolution of the French; and, last of all, and perhaps most important of all, we have the ever-growing strength and power and the splendid quality of the great new British Armies. These are all facts of glorious and encouraging import. They give us the assurance that we are definitely the stronger, and they justify my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for War (Mr. Lloyd George) in his expectation that the time will soon come when we shall be able to see our path ahead much more clearly than we have hitherto done, but none of these facts carry with them the assurance of a speedy peace of the kind that we mean to have. It is astounding that Europe should have been fighting with this terrible intensity and on this universal scale for more than two years. It seemed incredible beforehand that such a thing could happen, but now, after two years, that the War should continue for another year or even more does not seem incredible. We hope that it may not be so, but it is not impossible, and certainly it does not seem incredible. At any rate, it would be most wickedly foolish, after all that has happened, to make our plans on any other assumption than that the War will go on. The time has come—it came long ago—and it is evident to all that it has come when all our plans, both at home and abroad, ought to be made with a view to the continuance of the War for a long period, and all our plans ought to be made with a view to the conditions of a state of war becoming the basis of the whole of our national, social, economic, and industrial life.

We cannot go on treating the War as if it were an emergency which can be met by makeshifts. It is, until it is ended, the one vast, all-embracing industry of the nation, and it is until it is ended the sole aim and purpose of all our lives. Everything in the State ought now to be devised and

regulated with a view to the development and maintenance of our war power at the absolute maximum for an indefinite period. If you want to shorten the War, do this. If you want to discourage the enemy, let them see that you are doing it. If you want to cheer our own people, let them feel that you are doing it. Behind her widely extended fronts Germany is fretting and chafing. She has been less contented with victory than the Allies have been with repeated disappointments and defeat. Let her now see that her most formidable antagonists, for so we are now coming to have the honour to be, are coldly, scientifically, and systematically arranging their national life for the one supreme business in hand. That will dishearten Germany and her leaders far more than anything else we can do or say, however optimistic or enthusiastic. It will dishearten them more than anything we can do, apart from actual victories in the field.

I take the question of food supply and food prices as an example of the need of getting on to a sound permanent basis, having regard to the fact that we must count on a prolongation of the War, and I say to the Government: Why do you not put the question of food prices boldly on to a war basis? The First Commissioner of Works (Mr. Harcourt), who acted as President of the Board of Trade in the absence of the President through needs of health, gave an answer to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for the Blackfriars Division of Glasgow (Mr. Barnes) last week, in regard to food prices, which gathers together in a single line of figures a most striking and formidable series of facts. He showed a steady and unbroken rise in prices from the beginning of the War down to the close of the last recorded month, July. In September, 1914, he said, the rise was 11 per cent.; from that it rose to 37 per cent, in September, 1915; and it rose from 36 per cent, last August to 65 per cent, in the currency of the last completed month, July. Those figures raise very grave and urgent considerations, and we should be doing less than our duty if we did not take the opportunity, the last opportunity that will present itself for a long time, provided by the Debate on the Adjournment, to press their significance upon the Government.

Why has this steady rise been allowed to continue absolutely unchecked by Government action? There is no doubt whatever that the tendency has undergone no abatement or fluctuation in response to any measure which the Government during this long period have found it possible to take. Does anybody suppose that a rise

in the price of food like that can give us a sure foundation for the waging of war, however long, until victory is secured? Can anyone, looking at this line of figures, pretend that the problem has been grappled with manfully or effectively, or even that it has been faced? Are we not proceeding in regard to the supply of food in exactly the same way that brought us to disaster in regard to the supply of munitions, and later on in regard to the provision of men, namely, putting off drastic treatment of the problem in the hope that the War will finish before it is necessary to abandon our dearly cherished, go-as-you-please, old-fashioned methods? That is the question which I ask the House and the Government this afternoon, and I say that you cannot allow these food prices to continue to rise in this way without affecting materially and very definitely your war-making capacity, and also the temper of the people upon which that war-making capacity is founded. It is not that the people of this country will not stand privation. They will endure any suffering and any privation to win the War, but they will not stand privations side by side with enormous profits made by private persons, and they will not stand them unless they believe and feel that everything humanly possible is being done to relieve them to the utmost.

I am not able with the resources at my disposal, I say quite frankly, to analyse this volume of the rise in prices into the various causes to which it is due, and I am not able to show—I have no doubt that it will not be a difficult task for the President of the Board of Trade—or to form any accurate estimate of the proportion of the rise which is due to natural and to irremediable causes or military causes, and of the proportion which is due to artificial causes which are to be controlled, but I do not believe that the natural causes are the real or even the main explanation. The seas are free; the food production of the world outside Europe is practically unchecked; the resources of our own soil are very considerable, and have been to some extent increased, and are capable of much greater increase. I do not believe that natural and military causes by any means account for the rise, but that a very large proportion of the rise is due to extortionate profits made, not by persons outside our jurisdiction, but by persons who are within the control and authority of the State. Take, for instance, shipping. The movement of freights to their present height is an absolute scandal. Here, at any rate, is a vital factor in the fixing of prices. It is under your entire control. What nonsense it is to pretend, if you could organise the supply of munitions, with its infinite complications involving every industry and reaction between so many different industries, as has been done and done successfully, that you cannot also regulate

freights and shipping. The services of transport and communication stand on an entirely different footing from all services of manufacture. They are more suitable for State control on every ground and for every reason, and they have always been treated as more suitable for State control. If you can take over armament works, you can take over shipping. There is no reason at all why shipping should make special profits out of the War. They have no more right to make special profits out of this War than the railways, and there is no more reason in principle, apart from certain difficulties in practice, why they should not be taken over than there was against taking over the railways, which operation has been one of the most successful steps that the Government have taken in the domestic field since the commencement of the War. Where there is extraordinary service in time of war there may be a claim for extra profits. Where you expect special initiative and exertion, and where you require great, new, individual enterprise, a case may be made out, and a necessity may be shown for a higher rate of reward, but nothing of that sort is present with regard to shipping. It is a service of transportation. The ships go to sea almost as usual; the war risk is covered by a moderate insurance, which naturally finds expression in freights. All that has to be done, all the new effort required by the situation so far as the shipowners are concerned, is the effort of fixing freights by a stroke of the pen; yet, while we take over and regulate with the utmost minuteness, and in some cases with great celerity, all those businesses which are required for munitions, changing their whole character, altering their whole method—while we do that with these businesses where special exertions are required from their owners and great efforts by their staff in the organisation of great changes in their plants—while we take over all those complex businesses we continue to allow the shipping interest to exact an enormous toll, simply for carrying on their business in the old way. I am speaking of the main movement of freights; and that is the fact as it presents itself to-day.

Very extraordinary conclusions may be drawn from it. The British Admiralty are blockading Germany, and the success of their blockade is largely measured by the movement of prices, but owing to the uncontrolled rise in freights there has grown up—unconsciously, of course—a virtual blockade of this country by the shipping interests, which blockade is again represented, and accurately represented, by the movement and elevation of prices. The British Navy, when they blockade Germany, do so by long and perilous vigil on the seas, but the movement of prices which is due to shipping freights is

effected simply by a stroke of the pen in the offices of persons living in this country. Not merely do our people lose a great part of the relief which our Navy has won for them, but we actually suffer at the hands of our own citizens—unintentionally, I admit, and unconsciously, I believe; but the fact remains, we are actually suffering at the hands of our own citizens the evil of a blockade which no foreign enemy could put upon us. Of course, shipowners are just as good citizens as other classes in the country, and the fault does not lie with them. When there is no effective regulation and matters are left entirely to price movements, you must expect these results. In the absence of all other forms of regulations this is probably the only method by which the necessary competition of purchasers and consumers can be adjusted, but it is a wrong to the country—it is a wrong to the ship-owning class that they should be left in this position. The natural operation of the market and the whole conditions are bound to create a situation which forces up freights, and that in turn reflects itself in the condition of prices at home. I say to the Government, as I used to say to them very often in bygone days, “You ought without delay to take over the control of the shipping industry.”

At the beginning of the War the Admiralty were inundated by telegrams and letters from many shipowners asking to have their ships chartered by the Government. The Admiralty rate is a fair rate; it is a thrifty rate, but it is fair. It allows a fair return on capital and for working expenses, and the shipowners were quite content with it then. They were quite satisfied with the prospect of those rates, and the security which Government employment afforded them, having regard to all the then unknown possibilities of naval war. There is no reason at all why they should not be contented with that rate now. There is nothing in the service they are rendering, in the special exertions required from them, in the special aptitudes which they are called upon to display, which should render them dissatisfied now with rates which they would have jumped at in the first three or four weeks of the War, with the security attaching to those rates. I am not going to go into detail, though no doubt an answer will be given of a detailed character. I have in former times entered considerably into detail on this matter from the Government point of view, and I say there is no reason whatever why you should not charter every ship at Admiralty rates and then recharter it to the owner under such conditions as the interest of the State may require. Nothing would make me believe there is any insuperable difficulty in that if the Board of Trade would tackle the job in earnest with the skill and power that they have shown in dealing with other matters.

This question should be approached in the spirit which has been brought to bear upon the regulation of the manufacture of munitions, and in the spirit with which great industries like the armament firms on the Clyde and the Tyne have been transformed. If this business of shipping were approached in a similar earnest and resolute spirit there is no reason whatever why it should not be satisfactorily settled. Of course, it is rather more difficult than the railways, but it is incomparably less difficult than what you have done in the case of munition factories.

I know of two arguments which have been used against it, apart from the many arguments about the difficulties of detail which I do not at all underrate, but which I believe you can successfully override. But there are two arguments against it. The first which I have heard used is: "We need taxation; we need every penny we can get for revenue; and shipowners are making immense profits, and by the Excess Profits Tax the State gets 60 per cent, of those profits." The second argument is: "Admitting they are making high profits, is it not a good thing for this great and important industry to have in hand a capital reserve at the end of the War? "I consider both these arguments are wholly vicious and illegitimate from the point of view of State policy. First of all, if it is a system of taxation that we are invited to contemplate when we look at shipping freights, I say you could not possibly have a greater evil or a worse system of taxation than to use one great interest as if they were the farmers of the revenue and let them collect the revenue with a large percentage of profits for themselves from the taxation of food and the necessities of life. That is a proposition which really seems to combine within itself all the vices which a system of taxation, according to the views which have long prevailed in this country, can possibly involve. If it is a question of accumulating a reserve of capital for the shipping industry after the War, then I say that is not an argument which can be advanced in a democratic country. This emergency and the general stress and strain which the masses of the people are subjected to in time of war should not be used as a means to accumulate a capital fund in private hands to be used by them at the end of the War for their own benefit. They have always, hitherto, succeeded in keeping, at the end of a victorious war—as we all hope this will be—succeeded in keeping against the greatest possible competition and without any adventitious aid their position. Such an argument is wholly illegitimate. But there is another argument whose validity deserves very close examination. It is said that there is need to restrict consumption, particularly consumption of imports, and

that, with high prices ruling, that object is in a certain measure achieved.

If it be necessary, as I think it is necessary, to restrict within limits the consumption of imported staple foods, you could not do it in a more cruel or more unfair way than by the agency of price, because in regard to food, as everyone knows, the poorest class suffers out of all proportion to any other class. The housekeeping, not only of the rich, but even of the well-to-do—going a long way down the scale of economic well-being—the housekeeping of the rich and of the well-to-do is not materially affected by a price which would simply starve the poorest classes out of existence. The classes which are affected by the rises which have taken place and are continually taking place in the price of foodstuffs are soldiers' wives on separation allowance, the discharged wounded with their weekly allowance of 20s. if married and 10s. if single, the old age pensioners whose cases have been brought repeatedly before us, the professional classes, the poorer-paid industrial workers and clerks—all these classes are being seriously affected, but the case of no class compares for one moment with that of the poorest class, because there is a limit below which it is not possible, with the strictest economy in the home, however miserable, to maintain life. Therefore I say that to begin to restrict consumption, which it may be necessary to do, merely through the agency of price, through the agency of unregulated, fortuitous rises of price, is the most cruel and the most unfair manner of dealing with a great national and economic problem. In time of war particularly you should have regard for the broad claims of social justice. A war with all its evils should at least be a great equaliser in these matters. If we are to look upon the whole nation as an army, on our men and women as an army struggling for a common purpose, then they are all entitled to their rations and to secure the necessary supplies at prices which their strenuous labour is not incapable of meeting. The restriction of consumption could be achieved if it is required, and as it is required, by the direct regulation of consumption. I quite agree you cannot avoid privation; you ought not to avoid it altogether. I do not for a moment take the view that if there is a rise in prices wages should instantly conform to it in time of war, or that everything should go on just the same, and that freights should be just the same as if there was no war. There must be privations, and there must be thrift and economy in every class except the poorest class, which cannot be expected to make any diminution.

I say that the Government ought to keep steadily in mind two objects: First, the regulation of oversea supplies according

to what, for the national finances, we are able to afford—that is the first; and, secondly, the distribution of whatever food is brought into the market at a reasonable and a moderate price to all classes. I am not again going to plunge into the constructive detail of problems of this kind. A private Member always gets into impossible difficulties if he attempts to plunge into these great detailed problems which can only be handled by the Government; but if it be desired, as it is desired, to restrict importation from oversea, and to keep consumption in this country to the narrowest limits compatible with the development of maximum physical efficiency, then I say that bread and meat tickets, or the institution of so many meatless days in each week, or both these methods combined, is the proper path along which you should advance; it is infinitely preferable to and will entail incomparably less hardship and disadvantage than this unregulated use of the agency of price. In regard to coping with prices, freights are, as I have said, the chief and prime factor which should be dealt with. The spirit of the people continues always to surprise everyone who has witnessed the growing severity of this great War. The dauntless spirit, the dogged spirit with which every hardship is cheerfully borne and every sacrifice and every loss is sustained gives us all a confidence that there is no difficulty and no privation which this people here cannot go through to carry our cause and our flag to victory. On the other hand, the people of this country do require to know that the sacrifices and sufferings they endure arise solely from the needs of the War and of the action against the enemy and that they are not added to by any lack of grip and energy in dealing with the freight problems here or by the accumulation of extortionate profits in the hands of private individuals.

I trust that the Government will be able to make some statement on this serious argument which, I hope at not undue length, I have ventured to address to it. Before I sit down there are two matters which also require to be considered from the point of view of a prolonged war. On one of these I have already frequently addressed the House, therefore I shall only put a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for War upon it—I mean the use made of our man-power by the War Office. Before we get to the War Office let me say one word on the work of the tribunals. Most wonderful and admirable has been the work of the tribunals all over the country. That such an organisation could have been brought so swiftly into being, that they should have dealt with a vast number of cases and the immense complexity of the cases they have had to face is really one of those facts

which show that you can do anything in this country if you have the will and the intention to do it. It should be possible for the tribunals to be given a little more co-ordinating guidance from on high, from the centre and the head of the State—I am not thinking of anything higher—in regard to the classification of the cases with which they have to deal. At first the one object was to call them into being and to handle the great volume of cases which required attention. But gradually we have got our heads above water in that respect, and it ought to be possible to introduce a greater systematisation and co-ordination between the work of the different tribunals. The point with which I am chiefly concerned is the use made of the men after they have been handed over to the War Office. I know the immense and multifarious labours of my right hon. Friend at the present time, but I do assure him that there is an enormous field for administrative advance and improvement in this respect. I shall not trouble the House with them, but I have here a number of letters selected out of hundreds which have reached me, which show as in a series of tableaux the kind of typical cases of hardship and the misdirection of energy which are occurring at the present time. There is the case of the war-broken soldier, recovered two or three times from wounds and sent out to the front with his nerves shattered. There is the case of the man who has spent fifteen or eighteen months in the trenches, who writes home and says: Is there any future for the British soldier but to remain here in the front line until he is either killed or wounded? There is the case of a man who is taken from managing a business; employing 1,200 or 1,300 men, which owes its existence entirely to his own personal contribution, and who becomes a private in the Mechanical Transport Corps. There is the case of the Army Service Corps and the messes in this country, some of them employing twenty, thirty, or more able-bodied men in the service of the mess, whose duties could be discharged by these tired-out, war-broken soldiers who come back from the front. Side by side with these you get the passionate demands of a very large number of single young men of the highest military efficiency who enlisted and volunteered at the beginning of the War, who are clamouring to be allowed to go out and do their share at the front, but who have been kept here all the time. There was one case brought to my notice of an Army schoolmaster who was recommended for a commission as an officer and who volunteered to go as a private rather than remain in a position in which he was giving instruction to a number of small boys, but who was not allowed to go. I am sure that if my right hon. Friend, with his great authority,

power, and energy, examines the whole question of the employment of individuals from the point of view of getting the utmost possible service out of them and to yield war energy to the State, he will render an immense service to the country. The Army will be represented by stronger and more efficient battalions, and the sense of waste and mismanagement which must arise when so many of these cases are brought to the notice of large numbers of people throughout the country, will be utterly excluded from their area.

There is one other point to which I wish to refer before I sit down. If we are bound to consider that the War will be a prolonged one, and if we ought to approach all problems on that basis, on such a basis that if it were a short one and, perhaps, the end came unexpectedly, so that it would be wonderful and something upon which we had not counted but which came with all the more satisfaction to us—if we are to proceed on the basis that the War is going to be a long one, I say that the equipment of Russia with munitions of all kinds is almost the most important measure which is open to us to take. The great frontier in the East, extending over so many hundreds of miles, is the first that will crack when those nippers of which my right hon. Friend spoke lately bring their full pressure to bear. The manning of that enormous frontier against the repeated attacks of the inexhaustible armies which Russia can develop and bring into the field is the one insoluble problem which confronts the German General Staff at the present time. In view of the hopes which may legitimately be entertained that the Austrian demoralisation will be progressive and continuous, the difficulty of maintaining the Eastern front will be increasingly felt throughout the whole German military organisation in the near future. That all depends upon the supply of munitions you can secure for Russia. I know that the Government have made great exertions in that respect, and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made great exertions in that respect, but I do beseech and implore them not to allow financial considerations to stand in the way of meeting the needs of Russia in every possible manner. Order the necessary supplies where your credit enables you to order them, and the means of paying for them will be found when the time comes. After all, what is £50,000,000 or £100,000,000 in a matter of this kind? At £5,000,000 a day, it is a fortnight or three weeks of the War. If you shorten the War, as you might easily do by many months if the Russian Army has reached its fullest possible development of strength and power and the whole front is smashed as if by a gathering deluge, then you will relieve your finances from dangers and perils vastly greater than any that can

possibly threaten them by any ordering of supplies, however ambitious, at the present time. I put these points before the House, and I trust that they may receive the attention of the Government. Ministers are often offended with discussions which take place in this House. They are vexed when they are criticised.

The SECRETARY of STATE for WAR (Mr. Lloyd George):

No, no!

Mr. CHURCHILL:

The right hon. Gentleman supports all evils with a tranquil mind, but some of his colleagues are vexed when they are criticised. The slightest opposition renders them indignant, and they are always ready to attribute mean motives to those concerned in it. The remedy for all this is in the hands of the Government. Let the Government show that they do not merely hold the offices of State, but that they hold the key to the solutions of the difficulties with which they are confronted; that they do not need to be pushed by the House of Commons and by the Press into action on so many occasions, but that they can go forward spontaneously with good and well-thought-out arrangements; that they are really the leaders of the country in its hour of peril, not because they are willing to go in front of the country, but because they are willing to show the country the way in which it should go for its safety. If that attitude and characteristic were to be developed and displayed by the Government, then, when they return from their holidays, which we all hope they will enjoy and get benefit from, they will certainly find no difficulties in the House of Commons and there will be no diminution of that wonderful loyalty with which the House of Commons has supported them through all the hazards of this time of war.

I am not aware that any community has a right to force another to be civilized.

John Stuart Mill

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jeremy Corbyn and the leaving of NATO

by Christopher Winch

One of the charges levelled against Jeremy Corbyn is that he wants the UK to leave NATO. According to some Blairites (eg a recent article in 'Progress' by Richard Arthur and by the neocon journalist Ben Judah in the Guardian) NATO exists to keep the peace in Europe and Corbyn is jeopardising the peace with his maniacal proposals.

To put it kindly, this is playing fast and loose with the truth and anyone who knows about the history of postwar Europe will see this for the nonsense that it is. Keeping the peace in western Europe was the the job for which the EU was set up and which Britain opposed for many years, as maintaining European antagonisms through balance of power diplomacy is its main mode of operation within Europe. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, was formed shortly after the Second World War. It included the United States and most of the EEC as the EU was then called, minus France. The UK was a member. It was conceived of in order to defend Western Europe in the Cold War against the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The US as a hegemon, both financially and militarily in that effort was and remains the leading diplomatic and military power in NATO. The Cold War is over, so the original *raison d'être* of NATO has disappeared. So is there a need for NATO?

To answer this question it's worth looking at what NATO has been up to since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact 25 years ago. NATO helped bring about the disintegration of Yugoslavia, a multinational state in Europe and then illegally attacked what remained of it, bringing chronic instability to southeastern Europe. Some years later it launched an unprovoked assault on Libya, also with disastrous consequences. It has openly threatened Russia and moved into areas that the Russians, with two major European aggressions in two hundred years behind them, feel deeply menaced by. It has helped to foment a violent coup d'état against a democratically elected government in an area of vital interest to Russia, the Ukraine, and continues to

support an aggressive posture against Russia, accusing it of destabilising the Ukraine when it is obvious that this is what the EU and NATO were set on doing. In all of this the United States has played a leading military role. This hardly looks like an organisation bent on keeping the peace in Europe.

The US as global hegemon is interested in neutralising potential obstacles to the pursuit of its own interests. It thus has an interest in weakening or even destroying Russia. Europe does not have an interest in destroying Russia but in having good relations with her, therefore its interests are not the same as those of the US in relation to European security. The post Warsaw Pact NATO as it currently exists has no constructive role to play in promoting the collective security of Europe. The policies promoted by the US and its faithful poodle the UK are not in the interests of Europe and, although some European leaders realise this, practically all of them are prepared to do the US's bidding. This is the context in which we should consider whether it would be a good idea to leave NATO.

Let us take the pro NATO claims seriously. Europe needs some collective security arrangements, but there is no good reason why the US should be part of them. So what should collective security be based on?

Here are some suggestions as to the principles that a European Collective Security Union could be based on:

1] Independence of European security arrangements from those of any other power whose interests may potentially conflict with those of the European security zone. This means both military and diplomatic independence.

2] Non-aggression against neighbouring states within the security zone, including non-interference in their politics through fomenting dissent and the violent overthrow of governments.

3] Respect for existing borders. This can only happen when collective security arrangements preclude the violent overthrow of governments within the scope of the agreements between the

members of the collective security pact. The only way in which borders may be altered is via a plebiscitary arrangement agreed on by all parties to a disagreement and endorsed by all member states.

4] A mechanism for the peaceful resolution of interstate disagreements through negotiation and ultimately arbitration, which may include the measure described in 3].

5] Non-interference in the affairs of states outside the European collective security zone.

6] As broad based a security agreement as possible within the traditional zones of European conflict, including Russia as soon as is possible.

This proposal would not lead to the abolition of NATO but would turn it into a body along the lines of 1] – 6]. Who could quarrel with that? Well, we know who would – it would be the US and its allies, including Labour politicians who think that British interests depend on doing what the US wants Britain to do or, even worse, support the US's attempts to promote permanent crisis in Europe. But there is no reason to think that Europe cannot attend to its own security arrangements, it certainly does not need the United States to interfere in its affairs. NATO has adopted a particularly aggressive stance towards Russia, leading to the near (and maybe imminent) disintegration of the Ukraine. If it were to reverse this stand and begin negotiations with Russia for a collective security pact along the lines suggested above, there is little doubt that it would be welcomed by the Russians.

So the answer to Corbyn's critics should be: 'let's turn NATO into the sort of body you say it is, but which it clearly currently is not, namely one to maintain the peace in Europe through collective security arrangements for the continent'.

I am not sure that it is of the first importance that you should be happy. Many an unhappy man has been of deep service to himself and to the world.

Woodrow Wilson

Notes on the News

by Gwydion M. Williams

Labour Renewed?

Jeremy Corbyn has so far behaved sensibly after his unexpected victory. He must have noted that if 60% of the party voted for him, another 40% did not. So he kept Hilary Benn at the Shadow Foreign Minister job, and gave the Shadow Home Secretary job to Andy Burnham, his closest rival. The biggest job given to one of his own was John McDonnell as Shadow chancellor, indicating he plans to stick to his anti-austerity agenda.

This did also mean that there was no woman among the Big Four jobs. Probably because Yvette Cooper stood down as Shadow Home Secretary, presumably thinking that Corbyn's victory is a blip that she should sensibly distance herself from. If her judgement is that much off, we have lost nothing much. And there are a lot of women in slightly lesser posts.¹ I was ready to vote for a woman if she was about equal to the male candidate: but the actual candidates we got were a dismal lot.

Consider the future. Corbyn is 66; Andy Burnham is 45. He can sensibly hope for a second chance to be leader. Hopefully he now realises that he should have taken a more left-wing line. Another time he may ignore the media, who are in the pockets of the rich and keep on inventing sentiments that Britons allegedly believe in. He *did* make a sensible remark in his manifesto about returning to the values of 1945: but he failed to follow it through. Indeed, the modified Labour party now led by Corbyn *still* seems half ashamed of its period of greatest achievement.

Corbyn and his supporters reject the Blairite capitulation to Thatcherite values, which Ed Miliband was unexpectedly weak about. Miliband *should* have denounced deregulation as the cause of the 2008 crisis and denounced Osborne for bailing out the rich and squeezing the poor. Should have said that the 'Butskellite' system that Labour invented and that the Tories maintained before Thatcher was the best economic balance that anyone has so far found. But Miliband was distinctly 'leftist but ashamed of it'. And burdened by the legacy on his father Ralph Miliband, who saw the state as a piece of sinister nastiness.² Of course it's understandable that someone could get that impression from having to flee the highly aggressive Nazi state. But a much better reading of history is to say that Hitler became powerful because he did some sensible things with state power in his first few years, applying the policies that were later

and loosely called Keynesianism. It was because Hitler re-started a stalled German economy that he gained the power that allowed him to start several avoidable wars and end up getting some seven million non-Jewish Germans killed, in addition to all of his other crimes.

Butskellism – a term used at the time for the common ground between Rab Butler for the Tories and Hugh Gaitskell for Labour – was a grand success. It arose out of the lessons of Hitler, and of the ruthless but successful industrialisation of the Soviet Union under Stalin. The New Deal under Roosevelt in the USA had already shown that it was possible to have something similar within a Parliamentary system, if only the parliamentarians and voters would allow it. They hadn't in the 1930s: Britain and many other nations had inflicted vast suffering on themselves in defence of 'sound finance'. But after 1945 and up until the 1970s, the ruling class were scared of Communism and scared of a revival of Fascism and accepted limits on their profits in exchange for social peace and security. Education and health care were free and there was very little unemployment. It was in fact an optimum that Labour should be flaunting as its grand achievement.

It broke down in the 1970s, in part because of a shift in social values. The Butskellite system assumed that Trade Unions would accept the consensus: they increasingly asked for more. Labour twice tried to restore the balance with a sensible Incomes Policy: the Trade Unions decided they didn't want it. Heath offered to share power: once again the Trade Unions decided they didn't want it. The 1974-79 Labour government offered even more, including Workers Control, which Tony Benn in particular was keen to promote. And *still* the Trade Unions decided they didn't want it. (This included an offer to let the Miners Union take over the coal industry, which Arthur Scargill determinedly rejected, and then wrecked his own union in a foolish struggle with bosses who would not have been there had he been wiser.)

Motives were mixed. Traditional Labour – the people best represented by Jim Callaghan – thought that everything was fine and there was no need to change it. Then there were swarms of ineffective Trotskyists, and the declining but powerful mass of pro-Moscow Communists, both of whom were scared of saving 'capitalism' by reforming it. And even among the more sensible left, there was an irrational

fear of 'corporatism'.

Thatcher remained at first within the Butskellite consensus, carefully undermining Trade Union power but doing it in the name of individual freedom. But having briefly restored Butskellism, she then set to work demolishing it, believing that pre-1914 Britain must be restored. Labour could and should say that all of this was nonsense and did nothing more than give an unfair share of the wealth to the very rich, the 1% or More-Than-Millionaire class.

Then there's foreign policy: the blunders of Thatcher and Blair that we are still paying for. Thatcher got a tremendous boost from the Falklands War, where she upheld the rights of a small British community on a previously uninhabited island, while the left were paralysed by the magic words 'anti-Imperialism'. But the decision to destroy Saddam Hussein after his invasion of Kuwait was utterly foolish. Saddam was able and willing to develop Iraq in ways that were likely in the long run to create a broadly Westernised Iraq. Without him, the process reversed and Iraq fragmented. Kurds follow wider Kurdish concerns, including a possible war with Turkey. Shia Arabs have linked up with Iran. Sunni Arabs were fragmented but have now linked up with similar people in Syria to form ISIS. Iraqi Christians and several small religions that were there before Christianity had survived the Mongol Hoards and Timur (Tamerlane), among other conquerors, but are vanishing rapidly thanks to the 'help' offered by Bush Senior and Thatcher, and by their various successors.

The pattern of 'humanitarian interventions' that began in 1991 have been brutal, costly and futile. Inhumanitarian. A provocation that has encouraged Islamic extremism.

After the disaster of the Suez Crisis, the Macmillan-Wilson consensus was to wind down the Empire and avoid getting mixed up with US overseas interventions. Both of them kept Britain out of the Vietnam War (more accurately thought of as Vietnam's American War, following its war with the Japanese and then the French). But that sort of wisdom was abandoned by Thatcher and Blair, and we need to return to it.

Syria: Will the West Capitulate?

When the Syrian protests began, Assad offered open elections. A sensible or well-advised opposition would have given it a try, supposing that he might mean it. Or that if they tried it and he did not keep

his word, their moral case would be much stronger.

This is very seldom mentioned nowadays in Western media, so here's a reminder:

"Syria talks face immediate hurdle of Assad's refusal to step down

"Opposition says president's departure is non-negotiable, while late invitation to Iran threatens entire process...

"Assad has insisted throughout that he will not quit, while the opposition says he must go. It remains unclear how that circle can be squared.

"Assad was quoted on Sunday as saying he has no intention of stepping down and that his departure will not be on the table at the Geneva II conference.

"If we wanted to surrender we would have surrendered from the start,' the Interfax news agency reported Assad telling visiting Russian MPs. 'This issue is not under discussion. Only the Syrian people can decide who should take part in elections.'"³

When the crisis first erupted, many journalists noted that Assad did have a lot of support. Minorities and secular Sunni were scared of what might replace him. The protestors, encouraged by the West, were evidently not scared: but this was foolhardy and their cause is now wholly ruined. As with Iraq, any possibility of Syria ending up as a Westernised state in the next decade or two has wholly vanished. Indeed, neither Iraq nor Syria really exist any more. Smashing secular dictatorships has meant that 'the people' discovered that they are actually several different peoples whose natural ties are much more logically with peoples outside of the borders.

Encouraged by the West, the opposition thought "first we get rid of what exists. Then we can have an election in which everyone can say how wonderful we are". They did not want to risk the electorate delivering the 'wrong' verdict, a view the USA sympathises with.

Back in 2012, I had no suspicion that something like ISIS would erupt. But I was sure about the general trend:

"I recently heard a Western minister hoping that the Syrian opposition will exclude 'violent, extremist people'. Which is hardly realistic: those are the sort of people who take to war like a duck to water.

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

"It's quite possible that the Assad government will lose Damascus and retreat to the Alawite heartland. This would be

likely to be followed by total chaos, with Islamists likely to emerge on top. And Western pundits will once again view this as utterly unexpected and not the fault of the West."⁴

Pro-Western Arabs are a minority. The anti-Mubarak pro-Western protestors in Egypt turned out to be about 10%. The Muslim Brotherhood got 37.5% and harder-line Islamists got 27.8%.⁵ There, the pro-Western demonstrators went on protesting against the elected government, but the West ignored them and allowed a modified version of the original dictatorship to be restored.

In Syria, events seem to be drifting towards a similar outcome. Maybe with Bashir Assad stepping down but passing on power to someone similar. But this, sadly, is only likely to restore a rump Syria with its many internal divisions unresolved. It may have peace, as the Lebanon has, but it will probably never be healed.

China's Big Parades

Britain has a whole collection of commemorations of its various wars, and celebrations of their anniversaries. Yet China celebrating the 70th anniversary of the defeat of Japan was treated by the BBC as something abnormal and suspicious.

It actually fits a developing pattern. They used to be rare events:

"Military parades... hold a special place in the Chinese hierarchy of symbolic political events. In modern-day China, parades are a rare occurrence: there have been only three of them since 1960 – in 1984, 1999 and 2009.

"Notably, all of them marked the country's main national holiday – the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. According to the set rule, the next one should have been scheduled only for October 2019, to mark the country's 70th anniversary."⁶

It's actually a little more complex than that. According to the Wiki:

"Military parades, presided over by Chairman Mao Zedong, were held every year between 1949 and 1959. In September 1960, the Chinese leadership decided that in order to save funds and 'be frugal', large-scale ceremonies for National Day would only be held every ten years, with a smaller-scale ceremony every five years. The last large-scale celebration during the Mao era was in 1969. Large-scale celebrations did not take place for 14 years amidst the climax of the Cultural Revolution. Since then, the most prominent National Day celebrations have taken place in 1984 and 1999, at the 35th and 50th anniversaries respectively... The 2009 parade was the first and last time Hu Jintao oversaw this task."⁷

Xi Jinping is scheduled to be stepping down in 2022-23, so he's likely to be the

first leader since Mao to preside over *two* such events. But I doubt that's the reason. Much more interesting is who attended. *The Economist* summarised it thus:

"Thirty heads of state or government joined Mr Xi on the reviewing stand, including Vladimir Putin (hardly a notable guardian of the international order, but never mind). Their countries form a map of those parts of the world where China's clout is strong: Central Asia (leaders of four of its five 'stans' turned up), parts of South-East Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos); Africa (South Africa, Egypt, Sudan); as well as, increasingly, eastern Europe. The only surprising visitor was South Korea's Park Geun-hye, fresh from a tense stand-off with the North. She resisted American pressure to turn down the invitation, presumably in the hope of persuading China to exert some moderating influence on its capricious North Korean client."⁸

They leave out the most notable attendee; *Taiwan*. Beijing has been working hard to ensure that Taiwan, originally the exiled Kuomintang government defeated in 1949, continues to drift in their direction. Commemorations of the joint victory in 1945 is a neat way of including them. They even sent veterans, who marched as part of the parade along with veterans from the Communist forces.⁹

It went wider than that. "Chinese troops were not marching alone on the commemorative date: They were joined by their fellow soldiers from Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Pakistan, Serbia, Tajikistan and Russia."¹⁰ Mongolia is particularly significant: a neighbour that was once part of the Chinese Empire, and which had natural economic ties with China. But it is also a ceremony that quite a lot of the world could take part in.

If it is now to be a regular 10-year event, it will be interesting to see who turns up in 2025.

People's Car, People's Poison (Volkswagen)

A diesel engine has some advantages over a regular petrol engine. Its big *dis-advantage* that it typically burns hotter, and so turns more of the nitrogen in the air into unwanted oxides of nitrogen, polluting and dangerous to human health. There are ways round this, but they get in the way of the other main aim, fuel economy. Handling this honestly is tricky.

Handling it dishonestly was clearly a much more attractive option for the management of Volkswagen.

Since computer power is now so cheap, it has been natural and useful to including some simple devices within the car to adjust the engine for different conditions. But someone at Volkswagen must have realised that it was *also* possible to program

these devices to cheat. To spot when the car was being run in the artificial set-up of a pollution test,¹¹ and run the engine in a way that was wasteful of fuel but produced very few of those unwanted oxides of nitrogen. So the car could be sold as unusually fine with a combination of low pollution and low fuel consumption.

The Volkswagen came from the socialist side of Nazi rule: they did intend a better life for those they saw as 'good Germans', and had been succeeding until Hitler started a war he could easily have avoided. It was also a radically different design, which meant that a lot of 'captains of industry' disliked it and failed to see its potential. The British army occupying Germany controlled the main factory. They tried to keep production going, but Britain's Rootes Group turned it down.¹² (Roots later failed, was taken over by Chrysler in the 1960s and its remnants sold on to Peugeot and Renault in the late 1970s). Ford also rejected it, so the West Germans restarted it all by themselves, and it was a great success.¹³ It became what it had been meant to be, a 'People's Car' the literal meaning of the name, and very much functioned as such. Up until now.

I'd see it as one of many signs that the New Right are in sharp decline. They have failed to fix the economic disaster caused by speculators in 2008. They have had to junk their official creed to avoid a drastic collapse, just as they did in the almost-forgotten crisis of 1987. But the whole concentration on profit encourages cheating. The portion of 1960s radicalism that flowed into the New Right included most of the people who believed that cheating was fine in a basically unjust world. (Those who were after a new and higher moral standard almost all stayed on the left.) Not many had the sense to realise that cheating tends to fail drastically in the long run.

Tighter regulations are needed. After all, the Volkswagen cheat was written in the car's internal computer code and should have been blatant to an expert who took a proper look. Or rather, had there been the certainty of someone independent to inspect the code, the cheat would not have been tried. It is fair enough that car-makers should keep it confidential, since it is valuable. But in this and much else, a trustworthy agency upholding standards on behalf of the public. An unfashionable idea since the 1970s, but fashions change and the whole world is currently changing.

What's Rational?

The European Enlightenment vastly expanded the range of human thinking, but also included major errors. In particular, it had a notion of 'reason' that was self-ish, and largely ignored the vital process

of building fellow-feeling among humans with different needs and outlooks. It was this deficiency that encouraged the rival Romantic movement, which dealt better with these complex aspects of human life.

It also has encouraged a return to traditional beliefs and superstitions, several times in European and world history since the first advance of the Enlightenment. But this is unjustified. What typically passes for 'Rationalism' on social matters is mostly the abuse of reason.

There are really two forms of 'rationalism', used interchangeably depending on what the 'reasoner' wants the answer to be:

Version one assumes everyone is asocial and hypercalculating, does not care at all about others or social duty, but can also get instant answers about financial return.

Version two: everyone is still hypercalculating, but also hypersocial, seeing the lives of strangers as just as valuable as their own or as friends and relatives.

Real people are in between, mostly valuing self about those close to and those close above strangers. May sometimes value another above oneself: often the case with parents for children and sometimes children for parents.

Then there is Professor Dawkins' rehash of rationalism, in which *genes* make us self-ish. This too is nonsense. Genes function in an asocial manner, but can produce a hypersocial result: this happens with ants and bees, where most individuals have a short life and no genetic future. Mammals are more mixed: mothers make sacrifices and *sometimes* fathers help. Some mammals are social, living in groups, and we are an extreme case. But still mixed in our motivations, which accounts for the existence of religion, which baffles and confuses Professor Dawkins. Religion pushes us toward the hypersocial end of the spectrum, as do some non-religious creeds, most notably socialism. In extreme cases we can become genuinely hypersocial, seeing our own lives as no more important than other lives.

Note also that in its human aspect, hypersocial is different from conformist. People who care for others are more likely to be willing to suffer to correct what they see as an error by the group. If you care you deviate from the bourgeois norm, where it is better to be wrong with the majority than speak the truth and be unpopular.

Now consider 'Rational' economics, the core idea of the New Right. It assumes people Sociopathic or Asocial. It purports to describe capitalism, yet ignores both status and relationship, both of which are vital for actual business.

Having excluded human relationships, the economics of the New Right fails to understand that the profit motive is an anti-

social force, tending to destroy whatever society it operates within. That was Karl Marx's great insight, expressed in the *Communist Manifesto*. The complication is, a society that constrains the profit motive in just the right ways can run very efficiently. This saved the West from the 1940s to 1970s, allowing them to win the Cold War.

Since the 1980s, the official ideology of ruling parties in the West has been to revert to 19th century capitalism. This has to some degree damaged the system, with growth slowing wherever such 'reforms' are tried. But in practice, 'reforms' have been limited by the interests of the rich. There was a massive state bail-out after the 2008 crisis. But the ideology of free markets let it be run in such a way that the rich suffered very little, with ordinary people paying the cost of the gambling debts of the rich.

What They Believe That Ain't So.

"I believe it was Ben Franklin that said '*he that would give up just a little freedom for temporary security deserves neither freedom nor security*'."

This comes from an on-line discussion, and is both ignorant and wrong. Worse than ignorant: part of an aggressive unwisdom that leads to grave errors. There's another fine old US saying that covers it: *It isn't ignorance that makes you a fool: it's what you know that ain't so*.

Franklin's actual words were:

"Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."¹⁴

The misquotations are numerous: the Wikipedia has a whole list of them.¹⁵ But I'm surprised that people don't get suspicious. *Every* political system including that of the USA involves some limits on Liberty or Freedom. People can only denounce *all* limits if they are assuming, maybe unconsciously, that 'all' does not mean 'all' if it's a freedom they want to see limited. Or maybe *anything I don't like, isn't freedom*.

Franklin would presumably have said that while the US Constitution forbade many things and gave freedom to the legislature to forbid many more, it upheld *essential* Liberty. That's a reasonable viewpoint: what is *not* reasonable is the claim that the US has always been an upholder of Freedom. It maintained slavery for longer than most of Europe, including Tsarist Russia which abolished it in 1861. The USA was also slower than Europe to stop using state power to interfere with people's private sexual choices. Both sides in its 1860s Civil War introduced military conscription, with options for the rich to buy their way out of it. And so on.

Even more remarkably, Franklin said it

only once, and in the context of a demand that everyone should pay their taxes:

“The words appear originally in a 1755 letter that Franklin is presumed to have written on behalf of the Pennsylvania Assembly to the colonial governor during the French and Indian War. The letter was a salvo in a power struggle between the governor and the Assembly over funding for security on the frontier, one in which the Assembly wished to tax the lands of the Penn family, which ruled Pennsylvania from afar, to raise money for defense against French and Indian attacks. The governor kept vetoing the Assembly’s efforts at the behest of the family, which had appointed him. So to start matters, Franklin was writing not as a subject being asked to cede his liberty to government, but in his capacity as a legislator being asked to renounce his power to tax lands notionally under his jurisdiction. In other words, the ‘essential liberty’ to which Franklin referred was thus not what we would think of today as civil liberties but, rather, the right of self-governance of a legislature in the interests of collective security.

“What’s more the ‘purchase [of] a little temporary safety’ of which Franklin complains was not the ceding of power to a government Leviathan in exchange for some promise of protection from external threat; for in Franklin’s letter, the word ‘purchase’ does not appear to have been a metaphor. The governor was accusing the Assembly of stalling on appropriating money for frontier defense by insisting on including the Penn lands in its taxes—and thus triggering his intervention. And the Penn family later offered cash to fund defense of the frontier—as long as the Assembly would acknowledge that it lacked the power to tax the family’s lands. Franklin was thus complaining of the choice facing the legislature between being able to make funds available for frontier defense and maintaining its right of self-governance—and he was criticizing the governor for suggesting it should be willing to give up the latter to ensure the former.

“In short, Franklin was not describing some tension between government power and individual liberty. He was describing, rather, effective self-government in the service of security as the very liberty it would be contemptible to trade. Notwithstanding the way the quotation has come down to us, Franklin saw the liberty and security interests of Pennsylvanians as aligned.”¹⁶

Serving God and Serving Men

I had to look up ‘Dorothy Day’ to see just what was so significant about the Pope letting her have the title of Servant of God, and opening the road for her possible canonization.

What I found was remarkable was her actual history, as set out in the Wiki:

“American journalist, social activist, Christian socialist and devout Catholic convert. She advocated the Catholic economic theory of distributism. In 1917, Day was imprisoned as a member of Alice Paul’s Silent Sentinels, and in the 1930s she worked closely with fellow activist Peter Maurin to establish the Catholic Worker Movement, a pacifist movement that continues to combine direct aid for the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. Day co-founded the Catholic Worker newspaper in 1931, and served as its editor from 1933 until her death in 1980.

“Day had an abortion as a young woman and later gave birth to a daughter. She was never married in a religious or civil law ceremony, although common-law marriage laws may have applied to her co-habitations with at least two men, at different times.”¹⁷

Saint Dorothy, Unmarried Mother? We are indeed in a new era. But in the context of the Republic of Ireland having voted decisively to legalise Gay Marriage, I assume that the Catholic hierarchy now see the need to change.

God Save Our Pompous Sycophants

In the row over Jeremy Corbyn failing to sing the National Anthem, little attention has been paid to what a silly and offensive anthem it is. Do they listen with their brains switched off?

We are the only country in the world where the anthem says nothing at all about the country itself.

We are the only country in the world where the anthem consists entirely of sycophantic praise for the ruler. Even North Korea has a decent official anthem. The Wiki entry for this anthem, known as *Aegukka* (and not to be confused with *Aegukga*, the South Korean anthem) says that internally it is mostly replaced by two hymns in praise of their first two rulers.¹⁸ But even these are not as sycophantic as ‘*God Save the Queen*’ (or King, when there is one). They do mention the nation as well as the ruler.

Our anthem also enshrines partisan politics, dating from the brief panic in 1745 when the Jacobite cause came close to success.¹⁹ And the Jacobites had an excellent case, trying to restore the man who would have been king had not a parliament elected by the rich chosen to set aside the normal rules and ignore all non-Protestant heirs. It’s not exactly anti-Scottish, because more Scots were against the Jacobites than for them. There were more Scots fighting for King George at the butchery of the Battle of Culloden than were still supporting ‘Bonnie Prince Charlie’. Still, it is bad

to have the supposed symbol of unity enshrine such a cause.

Maybe Britain needs a new National Anthem. Maybe Labour should propose this.

Nepal – Peace At Last?

Nepal had an interesting part-revolution caused by a highly successful Maoist movement. But then politics got bogged down in a long debate about a new constitution. The 2008 elections to this body made the Maoists much the largest party, but they could produce no definite outcome. The Maoists lost a lot of seats in new elections held in 2012, but a solution was still difficult. Only now have the main parties got together and produced what will hopefully be a functional system.

For me, this bit of history suggests that Lenin was entirely wise to disperse the Constituent Assembly and set up a coherent authoritarian government in October 1917. A clear majority had voted for some sort of socialism, but there would have been grounds for endless dithering, and Russia would not have been left alone to work its way to coherence. Between the first moderate revolution and the Bolshevik revolution, the moderate government was nearly overthrown by General Kornilov, who died in 1918 but was the founder and initial leader of the White counter-revolutionary movements. Elsewhere in Europe, numerous governments east of Berlin that had established British-style multi-party government had abandoned them by 1933: the German Weimar Republic was actually one of the last to fall. Copying the externals of the British system did not give new-minted political systems the informal understandings and norms that made it workable in Britain.

In Nepal, they have successfully dumped the monarchy and got a basic multi-party political system, but what comes next is anyone’s guess.

“The new republic will become a federal one. The Maoists’ proposal of federalism was later adopted by many more mainstream parties because of the diversity of Nepal. Its people speak over 100 languages. They’re split by divisions such as high- and low-caste, Nepali-speaking v speakers of indigenous languages, hill ethnicities v lowland ethnicities, and gender divisions, with high-caste men from the hills almost supremely dominant up to now.

“The new document has drawn up provisional boundaries for seven states but their names are to be decided by their eventual assemblies and a commission has yet to fix their final boundaries. Nepali society has become deeply polarised on whether the states should be ethnically delineated...

“Many members of traditionally

marginalised groups fear that the constitution will still work against them as it's been rushed through by established parties which - including the Maoists - are dominated by high-caste, mostly male, leaders...

"Hindu groups that want the restoration of the country's officially Hindu status (abolished nine years ago) are not happy.

"The new draft enshrines secularism - although it is a moderate secularism, which says the state is responsible for protecting ancient religious practices, and also makes the cow, sacred to Hindus, the national animal."²⁰

Be Harassed To Death, Or Die Badly

"Nearly 90 people a month are dying after being declared fit for work, according to new data that has prompted campaigners and Labour leadership contenders to call for an overhaul of the government's welfare regime...

"Ministers insisted that the data could not be used to link claimant deaths to its welfare reforms, but the figures focused attention on the government's fit-for-work assessment process, which has been dogged by controversy in recent years."²¹

Government policies ensure that there are very few jobs for fit young people: but *also* that the needy will be harassed into paid employment. Part of a general policy of shifting the blame.

Meantime the House of Commons in a free vote has upheld the principle that people who are definitely dying and without hope must still be left to suffer, unless they have the means to be taken to a clinic in Switzerland and get a decent exit.

"MPs have rejected plans for a right to die in England and Wales in their first vote on the issue in almost 20 years.

"In a free vote in the Commons, 118 MPs were in favour and 330 against plans to allow some terminally ill adults to end their lives with medical supervision.

"In a passionate debate, some argued the plans allowed a 'dignified and peaceful death' while others said they were 'totally unacceptable'.

"Pro-assisted dying campaigners said the result showed MPs were out of touch.

"Under the proposals, people with fewer than six months to live could have been prescribed a lethal dose of drugs, which they had to be able to take themselves. Two doctors and a High Court judge would have needed to approve each case."²²

All sorts of excuses are given. But the decision is clearly a hold-over from Christian tradition, that has always had a violent objection to all sorts of suicide. There is little basis for this in the actual

Bible, but Christian traditions of all sort tend to ignore the Bible when it fails to match their prejudices.

Guns and Racism in the USA

The on-line question-and-answer forum Quora is a great place to encounter unexpected facts. Since I'd never believed the story that possession of guns allowed people to overthrow bad governments, I went to Quora and asked if in the USA it had ever actually happened.²³

That's when I learned some unexpected new facts. People knew of a couple of instances in which armed force had been used to force out corrupt local government. And there was the part-successful Dorr Rebellion to democratise politics in Rhode Island in the 1840s. But the main instances were white racist use of force to end the brief experiment with black people voting in the former Confederacy. The Meridian race riot of 1871, the Colfax massacre of 1873, the Election Riot of 1874 in Alabama, the Jaybird-Woodpecker War of 1888-9, the Wilmington insurrection of 1898 in North Carolina. It's a suitable topic for a popular book: a documentation of how the Klu Klux Klan was just the unrespectable edge of something much bigger.

Of course there was collusion by higher authorities, which didn't believe in racial equality and were happy to see it suppressed once it was clear that the South was not going to try to secede again. Only in the 1960s was the result of this racism reversed.

And then, sadly, most US blacks decided that getting their own guns was 'the American way'. It was, but in this case the American way was a decidedly inferior way. Black-on-black killing has ever since blighted their new freedom.

Racism In Britain

The British Empire had no coherent policy on race. In most colonies, there was a strict racial hierarchy. But in Britain itself, things were much vaguer and rich non-whites got a lot of acceptance.

But might still get persecuted by the authorities, or discriminated against. There was a general rule against non-white officers. And attacks on mixed-race marriages, particularly when it was the woman who was white.

"Our story about the forced repatriation of Chinese sailors who had been recruited for the Merchant Navy during World War Two told of the devastation for those families left behind. Barbara Janecek shared her own tale in response.

"She had read about Yvonne Foley, whose father Nan Young, a Chinese ship engineer, was sent back to the Far East following the end of the war. He was one of thousands of recruits from Shanghai,

Singapore and Hong Kong who lived in Liverpool."²⁴

British racism was informal because there were very few non-whites in Britain before the 1950s. When this changed, it took a determined effort to drive racism underground. Largely fought by the left, and obstructed by the Tories. The local Tories successfully used the slogan 'if you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour' in 1964 at Smethwick.²⁵

Boeing in China

"For the first time ever, Boeing is locating an aircraft production facility abroad - in China - as part of a bundled deal to sell 300 new planes to Chinese airlines and leasing companies. Companies moving production to China is an old story, of course, but Boeing isn't just new to the Chinese market - this is the first time it's ever built a factory abroad.

"The Chinese want to develop a domestic airplane manufacturing industry. But building large airplanes is difficult. So they've been playing Boeing and its major competitor [Airbus] off each other to get both companies to help teach a Chinese company how to do it

"In total, the planes Boeing has agreed to sell are worth about \$38 billion - an enormous sum of money. That's spread across three separate airlines and an aircraft leasing company, but all three airlines are state-owned enterprises, and the leasing company is a subsidiary of a bank that's also state-owned."²⁶

It may not be significant in itself. "The new factory will focus on painting and assembling twin-engine 737 aircraft manufactured in the US."²⁷ But it is typical of how China, having kept state control, can put pressure on the USA rather more efficiently than the USA can put pressure on them.

And of course it is the USA that owes China money. The USA that would face a massive crisis if China ever stopped buying its debt.

Tea-Party Suicide

The 'Boston Tea-Party' was about protectionism: cheap tea owned by the East India Company was kept out. The wider issue was 'no taxation *without representation*': the legitimacy of tax was not disputed. The right-wingers who chose 'Tea Party' truly are ignorant of their own history.

And still ideologically obsessed. One factor in the Boeing deal with China may have been the recent suspension of something called the Export-Import Bank of the United States. Its function is to finance and insure foreign purchases of United States goods for customers unable or unwilling to accept credit risk. This was part of the very successful Mixed-Economy strategy

that let the USA win the Cold War. But the New Right are certain that it is A VERY BAD THING. Liberals, having no coherent answer, have mostly gone along with it and allowed the bank's charter to lapse. True, there was some doubtful accountancy, but that should be seen as secondary. It is one more step downward for the USA.

The road downwards for the USA was begun by Ronald Nelson Reagan saying during a time of crisis that the state could not solve problems and that they should all be returned to the 'free market'. The end is indeed likely to be damnation for the USA.

Snippets

Democracy – Not Made In Britain

The USA was not defined as a democracy. The US Constitution defined relationships between states and left it open how each state defined its electorate. But by the 1830s it had democratised quite smoothly, and set an example for the rest of the world. A better example than Revolutionary France, which had experimented with giving the vote to all adult males, but found that no coherent politics emerged.

Britain meantime was a mixture, with power shared between a monarch, an aristocracy with the House of Lords and a wider electorate in the House of Commons. But not a *democratic* electorate. US Founding Father James Madison said in *The Federalist Papers* that half of the British House of Commons was elected by less than 6000 voters. (Letter number 56.) That was the system of Rotten Burroughs that existed till 1832, when the vote was extended to the richest one-seventh of adult males.

Greece – Tsipras Rules OK

It's normal for voters to lose courage in the polling booth. But in the recent Greek election, the voters kept their nerve. It had been expected that Syriza would be about level with the centre-right party that did so much to create the original crisis. In fact they were 7% ahead. They and their coalition partners lost a few seats but are still secure.

Greece has a 3% threshold for seats. The left-wing break-away from Syriza got 2.9% and so have no seats. The Socialists recovered a little. But mostly it will be business as usual.

Or business as usual until challenges to the consensus build up elsewhere in Europe. A very real prospect.

Salt Waters of Mars

Scientists were already confident that Mars at one time had quite a lot of water. There were any number of signs in the rocks. But the surface *now* appeared

dry, apart from some water-ice at one pole. Was definitely very dry where the various landers and rovers have been.

The new discovery is about dark streaks that are seasonal. Careful study has eliminated other possible explanations: they are extremely salty water flowing underground.

That's all we know for now: the current rovers are nowhere near any such areas. But we can now expect a dedicated rover to be prepared to study those areas. If life is there, it should be visible through a microscope, as it is in sea water on Earth.

If there are no signs of life in this salty water, that would almost certainly mean no life at all. If Martian life existed underground, it would have adapted, just as life on Earth has colonised all of the environments that seem extreme to our sort of life.

A lack of life on Mars would be a huge disappointment. But also an indication that life in the universe is much rarer than most people believe. And should be cherished rather than exploited on our own planet.

Catalans

Catalans have now elected a majority of representatives who want to quit Spain. Spain does not want to let them go. It may also be that a majority of Catalans would want to stay, but the central government evidently does not want to set the precedent and establish a *right* to quit. Something to keep an eye on.

Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* can be found at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairs-magazine.com/past-issues/>. And at my own website, <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

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Froggy

News From Across The Channel



French foreign policy

France is trying to cut a figure on the international scene. The day before the opening of the United Nations General Assembly on the occasion of the UN's 70th anniversary, France announced it had bombed IS positions inside Syria. France made strikes on the territory of an independent state itself engaged in the struggle against IS, and without a UN mandate. France was just following the example of the US, who have been doing the same thing. France is however on this occasion not under American command, as it is when it is bombing Iraq. The Syrian sky is however divided into corridors between the different countries, allied or adversaries, which are involved, and therefore France is cooperating with others while over Syria. In Iraq France made 220 strikes, 5% of the total number, since September 2014.

France is however firmly in the American camp; this handicaps her in her desire to be independent, and in her relations with Russia and with countries in the Southern hemisphere.

As for the refugees created by American and European policy: France does not want them. 80% of the French said they wanted 'border control', a euphemism for 'no refugees'.

Hollande was not in the Assembly when Vladimir Putin made his speech; otherwise he would have heard these salutary words:

'The export of revolutions, this time of so-called "democratic" ones, continues. [...] But how did it actually turn out? Rather than bringing about reforms, aggressive foreign interference has resulted in a flagrant destruction of national institutions and ways of life. Instead of the triumph of democracy and progress, we got violence, poverty and a social disaster. And nobody cares about human rights, including the right to life.

I cannot help asking those who have caused this situation: do you realise now what you have done?"

After his bomb strikes, Hollande stood up at the General Assembly and called for regime change in Syria. As Putin said, he is one of those who have learnt nothing of past mistakes.

7 planes were used for this bombing operation, which 'might be repeated in the next few weeks if necessary,' compared with the 400 planes the Americans deploy in the region. So far, France had only bombed IS in Iraq, refusing to follow the Americans into Syria. The justification for this change of policy is 'defence of French territory', in virtue of article 51 of the UN Charter. It is an interpretation of article 51, which was meant for armed aggression by a foreign army, something observable, whereas here the risk exists, but can't be pinpointed. The precedent is set for any country to bomb the territory of another, claiming a risk to the security of their territory.

Cooperatives

In July Froggy mentioned former Employees of Sealink Channel ferries who formed a Cooperative Company (SCOP) MyFerryLink to run three ships of the former company. Action by the British Competition Commission led to its ceasing to operate.

This might give the impression that Cooperative Companies are created in difficult circumstances and doomed to fail. In fact there are 2700 SCOP enterprises, most of them the result of a transfer of a healthy enterprise to its employees, for example after a retirement. They account for 50 000 employees.

A Regional SCOP Union provides training and help in the initial stages, up to a year, to turn employees into co-owners with a global vision of their firm able to take strategic decisions. All co-owners vote on strategic decisions, including wages and wage differentials. They do not receive more subsidies than ordinary firms and only succeed if they are economically viable. Banks will lend to them once the viability of the firm is established, the Regional Union sometimes acting as guarantor.

Employees are co-owners rather than shareholders; profits are shared but at least 40% goes into reserves. Some SCOPs do have investors, to whom they pay dividends. Generally they are local firms keen on preserving local employment and local suppliers. They are one of 15 types of cooperatives, which overall represent

about 10% of French employees, and between 7 and 10% of PIB. Some are well known firms, everyone who has been to a French restaurant or café will have seen the sign 'Chèque Déjeuner', which is a coupon exchangeable for a meal given by employers to employees, as an alternative to a canteen. Some are much talked about in the media, for example the Fralib, ex-Unilever employees who kept open a factory making Lipton tea bags and Elephant herb teas. Unilever had decided to transfer the factory to Poland. After four years of dispute Unilever handed over 19,26 million euros, plus the machines, (which the workers had maintained the while) and the workers invested their redundancy payments into financing the take-over of the firm. They now have contracts with the large supermarket chain Auchan for their products.

In line with their 'keep things local' philosophy, they are trying, among other things, to revive the French production of lime blossom, which used to be 400 tons a year and is now 10, since cheaper *tilleul* was imported from South America, taken to Hamburg and then to Poland for conditioning.

Gay marriage

A lesbian couple sued a Town Hall official in Marseille, insisting that she deserved prison, for not conducting their wedding and getting someone else to do it in her place. The official was sentenced to 5 months in prison, suspended, plus 1200 Euros to be paid to each partner, and a sum to an anti homophobia charity.

The problem was that the person asked by the official to conduct the wedding instead of her was not authorized to conduct weddings and the wedding had to be done again. Sabrina Hout had also signed the papers, as if she had conducted the ceremony. The mayor of one of the Marseille districts, Samia Ghali, celebrated the second marriage, and invited the couple to a cocktail reception afterwards, to make up for the unpleasantness. The couple still insisted on taking the deputy mayor, Sabrina Hout, to court, saying that 'elected representatives must leave their religious convictions behind when they enter the Town Hall.' The judge obviously agreed. The Taubira gay marriage law is no laughing matter.

Does the CIPD really point the way?

Mark Langhammer looks at a report on education and training by the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development

It has been the outlook of *Labour Affairs* (and its predecessor, the *Labour and Trade Union Review*) for some time that a more productive Britain, paying its way in the world, can only come about with an alternative economic and industrial vision for the UK. With the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, the emergence of Tax-research-UK's Richard Murphy as an economic advisor and the early articulation of ideas such as a UK investment bank to be capitalised by cancelling private sector tax reliefs and subsidies; and 'people's quantitative easing' (which means printing money but in a way that directs new money into economic and social projects that add value) there is at least the prospect of an alternative.

At present, the wastage of the talents of our workforce, and particularly our young people, within a "fly by night", low skills, low pay, job market is ubiquitous. We all have anecdotes of well qualified graduates waiting tables, pulling pints in bars, working as receptionists or as tour guides in the tourist trade.

A recent report of the CIPD (Chartered Institute for Personnel Development, the professional body for HR and people development.) - [Over-qualification and skills mismatch in the graduate labour market](#) - calls for a national debate about how to create more high-skilled jobs as graduate over-qualification reaches saturation point

The UK has too many over-qualified graduates entering non-graduate jobs. Too many will not realise returns on their personal investment in higher education, carrying an unnecessary debt burden for too many young people entering the labour market.

The report finds that the increasing number of graduates in the labour market has significantly outstripped the creation of high-skilled jobs, leading to negative consequences. These include the growth of "credentialism", where employers using degrees as a requirement when recruiting for traditionally non-graduate roles, despite no resultant change to the skills requirement for these jobs. This has led to a situation where many graduates are simply replacing non-graduates in less demanding jobs, or entering jobs where the demand for graduate skills is non-existent. This trend has particularly affected occupations where apprenticeships have been historically important, such as construction and manufacturing

The report, also makes important international comparisons, suggesting that graduate over-qualification is a particular problem for the UK

The UK has the second highest graduation rate in the OECD (54%) with only Iceland having a greater proportion. Germany, for example, a vastly more productive economy, has a graduation rate of just 31%

The growth of graduates significantly outstripping the growth of high-skilled jobs generated by the labour market is prevalent among most OECD countries, but is particularly pronounced in the UK

The UK has 58.8% of graduates in non-graduate jobs, a percentage exceeded only by Greece and Estonia. In contrast, countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Slovenia, which have a history of strong vocational training, have 10% or less of graduates in non-graduate jobs

The UK also has one of the highest levels of self-reported over-qualification among graduates in Europe.

The CIPD report notes that graduate skills are under-utilized and graduate over-qualification is squeezing lower qualified workers out of jobs. This conveyor belt of graduates are unable to affect or address poor UK productivity growth. Instead, they are left deeply indebted, with the Government's own research indicating that 45% of graduates will never be able to repay their student loans.

To compound this, a separate report by the Resolution Foundation "[A Steady Job](#)", reinforces this, noting a drop in the rate of "job-hopping" since the 2008 Crash, leading to a labour market freeze, with careers stalling. It notes that 30 year olds (those born in 1983) have taken a wage hit of £2800 per annum on average. It describes limited movement in the job market, with episodic (at best) employment at the start of careers, and very limited movement between employment sectors.

The CIPD report concludes that the Government needs to "take stock" on whether Higher Education delivers the desired returns for graduates? Or for society? When it comes to solutions, the CIPD is timid. It recommends better careers advice, without addressing that most careers advice is dispensed by teachers or lecturers as a "bit part" of their real jobs, and with limited labour market information at their disposal.

Effectively, our young people are being asked to make career choices by "second guessing" the labour market - like driving without a dashboard and with only vague ideas of their intended destination.

The English government's general response has been to increase the number of Apprenticeships available, without addressing the variable quality and "currency" of these apprenticeships. Even with the increase of the apprenticeship rate to £3.30 per hour in October, the rate stands at less than half the statutory minimum wage. It remains to be seen whether George Osborne's announcement for an employer levy to pay for post 16 apprenticeships in England will impact.² In practice, more apprenticeships are rightly seen by young people as dubious "schemes" - palliatives to the problem of long term or youth unemployment, rather than career developing VET programmes.

Another perceived pressure on the traditional indigenous working class is that the UK remains attractive to immigrant labour, with net migration to the UK last estimated at 333,000 per annum. In fact, three-quarters of all UK employment growth is accounted for by non-UK nationals, with 3.2m non UK nationals now working here. Instead of blaming immigrants for "taking our jobs" we should try to understand more about why immigrants are attracted? Or, more pointedly, why they are more attractive to UK employers.

Commentary

So, what to do?

In Scotland, the Edinburgh Government has undertaken modest work on interventions to stimulate the utilization of skills (and recognize the need to plan and intervene in the economy to stimulate better jobs) as well as commissioning a potentially ground breaking "[Working Better Together](#)" review of industrial relations under Jim Mather³. Taken together, the trajectory of Scotland's efforts are towards a collaborative, Scandinavian economic and industrial relations settlement.

Labour Affairs has long argued for reasoned Industrial strategy, access to 'patient' finance with reformed conception of the purpose of banking, creating clear blue water between utility and Investment banking, implementing the Tobin (Robin Hood) tax, with a New Deal in banking biased to promoting industrial development and better quality jobs. Tax Fairness, such as argued for by Tax Research UK⁴ remains central to boosting the UK economy. We have argued that workers control (or workers voice, as it is politely termed today) has a role to play, along with structured, employment focussed vocational education and training. A reconception of the state as a driver of innovation and good work, as a "player" in economic development, such as proposed by Marianna Mazzucato⁵ is necessary. Under a Corbyn leadership, Labour could reinvigorate the modest blueprints for an alternative economy of such as the Compass group⁶ as well as revisiting the policy proposals arising from Jon Cruddas's review.

There is also a need to do more to legislate for a more broadly based, civilised, conception of company law. Traditionally, companies were invented by "companions" who banded together to share risk to perform a vital economic or other function from which they would profit. Mainstream commentators such as Will Hutton have long argued that companies should petition the state for a licence to practice and accept reciprocal societal obligations in return. This classic conception of company has been debased by the narrow notion of

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Industrial relations: A tale of Two Press Releases

Mark Langhammer compares press releases on industrial relations by Whitehall and Edinburgh

It is clear that there are widely divergent approaches to Industrial Relations being pursued respectively in England and Scotland. Take these two press releases, from respective Governments north and south of Hadrian's Wall. There is really no need to comment further.

New steps to tackle taxpayer-funded support to trade unions

HM Government - Press Releases - Cabinet Office
06/08/2015

The government will abolish 'check off', the outdated practice of state-run union subscription payments, in the public sector.

outdated practice of state-run union subscription payments to be ended, removing the taxpayer-funded administrative burden on employers

union subscriptions can be paid by direct debit, modernising the relationship with trade unions and giving public sector workers greater consumer protection

removal of 'check off' in the public sector to be included in the Trade Union Bill, as part of curtailling public cost of 'facility time' subsidies

The government has today announced its intention to abolish the practice of 'check off' across all public sector organisations, modernising the relationship

between employees and trade unions.

Currently – under the check off process – many public sector workers who are union members have their subscriptions taken directly from their salary, administered by their employer. This was a practice introduced at a time when many people didn't have bank accounts, and before direct debits or digital payments existed as a convenient and secure way for people to transfer money.

The removal of check off will modernise the relationship between employees and their trade unions, while removing the burden of administration from the employer. The move also gives the employee greater control over their subscription, allowing them to set up their own direct debit with their chosen trade union, and giving them greater consumer protection under the Direct Debit Guarantee.

Matthew Hancock said:

"In the 21st century era of direct debits and digital payments, public resources should not be used to support the collection of trade union subscriptions."

"It's time to get rid of this outdated practice and modernise the relationship between trade unions and their members. By ending check off we are bringing greater transparency to employees – making it easier for them to choose whether or not to pay subscriptions and which

union to join."

The government intends to update legislation in the Trade Union Bill to facilitate the policy being adopted across the whole of the public sector. This change is part of the government's commitment to tackle 'facility time' – the taxpayer-funded subsidies given to trade unions.

This announcement follows the successful removal of check off by a number of central government departments including the Home Office, HM Revenue & Customs and Ministry of Defence.

Scottish Government Fairer Work practices

Scottish Government - Press Releases
10/08/2015

£100,000 as part of formal response to the Working Together review.

The STUC will receive £100,000 to implement recommendations on progressive workplace practices.

The announcement was made by Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work Roseanna Cunningham as part of the Scottish Government's formal response to the Working Together review in Inverness.

The Cabinet Secretary has highlighted the importance of having strong Trade Unions as key social partners that have an important role to play with employees and their employers, an essential component when developing more equal, fairer and productive work places.

During a visit to the Inverness leisure centre the Cabinet Secretary learned about the centre's trade union good practices and the implementation of the Living Wage, she said:

"Last year's Working Together review – led by Jim Mather – set out a clear view as to how a more collaborative and productive relationship could be developed, based on more inclusive dialogue between employers and employees.

"Since the report was published, The Scottish Government has implemented a number of changes, the first of those being the creation of my own post as Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work Skills and Training and the establishment of Fair Work Convention. The Convention has now met four times, and it has set its remit to deliver a blueprint for what Fair Work should look like in Scotland, by the end of March 2016.

"We have been clear in our support for the recommendations of the Working Together Review and work has been continuing in a number of areas. This formal response announced today now gives me the opportunity to set out how we are taking the recommendations forward in the

Continued From Page 15

short term shareholder return, a notion which will consider quicker routes to shareholder return than investing in people to develop a great organisation. Merger and acquisition to extend market share, tying senior management to stock market performance through share options, increased managerial opportunism and the use of performance related pay for middle and junior managers to effect cost minimisation all serve to reinforce the short term view of the company, rather than the need to invest in skills development.

We need to develop a narrative around what a broadly defined and progressive company, with environmental and societal obligations, should look like. Without this sort of approach, better quality jobs and real hope for our young people are a distant prospect.

In Britain, that it takes the CIPD to point our movement in the direction of better quality jobs is a sad indictment. Corbynomics has, at least, made a start to setting out an alternative vision.

(Endnotes)

1 See at <http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/over-qualification-and-skills-mismatch-graduate-labour-market.pdf>

2 See at <http://feweek.co.uk/2015/07/08/summer-budget-osborne-announces-apprenticeship-levy-for-large-businesses/>

3 See at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/08/4647>

4 See at <http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/>

5 See at <http://marianamazucato.com/the-entrepreneurial-state/>

6 See at <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/plan-b-a-good-economy-for-a-good-society/>

context of the new focus on Fair Work.

“Unlike the approach of Westminster through its Trade Union Bill, we believe a modern and progressive approach to industrial relations and to trade unionism is at the very heart of being able to achieve Fair Work. I am delighted to announce funding of £100,000 to the STUC to help them develop the capacity of Trade Union representatives through leadership and equality programmes some of the key the recommendations of the review.

“Fair Work means that everyone should be entitled to expect access to the labour market, job security, fair reward, opportunities for personal development, and a say in how their workplace operates. It means that access to work and progress in the workplace should be on an equitable basis, and people should not be disadvantaged by background or circumstance.

“This Government is committed to creating a more equal society and we will only be fairer and more successful when we end the blight of low pay and when all employers see their employees as assets in which to invest, to nurture and grow.”

The Cabinet Secretary was joined by Grahame Smith, General Secretary of STUC at the Leisure centre visit, he said:

“The Scottish Government’s very positive response to the recommendations of the Review demonstrates an appreciation of the progressive role of trade unions which stands in stark contrast to the vindictive approach of the Westminster Government.

“While the UK Government’s Trade Union Bill starts from the false premise that unions are bad and our activities need to be curtailed, the Scottish Government has actively sought to promote the very constructive role unions’ play in the workplace and in the wider economy and civil society in reducing inequality and poverty and improving productivity and economic success.

“Through the Fair Work Convention, the creation of which was the central recommendation of the Review, unions, employers and Government in Scotland have the opportunity work together to establish a distinctive approach to industrial relations and fair employment practices in the UK, akin to the approach in the most successful European economies.”

James Martin, Chief Executive at the multi-award winning Inverness Leisure centre, said:

“I am delighted that the Cabinet Secretary has decided to visit Inverness Leisure to see the work we are undertaking across our organisation. Employing over 150 members of staff at the centre, we are obviously one of the largest individual employers in the city. I am extremely proud of the work we have undertaken

in terms of our staff relations, having most recently become a Living Wage employer across the Charity. I am pleased to have worked with the Union and staff representatives to deliver the Trustees’ objectives of having no redundancies and continually improving the level of service provision to our one million visitors every year despite an increasingly challenging financial backdrop.”

Notes:

The Scottish Government’s formal response to the review can be found here:

<http://gov.scot/Publications/2015/08/7871>

The Working Together: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland Review reported to the Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women’s Employment publishing its report on 13 August 2014. The independent review group was chaired by Jim Mather and included representatives from trade unions, employers and academics. The review was initiated amid a recognition that there is a direct connection

between well-rewarded and sustained employment, progressive workplace policies, productivity and innovation, and had its origins in the regular discussions between the Scottish Government and the STUC. Its underpinning purpose was to recognise and promote the positive role played by trade unions in the workplace, in industry, in the economy and in wider civil society.

It underlined the Scottish Government’s support for effective trade unionism, fair employment practice, and greater partnership between employers and unions. A central facet of the review’s remit was therefore to ‘focus on measures which would optimise the relationships that link trade unions, employers and government’.

The £100k funding for STUC will support two projects – the introduction of equality reps and Union Leadership Development Programme.

STRIDENT

I make torture equipment for the
Saudis
tasers for out-of-order rowdies
tanks that killed Iraq
bayonets commando knives human
flesh
to hack
shells to finish-off resistance
in Afghanistan
drones with immediate execution
being the plan
I made the H-Bomb
never heard of the Rosenbergs
ignore the Japanese maelstrom
bullets by the billions
guided missiles on fighter planes
riding pillion
and it was those nuclear submarines
I built
that bought my housing dream
and Trident will build an extension
and contribute to my pension
every hellfire missile pays the bills
every bomb dropped sees my family
eat their fill
every machine-gun a bowl of
cornflakes
for the armaments skilled
I don’t go to the coffee shops of North
London
for an academic debate
it’s down the pub to share the joys
of a
macho-warrior state.

Wilson John Haire.

WHAT IS SAUCE...

Did they ask at the border
can we come in
though it would lead to murder
the death of kith and kin

When asked if there was anything to
declare
and open your bags please
that started the glare
for they you don’t tease

The queue was growing longer
the tanks the ammo trucks
the khaki the general staff with war
to ponder
the accountants in charge of the
bucks

Overhead the aircraft were stacking
with bombs and missiles
eager to send a whole country
packing
but don’t push be patient awhile

We come in peace my friends
pest control whole governments
baited
the cure may be worse than the
illness
but it mends
you may not agree but it’s fated

And fated it was
as millions hit the road
right into Fortress Europe’s jaws
into the gullets of nations, of no fixed
abode

Wilson John Haire.

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

The Trade Union Bill

Sajid Javid presented the Second Reading of the Trade Union Bill on 14 September. The debate began at 3.35pm and ended at 10pm. Given the importance of the subject, the speeches from Sajid Javid and Angela Eagle, the new Shadow Business Secretary are published in full with interjections from Backbench MPs.

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and President of the Board of Trade (Sajid Javid):

I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I see two or more new faces on the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon, and I want to begin my congratulating my new opposite number, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), on her appointment. She is certainly no stranger to Westminster; when she was first elected, I was just out of university. I believe that today marks the first time that our paths have crossed at the Dispatch Box, but I have long admired her skills as a parliamentarian and I look forward to working with her in the months ahead. I wish her all the very best.

I am also delighted to welcome the new Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), to the Front Bench. I congratulate him on his resounding victory in the election and wish him the very best of luck in his new role. He and I have two things in common, Mr Speaker. The first is that you will never catch either of us trying to eat a bacon sandwich. The second is that, like Members on both sides of the House, we both came into politics because we wanted to leave the world a better place than we found it. Obviously, you could put a rather large piece of cigarette paper between our ideas on how to achieve that, but his goal is the same as mine: a society that is fairer, more transparent and more just, in which the needs of the many are not outweighed by the wants of a few.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):

He is going to withdraw the Bill.

Sajid Javid:

That is wishful thinking by the new Leader of the Opposition.

Since the industrial revolution, Britain's trade unions have done much to help to deliver that fairer society that I was describing. They have helped to secure higher wages, safer workplaces and stronger employee rights. They have fought for social justice and campaigned for freedom and democracy, and they have supplied the House with some of its most eloquent and influential Members, including Leaders of

the Opposition.

Unions helped my father when he first worked in the cotton mills. They helped him again when a whites-only policy threatened to block him from becoming a bus driver. Just as the workplace has evolved and improved since that time, so the trade unions and the laws that govern them have developed too. I hope that, in 2015, no one would argue for the return of the closed shop, the show-of-hands votes in dimly lit car parks or the wildcat walk-outs enforced by a handful of heavies. That is why the Labour Government repealed not a single piece of union legislation during their 13 years in power. Now it is time for Britain's unions to take the next step, and the Bill will help to achieve just that.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green):

The Secretary of State is pretending that the Bill is about democracy rather than being a vindictive attack on working people. If it is really about democracy and opening things up, why is he not lifting the ban on unions balloting online and in the workplace, which would be precisely the way to make a modern democracy work?

Sajid Javid:

The hon. Lady will see that democracy and accountability are at the heart of the Bill—[*Interruption.*] She will see that a lot more clearly as I make progress with my opening remarks. Despite what people may have read in some reports, this Bill is not a declaration of war on the trade union movement. It is not an attempt to ban industrial action. It is not an attack on the rights of working people. It will not force strikers to seek police approval for their slogans or their tweets. It is not a reprise of Prime Minister Clement Attlee sending in troops to break up perfectly legal stoppages. It is simply the latest stage in the long journey of modernisation and reform. It will put power in the hands of the mass membership; bring much-needed sunlight to dark corners of the movement; and protect the rights of everyone in this country—those who are union members and those who are not, and those hard-working men and women who are hit hardest by industrial action.

Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab):

If this Bill was to be supported by the workers generally, some trade unions would already have given it support. This Bill is opposed by all those unions affiliated to the Labour movement and all those not affiliated to the Labour movement—even the Royal College of Nursing has said no

to this Bill. It is a travesty and an intrusion upon the democracy of the workplace—get rid of it!

Sajid Javid:

I am glad the hon. Gentleman has been able to get that off his chest. He will know, first, that the British people voted for this Bill at the general election and, secondly, that opinion poll after opinion poll has shown broad support for the measures we are discussing today.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op):

If this is such a fair and reasonable Bill, why does the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Vince Cable, say that it is both "vindictive" and "unnecessary"?

Sajid Javid:

There is a new Business Secretary in this Government and he is the one presenting this Bill.

Hon. Members from both sides of this House are, to some extent, insulated from the consequences of strike action. We are lucky enough to have generous travel expenses so that we can hire a car or a taxi when there is a transport strike. We have secure jobs, where we get paid whether we make it into the office or not. Even a Back Bencher is among the top 5% of UK earners, so we can afford to deal with the childcare costs that might come with a school closure or some disruption. But what about the low-paid restaurant staff who miss a day's work and a day's pay because of a stoppage called by a handful of transport workers? What about the self-employed builder who has to turn down a week-long job because a strike by teachers means that his kids cannot go to school? What about the single mother who cannot afford to lose a day's pay by refusing to cross a picket line? Should she be subjected to abuse and harassment simply for going to work?

Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab):

The Secretary of State talks about women on low pay. Many of these women and men do not have bank accounts, yet he is still trying to get rid of check-off, which makes it easier for people to join trade unions. How is that helping people to defend their own rights?

Sajid Javid:

There is absolutely no relationship between check-off and bank accounts. Anyone who is able to take advantage of check-off must have a bank account in order to receive their salary in the first place. I also want to talk about the impact on taxpayers, who have to fund the salaries of public servants, only for

those public servants to spend their time on trade union business. Do taxpayers not have a right at least to know what their taxes are being spent on? These are the people who are not represented in current trade union legislation, and by increasing transparency, fairness and democracy, they are the people that this Bill will protect. *[Interruption.]*

Grahame M. Morris (Easington) (Lab):

That is outrageous. Have a bit of dignity. On this issue of consistency, if the trade unions are going to have to pay for the enhanced services of the certification officer, does the Secretary of State believe that Members of Parliament should pay for the costs of our regulator, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority?

Sajid Javid:

The hon. Gentleman will know that the certification officer is the regulator for trade unions, and it is perfectly usual for the regulator to be paid for by those whom they regulate.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

Does the Secretary of State agree that modern unions are at their best when they work with employers to get more skills, better training, higher quality work and better paid jobs, and that strikes are deeply damaging to the interests of the employees as well as the employers?

Sajid Javid:

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. At the heart of this Bill is partnership—partnership between trade unions and employers and other stakeholders. A great example of that can be seen at Toyota in Britain. It has not had one day of industrial action in 20 years, and that is because of the partnership that it rightly has with its trade union.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab):

The Secretary of State is giving the House the impression that London commuters would somehow be protected by his threshold. Is he aware that the recent industrial action on the tube would have passed those thresholds? He talks about partnership. Is it not the case that it is not the strikes and the ballots that are the problems, but the intransigent Mayor of London who is sitting behind him?

Sajid Javid:

I am coming on to thresholds, but the hon. Gentleman's point proves that this is not some kind of ban on industrial action. Strike action can rightly still take place where there is clear support from the membership of the union. Let me move on to thresholds. The whole point of strikes is to cause disruption, but the impact of industrial action on ordinary people—often the very working people whom unions were created to support—is such that it should ever be used only as a last resort. It should be taken only after the explicit backing of a majority of members. That is why this Bill sets a minimum turnout of 50% for industrial action ballots. If 1,000 union members are being asked to participate in a strike, at least 500 of them must vote for the ballot to be valid. In addition, strikes in certain public services will need the support of 40% of those eligible to vote. In our hypothetical 1,000-strong union, a successful ballot will require at least 500 votes to be cast with at least 400 of those being in favour.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab):

Despite the Secretary of State's fine words about the trade union movement at the beginning, does he not realise that what he is saying about what this Tory Government are doing is a continuous Tory vendetta against the trade union movement? He should be thoroughly ashamed that he is bringing in this Bill and, just as in 1927, it will be a future Labour Government who will ensure that this rubbish is

destroyed and that trade unions are given back their basic freedoms.

Sajid Javid:

There was a time when Labour used to be the party of working people. We have seen evidence already this afternoon that it has given up on ordinary, hard-working people.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con):

Has my right hon. Friend seen the words of Rob Williams from the National Shop Stewards Network? He said:

“The message must be simple—Cameron, we are going to take you down. If this goes into law, we want mass co-ordinated strike action.”

Does that further underline the importance of getting this Bill into place?

Sajid Javid:

What that highlights is that, sadly, there are some trade union leaders who do not care about their members. They care about their own narrow interests and not the interests of their members or other hard-working people. I also wish to highlight the additional requirement for ballots of staff in six key sectors: the health service, the fire service, border security and nuclear decommissioning—because of the obvious risks to public safety and security—and education and transport. A ballot is required because of the massive disproportionate disruption that stoppages in those areas can cause.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab):

What is the appropriate word to describe it when a person who feels that they have been dealt with unjustly seeks to withdraw their labour and is forced to work against their will?

Sajid Javid:

I have already addressed the hon. Gentleman's concern. This is not a ban on strike action. This is about ensuring that our rules are modern and right and fit for today's workplace. We have consulted on which occupations within those sectors should be subject to the additional 40% support threshold. The consultation closed last week and we are now reviewing the results. We will publish the Government's response and details of the scope of the 40% threshold by the time the Bill is in Committee in the other place. As I have said, these measures will not make strikes illegal or impossible. If union leaders can make a genuine and compelling case to their members, they will have no problem securing the votes required. I believe that the vast majority of industrial action is unfortunate and unnecessary, but it is important that workers are able to go on strike. If union members truly want to do so, I will not stand in their way.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP):

The right hon. Gentleman talks about having a mandate for this Bill. His party was wholly rejected in Scotland, so why does he not enter discussions with the Scottish Government to devolve trade union law to the Scottish Parliament?

Sajid Javid:

First, as the hon. Gentleman will know, employment law and industrial relations are reserved matters. Secondly, as he is no doubt aware, the Conservative party won a majority at the United Kingdom general election.

Richard Fuller (Bedford) (Con):

My right hon. Friend was absolutely right to have a consultation on the additional 40% hurdle. He has talked about it in reference to the emergency services and other important services, but does he not agree that there is another issue: if we compare changes in strike action in the public and private sectors since the end of the last century, we see that over that 15-year period the number of strike days in the private sector has halved, but in the public

sector the number has doubled?

Sajid Javid:

My hon. Friend, as usual, makes an excellent point. That goes to the heart of the Bill and why we need these changes. It is also important that any industrial action reflects the current will of union members. As things stand, that is not always the case. Union leaders can secure a mandate for industrial action and then keep using it for as long as they please. For example, in October 2013 the NASUWT justified a walk-out by citing a mandate acquired in November 2011, almost two years earlier. That is hardly a constructive approach to industrial relations.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab):

Does the right hon. Gentleman not recognise that the reason the Opposition object to the Bill is that when people choose to go on strike they get only a tiny bit of strike pay, not their proper pay? They have responsibilities and families to support, so nobody goes on strike just for the hell of it; they do so because they need to.

Sajid Javid:

I think that the hon. Lady will therefore agree with the changes we are proposing today. She is right that strikes should always be a last resort—I think that is the point she is making. If union members wish to take strike action, they will vote for it and meet the proposed thresholds.

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con):

The question of mandates was raised a few moments ago. Is the Secretary of State aware that when over 1,000 Londoners were polled by YouGov last month, 53% approved of these proposals and only 26% disapproved? Even among Labour voters the measures were approved of by 40 to 38.

Sajid Javid:

My hon. Friend shows just how much support there is among the general public for these reforms.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):

Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the problems with the unions using historical mandates is that, because time has elapsed, many of the employees who voted for strike action may have retired or moved employment in the meantime?

Sajid Javid:

That is exactly the point I am coming on to.

When old mandates are used, it is not fair on union members. As my hon. Friend said, a two-year-old mandate is unlikely to reflect the latest negotiations and would fail to reflect changes in the workforce. To ensure that any industrial action is based on a current mandate from current members, the Bill provides a four-month validity period after a ballot result is announced.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con):

Is my right hon. Friend not showing with this legislation, once again, that the Conservative Government are standing up for people who want to work and against bullies who want to stop them. That is what fundamentally underlies his approach?

Sajid Javid:

I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting how the Bill protects the rights of working people across the country when they are affected by strike action that has no proper mandate. The Bill provides that voting papers sent to union members and employers will state the details of the trade dispute, exactly what type of industrial action is proposed, and an indication of the time period in which that action will take place. This will ensure that members know exactly what

they are voting for or against and allow them to make an informed decision.

One of the valuable roles performed by unions over the years has been to defend workers from abuse, bullying and harassment at the hands of managers. There is no place for such behaviour in the modern workplace, and I applaud anyone who stands up against it. But bosses are not the only culprits. The independent Carr report contained shocking accounts of appalling bullying and harassment directed at non-strikers by trade union members. There were threats that included details of where workers' children go to school, and abusive text messages warning, "We know where you live." Photographs of non-strikers were posted online in a bid to shame them. Workers who had failed to support industrial action reported being punished by colleagues who deliberately saddled them with antisocial shift patterns or isolated them in the workplace.

It is not acceptable for managers to harass and abuse trade union members who take lawful industrial action. Nor is it acceptable for strikers to treat those who choose to work in the same way. While such abuses are doubtless the actions of a tiny minority of trade unionists, they should never be allowed to happen without consequences. The Bill makes it clear that such intimidation has no place in the modern workplace.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):

Is it not the case that this is just another instance of the Tory party no longer being on the side of people's rights? There are no more rights. There is no longer a right to social security, legal aid or access to employment tribunals. The Conservative party is becoming much more authoritarian and Labour Members do not like it. It is no longer the party of rights. It used to have a fine tradition of rights, but that is disappearing.

Sajid Javid:

It is a case of a one nation Government standing up for all working people across the country.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con):

Why does the Minister think that since 2010 seven times as many strike days have been lost in the public sector as in the private sector, despite the fact that more people work in the private sector?

Sajid Javid:

My hon. Friend highlights an important point. It reflects the fact that, unfortunately, public sector unions seem to have more leaders who do not want to represent the views of their members and will take strike action without a full and proper mandate. The code of practice on picketing, which is already followed without difficulty by many unions, requires the appointment of a picket supervisor. The Bill will make that a statutory obligation. It does not add any new requirement that is not already in the code. The supervisor must either attend the picket line or be readily contactable by the union and the police and able to attend at short notice, and he or she must wear an armband or other means to identify them in order to ensure that picketing is peaceful and lawful.

In addition, we consulted over the summer on other measures to tackle wider intimidation. The consultation closed last Wednesday and we are considering whether the Bill should contain further provisions. We will set out our views on that consultation in due course.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op):

If the Secretary of State is so concerned about being even-handed in how he modernises strike law, why has he ruled out modernising

how trade unions communicate and how strike ballots are sent out? Why is he focusing only on more punitive measures?

Sajid Javid:

I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to e-balloting, but I am concerned about fraud and that the identities of people voting in a secret ballot may be revealed. In fact, the Speaker's Commission on Digital Democracy, which looked at the use of digital apparatus in elections, also shared those concerns. I do not think it would have been appropriate to suggest such changes.

Let me turn to political funds. The introduction of ballot thresholds will help ensure that unions reflect the will of their whole membership and that the views of every member count. Another way we are going to achieve that is through changes to the way in which political funds are managed.

Ian Lavery:

The Secretary of State discounts e-balloting because of potential fraud. How about considering an amendment to the Bill with regards to balloting in the workplace, where there cannot be any fraud whatsoever? It will be democratised and there will be a huge turnout on every occasion, which is surely what the Secretary of State is seeking to implement.

Sajid Javid:

I have clearly set out my concerns and we propose to make no change to the way in which ballots are carried out.

On political funds, first we will increase transparency on the way in which political funds are spent, helping members to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to contribute. The Bill places a duty on unions to report in greater detail on what annual expenditure over £2,000 is useful, helping members decide whether or not they want to pay into the fund. After all, freedom to choose without having all the facts is no freedom at all.

Secondly, unions will need to obtain the active consent of members to deduct a political levy. At present, members can, in theory, opt out, although many unions do not even tell new members that the political levy exists, let alone about them having to pay for it.

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con):

Labour is in hoc to and funded by the unions—[*Interruption.*] That is why Labour Members are making howls of protest. Is not it a fundamental right that people's pay packets should not be interfered with, without them knowing exactly where the money and the dues are going? That is what this Bill seeks to achieve.

Sajid Javid:

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That money belongs to hard-working people. They should know exactly what is being done with it and that is at the heart of the proposal. In fact, in Northern Ireland, members have had an active choice for almost 90 years and their unions are still perfectly able to operate and to organise. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and the Prison Officers Association still have more than four fifths of their members choosing to opt in. All we are asking is for a simple tick box on the same membership forms in England, Scotland and Wales.

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab):

My union, Community, has used the political fund to challenge Governments of all colours and even took the last Labour Government to the European Court and won on behalf of its members. Does the Secretary of State accept that the political fund is not just about putting money into political parties, but about holding

the Government of the day to account?

Sajid Javid:

I therefore hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with the changes, because they support union members and will introduce more transparency. They will still allow the unions to raise the funds, but they will just have to be more open about how they do so and what they do with them.

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab):

The right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) said earlier that when unions and employers work together, results are achieved. That being the case, why does the Secretary of State want to overrule agreements made freely between unions and public sector employees about the appropriate amount of time that should be spent on union duties?

Sajid Javid:

The hon. Gentleman has moved on to an issue that I will cover later in my remarks.

Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con):

Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a simple matter of transparency? If people want to give money to the Labour party as union members, they should choose to do so. Indeed, if they do not actually choose to do so, the danger is that the unions are arguably guilty of mis-selling, because people do not know what they are buying when they join up for membership of a trade union.

Sajid Javid:

My hon. Friend puts it very eloquently. This is an issue of transparency. It is about ensuring that when people, rightly, give money to any political party, they know that they are doing so and do it with their eyes wide open.

Ian Lavery:

I thank the Secretary of State for giving away again. If this is about transparency, what about the hedge funds and big business, which donate fortunes to the Conservative party? Will legislation be put in place covering the need to ask shareholders and the workforce whether such donations can be made? That's transparency.

Sajid Javid:

I think the hon. Gentleman actually agrees with the rules that apply to businesses. When businesses make a political donation to whatever party, they rightly have to declare it and must be open and transparent. They often need the votes of their shareholders. These rules are absolutely consistent with that. The hon. Gentleman is surely not saying that there should be no transparency here.

Dawn Butler:

The Secretary of State is being very generous with his time. On the point of businesses being open and transparent, should 40% of shareholders have to agree before a business can donate to a political party?

Sajid Javid:

The hon. Lady will know that businesses or individuals have to declare it when they make a donation. It has to be transparent. All businesses have to declare their donations and will often have to get the permission of their shareholders. In public companies, those shareholders will receive a vote. These changes are entirely consistent with that. We are saying that if someone is a union member, they should know that some of their money is going towards political purposes. It should be open and transparent. That is not the case in England, Scotland and Wales. It is the case in Northern Ireland. If it works in Northern Ireland, it can work in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Turning to check-off, as the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General has announced, a proposed amendment to the Bill will seek to end the practice by which union

subscriptions are processed through payroll in public sector organisations. The so-called check-off system was created in a time before direct debits existed and serves no purpose in the modern workplace. It has already been abolished across Whitehall. The amendment will extend this modernising step to the rest of the taxpayer-funded workforce.

I respect Britain's working men and women. I believe that they are perfectly capable of deciding for themselves whether they wish to support their union's political activity and they are perfectly capable of paying their union subscriptions themselves. To suggest otherwise is to say that Britain's union members are too lazy to set up a direct debit or too stupid to make a decision about politics. That is patronising in the extreme.

In the past few weeks, the Labour party has shown that it is possible actively to recruit hundreds of thousands of members to a support a cause and that it is possible to get hard-working men and women to hand over their hard-earned money to back an idea that they believe in. Not one of Labour's new members signed up by mistake because they failed to tick a box. Not one of the registered supporters was required to pay their £3 through their employer's payroll. Every new recruit to the Labour party made an active decision to participate. If the party born of the unions can achieve that, surely the unions themselves can do the same?

Alan Johnson (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab):

Will the Secretary of State explain why the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions is pursuing auto-enrolment for contributions to pension funds?

Sajid Javid:

This is an issue about check-off, not auto-enrolment. Several Whitehall Departments have already begun the process to remove check-off, and now we will apply that process to all parts of the public sector.

On facility time, the Government have a moral duty to ensure that taxpayers get maximum value for money out of every penny they provide the Exchequer. With that in mind, it is hard to justify paying a public servant to do a vital job, only for them to spend their day working for another employer. Yet this is exactly what is happening in the public sector today.

Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab):

Before I came to this place, I was a public sector worker—a home help—and an elected trade union official for a public service, after more than 200,000 members voted for me, and I can tell the Secretary of State that the work I did saved my local authority 10 times what I was paid in facility time. Does he agree that the Bill is anti-business and anti-working practice and that most employers that have trade unions recognise their value?

Sajid Javid:

I wholeheartedly disagree with the hon. Lady. There is nothing wrong with an employee doing union work, but it should be open and transparent.

Angela Rayner:

It is.

Sajid Javid:

Then this will make it even more transparent. If the hon. Lady looks at the changes, she should be able to agree with them.

James Heappey (Wells) (Con):

Is it not an outrage that union officials can conduct union business on public time? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the first year of the Government's controls on facility time in the civil service has seen a saving of £17 million?

Sajid Javid:

I should emphasise that point: we are saving £17 million a year because of the transparency we have introduced into the civil service. It will no doubt have a similar impact on the rest of the public sector.

There are nurses, teachers and other public servants being paid a salary by the taxpayer while working for their union under the banner of facility time. There is no transparency around how much time they spend on union work and no controls in place to ensure that the taxpayer is getting value for money. It is a situation that most ordinary Britons, including many dedicated public servants I have spoken to, find absolutely baffling. That is why civil service Departments are already required to publish information about the use of facility time by their staff. The Bill allows the Government to make regulations extending that to all public sector employers. It will include information about an employer's spending on trade union duties and activities and about how many of its union representatives spend a specified percentage of their time on their union role. We have already made considerable savings for the taxpayer by requiring Departments to publish this information, as we have just heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (James Heappey). However, if transparency alone does not lead to further savings, the Bill also grants Ministers the power to set a cap on the time and money spent on facility time.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab):

Will the Secretary of State agree with one of his own donors, JCB, which has people in facility full-time to encourage positive industrial relations? If it is good enough for the private sector, surely it is good enough for our public sector.

Sajid Javid:

It is good enough for all sectors. There is nothing wrong with facility time—the Bill is clear about that—but it should be open and transparent, and the current rules do not ensure that.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP):

Why have the Government not consulted the devolved Administrations and local authorities across the UK about facility time? They would tell him about its benefits, because these employers and organisations see the benefits of facility time.

Sajid Javid:

I am a bit baffled by the hon. Gentleman's question because there are three consultations that relate to the Bill. The main consultation is a nine-week consultation and it is open to every stakeholder in the United Kingdom, including those in Scotland.

Finally, the Bill enhances the role of the certification officer—a role that has served workers, unions and employers well over the past 40 years. It equips the certification officer with appropriate new powers for a modern regulator, such as allowing investigations to begin based on information from a variety of sources, without having to wait for specific complaints from union members.

For the first time, the certification officer will have the ability to impose financial penalties on unions that do not comply with statutory requirements—the very requirements that Parliament has deemed necessary. The Bill passes the cost of that regulation on to the unions. That is entirely in line with modern best practice. It is why banks fund the Financial Conduct Authority and why utility regulators are paid for by utility firms.

Rob Marris (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab):

The right hon. Gentleman is being very generous in giving way. I understand what he is trying to do with the Bill, but it makes some of us rather uneasy. That is true of the provisions on the certification officer who, hitherto, has been seen by both sides—I speak as someone who was a partner in a law firm with 1,000 employees, so I do know a bit about this—as a neutral arbiter or referee. The Bill politicises the role and, to the trade union side, appears to put the certification officer on one side of the divide, rather than keeping them as a neutral arbiter.

Sajid Javid:

The hon. Gentleman should be assured that if that were the case, we would not have brought these changes forward. The certification officer's role remains that of a neutral regulator, independent of Government—that will not change. What will change is the transparency, some of the powers that the officer has to carry out their duties and the way the officer is paid for. Just like other regulators, they will be paid for by the people they regulate and be independent.

In conclusion, in June 1966, Prime Minister Harold Wilson stood at this Dispatch Box and called union leaders of the day “politically motivated men who...failed to secure acceptance of their views by the British electorate, but who are...forcing great hardship on the members of the union and their families, and endangering the security of the industry and the economic welfare of the nation.”—[*Official Report*, 20 June 1966; Vol. 730, c. 42-43.]

Since then, successive reforms have helped to modernise the union movement. Now, it is time to take the next step: to embrace the transparency that modern society demands of business and politics; to embrace the democracy that is at the heart of what makes Britain great; and to focus on the needs and demands of union members, rather than the views and ambitions of union leaders.

In our manifesto, we pledged to deliver further union reforms, and at the general election, that manifesto secured the clear acceptance of the British people. This is not about the Government versus the unions or the workers versus the bosses. It is about creating a modern legislative framework for modern industrial relations; about making unions partners in the workplace; and about ensuring that a handful of militants cannot force great hardship on their members and on the public, or endanger the economic welfare of the nation.

I started today by talking about how unions were instrumental in consigning the dark satanic mills to the history books, but the workplace of the 21st century is very different from that of the 18th century. The way in which union members work has changed. Now, it is time for the way in which trade unions work to change too. The Bill will make that change happen, and I commend it to the House.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab):

I thank the Secretary of State for his gracious welcome, and especially for the timing of today's Second Reading debate on this Bill, which he has arranged for maximum convenience. I hope he will continue to be so accommodating as we go forward and I oppose him from the Dispatch Box.

Let me begin by drawing the attention of the House to my entries in the Register of Members' Financial Interests which, in the interests of transparency, I declared earlier than was technically necessary. I was especially pleased to win the nominations of Unison, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, the Communication Workers Union, the Transport Salaried Staffs Association and the recommendation of Unite in the recent contest

to be deputy leader of the Labour party—hon. Members can see where that got me. As the register shows, my campaign was supported by donations in cash and kind from some of the unions affiliated to the Labour party.

I also want to make a second declaration: I am a lifelong and proud trade unionist. I believe in social partnership at work, and that the right of trade unions to exist and represent their members at work is a key liberty in any democracy. I am dismayed that we have a Government who believe in attacking trade unions, rather than working with them in the spirit of social partnership to improve economic efficiency and productivity in our country.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op):

My hon. Friend will know that in recent years, the average trade unionist has been on strike for one day in 15 years. In sharp contrast, the export of goods last month was down to its lowest level since 2010. Does she agree that the focus should be on collaboration across industry and trade unions to raise productivity and wages, whereas the Bill will get people on the streets and force conflict?

Ms Eagle:

I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend's analysis of the effect of the Bill, despite the pantomime that we have just had from the Secretary of State at the Dispatch Box.

Dawn Butler:

May I declare that I am a proud trade unionist and was a full-time trade union official for more than 10 years? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Bill's real agenda is to stop public sector workers speaking out against this Government's attacks on their pay and conditions?

Ms Eagle:

It is impossible not to agree with my hon. Friend, and it saddens me beyond words that we are here today dealing with the most significant sustained and partisan attack on 6 million trade union members and their workplace organisations that we have seen in this country in the past 30 years. With the number of days lost to strike action down 90% in the past 20 years, there is no need whatsoever to employ the law in this draconian way.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op):

I welcome my hon. Friend to her new position. She says, rightly, that the number of days lost to strikes in the UK is at its lowest for 20 years. It is even more significant than that: we lose fewer days to strike action in the UK today than we did during the second world war. There is no problem here that needs fixing.

Ms Eagle:

Again, I agree wholeheartedly with the comments of my hon. Friend.

John Redwood:

Does the hon. Lady have a message for people in London trying to get to work or students trying to get to schools or colleges on the tube? Does she think each one of those strikes was right and necessary, and what is her advice to the travelling public?

Ms Eagle:

My message is that the Mayor should start doing his job and help to respond to the dispute. There is no necessity to employ the law in this draconian way, especially when this country already has the most restrictive trade union laws in Europe. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the trade group for the human resources sector, has criticised the Bill as an "outdated response" to today's challenges, commenting that the

"Government proposals seem to be targeting yesterday's problem instead of addressing the reality of modern workplaces".

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):

Does the hon. Lady not find it amazing that 99% of the time the Conservatives go on about regulation and red tape in business and the workplace? What are they trying to do now but introduce regulation and red tape unseen in Germany, Norway or other major economies of Europe? This is just a symptom of low-pay Britain.

Ms Eagle:

I shall come on to the smothering of trade union administration in what I will call "blue tape" later in my speech. I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I hope that he will join us in the Lobby tonight to vote against the Bill.

Rob Marris (Wolverhampton South West) (Lab):

I agree with my hon. Friend that trade unions are central to democracy and that we already have some of the most restrictive trade union legislation in the world—and the Bill will make it worse. Does she agree that the Government's proposals are a threat to the security of our country because they threaten democracy?

Ms Eagle:

I will come on to aspects of that, but it is important that we do not discount the attacks on democracy contained in the Bill, including the sinister attack on freedoms that many of us have taken for granted, perhaps for too long.

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab):

I declare my interests: I am sponsored by trade unions—the cleanest money in British politics and far cleaner than on the other side of the House. Does my hon. Friend agree that on Sky News yesterday the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) described elements of the Bill as like something out of Franco's dictatorship?

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab):

I declare an interest: I am a proud member of Unite the union and I have been since the miners' strike. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that 77% of the public believe that trade unions defend important aspects of workers' rights and that we need them?

Ms Eagle:

It is wise to remember that trade unions defend not only their own members. Over the years, trade unions have created a process that has given us holidays, weekends and reasonable working hours. It is right that the benefits that trade unions bring to our society are recognised and extended to those who are not members of trade unions but happen to be at work. Any attack on those rights that weakens those powers threatens the progress made over many years in democracy at work.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab):

My hon. Friend mentioned the CIPD, and it is not only the usual suspects who oppose this Bill—there are some unlikely bedfellows because the Bill goes beyond party politics. As we have heard, the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) called it redolent of Franco's Spain. The Secretary of State pooh-poohed Vince Cable, the former Business Secretary, for calling it "vindictive". A letter has been signed by 100 academics, mostly from business schools which are not usually seen as hotbeds of radicalism in our country. Will independent-minded Conservatives join us and our new leader in the Lobby tonight to oppose this draconian legislation?

Ms Eagle:

I would like to live in a world in which the Tory party did not have this kind of blood lust against trade unions, but alas we are not there yet.

David Rutley:

It is interesting to note that the new shadow Chancellor has told trade unionists: "We will support all demonstrations in Parliament or on the picket line"—against the Bill—"We will be with you at every stage. It is not often you have heard that from a Labour MP but you are hearing it now." Does the shadow Business Secretary agree with that?

Ms Eagle:

I agree with the right to demonstrate. I thought we were living in a free country. The Bill is draconian, vindictive and counterproductive. It is: "very provocative, highly ideological and has no evidence base at all".

Those are not my words; they are the words of Vince Cable, the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor as Business Secretary in the previous Government. He has a very revealing insight into the mindset of the Conservative party, the people he was in coalition with for five years, which has concocted the Bill.

"When we were in government, the Tories were constantly pressing for more aggressive trade union legislation of the type we see... They see the trade unions and the Labour party as the enemy. The question then is how do you weaken them? That is their starting point."

This is the prism through which we have to see the proposals before us today. Forget the blabber from the Secretary of State; this is the prism through which we have to judge these proposals.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab):

The Bill comes straight out of the right-wing playbook of the American Legislative Exchange Council. As Governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker did exactly the same thing in 2011 and put industrial relations back in that state for a generation. Does my hon. Friend not agree?

Ms Eagle:

More than that, I think the slightly shiftily looks on the faces of many Government Members demonstrate that they know they have been found out. They have been rumbled.

It is abundantly clear that, whatever protestations we may have to the contrary, Vince Cable's analysis explains what is really going on with this disgraceful piece of proposed legislation. Perhaps that is why so few people will defend it. Even Government Ministers will not defend it in public, as this tweet from "Murnaghan" revealed on Sunday:

"We asked the Government and the @Conservatives for an interview with any Minister/MP to defend the Trade Union Bill. No one was available."

They do not want to be questioned about it. Like all authoritarians, they just want to do as quickly as possible and brook no dissent.

The right to be part of a trade union to campaign for protection at work is a fundamental socioeconomic right. It is enshrined in the UN's universal declaration of human rights and the international covenant on civil and political rights. Before I was so rudely interrupted, I was just about to say that the Bill rides roughshod over that right. It threatens the basic options that those at work have to safeguard their pay and conditions by standing together to win improvements. Liberty, Amnesty and the British Institute of Human Rights have all said that the Bill's purpose is to "undermine the rights of all working people" and amounts to a "major attack on civil liberties in the UK." That warning should not be dismissed lightly by the Conservative party. Workers' rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association are all undermined by the Bill. For example, the requirement forcing workers to disclose media comments to the authorities a week in advance or face a fine

and the requirement under clause 9 for picket supervisors to register with the police and wear identifying badges are a dangerous attack on basic liberties that would not be tolerated by the Conservative party if they were imposed on any other section of society.

Remember that it is now known that thousands of people in the building trade have had their livelihoods taken away and their lives ruined by illegal employer blacklisting, a scandal that this Government have failed either to pursue or remedy. The Bill has been criticised for being OTT, with parts of it resembling the dictatorship of General Franco. Those are not my words, either, but the words of that noted Marxist agitator, the Conservative right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis).

That sinister intent needs to be added to other attempts by the Government to curb dissent in our country today. They have restricted access to justice by imposing fees to access the courts, which are causing the innocent to plead guilty. They want to scrap the Human Rights Act, which safeguards our basic freedoms. Their commitment to transparency in Government is in tatters with their plans to limit freedom of information powers. They have slashed legal aid and introduced employment tribunal fees, which deny women the chance to sue for equal pay or defend themselves against sexual harassment. They have limited the scope for judicial review and used their gagging law to bully charities into silence at the election, and now they are trying to silence the trade union voice through a tax on the existence of political funds, which finance general non-party political campaigning as well as the Labour party.

This is another gagging Bill, and those of us who care for the health of our democracy and civil society are united in opposing it. Clauses 2 and 3 are deliberately designed to undermine the bargaining power of trade unions by requiring minimum turnouts, thresholds and support before a strike ballot is valid. The new proposals demand a mandate for unions that breaks the democratic conventions of our society by counting votes not cast as essentially no votes.

More than half of the Cabinet would not have met that arbitrary threshold had it applied to their election to this House in May. Why do the Government have different standards for democracy and trade unions than anywhere else in our society? Clause 3 ensures that the 40% level of support restriction will apply to a much bigger list of sectors than the internationally recognised definition of “essential services” and, ominously, allows sectors to be added by secondary legislation that is as yet unpublished. From listening to the Secretary of State, it appears that the Government do not intend to publish it until the Bill is in the Lords.

If the Government are so worried about participation in ballots, why do they not allow e-balloting and secure workplace balloting, which are used routinely by many organisations? Clauses 4 to 6 might more usefully be described as the clauses that smother unions in “blue tape” and the hypocrisy of the Business Secretary in this respect is staggering. In July, he launched his drive to cut red tape, yet when it comes to unions he is increasing the powers of the certification officer and deliberately placing additional information and reporting burdens on unions. Not content with doing that, the Government, through clauses 12 and 13, are reducing the ability of trade union officials to do their jobs with the introduction of new powers to restrict facility time.

It is not hard to come to the conclusion that these proposals have been written to be as unworkable and difficult to comply with

as possible. They also create many more opportunities for ballots to be challenged by employers for minor technical reasons. Again, it is clear that the increased risk of employer challenge is an integral part of the Government’s intentions.

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab):

Does my hon. Friend recall that throughout the 1980s the working people of this country were lectured about giving managers the right to manage? Management in this country has agreed with trade unions at a local level who should have facility time and what they should do with it. Why should the Government have to intervene to destroy that partnership, which has worked for the benefit of all concerned?

Ms Eagle:

Rather like Don Quixote, they are tilting at windmills, and legislating for an absurd caricature of the reality of industrial relations up and down the country, for partisan purposes. That is why we oppose the Bill. Clauses 7 and 8 extend the notice requirements for any industrial actions and restrict the effect of any ballot for strike action to four months. These clauses are designed to narrow the effectiveness of any industrial action, even if it has reached the much higher requirements of turnout and support required for clauses 2 and 3. There is no sign of any evidence that could justify these changes and no sign of a clamour for employers to change the existing system. Indeed, these changes may intensify industrial dispute during the four-month period, and make things worse.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind):

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for allowing me—unlike the Secretary of State—to intervene. Everyone who heard the Secretary of State’s contribution will know that he cited the example of Northern Ireland, stating that what was good enough for Northern Ireland was good enough for the rest of the country. In particular regard to the political fund, trade union members in Northern Ireland have had to opt in, and that has been the case for over 60 years. Will the hon. Lady clarify what percentage of trade union members in Northern Ireland have opted in to the political fund? The answer to the question—I am sure it must have slipped her mind, as she always does her homework before contributing to debates—is 39%. Let me add that it could be to do with the fact that the Labour party never fielded candidates in Northern Ireland. Perhaps under the new leadership, the party might think of rivaling its buddies in Sinn Féin.

Ms Eagle:

We will have to have a chat about whether the Labour party should organise in Northern Ireland. It is a long-standing issue within our party. I would be more than happy to talk to the hon. Lady about that, but I suspect Madam Deputy Speaker would stop me from doing so over the Dispatch Box. We all know that this Government—barely with a majority—increasingly behave in a grossly partisan way, whether it is through individual electoral registration designed to disenfranchise voters, by introducing English votes for English laws, or now by making changes to party funding to try to hobble the main Opposition.

Chris Philp:

The motivation behind this Bill has nothing to do with the things that the hon. Lady has just mentioned; it is to do with protecting and helping ordinary hard-working people to go about their day-to-day lives and their work unimpeded by strike action, which sometimes has turnouts as low as 16%. It is reasonable to protect them, and I ask the hon. Lady to support that

Ms Eagle:

Disillusion has set in very quickly, I am afraid, with the hon. Gentleman. All I can say is that I am a long-standing member of a trade union, so I know many trade unionists, and I know that very few of them would contemplate being silly enough to have industrial action with very low turnouts and very little support, because that simply does not work.

The Prime Minister used to say he wanted to reform party funding and would limit donations from all sources. Now, however, instead of addressing the big money in politics—and the big issues that are causing disillusionment from politics generally—with millionaire hedge-fund donors being treated to lunches and dinners with the Cabinet, this Government are, outrageously, focusing on curbing only trade union donations. There is an important issue about big money in politics, but it needs to be dealt with on a cross-party basis to change our political system fairly, and not just with the partisan interests of the Tory party in mind.

As the Regulatory Policy Committee has noted, these proposals for changes are rushed, and have had nowhere near the level of consultation that they deserve. The Committee has described the impact assessment as “not fit for purpose”. There are serious questions about whether this Bill is compatible with the international legal obligations of the United Kingdom, as a member of the International Labour Organisation. The ILO has already criticised the UK on a number of occasions for its constraints on the right to strike, and the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has called for more, not less, trade union freedom in Britain.

Given the serious questions about its effect on fundamental rights, the Bill may be open to legal challenge on a number of fronts, including its impact on the devolution settlements, because it covers areas such as health and education that are clearly devolved. The Welsh Government, who have a substantially better record of working constructively with trade unions than this Administration, have objected to the proposals in strong terms, and are considering whether a legislative consent motion might be appropriate.

The Bill is a divisive piece of legislation which undermines the basic protections that trade unions provide for people at work. This is a partisan attack to undermine those unions, and the Labour party, but it will have substantial implications for more than 6 million workers by undermining unions’ ability to stop harassment in the workplace and ensure that the basic health and safety of workers is maintained. The Government are pushing through an agenda of attacking civil society, intimidating charities, threatening basic civil liberties, and undermining access to justice. These draconian measures must be stopped, and I urge the House to deny the Bill a Second Reading.

The Second Reading was carried by 317 votes to 284. The 284 No votes included 215 Labour (of 232), 54 SNP (of 56), 5 Liberal Democrat (of 8), 3 Democratic Unionist Party (of 8), 3 SDLP (of 3), 3 Plaid Cymru (of 3), and 1 Green (of 1). The two Ulster Unionist Party MPs did not vote. Only Lady Hermon, Northern Ireland Independent MP, of the non-Government Parties, voted for the Bill. Oddly, Jeffrey M. Donaldson of the DUP is recorded as voting both for and against the Bill. The Bill will go into the Committee Stage until 27 October.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

COPING WITH EARTHQUAKES

The Italian press was as keen as any other country's press to report the shocks that struck Europe during September. Italian reporting was, as usual, detailed and instructive and always included articles of comment and analysis from several different sources.

"*Earthquake for Europe*" was the headline of a polemic on the implications of the recent separatist poll in Catalonia. And of course both this and other pieces made reference to "*the Scottish question*". One article dealt with European, including Italian, separatist groups, one even mentioning Mebyon Kernow.

Other major September earthquakes were: Tsipras's poll victory, the scandal at Volkswagen and the UK's Jeremy Corbyn.

La Repubblica published at least three articles about Corbyn by *The Financial Times*'s John Lloyd. One appeared on 14 August. Lloyd headlined this: "*The Marxist Jeremy and the lack of a Social Democratic Leader*". Lloyd shares the inability of many in the Labour Party to cope with the rise in popular support for anybody other than the failed members of the former shadow cabinet. His article comprehensively undermined Corbyn with the usual well-aided arguments, rammed home by comments from Blair. It concluded by attributing Corbyn's rise to the lack of a candid, popular and inspiring Social Democratic leader.

Lloyd's piece included a nod of praise towards the Italian Premier: "*Matteo Renzi will also be the Italian Tony Blair, but there isn't a British Matteo Renzi*". Stefano Rodotà, the 82 year old politician and jurist, would surely say "just as well!" - not sharing Lloyd's enthusiasm for the Italian Premier and his values. Rodotà worked on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, and writes on liberty and democracy. He concurs with the views of many Italians that the Premiership of Renzi is a lamentable quasi-dictatorship where fundamental rights are being progressively eroded. And on 26 September *La Repubblica* published Rodotà's long piece of criticism explaining his views on Renzi's current political machinations.

Nadia Urbinati, Italian journalist and author of *Democracy Disfigured, Opinion, Truth and the People* (Harvard 2014), also wouldn't agree with Lloyd. Her strong and interesting *La Repubblica* piece (21 Sept) uses the election of Corbyn as the pivot to discuss "*the fall of the centre left*", not only in the UK but in Europe and the USA. She accuses the Labour Party Social Democrats of a "*strange and sad moral*

and intellectual fall", and she refers to the Miliband administration as being interchangeable with the Tories. She believes that their inability to confront and deal with new ideas has resulted in the erection of a "*cordon sanitaire*", between themselves and Corbyn. She is also unimpressed by Tony Blair's anti-Corbyn outbursts which are an "*ill-concealed egotism*" - an inability to accept that anyone would depart from **his** Third Way.

Various papers picked out ways of describing Corbyn. An *Il Fatto Quotidiano* piece on 23 July said that he is "*near to Podemos and Syriza*" "*isn't Cool Britannia*" and "*can't be accused of following the wishes of the European Troika*". This is a powerful way of distancing him politically from Renzi who is often disparaged for working happily as a puppet of the EU and Frau Merkel.

A comment on British society came in a piece by Pietro del Re, journalist and thriller writer, who had heard about Corbyn's idea that there might be women-only carriages in trains. He wasn't clear about whether it was UK men who are unable to keep their hands to themselves, or whether women were the problem. Apparently, del Re says: "*there has been a strong increase in molestation and sexual aggression in the country*".

There was a really impressive amount of detail about the mechanics of the leadership election in the Italian press. We know the details. Rosalba Castelletti picked out some of the amusing parts: the headline for her piece in *La Repubblica* of 20 August was: "*The joke of the Right - Vote Corbyn, make Labour lose*". She made fun of the Miliband administration's £3 vote, claiming to have heard of someone who managed to register three times and therefore vote three times. Then: one Toby Jug, of the Eccentric Party, expelled from the Monster Raving Loony Party, apparently also voted. She didn't say for whom. Then Miliband fled to Australia on holiday rather than face his critics.

Enrico Franceschini, *La Repubblica*'s London correspondent, wrote a detailed and constructive article which was published on 29 September. Headed "*Comrade Economist*", it dealt with Corbyn's ideas but also focused on his team of economic advisers. There are the well-known: Joseph Stiglitz, Thomas Piketty and David Blanchflower. The less famous: Mariana Mazzucato from The University of Sussex, a world expert on state intervention in the economy, Professor Nesvetailova of City University, expert on tax havens, and political economist Simon Wren-Lewis of Oxford University. Franceschini concluded with a thought from Martin Wolf

of the Financial Times that there would be some fresh thinking, even if Corbyn didn't win the next election.

The negativism of John Lloyd, is in contrast not only with Wolf's comment but those of many Italian journalists who are keen and able to see Corbyn as part of the wider picture of political development. Lloyd sees only division and turmoil, or wishes to see only that. His short comment of 15 September on the composition of the shadow cabinet was disingenuous and sour. He says that Corbyn has always stood for equal opportunities, well, he is "*on the extreme left*". Lloyd asserted that he has compromised his values by choosing men for his senior cabinet posts. He did mention Corbyn saying that the women's responsibilities are "*most important*". But he then continues with the thought that the men control the (hypothetical) money, so Corbyn is again wrong. Missing is the very relevant admission that women such as Yvette Cooper did not want to be in the shadow cabinet.

Turmoil or change is accepted as part of Italian politics. Tremors often happen. A recent *La Repubblica* article dealt with the large numbers of parliamentarians who have switched parties and allegiances since the last election. The most dramatic change is from Berlusconi's Forza Italia Party, on the right, which has lost 83 senators and deputies. Four new parties have formed. Matteo Salvini's Lega Nord might, one reads, consider a name change and formally organise to get support country-wide to form a new centre right.

NORMAL SERVICE WILL BE RESUMED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Switched on the TV the other night
and saw this florid red face,
what a fright,
it was preaching mayhem and murder
as a birthright,
dementia on tap, what a sight,
almost shouting and spitting,
ready to ignite,
take your medication I thought and
save some
poor country from blight,
next appeared a pale figure
ever so slight,
calm and collected and intellectually
bright,
killing to him was done
with foresight,
he peered from that box as though
through a gunsight,
so, who were these two, overeager
to smite,
a PM and a PM-in-waiting,
quite.

Wilson John Haire.