

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## Politics In Flux

Recent by-elections are not generally a reliable guide to a general election result. However, the weakness of the three liberal parties (Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Labour) which currently dominate political life suggests that it is possible that no combination will be able to form a stable majority. The Liberal Democrats are discredited through loss of trust due to breaking promises made before the election. The Conservative party frightens too many people, especially outside the South East because it is perceived as a threat to their livelihoods. Labour is too like the Conservatives. It has shown a lack of confidence in dealing with charges that it is economically incompetent. Rather than point to its actual record and to Tory failures, it seems ashamed of possible deviations from the Thatcher model. But for most of the public, the Thatcher model no longer makes sense. The liberal model of governance has lost much of its legitimacy and solutions based on global free trade and the unfettered power of corporations are resented by a significant section of the population. The Labour Party in particular has allowed itself to become part of the problem. Concerns about immigration are part of broader worries about rapid change, economic insecurity and a rapidly changing labour market. The liberal parties celebrate globalisation and the instability it brings, thus aggravating voters' fears.

There have been contrasting responses in Scotland and England. Although both countries have seen a rise in nationalism, it has taken a very different form in each country. In Scotland, the Scottish National Party has positioned itself on the social democratic left. While the Scottish Labour Party took its cue from New Labour and full-blooded neoliberalism, the SNP revived an updated social democratic alternative in the tradition of John Smith. The SNP is now a mass party with something like a social democratic agenda, while the Scottish Labour Party is at best stagnating and

is, in all probability, in serious decline, losing many members to the SNP and the Greens. This is a rational response on the part of the Scottish electorate to the failure of the Westminster Parties to attend to their interests. The SNP is likely to supplant the Labour Party in its heartlands for the reasons just mentioned. This will deny the Labour Party any prospect of gaining a majority at Westminster in May. It is worth noting that the SNP at 80- 90,000 members is now a mass party of the kind once seen in Britain after the Second World War. The English equivalent would be a party of 800,000, far in advance of the membership of any of the English Parties and indeed of the Scottish Labour Party with less than 14,000 members. It is worth remembering that in the years after the Second World War, the Conservatives had 3 million members and the Labour Party 1 million. In 1943, the Communist Party of Great Britain had 60,000 members.

This suggests that although the shrinking of their popular base is one of causes of the woes of the English parties, it is not just due to a lack of interest on the part of the population, but is also born of frustration that the parties have so little to offer. Politicians who talk like androids about 'hardworking families' and 'the global race' turn people away from politics. But this does not mean that the electorate have no interest in the big political issues, particularly those that they think affect their interests directly. Although the reaction to liberal politics in England has also involved nationalism, it has taken a very different form from Scotland. English nationalism has been captured by a group of professional politicians who are Thatcherite in orientation, seizing the original UKIP and initially developing a Thatcherite programme. However, as they realised that a lot of their appeal would come from working class people who felt threatened by economic liberalism and globalisation, they have been obliged

to tack to the left, giving up policies such as the privatisation of the NHS. Unlike the SNP they have been unable to develop a coherent programme, trying to be all things to all voters in an attempt to pick up and maintain political momentum in any way that they can. It is interesting that they appear to have relied on the working class vote in Strood rather than the middle class in Rochester in order to return Mark Reckless to Westminster as a UKIP MP. Evidently UKIP is trying to dance at two weddings at the same time. Farage is a banker and UKIP stands for both globalisation and old-fashioned English values, at a time when globalisation is the main killer of those values. It might work for this election but not for the long term. But can the Labour Party react to this threat to their own electoral base?

The signs are not good. The Labour Party as a liberal party is wedded to the globalist agenda. It has nothing useful to say about the EU and continues to be gripped by panic over immigration. Its suggestion to withdraw tax credits from low wage EU workers on the grounds that employers should not be subsidised for employing low wage immigrants is pathetic. Apparently it is going to be still alright to subsidise greedy employers if they underpay English workers and greedy landlords through housing benefit. How it expects to gain respect amongst working people for such an attitude is baffling, particularly if they are as concerned as they say they are about reducing the welfare budget. If most of it excluding pensions is in fact a subsidy for the rich they should say so and indicate what they are going to do about it over the medium term. They appear to be terrified of being accused of 'class war' by the right wing papers if they even gesture towards making the powerful and well-paid pay their dues to society. Unlike Scotland, there is no threat to Labour from the left. The far left parties in England are hopeless because they too are basically liberals in all but name. They cannot connect with the communities they claim to represent and they have no realistic policies to counter economic liberalism. UKIP,

for all its incoherence is thus given a clear run.

Although the Labour Party has tried to distance itself from the more overt liberal policies and attitudes that prevailed under Blair and Brown, in reality progress has been very limited. They are opportunistic and vacuous about the EU, they played the Tory game in the Scottish referendum campaign and damaged themselves in the process. Although they have committed themselves to reversing some of the most harmful of the Coalition changes to the NHS, they cannot even bring themselves to commit to supporting it as necessary through general taxation, instead hypothecating a badly thought out 'mansion tax' to inject extra resources. They continue to neglect their own traditional constituents in the North and West, as well as in southern England and have said nothing to support the TUC's attempt to establish social partnership in industrial relations in Britain. They continue to string along with bungled imperialist adventures in Libya, Syria and Ukraine. Here, UKIP has stolen a march on the left by opposing imperialism and adventurism abroad.

The two-party system is very resilient as it is part of the way in which politics is understood by ordinary Britons. But it is becoming more and more difficult for it to function, as mass politics has declined and the party memberships and elites have become increasingly detached from their electorates. A successful nationalist party in Scotland is going to disrupt the party system in England and Wales and make it increasingly difficult to operate in the next parliament. Even if UKIP proves to be a false dawn, as is quite likely, the Labour Party is unlikely to be able to form a stable majority after the general election in May and will continue to look as if it does not know what it is or what it is in politics for. We may, at least for a while, be moving to a system more like the German one, where the big parties have to form alliances in Parliament. This may be the only way in which other than liberal voices get a say.

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# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## Compulsory Military Service

On 28 July 1915, almost a year after Britain entered the War, the House of Commons debated the subject of compulsory military service. The debate was introduced by a Captain Guest, Liberal member for East Dorset. It is unclear whether J. H. (Jimmy) Thomas replied on the behalf of the Labour Party, or spoke simply in a personal capacity, but he boasted that he represented the voice of his members in the National Union of Railwaymen and, indeed, spoke on behalf of the whole of the working class. Their speeches are published below.

### **Frederick Edward Guest CBE DSO (14 June 1875-28 April 1937).**

*Guest was born in London, the third son of Ivor Guest, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Wimborne and Lady Cornelia Spencer-Churchill, daughter of John Churchill, 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Marlborough. He was educated at Winchester School and after school entered the military. He was commissioned as Second-Lieutenant in the infantry militia, East Surrey Regiment, and promoted to Lieutenant in 1894. After a short time in the militia, Guest became, in 1897, an officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards. He was sent to Egypt in 1900, was decorated for bravery in the Boer War, and rose to Captain before retiring from active duty in 1906.*

*In 1906 Guest became private secretary to his cousin and close friend, Winston Churchill a junior minister in Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Government. In 1904, during the controversy within the Conservative Party over adopting protectionism, Guest and other members of his family had followed Churchill into the Liberal Party in support of free trade. He*

*attempted three times to enter the House of Commons before winning the vote in the East Dorset seat in the January 1910 general election.*

*When World War 1 began in August 1914, Guest returned to active service as aide-de-camp to Field Marshall Sir John French, commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France. He performed confidential missions for French, liaising with the War Office and with political leaders. In 1916 Guest served in East Africa and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. After being invalided out of the army following serious illness, he resumed his political career. In May 1917 he joined Lloyd George's Coalition government as joint Patronage Secretary of the Treasury---effectively chief whip for the Coalition Liberals.*

### **James Henry "Jimmy" Thomas (3 October 1874-21 January 1949).**

*Thomas was born in Newport, Monmouthshire, the son of a young unmarried mother. He was raised by his grandmother and began work as an errand boy for a chemist at twelve years of age. At 15 he became an engine cleaner on the Great Western Railway. Three years later he passed his fireman's exams and began work at a colliery in the Sirhowy Valley. Here he joined the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, becoming a full time official. In 1913 he helped to organise its merger with two smaller trade unions on the railways to form the National Union of Railwaymen, now part of RMT. Thomas was elected NUR General Secretary in 1917, a post he held until 1931.*

*Thomas began his political career as a Labour Party local councillor for Swindon. He was elected to*

*Parliament in 1910 as the Member for Derby. Although he opposed military conscription he otherwise supported the British war effort. He was appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Labour government of 1924 under Ramsay MacDonald. In the second Labour government of 1929 Thomas was made Lord Privy Seal with special responsibility for employment. He became Secretary of State for the Dominions in 1930 and retained this position in the National Government of 1931-35. As a result of joining the National Government he was expelled from the Labour Party and was obliged to resign from the NUR.*

*Thomas served as Secretary of State for the Colonies in Baldwin's government from 1935 until May 1936, when he was forced to resign from politics. He was found guilty by a Tribunal of Inquiry of leaking budget secrets to his stockbroker son Leslie; to Sir Alfred Butt, the Conservative MP for Balham and Tooting; and to Alfred 'Coshier' Bates a wealthy businessman. Bates admitted giving Thomas £15,000 but tried to claim it was an advance for a proposed autobiography. Thomas retired to his home, Milbury House, Ferring, near Worthing, where he wrote his autobiography, My Story (1937).*

### **Captain Guest:**

*I would like to ask the attention of the House for a few minutes to a subject somewhat different to that which has engaged the attention of Members, but a subject which, to my mind, is quite as important at this moment, that is as to whether or not we in this country will not have, sooner or later, to consider the possibility of adopting compulsory*



military service. To-night is a particularly good occasion on which to raise the subject for consideration, as to-day we have already had two statements which, to my mind, point to the necessity for us turning it over in our minds. This afternoon the Prime Minister told us that we must consider that this War may turn itself into a contest of endurance. We have also heard from the Minister of Munitions that there are difficulties which may have to be faced in other directions. However, I do not raise the subject in an attitude which is at all unfriendly, or with any idea or object of embarrassing the Government. The Government at the present time carries on its shoulders sufficient burdens without anyone going out of their way to add to their cares, unless they feel they must try to put forward something in the shape of a suggestion.

I think possibly those of us who feel the necessity for this innovation may be even of some use to the Government, because we possibly know some of the difficulties they may have to face and overcome if they undertake it. Anyhow, it seems to me that it cannot do any harm to ventilate the matter and discuss it openly. So much harm seems to me to be brought about by working behind the scenes. In any case, the ventilation of the subject, if it had the result of drawing anything in the shape of a statement of intention, or anything of that kind, or even an indication of it being seriously considered, would do a great deal to counteract agitation or to allay the anxiety of anyone who might feel inclined to write or speak in favour of it during the Recess. I think also it may induce the Government, when such time may come, to know that some who before the War were opposed to any form of compulsion are now ready,

if necessary, to back them through thick and thin.

I do not myself put forward my change of views on any political grounds whatsoever. I regard the necessity for the close consideration of this matter by the Government purely on the ground of expediency. If I might say one word about the difficulty in which one finds oneself in being both a soldier and a Member of Parliament, it would be simply to say one appreciates the fact that one's position is difficult; but it seems to me some special use might almost have been made of people who occupy that dual position, instead of being, as it almost appears they are, regarded as a nuisance. If I give my word that I do not in word I say represent any opinion other than my own I may claim the indulgence of the House this evening. Instead of adopting the attitude of embarrassing the Government, if such a thing were possible in so humble an effort, I would turn rather to hon. Members of the party with whom I have served, if I could but persuade them at least to keep their minds open on this subject.

My object also would be to put forward the claims for the urgency of dealing with this matter. One cannot do it, I agree, without running two risks. The first would be, perhaps, in some way embarrassing the Government; the other---perhaps the more serious point of view---is whether or not it would in any way be of advantage to the enemy. I heard this afternoon some remarks about the performances of the Government during nine months of the War, and it seems to me that during that period, judging by the accounts one has read, they enjoyed the completest confidence and the most unquestioned support, and it was not until after they made some shortcomings that the House

took upon itself to ask questions. Therefore, it does not seem that any harm can be done by private Members putting suggestions forward.

Further, as to the point of view that it could be of any advantage to the enemy to discuss such an innovation, I must register my opinion that it is not only of no advantage to the enemy, but the mere fact that we are prepared even to consider the taking of so serious a step, in order to make ourselves more fully equipped and organised to carry the War to a conclusion, would be nothing but discouraging in the highest degree. The point of view to be realised, in my humble opinion, is that it would be of incalculable encouragement to our Allies, and I think that they would appreciate the fact even more than we can understand the fact that we are in real earnest. Another argument in favour of urgency seems to me the development at the end of twelve months of war. There is no doubt that many of us had hoped that the positions we occupy in different parts of the world would have been somewhat different from what they are to-day. I believe, without adding anything further, that is to-day one of the gravest reasons why we should consider the urgency of this problem.

Our problem is to win and win quickly. **We have special reasons why we took our share in the great conflict. Perhaps I am right in saying that ours was, perhaps, more of a matter of principle than it was of self-preservation.** I think that the order of those two things is gradually becoming somewhat reversed. Our duty and the burden which we accepted of not sheathing the sword, as the Prime Minister said, until we had got back for Belgium more than she had lost, will take, it seems to me, a great deal of doing. It seems to me it will

require all the men, all the money, and all the organisation that we can possibly put into working order so as to bear the strain sufficiently long to bring that about successfully. It is for those reasons, perhaps as much as any other, that I recommend to the consideration of those Members with whom I worked for so many years to keep their minds open on the necessity of compulsory service. If I may say so, on land the burden---anyhow as we see it every day in the papers---in mileage has been undoubtedly borne up to now by our gallant Allies. It seems to me that an opinion worth considering and bearing in mind in this connection is the opinion of the soldier. I think if one realises that the soldier of to-day is the elector of a year ago, and will perhaps be the elector of tomorrow, we may eliminate from our consideration the influence of the professional soldiers, because, after all, they undertook to serve before the War---they do not complain; they merely do their work---but when we have an Army of the size that we possess to-day, knowing it to be composed of men who only undertook the job purely from the point of view of self-sacrifice, I think perhaps we have a right to consider what their opinions on this subject might be. (my emphasis)

The moral effect upon the troops, as I would imagine, both fighting and in training, would be very great, and very beneficial indeed. Anyhow, speaking from the point of view of what one hears out there, the cry is often heard, "When are those at home who have not come forward going to bear their fair share?" Whether the same opinion is held by those in training I am not in a position to say. Another consideration should be the effect of such an innovation upon our great Western Allies. If I may say

so, it is a land which has produced a race of men every one of whom has proved himself to be a hero. They have surprised Europe by showing qualities of which perhaps they were not suspected, qualities of stoicism and tenacity. Her Army is splendid. A prolonged war may bring in its train in that country difficulties, political or otherwise, but I am sure if we could give to France the encouragement which the adoption of this system would bring it would enable that country much more easily to ignore any such influences.

If we took the final plunge I believe its effect in that direction would be very great indeed. I would like to ask hon. Members whether they are really satisfied, after reviewing the situation for the last twelve months, with the comparative efforts of the two countries. Take France, with a much smaller population than our own. It has produced a proportion of troops which those who know the numbers will agree is enormously in excess of our own proportion, and I imagine at an expenditure of probably half our own, and I should think, judging from the public debates, they have produced munitions many, many times in excess of those which we have been able to turn out. There you find men and women and boys have cultivated every square inch of their rich country, and one cannot help looking back over that period and wonder whether we can rest satisfied with the efforts we have made in the comparisons I have put forward.

If I may be allowed to deal with a very practical point it would be this. I think the system of enlistment in operation today in England is probably responsible for a great deal of our difficulties in many directions. We have the dual system. We have the Territorial

Associations enlisting on one side of the street and the recruiting sergeant on the other side, and it seems to me that this system is open to the charge of being indiscriminate and extravagant. I know a case which I imagine is merely typical of thousands of others. A wise Territorial Association on one side of the street refused to take a man because he happened to be a skilled worker, and he was told that the best way to serve his country was to work at the bench. The man is determined to have another try, and he goes across the street to the recruiting sergeant and pleads that he is a casual labourer, and in that way he gets sent to the front, and, as the Minister of Munitions has told us, it is very difficult after he has gone to get him back again.

If one looks a little more closely into this indiscriminate enlistment one is brought up against the fact that we have in the last twelve months accepted the voluntary service of a great many people who would have been far more economically employed if they had been left behind. You find all through the Army men in the position of landlords who might use their influence amongst recruits to separate the useful from the useless, and they would have been doing greater service at home. There are numbers of employers who have given up businesses in order to take their part in the War. We find numbers of foremen who have left businesses which have run into a condition of chaos. I think also you will find, if you look into the matter, that men have gone below the level of the manager and the foreman, whom I should call the workshop "ganger," who at election times control the dinner hour meeting. Those are men whom it is difficult to replace, and if there had been an organised system instead of all this

indiscrimination, we might have been saved a great many of the labour troubles which have occurred during the last twelve months. From what we have heard tonight from the Minister of Munitions it is possible that we may recover a great many of these men. I admit that I am not quite satisfied myself, and I should be greatly reassured if we could have a somewhat stronger assurance than we have had from the Minister of Munitions that this fact is admitted by the Government, and that they intend to pay close attention to it with a view to remedying it before the matter goes too far.

I imagine that we must still have in this country hundreds of thousands of men who are still under training. It may be difficult to apply this suggestion to those abroad, but if it could be applied rigorously to all those who are in this country the evil might be overcome and a great deal of good might be done. We have often heard the argument of the economic mistake of taking married men so freely, but that argument is one which I think it is quite unnecessary for me to go into this evening. It has been most elaborately explained and accepted on all sides by the public generally. I must, however, put forward one more argument against the present system. The papers last night gave us the figures of the total casualties, and I imagine those men will mostly be unable to take much further part in the War. I imagine that those 330,000 men are probably the best, and those casualties are the result of holding the line, which is not very long.

As time goes on, if that line is increased, and the casualties amount to anything like reasonable proportions, I think before we have been another year in this War we may have lost such a number of our best and most valuable men that

the loss will be very great indeed. Surely it is not carrying the argument too far when I say that the Armies that come later, whatever their numbers are, as you get further and draw deeper from the pool, so it seems to me you will draw from a less good quality and leave a less good quality behind. (HON. MEMBERS: NO!) I have heard, in answer to these suggestions which have been put forward, that it is too late to make a change, but I submit that that depends on one thing, and on one thing alone, and that is in your calculation as to the duration of the War. If one were satisfied that it were drawing to a close, I would be the very last to suggest such a great alteration, but I do not see how anybody can possibly maintain that opinion in the face of the events that have happened during the last few months.

The only other point I would like to ask the House to consider would be the effect it would have, first of all, upon our opponents. As I have already said, I think it would be most discouraging to them. The effect that would have upon neutrals would be of a steadying character, and I think it would satisfy them that we were prepared to go to any limits to win the War. Upon our Allies I firmly maintain that it would have an effect of instantaneous encouragement to even greater efforts still. I believe it would be, perhaps, even unnecessary to put the machinery in action. The effect of the mere fact that you told the country that you thought it was sufficiently serious to even consider shortly, under certain conditions bringing forward such a measure would be, I think, really to make them realise the altered conditions and the more significant considerations of the War. I think that as far as we are concerned here it would enable us to establish ourselves,

both as the trusted servant and the respected leader of the nation.

### **Mr J. H. Thomas:**

I do not think anyone would complain of the manner in which the right hon. Gentleman has introduced the subject. We are satisfied both from his actions in the past and the services he has rendered to the Army, that he is actuated by the highest and best of motives. I think I am equally entitled to say that we have now reached a stage, in discussing this question, when those of us who may take the opposite view can also take it without being accused of in any way doing anything to hamper or hinder the good work of our gallant men. It is hardly necessary for me to say that those of us who sit on these Benches, as responsible Labour men and Labour leaders, have shown throughout the whole of this War that we are not unmindful of our duties, responsibilities, and, if I may say so, our patriotism to the country in her hour of need, and in saying that I immediately join issue with those who assume that, simply because a speech is made in the House of Commons, or even a measure passed, it settles the question. I am a responsible leader of the largest trade union in the world, and, if I may say so without egotism, I think I can claim to at least say that my men follow me, and equally that I am not afraid to tell the men when I think they are wrong. It is, however, useless giving my assent or support, as a leader, to any proposition unless I am satisfied absolutely that I can carry my men with me. That is the all-important point to consider in discussing the question.

We entered this War as a voluntary nation with a voluntary Army and with all the environment and traditions of voluntaryism. I do not think that the hon. and gallant



Member would claim that our enemy, whether it be Germany or any other nation, whatever their system may be, has produced soldiers of more courage, valour, heroism, or sacrifice than our voluntary soldier has shown up to now. Have we, as a House of Commons, had any evidence yet submitted by any responsible Minister that any call that has ever been made upon the nation has not been responded to? Let us examine the facts. The very first call that was made for men was so magnificently responded to that Lord Kitchener himself, in order to check it, had to alter the height standard. It is true to say that in itself not only caused confusion, but also had the effect absolutely of retarding recruiting. Notwithstanding those difficulties, it is true to say that up to the last appeal that has ever been made on behalf of the War Office we have been assured on the highest possible authority that every response that was expected has been made. We are therefore justified in saying that until the responsible Minister comes down and himself says that the nation has failed to give him the material he requires there is no case made out whatever for the change.

I want to approach the question from another standpoint. Have we as a nation made or are making a fair contribution to the War waged on behalf of the Allies? It will not only be generally agreed that our Navy is doing all that was expected from it, doing it silently under great difficulties, and doing it well, but it must be admitted that the real value of the contribution of our Navy to themselves cannot be calculated even by the Allies. It is probably true to say that the contribution of our Navy is one of the largest contributions of any of the nations engaged. It is equally true to say that we have raised, on

our voluntary system, the largest Army that was ever contemplated by those who advocated military service. I have never yet read any speech or heard anyone say but what the contribution of our own voluntary Army sent to the front and raised in this country has been larger than was ever anticipated. Mark you, this has been so in spite of all the sinister efforts of the conscriptionists, because we have got to face this fact, that voluntarism has not had a fair trial.

We find one of the largest organs of the Press refusing point blank to accept advertisements, and we have seen the voluntary system decried from day to day. We have seen the sacrifice of the married man ridiculed, and when we talk about the cost of the married man it is no use saying that he is too expensive unless you admit that you are paying too much for his sacrifice. I put it to you that no amount of money can pay the married or the single man for the services he is rendering us to-day. Therefore, I submit that these arguments are important, and most important of all is this, in my opinion, that the financing of this great War is probably the greatest and best contribution that this country could make. If we are to finance the War, and if the silver bullet is to win in the end, then to be producers is all essential, and the more people you make consumers and not producers, to that extent you prevent us being the financial stability we ought to be.

I want to examine it from another standpoint, and I am going to take the four most important industries in this country. To commence with I will take coal. What is the position with regard to that trade today? The Government appointed a Committee representative of employers of labour, of representatives of coal owners, and of the chief inspectors

of mines to examine the effect of voluntary recruiting on the coal industry. The Committee presented a Report nearly two months ago, and this is one of the paragraphs:--"The evidence before is conclusive that if labour is further withdrawn from the collieries the output will be so reduced as to seriously affect the industrial position of the country, and the time appears to the Committee to have arrived when very full consideration should be given to the question as to whether further recruiting amongst the miners should be encouraged." And that is to be used as an argument for compulsory military service! I want to try and examine the question fairly as it appears to me, an ordinary working man. Here it is agreed that not only has the miners' contribution been a magnificent contribution, but one of the staple industries of the country would be seriously affected if you recruit any more men from the coal-fields.

Next we come to the railways. Out of 650,000 railway men at the commencement of the War 86,000 odd have voluntarily enlisted, and the position had become so acute in March of this year that the railway companies had to say to the War Office, "If you take one more man from the railway service we refuse to be responsible for the carrying of your troops." They actually did say that. It is no use the hon. Baronet opposite shaking his head. I know it is so, and, moreover, it was given in evidence before us as a Select Committee. The result is that no railway man to-day can be accepted unless he has a letter from his railway employer. That means that, so far as coal and railways are concerned, you have exhausted the men there.

With regard to munitions, need I argue that every skilled engineer, everyone who can make shot or

shell, is essential at this moment? The Minister of Munitions has already indicated that they have had to bring men back from the front, and therefore you have got to apply compulsory military service to one industry again that has already supplied too many. Let me take the next case. Your arguments would be all right if you are going to say, "You take too many from one and not enough from the other." I am going to ask, Where are you going to get your men from? I have already given the cases of coal, railways, and munitions. Now we come to agriculture which is all-important. So serious had the position become that the Board of Agriculture had to arrange with the War Office for a supply of soldiers to help bring in the hay harvest, and they are now making arrangements for large numbers of soldiers for the corn harvest. In the opinion of the Board of Agriculture itself not another man can be recruited from that industry. I put it to this House that here you have four important industries, employing millions of men, which all go to show that so far as these industries are concerned no more men can be spared.

Let us take the unemployed returns. Can you point to any industry that shows a surplus of labour? Is not the difficulty to-day not only in the four industries I have mentioned, but in every other industry an absolute shortage of labour? Is it not true to say that every effort is being made to get women into these particular works? Therefore I submit, examine it from that particular standpoint, where do you get? You absolutely get to the position that, so far as military service is concerned, you are getting all the men that you require, and when responsible Ministers say they want more then will be the time for you to recognise your methods and see if you can get them in a different way. But up till now there has been no evidence to justify that. I want to go further and apply the practical side of it.

The one evil of the change, above all others, would be a break in the unity of our people. I believe it is necessary to wage this War to a successful end, and I believe also the thing important above

all others, is to have all parties, all creeds, rich and poor, absolutely united to that end. I am absolutely sure that at this stage---when the people have responded so magnificently, when, if any mistakes have been made, they have not been mistakes at the bottom but mistakes at the top, when if there have been any differences they have not been differences among the workers but differences which have been shown at the other end---the workers of this country will want more evidence than has yet been produced before they will agree to a system of that kind.

Remember, we are a free people. Our institutions are free, and we have fought for freedom in the past, I put this question: Who is going to choose? Try to apply the practical side of the matter. Let me assume that you have this system in operation. Apply it to the railways. Who is going to say whether this man or that one shall go? If the military authority is going to decide, then those responsible for the running of the railways will say: "You will have to take the responsibility for running the railways." On the other hand, if you are going to throw the responsibility upon the railway manager, he is going to be accused of picking and choosing and of victimising men, and you are going to have internal strife, strikes, and everything else. I therefore beg of you to realise the difficulties of the situation. You talk about compelling the workers of this country. What better illustration of the failure of that could you have than in what happened last week? You passed a Munitions Act. You put in operation the Proclamation, and in twenty-four hours the Act was an entire failure. Why? Because the men themselves resented it. (HON. MEMBERS: NO!) I am not going into the merits. I hold very strong views

on the merits, because I frankly say I would never abdicate Government responsibility, and I would never give way to any section of the people. I hold that strong view and have said so. But that does not alter the fact that your Munitions Act, with all its penalties, failed utterly and absolutely the first time it was put into operation.

What is going to become of any Act in which you talk about compulsion? Therefore I say, let us continue our voluntary system. Let us realise that the spirit which animates our gallant soldiers and sailors is the feeling that they are free men. They have entered into this War, they are making sacrifices and risking their lives, because they believe they are fighting for freedom and liberty and against militarism and all that it means. No words of mine could express my feelings of admiration for those gallant men. No words of mine could express what I felt about our women who are to-day mourning for the loss of many gallant people. But I am satisfied that if we were to attempt to depart from that system to-day it would be fatal to the best interests of this nation. I believe the overwhelming mass of the people of this country feel it. I believe you would be making a fatal step. I believe we will continue, under the voluntary system, to wage this War to a successful issue and not have to say we broke down the German military system to establish an English military system in this country. That is my feeling. I hope we shall go on with the Debate free from personalities and passion, but I sincerely submit to the House that the views that I have expressed in all sincerity are the views of the overwhelming mass of the working men of this country.

The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

*John Stuart Mill*

The limitation of riots, moral questions aside, is that they cannot win and their participants know it. Hence, rioting is not revolutionary but reactionary because it invites defeat. It involves an emotional catharsis, but it must be followed by a sense of futility.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*



## Listening to Italy by Orecchiette

### POLITICS IN LATIN

In 2005 Italian electoral law was changed by an act introduced by Senator Roberto Calderoli. Almost immediately he called it *una porcata*, “shit”, loosely translatable into English as “a dog’s dinner”. Much later he admitted to having been pressured, saying that it had been “a bill born out of blackmail”. It soon got nicknamed *Porcellum*, literally a pigsty law. Matteo Renzi Italy’s Prime Minister is currently re-writing it under the title of *Italicum*, meaning: of or from Italy.

*Italicum* is complex. The main points are that it is based on the Spanish system and allows for a second round of voting if a majority of 40% is not reached by one party. It is hoped that the new system will give a stable government. It continues the premium of additional seats for the party with the largest number of votes. But the % premium will be reduced from the 55% under *Porcellum* to 40%. There are eligibility thresholds that have to be reached by single parties and also coalitions in order to get seats. There are also slightly different rules for the two northern areas with significant linguistic minorities. National constituencies are will be smaller and have fewer representatives – making it easier for voters to know their local representatives. The blocked lists have been modified and there are some allowances for male and female quotas on the lists. Under *Porcellum* candidates were able to stand in unlimited numbers of areas. A curious idea; these have been reduced.

The main points were agreed on 25 November. Time still has to be spent on approving *Italicum* and it is hoped that it will have completed its passage by February. Changes can still be made.

A brief background to this starts with the referendum that abolished the monarchy in 1946. From 1945, and during the First Republic from 1946 - 94 there were 61 different governments. The Christian Democrats mainly held

power during this time. One of their strategic imperatives (assisted by the US and NATO) was to stop the PCI, the Communists, or even the left from having any power. The infamous Giulio Andreotti, with a 40yr involvement in Christian Democrat politics, admitted as much in 1990.

By the start of the 1990s Italians were disenchanted by their political and ruling class. There was rampant corruption, massive government debt and political paralysis. In 1993 a national referendum was held followed by political changes, one of which was dropping proportional representation. The new law was nicknamed *Mattarellum* after its rapporteur Sergio Mattarella. The subsequent election resulted in many fresh faces in government, a national sense of hope and the start of the Second Republic.

Berlusconi’s government modified *Mattarellum*, by introducing *Porcellum* in 2005. This was far from altruistic. It was designed to strengthen his control and also to reduce the influence of the smaller parties. This didn’t work. Then in 2013 The Constitutional Court ruled that the electoral system was unconstitutional. The successful case was based on the interpretation of the Italian Constitution. The contested points were the very large premium amounting to 55% of the seats in the lower house which were given to the winning party and the use of blocked lists. The parties order their candidates into a list. After an election the number of seats to be allocated is known and they are taken in strict order from that party-compiled list. It was successfully argued that *Porcellum* took away the electorate’s democratic right to choose.

This ruling applied to all future governments. The decision not to make it retroactive was to maintain the legitimacy of the current government. Its pressing brief was therefore to bring into law a structure that would not be unconstitutional. But, Enrico Letta’s government didn’t last to see the job

finished. The next government which was led by Renzi was not elected. He was simply given a vote of confidence by a parliamentary assembly that actually could not legitimately vote him in. But, again the imperative was to devise a new electoral system.

The Italian parliamentary structure has a lower house of deputies with 630 seats and an upper with 315 senatorial seats. There are also 20 regional governments, 5 of which have differing amounts of autonomy. Renzi would like to amalgamate the Senate and the Regional governments. This would be hugely unpopular with those about to lose power, influence and sleek government cars. It would save a lot of money and the intention is that it would reduce the power of the Senate to modify the work of the lower house.

Renzi’s current proposals are not very innovative but follow on from *Porcellum*. So, there are jokes about *Italicum* being a little pig.

One further factor is that President Giorgio Napolitano, nicknamed *the cadaver*, will shortly be 90. The press speculate that he wants to resign when he makes his annual speech to the nation on 31 December. Both he and Renzi want to conclude *Italicum* as soon as possible. There are nightmare visions of a country with no government or President and everyone, particularly the EU, wants to avoid the fudges that would result.

The fact that the political class do not want to jeopardise their seats in an election adds a measure of pressure, a type of blackmail, concentrating thoughts on Renzi’s new legislation however odious much of it seems to many. And that includes the even more contentious *Jobs Act*, with its curtailment of workers’ rights. Many in his party are bitterly opposed to it, while he is supported bizarrely by Berlusconi and Alfano’s right-leaning parties. Mrs Merkel also agrees, but the Unions, particularly the communist CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro) are organising a general strike for mid-December. Renzi has said that he wants to serve a full term as Prime Minister. Will he make it?

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Plebs and Stars

“Ex-chief whip Andrew Mitchell probably did call police officers ‘plebs’, a High Court judge has said as he rejected a libel case against the Sun.

“Mr Justice Mitting said the Tory MP’s behaviour was ‘childish’ and that his version of events was inconsistent with CCTV footage of the row with PC Toby Rowland in Downing Street in 2012.”<sup>1</sup>

I always had believed the police on this matter. Various unofficial and mostly insulting terms are regularly applied to policemen, but not plebs. So my belief was that they didn’t make up the use of the term, regardless of whether the account of the specific occasion was true. It was later confirmed that the term was widely used.

In the modern world, where many who depend wholly on paid work would not class themselves as ‘working class’, maybe ‘pleb’ is a better term to use. I talked about this last month:

“The trend since the 1980s has been to split the population into Stars, Plebs and the Unwanted. The Stars make enormous amounts of money, but may be dropped at any time and sometimes work themselves to death (as Michael Jackson did). The Plebs include people in what used to be comfortable and secure middle-class occupations, who now find themselves undervalued and likely to be sacked. They are no longer distinct from what used to be classed as working-class trades... Below the Plebs are the Unwanted, people blamed for not having jobs even though jobs are being continuously destroyed. Up until the 1980s, the fear had been that the unemployed would turn to either Communism or Fascism. It was then noticed that a lot of them became passively helpless, while many turned to drugs or to hopeless dreams of joining the Stars.”

Mitchell insulting a policeman

who was just applying the rules fits with this. Rules are for little people, Plebs. The Stars should be above such things. They are the Superior Persons who create the wealth that the Plebs depend upon.

Except they are not. Achievements among the Stars might suggest an above-average talent. But hear them talk and it becomes obvious that many of their beliefs are shallow and ignorant. And that they often do foolish things for no good reason, even within what should be their area of expertise.

They are not superior *individuals* risen by their own unaided efforts. They are a superior *network* of moderately talented people who know how to work smoothly with others of their kind. This was also true of the older Ruling Classes: but what we have now is an Overclass, not a Ruling Class. Ruling Classes see the whole society as their responsibility, and also expect to control it. The Overclass takes the same detached view of society as an Underclass: society either does not exist, or else it is nothing to do with them and should look after itself. This explains the broad moral failure of the New Right, which has been a hodgepodge of old and new on sexual matters. More exactly, it used Family Values as a vote-winner but was never exactly serious. The British Tories flipped on most issues once it became clear that there were more votes to be lost than gained by sounding like they believed in old-fashioned values. A similar flip by the US Republicans would astonish most people, but not me.

Economically, the New Right has lost sight of the importance of both Sympathy and Fair Play – just like most members of the Underclass, and with far less excuse. They swallowed the economic doctrine held by the Classical Liberals, but applied it with much less restraint. The Classical Liberals often behaved in a way that showed

that they didn’t believe the official doctrine, and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century they became more enthusiastic for state authority than the Tories. (Early 19<sup>th</sup> century Tories, created by a fusion of the Old Whig faction of Pitt and Burke with existing factions calling themselves Tory, did a lot of the early factory acts and tried unsuccessfully to preserve the importance of British agriculture through measures like the Corn Laws. But the two big parties regularly suffered splits and gave rise to factions that merged with the other side, so the ideological difference has never been very clear.)

When Adam Smith said “*it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest*”, he was voicing a clever half-truth. We expect to pay for our meat, beer, bread etc. But we also expect that the vendor will mix self-interest with some idea of fairness and sympathy. Any sensible shop keeper or business person tries to make you think that they are both fair-minded and have a high regard for you personally, whether or not this is actually the case.

The standard answer is that the ‘miracle of the market’ solves it all, just as ‘natural selection’ produced superior animals and eventually humans. The New Right tend to link the two, but leaving out the ‘off-message facts’. In biology, two gigantic ‘off-message facts’ are: Firstly, many animals manage fine without changing their bodies or way of life. Secondly, there are more animal parasites than animals that live free. Before modern medicine and hygiene, every human would have carried a large number of ‘freeloaders’: lice, fleas, worms in the gut and an entire ecosystem of bacteria.

Among humans, we make judgments and a normal society can freeze out those who don’t behave. At least a

small society can do this, up to a point. The big problem is that an individual can do better by being less fair and sympathetic than the norm, provided they do this cleverly. Also some people will do it foolishly and damage themselves, but also spoil the general pattern of trust. This must have got worse as people started to live in large societies and routinely encountered people they did not know and might never meet again. That was when law became necessary, with punishments made harsh enough to put a limit on whatever any particular society defined as anti-social behaviour.

### Who's Afraid of the Big Bad State?

The rise of civilisation was also the rise of the state. The most sensible anarchists have been those who also believe that civilisation as such was a mistake and that we should return to a simple and rural way of life. I myself doubt that this is a good idea, but in any case they never found a plausible politics with which to express this feeling. The actual preservation of a bucolic paradise of small producers would need a small but powerful state set over the whole, able to stop accumulations of power. But small producers and in particular small farmers hardly ever see it so. You could break your heart trying to persuade them to control the forces that are destroying them, and many hearts have indeed been broken trying to do so. In my case, I don't see it as particularly desirable, even supposing it were politically possible.

Classical Liberalism had the ideal of a small state, but never managed to achieve this. Countries governed by believers in liberal ideology still conformed to the rule that the rise of civilisation was also the rise of the state. Ancient states were often arbitrary in their powers, but almost always small in terms of numbers employed and the proportion of the national wealth actually under state control. Imperial China gave arbitrary powers to officials, but there would be just one single court-appointed official per xian, a unit roughly the size of an English county and often translated as county. China started out with about a thousand of these, and currently there are 1,464 of them in Mainland China

out of a total of 2,862 xian-level divisions.<sup>2</sup> But of course modern China has a state reaching down to village level, whereas Imperial China expected magistrates to maintain a rather loose sort of order in cooperation with the local gentry, the class from whom most of the magistrates had been recruited.

During the Industrial Revolution, the British state was large and taxes high compared to most of the rest of Europe. But it was a state that was dominated by the gentry and had minimal controls for rich people or ambitious newcomers. It was also a highly protectionist state, and had been for many decades. Adam Smith asserted that progress had happened despite the state rather than because of it. But since his time, we have had many cases of successful state-promoted industrialisation. None where the state was small or inactive but the economy grew fast as Adam Smith asserted it would.

Fascism nowadays gets identified as an expansion of state power. It wasn't really: it was the merger of existing states with populist right-wing movements that were determined to impose their own ideology. The more the right-wing populists swamped what already existed, the worse the fascism, with Nazism as the extreme case. In Spain, General Franco wasn't very ideological and his version of fascism was fairly mild.

During and after World War Two, Britain, France and the USA adapted and adopted many ideas from both Fascism and Leninism. Produced a successful mix that won over their former foes in Japan, Italy and West Germany.

That was the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s, there was also a huge cultural shift in Britain and the USA which created a global culture of a new sort. France was left behind in this process.

Equality for non-whites and for women made a lot of progress, because the Soviet Union was offering a major challenge on those issues and was ahead till the 1970s. Probably the changes would not have happened without that challenge.

Also the general emphasis on 'freedom' made it harder to resist other changes, tolerance of homosexuality

and also an erosion of hierarchies. This was unrelated to the Soviet challenge, since they remained intolerant and hierarchical, a fixed point in a changing world.

There was also a major rise in 'Green' values, which had been marginal till the 1960s and only really became important in the 1970s.

Bizarrely, the generation that rose to power through those changes now prefer to claim that nothing much happened and that they are heirs to centuries of Western 'universal values'. 1960 values rejected too much and exaggerated existing unfairness in the 1970s. That and the decision of the Left to ignore or oppose Incomes Policy and Workers Control created a frustrating deadlock in which the New Right were able to take advantage of.

They were not however able to change the basic nature of the civilisation – the more civilised, the bigger the state. Some state functions have been hived off, but the notion of shrinking it has remained unrealised. 'Utopian Capitalism' of the sort promised in the 1980s has remained unrealised. A serious attempt to create it in Russia when Yeltsin was in charge produced a shrinking economy and a rising death rate, and paved the way for Russia's current alienation from the West. Putin is very much a product of this process, not its cause. Whereas Lenin and Stalin created something that probably would not have existed without them, Putin is a highly predictable product of Western blunders.

### UKIP and the Pushmi-Pullyu Strategy

The New Right system dangles grand promises but mostly does not fulfil them. Not only did it fail to shrink the state: it has also done huge damage to the world of independent small business that Thatcher claimed to favour, and probably did genuinely want to promote.

Marx's core argument in *The Communist Manifesto* – that a capitalist market destroys small independent production – remains spot on. He was over-optimistic about the new wage-earning class making an intelligent response to this situation, which is very complex. He also mistrusted the state, which was a major error, since



only an expanded state has actually been able to deliver socialism. The socialist movement failed in the 1970s because it vehemently rejected the methods that had worked and pursued over-ambitious aims of getting people to 'do the right thing' without state power. State power is obviously imperfect, but finding something better is inherently tricky.

The New Right promised Utopian Capitalism in the 1980s: a mass of small entrepreneurs and a world that was a gigantic prosperous suburb. It's not a vision I ever liked, but it also does not matter much, because the reality has been otherwise. Successful small businesses are an increasing rarity. The Internet and World Wide Web – both of them pioneered by state-funded research far removed from any commercial motive – have not helped. The new technology has allowed a few small businesses to grow gigantic and crushed most of the rest. The trend described by Marx in the 1848 Communist Manifesto has continued quite smoothly: independent small production continues to decline. And without welfare, the system would have been overthrown long ago by all of the losers in the system.

The New Right profited from socialist failures, but needed to do so in a devious manner. It had to go after two different constituencies, which had to be given a different message. The rich and dynamic had to be assured that they would be looked after, with the state stepping in to cure any financial crisis, as happened in both 1987 and 2008. The military would remain a gigantic customer for high technology that would not have been immediately profitable, but might lead on to many consumer products. This required some new wars and new enemies to justify such spending, so they were found in the Middle East.

Meantime a completely different set of promises had to be spun out for small producers, who continue to be wiped out by market freedoms, but need to be pointed at the wrong targets. The politicians of the New Right need authentic religious and/or traditionalist people to win elections.

This could be called the pushmi-pullyu strategy. This is a two-headed animal from the Doctor Dolittle books:

described as the rarest animal in the world, the pushmi-pullyu (pronounced "push-me—pull-you") is a 'gazelle-unicorn cross' which has two heads (one of each) at opposite ends of its body.<sup>3</sup> Which would have created problems for its digestive system, but since talking crap has been a common habit of both Thatcherites and US Republicans, the image remains suitable.

A lot of the 'pull-you' side of the ideology involves creating resentment against those who are suffering, the Unwanted in the Stars / Plebs / Unwanted system that has replaced more traditional class divides. The attitude of the declining traditionalists has anyway always been '*if you have a problem, it is your fault. If I have a problem, it is a matter of 'public interest' for the state to bale me out*'. This is also the view of the rich, but it has been mostly the rich who got the bail-outs.

Unemployment gets blamed on moral weakness or laziness by the unemployed, not on the planned destruction of secure jobs as part of the breaking of the Trade Union movement. You can always find some individual offenders and welfare cheats, of course. But you could do something similar for people injured in traffic accidents. Or people who get sick or injured. A minority in each category did in some sense bring it on themselves, but far more are 100 per cent victims of circumstances they did not control.

(This attitude is a hold-over from the Plutophile Heresy that infected Protestantism, and Puritanism in particular. This notion – which flatly contradicts everything in the New Testament, and relies on a few untypical examples from the older Hebrew Scriptures – sees wealth 'honestly gained' as a sign of Divine Favour. This is flatly opposed to the main teachings of Jesus, but preachers who rely mostly on rich donors to pay their expenses are happy to spout it. They have to know that the bulk of the Bible says something else, but supposed belief in a future assessment in front of God tends to get outweighed by material needs in churches with no reliable sources of funds beyond donations that the rich are generally the most willing

to make.)

And how does UKIP fit in? Just another pushmi-pullyu, with the reactionary 'pull-you' head much larger, but the pro-rich 'push-me' head very much in control. Farage manages to sound anti-establishment but avoids most of the serious issues other than Europe.

### **And I Think To Myself, What a Fungible World**

If I have time, in my remaining years, I may write a book on economics entitled *Economics If You're Not a Sociopath*. This might seem a puzzling ambition, since surely everyone would be starting from the assumption that most people care for others, and have principles. Sociopaths – people with a total indifference to the sufferings of others – are rare exceptions. Obviously no one would build a fancy system of economics that an extreme abnormality is the norm.

Actually they do.

Adam Smith's remark about the butcher, brewer and baker is one example. If those particular individuals were sociopaths, you would clearly need to address just their self-interest and not bother addressing feelings that they lack. But much more probably you'd find some alternative source for your meat, beer and bread. With the butcher in particular, you might wonder what you were eating – or even conceivably *who* you were eating.

So-called 'rational' economics would only be rational if everyone was a clairvoyant sociopath who also regarded the entire world as fungible. Clairvoyant, to know the correct market price for everything. It is a basic assumption of 'rational economics' that this happens on average. It cannot be denied that individuals make errors, but it is hoped that these will even out. But there is no clear reason why they should. Sociopathic, to be totally lacking in sympathy, accepting no duties to other humans. This is normally packaged by describing the duties imposed by sympathy as limitations on freedom. Ready to see the world as fungible, a place where anything can substitute for anything else. This allows you to claim your economics as universal without the bother of studying real

societies.

This “rational” assumption follows on from Classical Liberalism, and takes very literally the economic model that Smith loosely outlined. Of course Smith also wrote another book called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he assumes the exact opposite, people full of moral feeling and sentiment. This is known to experts in the field as ‘The Adam Smith Problem’. My own conclusion, set out in detail in my book *Adam Smith: Wealth Without Nations*, is that he was massively inconsistent and guided mostly by a desire to please the ruling class of his day. Actual Classical Liberal opinion tended to take contradictory views of fundamentals just so long as they could arrive at a conclusion that suited them. Those actually governing the country knew perfectly well that sentiments were at least as important as self-interest, and commonly more so.

You could call the New Right a diseased offshoot of Classical Liberalism. And with the current weakness of socialism in much of the world, it has unintentionally generated some equally diseased enemies. Notably the entire range of Islamic Extremism, produced by the global abuses of power by Neo-Liberalism and also Late-Vintage Liberal Imperialism. Neither has a good understanding of human values.

The current anti-tax views of the rich are based on a contempt for the rest of the society and a belief the rich do most of the important stuff. The attitude that dominated the ‘Roaring 20s’ and which led on to the Great Depression and the near-collapse of capitalism. Franklin Roosevelt, the man who saved the West at the time, had no sympathy for such views:

“The movement toward progressive taxation of wealth and of income has accompanied the growing diversification and interrelation of effort which marks our industrial society. Wealth in the modern world does not come merely from individual effort; it results from a combination of individual effort and of the manifold uses to which the community puts that effort. The individual does not create the product of his industry with his own hands; he utilizes the many processes and forces of mass production to meet the demands of a

national and international market.

“Therefore, in spite of the great importance in our national life of the efforts and ingenuity of unusual individuals, the people in the mass have inevitably helped to make large fortunes possible. Without mass cooperation great accumulations of wealth would ‘be impossible save by unhealthy speculation. As Andrew Carnegie put it, ‘Where wealth accrues honorably, the people are always silent partners.’ Whether it be wealth achieved through the cooperation of the entire community or riches gained by speculation—in either case the ownership of such wealth or riches represents a great public interest and a great ability to pay.”<sup>4</sup>

The New Right now insist that Roosevelt prolonged a crisis that would otherwise have cured itself – ignoring the small detail that it entirely failed to cure itself in other countries that had no New Deal or similar. Or the way that the government pumped money into the economy Roosevelt-style during the Crisis of 1987, which paved the way for the Soviet collapse in 1989-91. And did just the same with the crisis that began in 2008, except now there is only a weak recovery. All of these off-message facts are ignored because of the wonderfully rational nature of New Right economics. A system that assumes that everyone is a clairvoyant sociopath.

“Rational Economics” also ignores the basic fact that virtually everyone is influenced by what they see other people doing, even when it has no direct effect on them. Of course recognising that, even for clairvoyant sociopaths, would probably make the maths unmanageably complex.

Economists have been accused of ‘Physics Envy’, but tend to be badly informed about real physics. Or perhaps they manage to avoid noticing the ‘off-message facts’. In any case, they don’t follow the example of actual functional physics, where it is agreed that even the most beautiful theory can be slain by one awkward little fact. This seldom happens in economics. Worse, they pay no attention to the ‘Three-Body Problem’. Newton hit this when he tried to complete his grand work on gravitation by an exact account of the moon’s orbit. It turned

out that the motion of a moon is influenced both by the body it orbits and by the sun they both orbit. And it is not a simple combination the (relatively simple) two-body motion that you’d get if each was alone in the universe. Worse, the correct maths involves an *infinite* set of calculations. In this case, thankfully, most of these infinite calculations would produce a tiny and insignificant result. Scientists in the 18<sup>th</sup> century managed to work out the motion well enough to know more or less where the moon would be at any given hour. A German called Tobias Mayer laboured long and hard and produced lunar tables that were good enough to help with the vexed problem of finding Longitude at Sea. This was later given a superior solution by a British clock-maker who devised the first useful chronometers, but Mayer’s widow did get a large payment from Britain’s Board of Longitude for his partial solution.

(Finding longitude on land was solved well before that, by French astronomers who realised that the positions of the four main moons of Jupiter could give a universal standard of time, which could then be compared to the rising of the sun to determine longitude with great precision. It was too complex and slow to be of use at sea, but it did finally settle the position and relative size of the main continents. And demonstrated that Europe was rather smaller than previously assumed, leading Louis 14<sup>th</sup> to complain that the astronomers had lost him more territory than his general had conquered. But I assume this was a joke: the value of territory to a monarch would be the revenue that could be drawn from it, not its apparent size on a map.)

In physics, theories are treated with suspicion if the assumptions seem unreasonable. Sometimes the evidence is overwhelming: it did not seem right that light could be both a wave and a particle, but numerous experiments showed that it only made sense if treated as in some sense both.

In the case of Rational Economics, the conclusions are seldom very accurate and sometimes wildly wrong. It never did merit being taken very seriously, and probably would not have been had it not been tailored to

suit a newly rising class of rich people who were little concerned with social values.

And it's a killer ideology. One that is increasingly wrecking the society it exists within.

### **US Police as an Army of Occupation**

"After a Missouri grand jury declined to indict Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown this week, it became clear immediately that Ferguson prosecutor Bob McCulloch presented the case in a way that was bound to fail. Many critics say this appears to have been entirely intentional on the prosecutor's part..."

"It is the grand jury's function not 'to enquire ... upon what foundation [the charge may be] denied,' or otherwise to try the suspect's defences, but only to examine 'upon what foundation [the charge] is made' by the prosecutor..."

"McCulloch allowed Wilson to testify for hours and made sure the grand jury was aware of every possible piece of evidence that could exculpate the cop. In his rambling press conference Monday night, McCulloch explained that the refusal to indict resulted from the combination of contradictory eyewitness testimony and other exculpatory evidence. But it was immediately obvious to legal experts that the way the prosecutor presented the evidence virtually guaranteed that there would be no indictment, and therefore no trial. As the cliché goes, a prosecutor can get a grand jury to indict a ham sandwich. But, it should be added, the prosecutor has to want the ham sandwich to be indicted."<sup>5</sup>

US law starts with a big advantage for the police. Supreme Court judgements have already established that police officers can in some cases shoot suspected criminals in the back while the suspect is running away. The rule is "to prevent a suspect from escaping, but only if the officer has probable cause to think the suspect's committed a serious violent felony".<sup>6</sup> That did apply in the Ferguson case, but there were also a lot of witnesses saying the man was trying to surrender when he was shot, even though he had earlier struggled with the policeman who shot him.

It should have been for a jury to

decide. It's a fact that US soldiers sometimes disliked the Geneva Convention rule of enemies suddenly becoming off-limits if they chose to surrender. In World War Two, it has now emerged that they sometimes cold-bloodedly shot German soldiers who had surrendered. And those were white and close to the Anglo norm, people who would probably have become valued allies in a few years when the Cold War got going. For non-whites, there has always been much less tolerance. Given the overlap between police and military attitudes in the USA, a serious prosecutor could have made a very convincing case for murder.

What actually happened was an abuse of the Grand Jury system. This is an old English system that the USA retained, and which originally existed in order to prevent anyone being prosecuted if there was no good evidence against them. The normal form is for the Prosecutor to present all of the evidence they have, without reference to what the Defence might say, since this will come out at the trial. In this case, the 'Prosecutor' is reasonably suspected of playing to lose. The actual numbers have not been revealed, but it seems that the policeman could have been 'cleared' if just four out of the 12-person Grand Jury had taken his side. In a regular trial, he would have needed all twelve to claim to be cleared, and a split jury would have meant a new trial. Blatantly it is an unfair system.

But it's also true that Afro-Americans have not helped themselves very much. When Martin Luther King tried doing things in line with Gandhi's example, this worked. What went wrong was a later, angrier generation deciding to ignore this and do things the standard US way, noisily and with threats of violence.

Doing things the standard US way tends to fail, especially if you lack power. The turn to violence by people such as the Black Panthers was understandable but profoundly foolish. Given the numbers, it was virtually certain to fail to end racism. And it paved the way for the massive black-on-black violence that has followed.

Oddly enough, they still fail to see this. Afro-Americans are hooked on

their own version of 1960s liberalism, which self-destructed while pursuing the twin goals of imposing its own values on both South Vietnam and the US South. Examples of this frozen perception can be found in the (highly entertaining) novels of Walter Mosley, best known for '*Devil in a Blue Dress*', featuring the classic US 'the hard-boiled detective', except that the man is black. Another, '*Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*', sounds as if it summed up why existing methods were not working, but also shows no hint at all of an alternative. It is all very depressing, unless one is looking forward to a break-up and downfall by the USA. But it could very easily be much more messy than the Soviet collapse.

### **Democracy Viewed as an Immaculate Conception**

In Democracy, you choose who govern you. Or so they say.

Representative Democracy with competitive political parties for national government actually makes you one tiny voice among millions. Some of those millions may choose to go off in a direction you don't like at all. Which leads to protests of the sort that the US has generally encouraged after the Soviet collapse. If it isn't MYWISH, it isn't actually democracy, even if it technically speaking gets the most votes.

As well as this, Representative Democracy is a remarkably efficient engine for generating national or sectarian divisions that had previously been dormant or absent. Leninist parties tend to be good at fitting a diversity of peoples into a single acceptable framework, as in Yugoslavia. Or keeping Czechoslovakia together, even if they did a bad job after home-grown reformism was crushed in 1968. After the Soviets pulled out, open politics as expressed in their 1992 elections revealed that there was no longer any such thing as Czechoslovak politics: parties that won significant support were all either Czech or Slovak. It would also have added up to a deadlock, with a majority of Czechs favouring Centre-Right policies while Slovaks favoured Centre-Left. Since both of them were expecting to join the European Union shortly, as indeed



they did, the split went off smoothly. But elsewhere it usually goes much worse.

Some human activities are easily transported from one society to another. This applies to various sports and games, with European games like chess and English sports like football and cricket and tennis becoming global. Not that the transplant is always successful: China's gigantic population produces most of the world's best table tennis players, but has only recently been producing top-ranking players of regular tennis, while the Chinese cricket and football teams regularly lose to teams from much smaller nations.

Competitive Representative Democracy is a much harder thing to transplant successfully. Its actual development in Britain was slow and messy. Parliamentary power was established as dominant in Britain in 1688, but until Queen Victoria inherited the throne as a rather naïve teenager, monarchs could mostly control parliament. Until the 1832 reforms, a couple of hundred rich families could control a majority of House of Commons seats. Only in the 1880s did a majority of adult males get the vote.

Similar things happened in most European countries: parliaments began as bodies elected by a rich minority, and mostly serving as a limited balance against royal power. When people tried importing an advanced version of the system into a country that had never known it, the system mostly deadlocked and governed badly and was not respected.

Most people prefer good government to government in which they have their own tiny voice in electing a representative who may anyway be powerless among the mass of other

representatives.

Even when the system works, it commonly does not work well. Representatives may play their own game and join the ranks of the rich and powerful. And since the 1980s, newspapers mostly owned by rich right-wingers have successfully cultivated an attitude of sullen futility, equally hostile to government and big business. Big business can mostly ignore such things, since in practice only the government can curb them.

In the USA, a majority want what Obama offers to give. But they have been persuaded to mistrust him and other politicians.<sup>7</sup> Some people don't bother voting: others vote against their own economic interest, in a false belief that Republicans will preserve traditional values. Very much the pushmi-pullyu effect I noted earlier.

### **The Colour Clowns of Hong Kong**

The Hong Kong Democracy Protests are dying with a whimper, not a bang.<sup>8</sup> There was never any point in asking Beijing to open up the electoral process to the possibility of an elected leader hostile to Beijing. If there had been a positive response from people in the rest of China then the cause might have been won. But there is a broad lack of sympathy for Hong Kong, which is disliked for asking for more when they are already privileged.

Meantime the actual business of Hong Kong is business, on the US model.

"The stock exchanges of Hong Kong and Shanghai on Monday launch a much-anticipated trading link that will see billions of dollars in daily cross-border transactions and partially open up China's closeted equities markets to the world.

"After weeks of delays the Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect finally kicks off, giving international investors access to companies in the world's number two economy, while allowing mainland investors to trade shares in Hong Kong."<sup>9</sup>

This is part of a process of Hong Kong being overtaken by Shanghai. The 'Umbrella Revolution' has undoubtedly speeded the process. Business people strongly dislike disorder and uncertainty. Their

nightmare would be an elected chief executive who got into a fight with Beijing, since Hong Kong cut off from the rest of China would soon become a ghost town.

### **Snippets**

Almost unnoticed in the West, China has been building stronger trade links with the rest of Asia. This includes a major agreement with Australia, which did at least get a mention by the BBC.<sup>10</sup> It is also noticed in passing that China is to host the 2016 meeting of the G20.<sup>11</sup> But while the USA fights futile wars and while the European Union is tied up with a pointless quarrel with Russia over Ukraine, China is quietly strengthening itself and making new friends.

The really big news – yet viewed as marginal in the West – was the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum.<sup>12</sup> The 2014 meeting was in Beijing and seems to have China central to it, as it is in geographical and economic terms. Both Russia and the USA are also members, but are damaging each other. Meantime China advances. And President Xi Jinping shows no sign of moving China any closer to the norms that the USA is trying to impose on the rest of the world.

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At the time of writing, it has yet to be decided if Israel will decide to make itself officially an exclusively Jewish state. It has been proposed, but appals a lot of people.<sup>13</sup> It has been the reality from the beginning, but before now there was at least the pretence that something else was the long-term goal.

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Meantime India has had official Universalism since independence. But the oppressive system of caste has remained strong, and is supported by many of the voters.

A recent article in the magazine *Prospect* explains just how bad the system is. After mentioning the case of the Afghan schoolgirl who was shot by the Taliban, it cites a contrasting case in India:

"Surekha Bhotmange was 40 years old and had committed several crimes too. She was a woman—an 'Untouchable' Dalit woman—who lived in India, and she wasn't dirt

The power of one, if fearless and focused, is formidable, but the power of many working together is better.

*Gloria Macapagal Arroyo*

The past is prophetic in that it asserts loudly that wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

poor. She was more educated than her husband, so she functioned as the head of her family. Ambedkar was her hero. Like him, her family had renounced Hinduism and converted to Buddhism. Surekha's children were educated. Her two sons, Sudhir and Roshan, had been to college. Her daughter, Priyanka, was 17 and finishing high school. Surekha and her husband had bought a little plot of land in the village of Khairlanji in the state of Maharashtra. It was surrounded by farms belonging to castes that considered themselves superior to the Mahar caste that Surekha belonged to. Because she was Dalit and had no right to aspire to a good life, the village panchayat (assembly) did not permit her to get an electricity connection or to turn her thatched mud hut into a brick house. The villagers would not allow her family to irrigate their fields with water from the canal, or draw water from the public well. They tried to build a public road through her land, and when she protested, they drove their bullock carts through her fields. They let their cattle loose to feed on her standing crop."<sup>14</sup>

The majority are prejudiced and the majority can express this prejudice in elections. So nothing is likely to be fixed very soon.

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Last month, I was expecting a deal on Ukraine. I've not yet lost hope: signals are mixed at the time of writing (28th November). Some people still trapped in Cold War thinking are denouncing the West for being weak in confrontation.<sup>15</sup>

What the article is protesting at would be quite encouraging, if true. Currently signals are mixed. Neither the USA nor the European Union are ready to spend very much on Ukraine. They might like to arm West Ukraine for a quick war of conquest over East Ukraine, as they armed Croats against Serbs. But Russia has learned from history and seems to be arming East Ukraine.

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Denied a binding referendum on independence, the Catalans held a vote anyway.<sup>16</sup> 80% voted for independence from Spain, but not a majority of the voters. So for the time being, things go on as before.

People have a notion that International

Law includes some right of secession. Arguably it should, but most definitely it does not in practice. The UN mentions self-determination, but also 'territorial integrity'. In practice states over the world can hang onto minority territories for as long as they have the will and power to do so.

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In the new world weather system that is developing, the general trend is Global Warming. But the actual weather is a mixed bag of extremes, often meaning much warmer summer and much colder winters. (Allowing Climate Denialists to cite the fairly moderate average change.)

You may have noticed on the news the recent enormously heavy snowfalls over most of the USA. It seems to be another case of major changes that include excessive snow and cold as well as excessive drought and heat:

"Cold air is usually trapped in the Arctic by the winds that circle the pole – the polar vortex. The strongest winds found high up in the atmosphere are called the polar jet stream.

"The jet stream is naturally wavy and constantly shifting. This week, however, it developed an especially large kink over the continental US that has remained in place for several days. On the west side warm air moved up into the Arctic, while freezing polar air spilled south as far as Texas, causing temperatures to plummet.

"The enormous snowfalls in places like Buffalo were largely due to a phenomenon known as the 'lake effect'. Winds blowing across the Great Lakes pick up moisture, which can get dumped as snow when conditions are right...

"Global warming is also increasing the amount of moisture in the atmosphere, causing not just increased rainfall, but increased snowfall as well when conditions are right. So while it might seem contradictory, global warming seems to be part of the reason for recent 'snowmageddon' events such as the record snowfall in northern Japan in 2013.<sup>17</sup>

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# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Germany and Russia

The media in Europe are telling us to hate Putin, Russia and the Russians. The occasion for this hostile outburst is the situation in Ukraine, which the West wants to incorporate into the Atlantic Alliance, against Russia's wishes. Some in Europe however still see that Russia has a right to defend its borders.

For example Germany's Foreign minister, M. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has said he is against Ukraine joining NATO. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, he said he considers "that it is possible for NATO to have a partnership with Ukraine, but not membership."

He does not believe it is realistic for Ukraine to join the European Union in the foreseeable future, as the economic and political modernization of Ukraine is a "*project for a few generations.*"

Steinmeier's comments on Ukrainian membership of NATO are particularly important because he - a social democrat - had been seen as a prominent "westerner" in the German cabinet. There have also been other statements in just the last week from Merkel herself and others (Merkel speaking in Poland on Russia as part of Europe's future etc.).

The Germans seem to be spurred into non-compliance in the new Cold War by basic economic self-interest; EU trade with Russia is \$350bn a year, well over \$100bn of that accounted for by Germany

(export of machinery, cars etc.). A visitor to a large engineering plant (steel) in the Ruhr a year and a half ago reported that it produced all kinds of interesting things from sophisticated industrial furnace fittings to parts for Audi cars, but also drive and transmission shafts for Russian Railway locomotives.

Even at the time (18 months ago) the biggest worry of the Works Council chairman (a trade unionist) was that politics would undermine their substantial Russian trade. This is a picture that is probably common across German industry. German industry leaders have been vocal in their opposition to the US sanctions campaign, and Putin's counter-sanctions have proved to be a masterstroke.

### France and Russia

Is this pragmatic attitude also present in France?

There is an important pro-Russian current among top level French politicians. *Le Monde* newspaper is one of those telling us to hate Putin, but on 17 November as part of a series of articles entitled 'Putin's French networks' it detailed support among politicians in France for Putin, from the left (Parti de Gauche, Jean-Luc Mélançon), to the Socialist Party: Jean-Pierre Chevenement, who is Hollande's special envoy in Moscow and Jacques Attali (and generally the Gaullists and Mitterrandists). In the right coalition UMP (Sarkozy's party): François

Fillon, ex-prime minister, Thierry Mariani (and the old Gaullists in general); Sarkozy himself, at a public meeting on 14 November, said France must deliver the Mistral helicopter carriers ordered in 2010 to Russia. Both Fillon and Sarkozy met Putin personally and that seems to have made a big difference.

The National Assembly has a Franco-Russian friendship society, with 66 members, 2/3 of which are UMP. On the right: Philippe de Villiers and the National Front.

The Russian ambassador in France organised a conference on 1st September about Ukraine, attended by French politicians and top business people as well as members of the Russian Parliament. This was organised by another Franco-Russian association led by Mariani and the head of Russian Railways. The Russian ambassador had been a speaker at a UMP internal meeting the year before.

On 18 November *Le Monde* described the building of a new Russian Orthodox church in the centre of Paris on the banks of the Seine, including a cultural centre, primary school, Slavic institute, being built by the Russian government.

Putin lost a very rich and powerful French ally when Christophe de Margerie the head of Total was killed in an accident at Moscow airport last October; Margerie was skirting Western sanctions against Russia.

"A staunch defender of Russia



and its energy policies amid the conflict in Ukraine, De Margerie told Reuters in a July interview that Europe should stop thinking about cutting its dependence on Russian gas and focus instead on making those deliveries safer.” <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/21/total-oil-ceo-christophe-de-margerie-killed-in-moscow-plane-crash-say-reports>

So it seems that there is quite a large not anti-Russian current in France, however there are differences with the German situation.

The politicians mentioned above are not in power, except the special envoy to Russia Jean-Pierre Chevenement. There is no telling what Sarkozy and Fillon would do as regards Russia if they get into power at the next elections. In favour of Sarkozy, in 2008 he played a positive role in negotiations between the EU and Russia during the Georgian conflict.

The other difference between Germany and France is public opinion; the visitor to Germany quoted above mentions ‘a general public scepticism about what they [Germans] are being told is happening in Russia and Ukraine’; the same scepticism may not exist in France. Television and press are overwhelmingly anti-Russian.

The newspaper *Le Figaro* may be an exception.

An article in *Le Figaro* of 13 November 2014 by Alexis Feertchak (<http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2014/11/13/31002-20141113ARTFIG00154-ukraine-apres-le-mur-de-berlin-le-mur-de-kiiev.php>) blames Europe’s decision to offer a relationship with Ukraine that excluded Russia as the origin of the disastrous present situation. Setting up Putin and Russia as enemies of the West made public debate in Europe about Ukraine a farce. Well known public figures like Hubert

Védrine, Dominique de Villepin, Vladimir Fédorovski, Hélène Carrière d’Encausse, Jacques Sapir or Jean-Pierre Chevènement have stood up against this demonization but with few echoes.

Alexis Feertchak quotes the historian Adler at a conference organized by the Institut Diderot; (Adler’s words are summarized in what follows). Historically there is no Ukrainian nation or state as such. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote in 1990, just before the fall of the Soviet Union:

“To speak of the existence since the ninth century of a separate Ukrainian people, speaking a specific non Russian language, is a recent falsification of the truth. Together we come from the noble city of Kiev, cradle of the land of Russia according to the Nestor Chronicle, and source of the light of Christianity. We were governed by the same princes.” [note re language: Klitchko and Poroshenko are not fluent Ukrainian speakers.]

According to Alexandre Adler the common history of the Ukrainians and Russians during the Second World War should not be overshadowed by the joining of a small part of Western Ukrainians with the Nazi regime. This accusation of a reprehensible attitude of Ukraine during WW2 is explained by the fact that historically one part of Western Ukraine was not associated

to Russia, but to the Kingdom of Poland and then of the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1940, some of those who had belonged to this Mitteleuropa, acted with the 3rd Reich. But these acts, which did take place, are in no way representative of Ukraine, or even of Western Ukraine, said Adler.

Ukraine is a bridge, a step towards Russia, as the etymology of its name indicates. Europe must understand that the demands of the Ukrainians for closer cooperation with Europe must take place within a wider political cooperation which includes Russia.

Let us hope that the words of people like the historian Adler and other French public figures join those of German public figures to halt the present dangerous hostility to Russia.

### **Non interference in other countries policies.**

Stephane Le Foll, French Minister for Agriculture and spokesman for the government, said on the occasion of the minister of justice criticizing the judicial ruling in Ferguson, USA: “The U.S. has its own rules and procedures.”. “One shouldn’t comment about what’s going on in the U.S.”

He should be reminded of this when he next spouts about ‘what’s going on in Russia’.

The infectiousness of crime is like that of the plague. *Napoleon Bonaparte*

The individual whose vision encompasses the whole world often feels nowhere so hedged in and out of touch with his surroundings as in his native land.

*Emma Goldman*

The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause, as, for instance, the black man's right to his body, or woman's right to her soul.

*Emma Goldman*

The government, which was designed for the people, has got into the hands of the bosses and their employers, the special interests. An invisible empire has been set up above the forms of democracy.

*Woodrow Wilson*

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):**

My first question is: why do we have to debate something as fundamental as a mutual defence agreement with the United States in time allocated by the Backbench Business Committee? The answer is that Governments of all hues---this applies to my party, as well as the coalition Government and previous Conservative Governments---have been reluctant to have parliamentary debates on the subject. Indeed, this is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the debate on the Consolidated Fund held in 1994, which was started by Alan Simpson, then a Member, at 1.56 am on 15 December. Only two other Members took part at that time of the morning, so it was hardly parliamentary scrutiny.

I welcome this debate, but there cannot be a vote because it is an Adjournment debate. However, the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) has tabled a motion, supported by me and others, which could lead to a parliamentary vote on the mutual defence agreement. I hope it will. It is interesting that parliamentary scrutiny of the mutual defence agreement and nuclear weapons has been in short supply going back to the end of the second world war.

The National Archives in Kew has a document, "Extracts from a memorandum on the Atomic Bomb from Prime Minister Attlee, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1945", which states: "The only course which seems to me feasible and to offer a reasonable hope of staving off imminent disaster for the world is joint action by the USA, UK and Russia based upon stark reality. We should declare that this invention has made it essential to end wars. The New World Order must start now. All nations must

give up their dreams of realising some historic expansion at the expense of their neighbours. They must look to a peaceful future instead of a warlike past. This sort of thing has in the past been considered a utopian dream. It has become today the essential condition of the survival of civilisation and possibly life on this planet."

That was Prime Minister Attlee's view in August 1945, just after the first nuclear weapons had been exploded at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Seven years later, there was an explosion in Australia by Britain when its first H-bomb was detonated. There was an interesting programme last night on al-Jazeera that showed the return of lands to the indigenous people who were driven off them because of those nuclear tests. The nuclear test veterans are still with us, and are still suffering as a result of the tests.

The then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, made a statement to the House of Commons on the detonation of that weapon on 3 October 1952. He explained that the temperature at the centre of it was nearly 1 million degrees and the damage it caused, and said that the Government were grateful to the Australian Government for allowing the test. He concluded: "All those concerned in the production of the first British atomic bomb are to be warmly congratulated on the successful outcome of an historic episode and I should no doubt pay my compliments to the Leader of the Opposition and the party opposite for initiating it"--(*Official Report*, 23 October 1952; Vol. 505, c. 1269)

That was the same Clement Attlee. I am a great admirer of Clement Attlee's domestic record, but not of a large part of his international record. During questions, Samuel Silverman asked the Prime Minister to explain

"the total cost of this experimental explosion, and will he bear in mind that to some of us it is no comfort at all to realise that both major parties in the State are equally responsible for this colossal folly?"

The Prime Minister said that everyone is equally responsible: "Even if one sits below the Gangway, one does not escape the responsibility." Silverman then asked: "What about the cost?" Prime Minister Churchill--this is fascinating---then said: "As to the cost, I have said before, as an old Parliamentarian, that I was rather astonished that well over £100 million should be disbursed without Parliament being aware of it. I was a bit astonished. However, there is the story, and we now have a result which on the whole, I think, will be beneficial to public safety. As for the future, I think we must be guided by the precedents established under the last regime as to detailed accounts and the way in which the expenditure is recorded."---(*Official Report*, 23 October 1952; Vol. 505, c. 1271.)

It is astonishing that, with all the austerity at the end of the second world war, the then Prime Minister managed to spend £100 million of public money without telling Parliament, and apparently without discussing it with his Cabinet, which resulted in the entirely secret development of a British nuclear weapon, the first of which was exploded in 1952. We still had for some time the pretence that Britain had an independent nuclear deterrent.

**Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP):**

I commend the hon. Gentleman, and the hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) on the other side of the chamber, for helping to secure this debate through the Backbench Business Committee. Does the hon.

Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) agree that it is unacceptable for a UK government of any party to wish to spend £100 billion on through-life costs for Trident renewal, and to do so in a way that is not open and transparent, maintaining the historical tradition of being secretive, and not being prepared to face the consequences of their decisions? It seems that the UK Government will not even turn up at the international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Vienna in December. Does he agree on both those counts that UK Governments of all political persuasions have acted totally unacceptably?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and I agree with his points. The secrecy surrounding anything to do with nuclear weapons is completely unacceptable. The fact that the British Parliament has barely debated the mutual defence agreement---and I will come to that in a moment---since its existence is serious. The huge expenditure on Trident, at £100 billion, is enormous by any stretch of the imagination. It is my belief---the Minister will correct me if I am wrong---that the British Government have no intention of attending the international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Vienna at the beginning of December. I hope I am wrong about that, and I hope that they will attend, because it would simply not be right not to attend. On security, the US is a major military and industrial power; that is obvious. It is a very wealthy country---that is equally obvious. The President must send a message to Congress to ask it to approve and renew the amended treaty, and it must debate, vote on and approve it the matter. We have no such transparency in the British Parliament. The Prime Minister or any other Minister still has the ability to use the royal prerogative to override Parliament in this respect, and to approve the treaty, if that is what they want to do. That is why I was so determined that we should have this debate and why I have raised the question on so

many occasions.

**Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD):**

I add my congratulations to the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. He is talking as though he is surprised about the lack of scrutiny. I am not surprised in the slightest, because if we had any decent level of scrutiny, it would be very clear that replacing Trident is a complete waste of money.

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

I am basically a very optimistic person---in our line of work and with my view on politics, Sir Roger, you have to be an optimist, otherwise you would be very sad. I am optimistic that every Government want to consult Parliament and want Parliament to approve of things, but we have to face the reality that the lack of a written constitution and of a clear delineation of power, particularly on foreign affairs and treaty matters, means that the Government of the day, whatever party it is, does not have to consult Parliament on agreeing a treaty---or, indeed, on going to war---unless we change the relevant legislation. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a war powers Bill before Parliament, but I do not have much hope of it getting through Parliament, despite my inevitable optimism on all these matters.

**Mr John Spellar (Warley) (Lab):**

Might my hon. Friend not want to question why the Liberal Democrats, who seem to be exerting some influence---undesirable, I would say---over the Trident renewal programme, do not seem to have managed, or even tried, to exert that influence to get this issue debated? Nuclear policy has been debated, as I will say later; my hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) made Labour's position quite clear. Why does my hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) think that the Liberal Democrats have not insisted on having a debate?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

The shadow Minister invites me into a difficult situation. I cannot speak on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, nor would they want me to. They apparently wanted a Trident review,

with no like-for-like replacement. The review took place, and it is a matter of record and of history. On the question of this debate, I do not know what pressure was or was not applied by particular Ministers. I know that a number of Back-Bench MPs on both sides of the House believe, as I am sure the Member for New Forest East would agree, that Parliamentary scrutiny of all things is important; that is why we are sent here as Members of Parliament. As for the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (Mr Spellar) on nuclear weapons, he and I have a slightly different history on this matter, and we have debated it.

**Mr Spellar:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right that there was a Trident review. It came to the self-evident conclusion that if we are to maintain the nuclear deterrent, continuous at-sea deterrence is the only way of doing so, in spite of many fanciful schemes dreamt up by the Liberal Democrats. He has a perfectly straightforward, long-standing and honourable position of being opposed, but where does he think the Liberal Democrats now stand on the issue?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

Well it is---(*Interruption*) My friend the hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) helps me in this. It is an unfair question. I do not know and cannot tell, but I hope that the Liberal Democrats, and, indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley will come round to the view that nuclear weapons are unsustainable, expensive, dangerous and immoral, and that the world would be a much safer place if the five declared nuclear weapons states stood up to their obligations under the non-proliferation treaty and took steps towards disarmament. This debate is not solely about Trident; it is about the mutual defence agreement. Nevertheless, there is obviously a close connection.

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):**

The hon. Gentleman and I have a very different opinion on nuclear weapons. I understand that the hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) will



come forward with a different point of view. When it comes to nuclear weapons, I think that if a country has them in their possession, they become a deterrent, and I believe that, by their very existence, they prevent wars in places where there could be wars. That is my opinion, and I believe that it is the opinion of the vast majority of my constituents and the people I speak to in relation to nuclear weapons and nuclear power. What wit does the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) give to the opinion of my constituents who tell me that nuclear ownership is a deterrent?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

The way I suggest the hon. Gentleman deals with the issue is simply this: there are five declared nuclear weapons states, which all happen to be the five permanent members of the Security Council, and there are three other states that have nuclear weapons that we know of for sure---India, Pakistan and Israel. Then, there are questions about North Korea, which has some nuclear explosive capability. That leaves a very large number of other states that have no nuclear weapons. A considerable number of states have voluntarily given up nuclear weapons, such as South Africa, Argentina and Brazil, and there are others. If weapons of mass destruction were ever used, they could only create an environmental disaster where they go off and an economic disaster across the whole planet---and possibly an environmental disaster for the whole planet with a nuclear winter. They are something that we should not, could not and never would countenance the use of. However, every state, by possessing nuclear weapons, clearly does countenance their use, otherwise they would not possess them. I think security comes from disarmament, not from rearmament, and this is going to cost us a great deal of money. The hon. Gentleman and I might not agree on that, but that is a view I strongly hold. It is not just my view, but that of millions of people around the world who do not wish to live under a nuclear umbrella, because they fear it could become a nuclear cloud.

**Mr Leech:**

I add that the countries that own nuclear weapons have all been involved in wars since having nuclear weapons, so it has not stopped them from ending up in some sort of conflict.

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

Indeed; those countries have all been involved in conflicts, and we have come near to the use of nuclear weapons in the case of Korea and in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Clearly, their existence poses a threat. When the House debated Trident renewal in 2007, many Members took the view that Britain's security depended on having nuclear weapons. If that was the case, someone could argue for any country in the world developing nuclear weapons on the basis that that would guarantee its security. As I have explained, the reality is that the vast majority of nations do not have nuclear weapons and do not want them. Although some are under a nuclear alliance such as NATO, many are not and do not possess nuclear weapons, yet have massive natural resources. Many countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia are part of nuclear weapons-free zones. That is my view.

**Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con.):**

I appreciate that I will have the opportunity to speak after the hon. Gentleman, but I want to take him back to the point made by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). The hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) said that if nuclear weapons were used, there would be dire effects on the environment and on the planet, but does he not recognise that people who believe in deterrents believe that the nuclear deterrent is constantly in use, because the use resides in the possession, which results in the deterrent effect on any other power against using such weapons against this country?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

The hon. Gentleman and I have debated that view, and I simply do not agree that they provide security. Yes, they are in existence every day and therefore are potentially a threat to somebody, but it did not do the USA much good on 11 September

2001. Nuclear weapons were not much help on that occasion; nor are they much help in dealing with poverty, environmental disasters and people who are forced to flee and seek refuge elsewhere. My purpose today is to debate the mutual defence agreement and that, of course, is central to Britain's nuclear relationship with the United States. I turn to the history of the agreement. The USA had the McMahon Act, which did not allow the sharing of its nuclear or defence information with any other state, notwithstanding the provisions of the NATO treaty of 1948. Britain, which had a very close relationship with the USA throughout the 1940s and '50s, could not legally share a relationship of nuclear information with the USA. The McMahon Act was then amended, and straight after the amendment was agreed, the mutual defence agreement came into being, by which information and technology is shared between Britain and the USA.

An interesting legal point relates to the use of testing facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston and plutonium, which it would be completely illegal to use or test in the USA. I would be grateful if the Minister said whether there was any testing involving plutonium or potential uses of plutonium at AWE Aldermaston, because it is a significant point of the issue. The mutual defence agreement has been amended a number of times in its history and was most recently renewed, on a regular 10-year cycle, to allow arrangements for the transfer of special nuclear materials and non-nuclear components. The treaty was last extended in 2004 and will be extended a further 10 years from this year. As I have explained, the US Congress debated it earlier; we were not able to debate it.

The next issue relates to what I have just said about the use of AWE Aldermaston, but also to the legality of nuclear weapons and the relationship of the agreement to the non-proliferation treaty, which is the result of an initiative by a previous Labour Government to try to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The treaty has two central

themes. One is that all states that do not possess nuclear weapons and that sign the non-proliferation treaty agree not to possess them, take them on board or develop them. The other is that the five declared nuclear weapon states---Britain, France, China, Russia and the USA---agree both to take steps towards disarmament and not to allow the proliferation of nuclear weapons. So it would be interesting to know how Israel managed to get hold of its nuclear weapons and nuclear facilities.

It would also be interesting to know how this Government or any other Government can justify nuclear rearmament within the terms of the articles of the non-proliferation treaty. In a legal opinion released in July 2004 for Peacerrights, BASIC---the British American Security Information Council---and the Acronym Institute, Rabinder Singh, QC, and Professor Christine Chinkin of Matrix Chambers concluded that: “it is strongly argued that the renewal of the Mutual Defence Agreement is in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty”. I would therefore be grateful if the Minister said in his reply to the debate what the legal process is in the evaluation of the mutual defence agreement and how he believes that it is compatible with our obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which is coming up for its five-year review in May 2015, during the general election period in this country. Will he explain exactly what power and what finance have been used, in advance of the Trident replacement programme, to ensure that the British Government have that money available, even though there has been no main-gate decision, which is due to be taken in 2016.

I shall quote from written evidence given to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs by Nick Ritchie of the Bradford disarmament centre: “The UK is entirely dependent upon the United States for supply and refurbishment of its Trident 11 (D5) submarine launched ballistic missiles...The missiles themselves are produced and serviced in the United States by Lockheed Martin. The UK does not actually own any individual

missiles, but purchased the rights to 58 missiles from a common pool held at the US strategic weapons facility at the Kings Bay Submarine Base, Georgia. British Trident submarines also conduct their missile test firings at the US Eastern Test Range, off the coast of Florida.” The obvious point is that the claim that Britain has an independent nuclear deterrent must be treated with the utmost caution, if not derision, when what is quite clear is where the technology comes from, the relationship with the mutual defence agreement, the expenditure involved and the testing facilities that are available for Britain to use in the USA.

**Dr Lewis:**

There is a question of independence in terms not of manufacture, but of control. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is entirely a matter for the United Kingdom Government whether the deterrent would be fired, as opposed to used---fired in response to a nuclear attack on this country--- and that the United States could do nothing to prevent that from happening?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

That is indeed a very good question. I hope that the Minister can assist the hon. Gentleman with the answer, because it is fundamental. We have been told all my life that we have an independent nuclear deterrent in Britain and that we can operate independently. The mutual defence agreement should not have been necessary in 1958 if that was the case. It clearly was the case before 1958. Whether it was after that, I doubt, and it certainly was not the case at all after Polaris came in during the 1960s. That was a US import, as is the current technology. Could Britain fire off a nuclear weapon independently of the United States? No, I do not believe it could. I believe that it would require the active participation of the US military and US Administration to undertake that. I simply do not believe that it is an independent nuclear weapon. I hope that this debate begins to raise more of those extremely important questions.

I was referring a few moments ago to the activities at AWE Aldermaston. Stanley Orman, a former

deputy director of the AWE, said in 2008 that “We also devised a technique...of imploding a non-fissile plutonium isotope. Now because it was plutonium the laws in the States would not allow you to implode this even though it was non-fissile, because it was plutonium. So again the American scientists would come across and use our laboratories because they couldn’t use theirs.” If that is the case one has to ask this question. Why is this treaty so one-sided that the USA is unable to do some testing in its own jurisdiction and therefore does it in ours, when the mutual defence agreement has received very limited parliamentary scrutiny, apart from today?

**Angus Robertson:**

Has the hon. Gentleman any idea why our colleagues in the United States of America deem it unacceptable to conduct such tests there, but somehow we find it acceptable that they should happen here in the UK?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

I have many criticisms of the USA, but one thing that I find interesting and admire to some extent is the relative openness of its parliamentary system, compared with ours, and the ability of individual Members of Congress and the Senate to get legislation through. Indeed, legislation prevents such tests from happening in the USA. That is not the case in this country.

**Angus Robertson:**

Just for the record, for people who might be watching this debate and who have not been following the proceedings in the United States, what were the reasons why American law makers opposed such tests being conducted in the United States? I ask that just so we can understand on what basis UK Governments of both political persuasions have found it acceptable for that to happen in the UK.

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

Nuclear weapons have been tested in the USA. They were tested there in 1945, towards the end of the second world war. I am thinking of the Manhattan project. There was the Nevada test range. Since then, there has also been considerable testing, including underground testing, and there are

therefore deeply polluted and damaged lands in the west of the USA in particular, just as much as there are deeply polluted and damaged places in the Pacific such as the Marshall Islands or, indeed, Australia. There has not been any nuclear testing in the UK itself. We have always done that somewhere else and polluted somebody else's environment rather than our own. I suspect that the motives behind the legislation that the hon. Gentleman refers to in the USA come from concerns about the environment and health of people, particularly in the western parts of the USA. Indeed, talking to the Western Shoshone people, one can only admire how they have stoically campaigned against nuclear weapons when they have suffered so much because of that.

The Austrian Government have invited every nation in the world to come to Vienna in December to take part in a conference on the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons. This will be the third conference. The first was held in Oslo; it was hosted by the Norwegian Government. The second was held in Mexico, hosted by its Government. As I said, the third will be hosted by Austria. The last conference was attended by 135 nations, and 155 nations have now signed up to this conference. The Government of New Zealand, which is iconic in giving up nuclear weapons and devices, have headed up an invitation from those 155. Can we really be so discourteous to those 155 countries as to say, "We do not want to come."?

**Angus Robertson:**

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. He mentioned the fact that the first of those conferences was hosted by the Government of Norway, a member of NATO that now provides the Secretary-General of NATO. Norway, no doubt, will be attending the conference together with other NATO member states and more than 100 other countries. Given the commitment of other NATO countries, other allies and other friends, if they think it is important to turn up at that

meeting, it would be much more than a discourtesy if we did not. Why are the UK Government not prepared to join the majority of other states that have taken their responsibilities seriously in understanding the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons?

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

The Government must answer for themselves, if they have decided definitely not to go to the conference. It would be discourteous not to attend, but the answer I received from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) during Foreign Office questions a couple of weeks ago indicated that he thought the conference was one-sided. Yes, it is a one-sided conference. It will consider the humanitarian effects of what nuclear explosions do, and what they have done in the past. I met the Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands in New York at the NPT review conference in May. He witnessed a nuclear explosion as a child, and his community has been devastated by successive testing. The community are now taking out an International Court of Justice action against the nuclear weapons states, Britain included, because of the damage that has been done to the community and the islands. Surely if supporters of nuclear weapons are so confident that those weapons are safe, reliable, usable and so on, they will not be afraid to attend a conference to discuss the humanitarian effects of those weapons on the environment, pollution and the welfare of the entire planet.

I quote from the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons:

"The UK is badly out of step with the majority of countries in the world. As one of the few countries with nuclear weapons, the UK has a special responsibility to understand the risks and consequences of its own weapons. By refusing to participate in the conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons held by the governments of Norway and Mexico, the UK gave the impression that it doesn't care about the catastrophic effects its weapons could have on environment,

climate, health, social order, human development and global economy." I could not put it better myself, and few others could.

We are debating the MDA at last, and I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee and to the House for giving us the opportunity to do so. I hope that there will be an opportunity to debate and vote on the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion and others that calls for the rejection of the MDA because of its secrecy, because of its transfer of technology of weapons of mass destruction between two jurisdictions and because it will be used as a basis for the renewal of the Trident system. I believe that Parliament will have to vote on the renewal of Trident in 2016, and that will commit to expending £100 billion on yet another generation of weapons of mass destruction. There has to be a different way to run the world. There has to be a different way to use our technology, resources and skills rather than the highly secretive world of nuclear weapons. The MDA represents all that is wrong about the nuclear relationship between Britain and the USA. That is why I have raised the subject today, and I hope that we can promote a serious public debate about nuclear weapons and their safety.

Jeremy Corbyn's long contribution stimulated an interesting debate, even though only a handful of MPs participated. But given the serious and particular nature of the subject, one would expect a Defence Minister to reply to the debate. But for some unknown reason the task was handled by the Minister for Europe, David Liddington. On the specific matter of the independence of the UK's nuclear deterrent and the Mutual Defence Agreement, he had the following to say:

**The Minister for Europe (Mr David Liddington):**

Questions have been posed about the independence of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent and whether that independence is in practice meaningful, given the MDA and our close collaboration on defence matters with the United States. I want to be absolutely



clear that this country's independence is and always has been operationally independent. The command and control systems involved are UK-owned and controlled. Decision making and use of the Trident system remain entirely sovereign to the United Kingdom. Only the Prime Minister can authorise the employment of the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrent, and there are no technical means by which the United States could negate or override a prime ministerial instruction.

It is true that through the MDA we have been able to take advantage of some American know-how, and of a certain amount of American material. We would have been able to provide that for ourselves, but creating an entirely indigenous source of such material, equipment and know-how would have given rise to significant additional expense. It has seemed to Labour and Conservative Governments alike over the years to be common sense to work with the United States to take advantage of its capacity in those areas of nuclear expertise to our mutual advantage, rather than incurring the extra costs ourselves when that was not necessary for the independence and capability of the system, but we choose not to manufacture those indigenously because of the economic benefits of working with our closest ally.

During his speech Corbyn suggested that if Britain's nuclear deterrent is independent the "mutual defence agreement should not have been necessary in 1958." Liddington's response to this indicated that the MDA was necessary on economic grounds. But if the Government are prepared to splash out £100 billion on a Trident replacement, economics is no longer a valid reason for the MDA. The real reason must lie elsewhere.

### **The Murder Of Lee Rigby: It Was The Internet, Stupid**

On 25 November, David Cameron made a statement on the report of the House of Commons Intelligence and Security Committee into the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby. In his statement, apart from saying that lessons needed to be learned in the way the security services monitor suspected terrorists, he denied they were culpable of serious failures in their operations. This, in spite of the fact that they had been keeping tabs on the two killers, Michael Adebowale and Michael Adebolajo, for some considerable time before they carried out their gruesome act. and then allowed them to disappear from their radar screen.

Cameron told MPs that one of the

(Intelligence and Security) Committee's key findings does "not consider that, given what the Agencies knew at the time, they were in a position to prevent the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby." And, he said, the report also finds that the two murderers were in contact 39 times between 11 April and 22 May, including seven attempted calls and 16 text messages on the day before the murder. Again, we should be clear that post-event analysis shows that "none of these text messages revealed any indication of attack planning or indeed of anything of significance."

However, turning to the role of internet companies Cameron said that the Committee is clear that it found "one issue that could have been decisive." He went on to say, in December 2012, five months before the attack, Michael Adebowale had a crucial online exchange in which he wrote about his desire to kill a soldier, but the automated systems in the internet company concerned did not identify that exchange. When it automatically shut down other accounts used by Michael Adebowale on the grounds of terrorism, there was no mechanism to notify the authorities. This information came to light only several weeks after the attack

as a result of a retrospective review by the company. The Committee concluded that "this is the single issue which---had it been known at the time---might have enabled MI5 to prevent the attack."

Unsurprisingly, neither Cameron nor any other speaker, Miliband included, referred to the role of British foreign policy in the murder, in spite of the fact that one of the killers was shown via a video recording on TV exclaiming that they killed Lee Rigby in retaliation for all the Muslims killed by the British military. MPs claimed that the murder was the result of the acting out of a pernicious ideology. This is Labour's Mike Gapes take on it: "Does the Prime Minister agree that we are facing a struggle with an ideology---the ideology of violent Islamist jihadism, which, although it is only a small minority ideology in the Muslim community, is linked to the phenomenon of self-starting terrorists? Does he agree that we need not just our state institutions but the whole of our society to challenge, confront and defeat that ideology?" Cameron agreed with every word he said.

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### DUMB INSOLENCE

I could understand  
if the West was peaceful  
and all violence was damned  
that explosives were only a tool  
then you had the right  
to moralise  
about those daisies under the scythe  
those heads that cannot be deodorised  
but you sent the bombers  
sent the drones  
and not a murmur  
from you death's chaperone  
about those nameless victims  
the family wipe-out  
your public lacks a  
prim  
and proper attitude  
caring nowt  
until they  
some day  
also become  
prey.

*Wilson John Haire. 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2014*

## The Mather Review: Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland

**Mark Langhammer**

Bill Mather, Chair of Scotland's "Working Together Review" delivered the annual Labour Relations Agency lecture in Belfast on 30<sup>th</sup> October. The review reported in August 2014 and is a critical building block for industrial relations in the context of post-referendum Scotland.

The Labour Relations Agency in Northern Ireland is a body similar to ACAS in England, established in 1976 as a Non-Departmental Public Body with responsibility for promoting the improvement of employment relations in Northern Ireland. The Agency is independent of Government and is funded mainly in the form of a grant from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Northern Ireland has fully devolved powers over employment law, unlike Scotland which can expect powers over employment law under whatever "devo-max" settlement emerges. Much to the frustration of Bill Patterson, CEO of the LRA in Northern Ireland, devolved powers over employment law remain untapped in Northern Ireland due to lack of political consensus, but in Scotland, it is probable that any SNP led government will adopt the Mather recommendations wholesale.

For readers of Labour Affairs (and Labour and Trade Union Review) over the years, the consensus emerging from the Mather Review can only be seen as a radical leap forward, with industrial democracy at the core of the review recommendations. The Mather Review follows on some years of thinking and research on the utilisation of skills, which has moved Scotland from barren market based policy focussing narrowly on "skill supply" to a Scandinavian model of workplace engagement and getting the best from the collective intelligence and ability of the workforce.

For the record, the 30 recommendations of the Review Group come in four main sections and are set out below:

### **Developing Capacity and Capability in Industrial Relations**

1) The Scottish Government should continue to support the development of union-led learning through Scottish Union Learning (SUL) and its Development and Learning Funds and publicise the benefits of those. The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) should agree an approach that ensures that union-led learning fulfils its full potential in addressing

Scotland's workplace and workforce development challenges.

2) Training for union representatives (shop stewards; learning reps; health and safety reps) provided through further education colleges should be funded through a fee remission arrangement.

3) The Scottish Government should work with the STUC and public sector unions to introduce trade union Equality Representatives into Scottish public sector workplaces. Equality Reps should be given access to appropriate training and facility time to perform this role effectively.

4) The Scottish Government should work with the STUC and public sector unions to introduce Environmental (green) Representatives into Scottish public sector workplaces. Environmental Reps should be given access to appropriate training and facility time to perform this role effectively.

5) The STUC/TUC Education in Scotland should work collaboratively with appropriate providers to develop a Union Leadership Development Programme to enhance the capacity of current and future union leaders.

6) A trade union environmental workplace fund should be created to support the development of union capacity on sustainable workplace issues and to support relevant workplace projects.

### **Supporting Fair Employment**

7) The Scottish Government should continue to emphasize the significance of Scotland's trade union movement, the valuable part which unions can play in building economic success, and the value of union facility time in delivering effective industrial relations.

8) The Scottish Government should assign responsibility for industrial relations to a single Cabinet-level Minister. At present, different aspects rest within different ministerial portfolios.

9) The Scottish Government and the STUC should regularly review their Memorandum of Understanding and seek ways of improving the engagement between unions and Government and its agencies.

10) The Scottish Government should explore with the STUC how the 'social dialogue' approach encompassed in the Memorandum of Understanding can be expanded to involve employers in Scotland, recognising that enduring social dialogue will not exist unless the employer pillar

is representative, consistent and committed to working together to achieve agreed objectives.

11) A fair employment framework should be developed through a stakeholder body (see recommendation 14), and it should be promoted across private, public and third sectors. The framework should be based on 'what works' principles and should clearly define the responsibilities of unions, employers, employees and workers. The framework should seek to provide support for diversity in the workplace with particular regard to women and young people.

12) For the last ten years NHS Scotland has operated a model known as staff governance and embraced its own version of partnership working. Further work should consider whether this construct might translate across to other sectors and how this or other forms of collaborative working might generate higher levels of trust and co-operation in industrial relations.

13) The Scottish Government, local authorities and the STUC should engage appropriately to expand the reach of the Determined To Succeed / Better Way To Work - Unions into Schools and Colleges initiative and should ensure that unions are fully involved at strategic and operational level in the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

### **Opportunities for Constructive Union and Employer Leadership**

14) The Scottish Government should establish a stakeholder body with representation from trade unions and private/public/third sector employers. The body should be supported by relevant experts in the field of industrial relations and operate with an independent secretariat.

15) The purpose of this body would be to provide leadership on Scottish industrial relations matters and fair work. The group would encourage the development of constructive industrial relations in a range of different sectors and workplaces. It would also seek to increase dialogue between unions, employers, public bodies and Government departments.

16) Amongst other things, the body would provide a framework to develop joint training for unions and management on strategic organisational development matters.

17) The body would explore the potential to extend collective and sectoral bargaining

in Scotland and seek to increase levels of workplace democracy across the private, public and third sectors in Scotland.

18) The body would also promote the introduction of Equality and Environmental (green) Reps into Scotland's workplaces and prepare and disseminate guidance for their operation including recommendations on facility time and time off for training (see recommendations 3 and 4 above).

19) The stakeholder body should work with business leaders, relevant agencies and professional bodies to benchmark and promote effective and professional people management practices including industrial relations based on recognised good practice.

20) The stakeholder body should be a vehicle through which unions and employers can assess, distil and promote evidence of the most effective industrial relations practice.

21) The Scottish Government and Scotland's Public Sector should use powers of procurement to encourage progressive industrial relations practices and behaviours in the private and third sectors. This would include the requirement for private and third sector enterprises to evidence what steps they take to ensure fair and effective industrial relations, and commitment to the concept of a living wage, workforce and workplace development and the promotion of workplace equality.

22) All Industry Leadership Groups (or ILGs and official bodies established to provide strategic leadership and advice to industry/public sector in Scotland) and public sector bodies should be required to establish fit-for-purpose vehicles to formally engage with unions on employment, workplace and workforce development matters.

23) All public sector bodies should be required to include a section in their annual report on their approach to industrial relations and the impact that has had on workplace and workforce matters.

24) The Scottish Government should legislate to ensure that there is effective worker representation (from representative trade unions) on the board of every public sector body; a role tasked with representing worker interests. In so doing the Government should have in mind the need to increase the number of women on the Boards of public sector bodies. The role should be afforded status equivalent to a non-executive director and the individual(s) should be furnished with all the necessary business information, training and development to engage in a meaningful manner with other board members and executives.

25) The Scottish Government and the Public Appointments Commissioner should work with the STUC and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to develop a strategy and action plan to increase the number of board members on public bodies from a trade union background with due regard to the Scottish Government commitment to diversity and its specific emphasis on rebalancing female participation.

26) The Scottish Government and the STUC should work together to ensure that sufficient support is available to ensure that unions are engaged with the range of workplace and workforce initiatives taking place in Scotland including the Scottish Leaders Forum work on public service workforce development and industrial engagement; the work on leadership being led by Scottish Enterprise; the work of Investors In People and the Workplace Innovation Consortium being led by Strathclyde University.

An Evidence-based Approach to Constructive Industrial Relations

27) The stakeholder body should administer an Industrial Relations Modernisation Fund to encourage unions and employers to develop innovative approaches to industrial relations in Scotland.

28) The Scottish Government should consider investing in an Industrial Relations Learning Academy which would be set up with the express purpose of designing and delivering learning opportunities for all stakeholders in the industrial relations arena. Employer and union representatives would participate in joint training with

a view to building strong working relationships and engendering greater levels of mutual understanding and trust.

29) The Scottish Government and the SFC should work with the STUC and other appropriate bodies to improve the availability, quality and accessibility of representative Scottish data on industrial relations.

30) Scotland needs to build greater research capacity in the field of industrial relations and in so doing gather appropriate datasets, interpret findings and help to inform strategic choices at individual workplace, industry sector and national levels. The Scottish Government, the SFC, the STUC, and researchers actively working in this field should be asked to consider and make recommendations on how this can be achieved.

The Mather Review Group recognises that this report is not an end point, but the beginning of a long, challenging and on-going process which necessarily involves trade unions, employees, employers and Government. However, it is a process that the Review Group believes is both vitally necessary and potentially hugely rewarding for everyone, who is either directly or indirectly involved.

Likewise, the Review Group is convinced that that the economic and social challenges and opportunities facing Scotland are more likely to be addressed successfully in an environment where unions play their full part. The Review Group positively promotes the contribution of unions to economic, social and civil life in Scotland, and invites consideration of how this contribution can be most effectively deployed and developed.

### **Commenting on the Review, Oxford academic Ewart Keep – who supported the Review working group – commented:**

"Scotland is starting out from a very different conceptual location from England in terms of both the importance of workplace industrial relations and also what it is possible to contemplate might be done to improve them. The Review's report also makes it very clear that Scotland is liable to be heading in a very different direction from that which England is likely to follow in the short to medium term, and that Scotland (or at least some elements therein) wants to end up in a very different conceptual place and space from England (essentially Northern Europe rather than a point somewhere in the mid-Atlantic).

In other words, the Review underlines the fact that, at least in relation to issues to do with the workplace and employment relations, Scotland is already strongly divergent from the dominant and well-established policy model that those in Westminster would generally wish to follow, and is liable to become more so over time, whatever the outcome of the referendum.

It is not simply that the Coalition Government would neither be willing to commission nor act upon anything akin to the Working Together Review and its findings, but that some within the Labour Party at Westminster would also probably find the Review's report slightly uncomfortable and unsettling reading. Its underlying assumptions about what the accepted 'best practice' model of industrial relations might look like are simply too radical and too strongly located within a Northern European social democratic and social partnership tradition to be liable to play well with the Neo-Liberal media and employer interests that politicians have become used to deferring to."

Labour Affairs will return to the rich research and international evidence behind the Mather Review in future issues.

References and Reading:

**Working Together Review: Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland.** Published, August 13, 2014 – see at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00457659.pdf>

**Professor Ewart Keep's blog:** at <http://www.futureukandscotland.ac.uk/blog/reflections-working-together-review>