

P R O B L E M S

(formerly: Problems Of Capitalism & Socialism,
Problems Of Communism)

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Going To Hell Via Texas

How Texas's Deregulated Electricity Hurts Its Customers

By Gwydion M. Williams

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The world briefly fixed its attention on Texas in February 2020. Record-breaking cold weather was made much worse by a drastic failure of the electricity supply.

How could this happen in a state famous for its fossil fuels? A privatised supply system, maybe. Or maybe not. And then the world's attention moved on.

It is not clear that the world as a whole has learned anything from it.

The world definitely learned much less than it should from previous disasters.

A wider understanding is needed, to learn the right lessons.

To realise that it was just one of the bad consequences of deregulation and pro-business policies. The policies that the USA and the wider world have been following from the 1980s.

Miracles of the Market

You are running a coach trip and there might be nowhere to buy food the other end. You lay in sandwiches etc. to sell, or else warn everyone to bring their own.

You'd do this even if you had a literal belief in the biblical Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes.

Proper believers in any religion do not use the possibility of *exceptional* events to wriggle out of their normal social duties.

The New Right is short of proper believers. The serious thinkers mostly ignore religion, though some like Richard Dawkins have a pathological hatred of it.

Ronald Reagan spoke of the 'miracle of the market'. But he also ran up huge debts by boosting the USA's already-huge military machine. He said it was needed because a powerful Soviet Union threatened to swallow the entire world. There was enough reality for this to be believed: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Vietnamese attempt to make Cambodia into a puppet regime (and not just replace the Khmer Rouge with moderates). Even the

Cuban intervention in the Angolan civil war could fit, though I'd rather see it as part of the process that forced South Africa to abandon Apartheid.

Gigantic military spending is not something that left-wingers like to celebrate as state spending and a boost to a sluggish economy. Perhaps a worse option than Keynes's rhetorical suggestion of paying the unemployed to dig holes and fill them in again.¹ But it *is* state spending, and not to say so was foolish. It had worked for Hitler, after all. Hitler gained power because he was a great success from the centre-right viewpoint as it existed in the 1930s. And could win over some centrists by restarting the German economy. Boosted the economy with both a stronger military and a new system of superior roads and welfare, whereas Reagan was almost all about weaponry.

Hitler also had no problem paying for it. He began by repudiating the vast sums the Weimar Republic had been forced to pay as reparations for Germany's supposed war guilt. A total debt of 132 billion gold marks, or about \$269 billion in modern money.² This had helped ruin and discredit Weimar, and by 1932 Western governments wanted to write off most of it, but the US Congress refused to agree. But Hitler's arbitrary action didn't stop Western businesses doing as much trade with Nazi Germany as they could, right up till the start of the World War.

The claim was re-imposed after 1945, but then postponed till Reunification. In the end not much was paid.³

Debts only matter when someone has the will and the power to make the creditor pay. They are not the 'law of nature' that some economists think they are.

The USA from Reagan onwards has happily run up immense debts to foreigners. Most people see US bonds as just as valuable as money in the bank.

It was also foolish for 1960s radicals to denounce the Western system as 'capitalism' and demand its immediate replacement. The standard centre-right line had been that it was a Mixed Economy that had taken the best things from both socialism and capitalism. This was partly true, though socialist ideas of human equality still had a long way to go. But the economy was state-dominated and worked much better than Classical Capitalism. This gets written out of history, so I've documented it in detail as *Feed-the-Rich Economics*. I explain how the Mixed Economy won the Cold War, and then was denounced when the rich felt safe.⁴ And that those not scared of borrowing from socialism have done better all along.

The stagnation of the Soviet Union under Brezhnev was a disaster for socialism, but other things might have happened. In the 1960s and 1970s, many Western countries

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/may/26/builders-britain-recession>

2 <https://www.history.com/news/germany-world-war-i-debt-treaty-versailles>

3 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11442892>

4 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

had serious plans for Incomes Policy and Workers Control. Workers Control in Britain nearly happened after a 1977 government report with a very practical scheme.⁵ And back in 1969, left-wing Labour minister Barbara Castle had a very sensible compromise over Trade Union power in *In Place of Strife*.⁶ This is grossly misrepresented by most sources that mention it. Later attempts by Edward Heath to compromise with Trade Union power after losing his fight with the Coal Miners are very seldom mentioned. We in the Ernest Bevin Society were among the minority on the left who saw the possibilities. There were never enough of us to win over a wider movement that at that time was full of false hopes for the future.⁷

Barbara Castle's *In Place of Strife* would have regularised Trade Union power and left it gigantic. Instead it seemed to be going nowhere in the 1970s. Thatcher's simple dogmatism and hostility to trade unions won over much of the working class.

The bulk of the left preferred Strife to a more socialist version of the Mixed Economy. And they were very surprised when endless strife with few visible gains lost them working class support.

All along, I had complete contempt for the Trotskyist claim to be functional revolutionaries. And doubted that the pro-Moscow Communists could succeed either. Time, I think, has justified this view.

Those left-wingers who blundered in the 1970s now prefer to re-tell the tale as an heroic but inevitable defeat. Ensuring continuing defeat. This was famously summed up by Eric Hobsbawm in 1978 as *The Forward March of Labour Halted*. Brendan Clifford's detailed refutation can be found at our website.⁸

Neither the excuses of failed leftists nor the New Right narrative are true.

If human history had begun in the 1970s, it probably would have ended in the 1990s, just as Francis Fukuyama promised. But it was actually 1970s blunders by most of the left that gave an opening to Libertarian ideas that had once been marginal.

In Texas, unusual suffering was caused by a naïve belief that the 'miracle of the market' would work for electricity. They trusted companies driven by a fierce competition for low prices. Did not expect them to neglect dangers that were far from certain.

It's part of a wider failure. We in the West currently suffer from a pandemic that was perfectly predictable. For decades, experts had warned that people and goods moving fast around the world made it likely that some obscure virus would spread. And opening up jungles for crops or logging raised the danger of creating viruses deadly to humans. As did rich gourmets eating exotic species.

Most animal viruses cannot infect humans. Or at least cannot be passed on to other humans from the first person infected. But with enough contact, a few will get through.

East Asia is a mix of leftist, centrist, and right-wing

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Report_of_the_committee_of_inquiry_on_industrial_democracy
6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Place_of_Strife
7 https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/#_Toc23413143
8 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-010/the-british-left-made-thatcher-possible/>

governments. All of them coped with a pandemic that had begun there. A short hard lockdown in China stopped the virus spreading far beyond its first major outbreak in Wuhan. Elsewhere, traditional conservative ideas had never died, even in Australia. Those countries have had nothing like the totals of sickness, misery, and death run up in the West.

Broad attitudes to authority can cut across left-right divisions:

"Psychologists have shown that some cultures abide by social norms quite strictly; they're tight. Others are loose – with a more relaxed attitude toward rule-breakers...

"Relative to the US, the UK, Israel, Spain and Italy, countries like Singapore, Japan, China and Austria [sic] have been shown to be much tighter. These differences aren't random. Research in both nation-states and small-scale societies has shown that communities with histories of chronic threat – whether natural disasters, infectious diseases, famines or invasions – develop stricter rules that ensure order and cohesion. It makes good evolutionary sense: following rules helps us survive chaos and crisis. On the flipside, looser groups that have faced fewer threats can afford to be more permissive."⁹

A virus that spread first in East Asia has remained much rarer there. Whether you count by deaths or reported cases, the top sufferers are Europe, the USA, parts of the Middle East and parts of Latin America.¹⁰ India and Indonesia feature in gross totals, but look a lot less bad if you adjust for population.¹¹ 113 deaths per million for India and 132 for Indonesia, as against 1,582 for the USA, 1,803 for the UK and 1,909 for the Czech Republic.

New Zealand has had 5 deaths per million. Australia 35. Japan 63. And China 3 per million, mostly close to the original outbreak.

Live Free, Freeze and Die

Question: Why has the enormously rich state of Texas failed to cope with weather that would be normal in Canada, Scandinavia etc?

Answer: They thought 'true grit' would save them. Or at least save everyone who deserved to be alive.

"Texas officials knew winter storms could leave the state's power grid vulnerable, but they left the choice to prepare for harsh weather up to the power companies — many of which opted against the costly upgrades. That, plus a deregulated energy market largely isolated from the rest of the country's power grid, left the state alone to deal with the crisis, experts said." (Texas Tribune)¹²

Question: Why can't the rest of the nation help?

Answer: Texas isn't properly linked:

"Texas is the only state in the US with an independent power grid, meaning it is largely dependent on its own resources...

"When its infrastructure is under strain, for example during a cold-weather event, most of the state cannot link up with other

9 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/feb/01/loose-rule-breaking-culture-covid-deaths-societies-pandemic>. The author may have confused Austria with Australia.
10 <https://informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/covid-19-coronavirus-infographic-datapack/>
11 <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries> as at 1st March 2020.
12 <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/02/17/texas-power-grid-failures/>

grids around the US to make up the shortfall.” (BBC Online.)¹³

Question: Why take such a risk?

Answer: They wanted as little Federal control as possible.

“The Texas Interconnected System — which for a long time was actually operated by two discrete entities, one for northern Texas and one for southern Texas — had another priority: staying out of the reach of federal regulators. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Power Act, which charged the Federal Power Commission with overseeing interstate electricity sales. By not crossing state lines, Texas utilities avoided being subjected to federal rules.” (Texplaner)¹⁴

This is something they had as Southern Democrats, cherishing the memory of their war to defend Negro Slavery. Something they kept as Republicans who hid racism behind a mask of libertarian ideology. But whereas Southern Democrats were functional conservatives, this lot are not. The older politicians accepted social duties, though with strong racism and a dislike of some types of government action. The current batch seem to believe their own propaganda.

Not that the reality has ever been the small-state small-government utopia imagined by the original dreamers. It was part of a wildly unrealistic world view: for instance Ayn Rand in *Atlas Shrugged* supposed that one of her heroes could blockade all of the world’s oceans with just one ship.¹⁵ And the more serious libertarians simply wrap their fantasies in fancy maths that isn’t based on real commerce.

After 40 years of New Right dominance, the state remains large and taxes remain high. But there have been three big shifts:

- 1) Salaries for top managers are now ten or twenty times as high as they once were, relative to other employees.
- 2) The very rich always tried to avoid tax, but it has been made much easier.
- 3) Governments are much more likely to let business leaders tell them what to regulate and what to leave alone.

How did this happen? I’d say that the politicians and the influential rich noticed with the half-forgotten crisis of 1987 that ‘free markets’ weren’t working as promised.¹⁶ But then the Soviet collapse gave them confidence that they could twist libertarian dreams into a Feed-the-Rich reality. And this has so far succeeded in the West — most voters go on agreeing to make sacrifices to give further wealth to the rich, and still treat taxes as wasteful and immoral. But in the wider world, Western cultural influence has regressed even in places where it was secure during the Cold War. I’ve done a detailed study: *The West Fails in Five Civilisations*.¹⁷

¹³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-56085733>

¹⁴ <https://www.texastribune.org/2011/02/08/texplainer-why-does-texas-have-its-own-power-grid/>

¹⁵ For her other errors, see <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/50-new-right-ideas/ayn-rands-atlas-shrugged/> and <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/50-new-right-ideas/new-right-ideas-hayek-and-ayn-rand/>

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Monday_\(1987\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Monday_(1987))

¹⁷ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/>

A deregulated power industry opened up a new feeding-ground for Feed-the-Rich policies. The rich fed well, neglected social duties and will probably get away with it. With the damage done, most mainstream media are still reluctant to point the finger at the greed of the rich:

“The catastrophic breakdown of Texas’ natural gas and electricity system last week lacks a single villain to blame for it all. Instead, the widespread constraints in natural-gas supply and the shutdown of core power plant capacity that left millions without power can be chalked up to cascading failures between these two interdependent systems — and any solutions will need to take these interdependencies into account to avert a similar crisis in the future.

“That’s the emerging consensus from a wide range of energy experts examining the cause and effect of last week’s crisis, which caused dozens of deaths, a breakdown in the state’s water systems, and more than \$120 billion in economic damages which have yet to be fully played out.”¹⁸

Who pays the \$120,000,000,000? Probably most of the burden will fall on ordinary people. The tax system from the 1980s has been rigged so that even the official tax rates for the rich can be lower than for ordinary people. Some of it is treated as ‘investment’ and so privileged. And they have all sorts of entirely legal dodges to avoid tax on most of their income.

The facts are sometimes admitted, and described clearly. But then the ‘consensus’ avoids blame for the rich. It’s as if one said ‘*this creature has feathers, webbed feet, a beak and makes quacking sounds. Therefore it’s a panda*’.

Liberals mostly just want to curb the more extreme forms:

“Losing power in Texas — and losing faith in the state’s reverence for rugged individualism...

“As electricity infrastructure evolved in the 1930s, the federal government regulated energy across state lines. But Texas had its own grid network, the Texas Interconnected System, and a flourishing oil trade. So the state shrewdly spurned interstate grids...

“In 2002, Texas deregulated its energy market, creating an environment in which electricity retailers compete for business. The lowest bidder would win customers in the marketplace, but that encouraged power generators to delay or neglect weatherizing critical equipment. In 2011, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission warned ERCOT that power plants must winterize their equipment. Electricity providers, beholden only to the market, largely ignored the advice.”¹⁹

A business will try to avoid expensive safeguards against remote risks when the safeguards would otherwise do them no good.

Risk-taking is also part of modern business culture. Sometimes big corporations ‘bet the company’ when hoping for a useful major advance. IBM did this in the 1960s, with their radically new IBM System/360.²⁰ And then later suffered near-collapse because the bulk of the management disliked their highly successful IBM Personal Computer. They also failed to guard against

[the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/50-new-right-ideas/ayn-rands-atlas-shrugged/)

¹⁸ <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/texas-blackout-hearings-highlight-intertwined-risks-of-natural-gas-power-grid-and-deregulated-market>

¹⁹ <https://www.vox.com/first-person/22297174/texas-winter-storm-uri-power-outages>

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_System/360

machines that were originally known as IBM-Compatible – they would run software written for it. They must have remembered that other companies had made legal copy-cat versions of their 360 and 370 mainframe systems, but hadn't achieved much.²¹

There was another factor. Anti-trust legislation against IBM had failed to nail them. But it had made them wary, so they made no attempt to buy up a little software company called Microsoft and a relatively small chip-maker called Intel. Which then flourished as two separate businesses lumped by consumers as a hybrid called 'Wintel',²² taking market share from IBM and shattering its jobs-for-life culture.

Real business history is a mix of gambles, some of which succeed brilliantly and others crash. Also of failures to invest in the right things at the right time – but usually someone else grows from small beginnings by noticing.

This risk-taking for useful ends is a reason why a Mixed Economy can be very successful. But not if the rich get to dominate politics and look just to their own short-term benefit.

The 1958 emergence of the Boeing 707 was another successful gamble:

"Although it was not the first commercial jetliner in service, the 707 was the first to be widespread and is often credited with beginning the Jet Age. It dominated passenger air transport in the 1960s and remained common through the 1970s, on domestic, transcontinental, and transatlantic flights, as well as cargo and military applications. It established Boeing as a dominant airliner manufacturer with its 7x7 series."²³

But in those days, they were proud of good engineering and saw profits as secondary. Only after their original useful culture was subverted did they drop standards and produce the death and scandal of the Boeing 737 MAX.²⁴

Boeing with the 707 also learned lessons from the failure of Britain's **de Havilland Comet** in the early 1950s:

"Within a year of entering airline service, problems started to emerge, with three Comets lost within twelve months in highly publicised accidents, after suffering catastrophic in-flight break-ups. Two of these were found to be caused by structural failure resulting from metal fatigue in the airframe, a phenomenon not fully understood at the time; the other was due to overstressing of the airframe during flight through severe weather. The Comet was withdrawn from service and extensively tested. Design and construction flaws, including improper riveting and dangerous concentrations of stress around some of the square windows, were ultimately identified. As a result, the Comet was extensively redesigned, with oval windows, structural reinforcements and other changes. Rival manufacturers meanwhile heeded the lessons learned from the Comet while developing their own aircraft."²⁵

That's how business works – the pioneers often fail and the successes are those that are bold at just the right time for boldness to be rewarded. And you can't expect businesses to be moral of their own accord. It is particularly foolish to praise successful gamblers and pretend that the failures are a different species.

21 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_Personal_Computer

22 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wintel>

23 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_707

24 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_737_MAX_groundings

25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Havilland_Comet

What you can do is ensure that only the rich get hurt when they take excessive risks. Hurt no more than by being reduced to the same level as the rest of us. Most of them end up still fairly privileged.

Society should make sure that ordinary people don't suffer. But this is just what the New Right were bitterly against.

A state is inclined to look to the long term. And may ignore unwanted risks, but states can always be persuaded. Protection against asteroids was once the concern of a few experts, but now is popular with voters. Of course it helps that no commercial interests are hurt by the relatively small sums spent on better telescopes. These also find interesting new objects, and produce stunning images that many people like.

Replacing fossil fuel is a very different issue. There are lots of commercial interests doing well out of solar power and wind power – but also natural gas. They may not want to make these sources expensively weather-proof when the weather is mostly warm, and perhaps someone else will manage if your own company can't supply for a few days.

Maybe everyone hoped someone else would burden themselves with the extra expense of keeping Texas going if there were another cold snap.

State regulation could have fixed it, but Texas decided not. Saw it as an interference with Freedom. Part of the anti-state rhetoric that can be sold to ordinary people for the benefit of the rich.

Big corporations now make loud noises about how 'green' they are. You'd be green in another sense if you believed it comes ahead of profits.

Question: How could Texas be so unprepared?

Answer: Profit-driven companies decided not to worry about the unexpected:

"The storm, among the worst in a generation in Texas, led to the state's grid becoming overwhelmed as supply withered against a soaring demand. Record-breaking cold weather spurred residents to crank up their electric heaters and pushed the need for electricity beyond the worst-case scenarios planned for by grid operators..."

"For years, energy experts argued that the way Texas runs its electricity system invited a systematic failure. In the mid-1990s, the state decided against paying power producers to hold reserves, discarding the common practice across the United States and Canada of requiring a supply buffer of at least 15 percent beyond a typical day's need.

"Robert McCullough, of McCullough Research in Portland, Ore., said he and others have long warned about the potential for catastrophe because Texas simply lacked backup for extreme weather events increasingly commonplace as a result of climate change." (*New York Times*).²⁶

California's similar deregulated system was massively abused by dealers working for Enron.²⁷ Enron was also praised as a brilliant business success, when overall they were actually losing money in conventional capitalist terms. Got away with fancy accounting that made their loss-making operations seem brilliant.

26 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/16/us/texas-winter-storm-power-outages.html>

27 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000%E2%80%93California_electricity_crisis#Involvement_of_Enron

Question: Will Texans and others learn from their errors?

Answer: Hard to say. The folly that began with Reagan is still devoutly believed by supporters of Trump.²⁸ Biden gives mixed signals.

The Economist magazine, as an intelligent defender of the interests of the rich, is expecting nothing much to happen:

“Why Snowmageddon won’t change Texas

“Without political competition, there is little incentive for Texas to tweak its model...

“Those who have called this February storm a once-in-a-century event have forgotten 2011. A decade ago a severe storm caused nearly a third of the state’s power-generating units to fail, causing rolling blackouts and prompting hearings into ERCOT. Yet experts’ suggestions—such as protecting equipment for winter conditions, increasing the grid’s excess capacity and reforming ERCOT—were ignored. ‘We fell short, because we didn’t demand the full implementation of those recommendations,’ says Joe Straus, a former Republican speaker of the Texas House. ‘We knew what to do, we just didn’t do it.’...

“The state’s founders were so wary of government that they wrote into their constitution that the legislature should meet only every other year for up to 140 days. Yet limited government comes with limitations. Texas spends around \$4,000 per person, 40% less than the average American state. Because it fought the expansion of Medicaid, a health-care scheme for the poor, it has the highest uninsured rate in the country, which probably contributed to the state’s higher-than-average death rate from covid-19.

“Could this power crisis prompt a broader reckoning about the limits of Texas’s anti-government, low-regulation philosophy? Despite the reasons to think it should, that is unlikely.”²⁹

I’d say that even Texas might change. The Republican Governor won 56% to 43% in 2018. Trump has offended masses of moderate Republicans by declaring himself winner of an election he lost by seven million votes. And the Texas House of Representatives is split 55 to 45. It isn’t even hugely gerrymandered for the Republicans, unlike many other states. Texas might choose Democrats who would dare to re-impose rules on the rich.

But more probably not. US citizens have been abused for decades and Trump has successfully won over many who might have supported Bernie Saunders and the left. Centrist Democrats want to keep the basics of Feed-the-Rich, being themselves part of the tiny 1% that still flourishes.

Hurt Individuals

Some people froze to death when they lost electricity. Or poisoned themselves by not knowing the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Others kept power, but suffer because corporations struggling for wealth and fearing extinction decided to transfer many of the risks to their more naïve customers:

“His Lights Stayed on During Texas’ Storm. Now He Owes \$16,752.

“As millions of Texans shivered in dark, cold homes over the past week while a winter storm devastated the state’s power grid and froze natural gas production, those who could still summon lights with the flick of a switch felt lucky.

“Now, many of them are paying a severe price for it.

“My savings is gone,” said Scott Willoughby, a 63-year-old Army veteran who lives on Social Security payments in a Dallas suburb. He said he had nearly emptied his savings account so that he would

28 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

29 <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2021/02/23/why-snowmageddon-wont-change-texas>

be able to pay the \$16,752 electric bill charged to his credit card — 70 times what he usually pays for all of his utilities combined. ‘There’s nothing I can do about it, but it’s broken me.’

“Mr. Willoughby is among scores of Texans who have reported skyrocketing electric bills as the price of keeping lights on and refrigerators humming shot upward. For customers whose electricity prices are not fixed and are instead tied to the fluctuating wholesale price, the spikes have been astronomical...

“The steep electric bills in Texas are in part a result of the state’s uniquely unregulated energy market, which allows customers to pick their electricity providers among about 220 retailers in an entirely market-driven system.

“Under some of the plans, when demand increases, prices rise. The goal, architects of the system say, is to balance the market by encouraging consumers to reduce their usage and power suppliers to create more electricity.” (*New York Times*).³⁰

It isn’t that most Texans are selfish. When it comes to personal choices, they can be very generous. But they were seduced by foolish anti-state rhetoric. Abandoned the tightly regulated New Deal system that gave them growth that less-regulated capitalism had never managed.

They believe in a system of highly similar individuals managing to live in harmony without a large state machine to express their collective will. Without strong curbs to control the foolish and the selfish. As indeed do many on the left, after the big cultural shifts of the 1960s and 1970s. And culturally, it produced a new order that most US citizens see as an improvement. But applied to economics, it has not worked.

“Texas lawmakers are calling for measures to relieve these excessive costs, which in some rare cases were borne by customers who had signed up for offerings that pegged their costs to wholesale market prices, as retail energy provider Griddy does.

“But ERCOT CEO Magness noted during Thursday’s hearings that any steps that interrupted the flow of money from electricity purchasers to sellers could lead to generators being unable to collect on the money owed to them for last week’s power.”³¹

How many managers of failed providers will be punished by the law? The rich have spent a lot of money getting friendly politicians elected. And unlike Britain, there are no limits on how much can be spent. The Supreme Court defended the right of the rich to bias elections as a Fundamental Freedom. So even for issues where the voters would like more state spending and more curbs on the rich, the complexities of US politics stop it happening.

There is certainly financial chaos:

“Texas power co-op files for bankruptcy as storm fallout mounts...

“Brazos Electric Power Cooperative — a generation and transmission company that serves co-operatives across the state, many of which serve poorer rural areas — said it faced more than \$2.1bn in bills for power it bought at surging prices during the storm. The figure was more than three times what it paid in all of 2020.

“The Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing was “necessary to protect its member co-operatives and their more than 1.5m retail members from unaffordable electric bills”, said Clifton Karnei, Brazos general manager.

“The bankruptcy is the latest manifestation of a financial crisis unfolding in the Texas wholesale power market.

“As the storm iced nearly half of Texas’ power generation capacity, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (Ercot), the grid operator, set power prices at their maximum level of \$9,000 a megawatt-hour to lure as much generation as possible on to the grid. A typical average

30 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/20/us/texas-storm-electric-bills.html>

31 <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/texas-blackout-hearings-highlight-intertwined-risks-of-natural-gas-power-grid-and-deregulated-market>

price is just \$25 a MWh.”³²

People outside of Texas are trying to help. Left-wing Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Congresswoman for New York, showed the same enthusiasm for ‘handouts’ to the needy for Texas as for other matters:

“Ocasio-Cortez fundraising for Texas relief reaches \$4.7M...

“CNN noted that this is Ocasio-Cortez’s first major fundraising effort and disaster site visit apart from efforts relating to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our first major relief effort was last year when COVID hit and so we were able to build a disaster relief and fundraising operation and we cut our teeth on that with COVID but that was in our home district, and so before that, we had mobilized for Hurricane Maria relief but that was before I was elected as a member of Congress,” Ocasio-Cortez told CNN. ‘I think this is just something that we should be able to do whenever there is an area in our country that’s in need.’”³³

And the BBC reported how a New Jersey plumber rushed to help:

“From halfway across America, one plumber has answered the pleas of Texans still grappling with the aftermath of a devastating winter storm.

“As the coldest temperatures in over 30 years swept through Texas in early February, pipes burst in homes across the south-western state, leaving thousands of families with flooded homes and no water.

“Plumber Andrew Mitchell and his family drove 22 hours from Morristown, New Jersey to the Houston area in a truck loaded up with around \$2,000 (£1,418) worth of materials to offer a helping hand...

“It’s really a blessing to be a blessing to other people and Andrew truly enjoys the work,’ Mr Mitchell’s wife, Kisha Pinnock, told the BBC. ‘Plumbing is his passion.’”³⁴

But for too many others, money is their passion. Without state regulation and state spending, individual generous acts get overwhelmed by selfishness:

“How Texas exposed its grid to extreme weather

“In January 2014, power plants owned by the largest Texas electricity producer buckled under frigid temperatures. Its generators failed more than a dozen times in 12 hours, helping to bring the state’s electric grid to the brink of collapse.

“The incident was the second in three years for North Texas-based Luminant, whose equipment malfunctions during a more severe storm in 2011 resulted in a \$750,000 fine from state energy regulators for failing to deliver promised power to the grid...

“Experts hired by the Texas Public Utility Commission, which oversees the state’s electric and water utilities, concluded that power-generating companies like Luminant had failed to understand the ‘critical failure points’ that could cause equipment to stop working in cold weather.

“By the end of the process, the PUC agreed to soften the proposed changes. Instead of identifying all possible failure points in their equipment, power companies would need only to address any that were previously known.”³⁵

Fines can be seen as a fee for unimportant misbehaviour. I heard of a case where a school began fining parents for bringing their children to school late, But found that now a greater number would do so.

Texas’s political culture is a big problem:

“Shivering under a pile of six blankets, I finally lost it’: my week in frozen Texas hell...

“While it might be easy to blame Texans for electing such inept

people into office, don’t forget that this is one of the hardest states in which to vote. Voter suppression is as much a part of the state’s identity as barbecue...

“Even sadder was when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a congresswoman with no real connection to the state, raised \$5m for Texans and traveled to Houston’s food bank to volunteer, while state leaders evaded responsibility and gave interviews to Fox News saying frozen wind turbines were the reason the entire state shut down, when only 7% of Texas’s power is generated by wind during the winter.”³⁶

The latest crisis is just a bigger version of past failings:

“Why a predictable cold snap crippled the Texas power grid...

“Monday was one of the state’s coldest days in more than a century - but the unprecedented power crisis was hardly unpredictable after Texas had experienced a similar, though less severe, disruption during a 2011 cold snap. Still, Texas power producers failed to adequately winter-proof their systems. And the state’s grid operator underestimated its need for reserve power capacity before the crisis, then moved too slowly to tell utilities to institute rolling blackouts to protect against a grid meltdown, energy analysts, traders and economists said...

“After more than 3 million ERCOT customers lost power in a February 2011 freeze, federal regulators recommended that ERCOT prepare for winter with the same urgency as it does the peak summer season. They also said that, while ERCOT’s reserve power capacity looked good on paper, it did not take into account that many generation units could get knocked offline by freezing weather.

“There were prior severe cold weather events in the Southwest in 1983, 1989, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010,’ Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and North American Electric Reliability Corp staff summarized after investigating the state’s 2011 rolling blackouts. ‘Extensive generator failures overwhelmed ERCOT’s reserves, which eventually dropped below the level of safe operation.’”³⁷

And the storm didn’t just hurt the electric supply:

“Texas Farmers Tally Up the Damage From a Winter Storm ‘Massacre’

“The state’s agriculture sector has lost an estimated \$600 million or more. Crop and livestock damage could mean shortages and higher prices beyond Texas.”³⁸

Outsider admiration for rugged Texan individualism has also suffered damage:

“Nanny state? After the mess here in Texas, I’d give my right arm to live in one

“When the big freeze hit this laissez-faire part of the US, it was like the pandemic squared...

“The fatalistic Texan approach to the pandemic was summed up by a porter I interviewed outside a Fort Worth hospital in January: it was tough at first, he said, transporting the dead sealed in body bags, but he was well used to it now...

“The extent of the catastrophe only became clear when our friend Diego Cubero texted. Did we have water or electricity? He lives near Corinth, just to the south of Denton, which lost both. To avoid utter meltdown, the electricity-grid operator was blacking out entire towns, even cutting off vital facilities like Corinth’s water-processing plant. Denton was lucky to have rolling outages.”³⁹

It was also never that tough in Anglo-dominated Texas after the very early days. Both the USA and the British Empire suffered far less than Continental Europe in both world wars.⁴⁰

32 <https://www.ft.com/content/5a7adedf-8328-42a7-9653-d8a88ace3370> (pay site)

33 <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/539802-ocasio-cortez-fundraising-for-texas-relief-reaches-47m>

34 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56203935>

35 <https://asiatimes.com/2021/02/how-texas-exposed-its-grid-to-extreme-weather/>

36 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/26/texas-freeze-my-week-in-hell>

37 <https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKBN2AL00N>

38 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/04/dining/texas-farms-storm-damage.html>

39 <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/abroad/working-abroad/nanny-state-after-the-mess-here-in-texas-i-d-give-my-right-arm-to-live-in-one-1.4499334>

40 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Life was vastly worse for China and Japan in World War Two.⁴¹ And while the British Empire fell apart, the USA gained a great deal.

Japan was remade by the USA, with great generosity when they saw Communism spreading in Asia. Spreading because the Kuomintang between 1945 and 1949 showed itself utterly unfit to rule.⁴² Chinese in the former Japanese possessions of Manchuria and Taiwan found their new rulers worse than the Japanese. But the USA back then was modest enough to learn and frightened enough to be generous to the needy. The USA even paid for a limited Land Reform in much of non-Communist Asia, and gave massive backing to the research that led to the Green Revolution.⁴³

I mentioned earlier how Western carelessness and failure has led to a general loss of Western influence. China in particular, where some people wanted to become much more Western back in the 1990s. And now fewer and fewer feel so. I've done a blog on it, *China Becoming Scornful of the USA*.⁴⁴

Who Pays?

It's to be expected that many of those visibly in charge will lose their jobs:

"Following widespread power outages during a series of winter storms that left many Texas residents in the dark for days, the head of the organization overseeing the state's power grid has been fired.

"Bill Magness, president and CEO of Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), was terminated from his contract by the organization's board of directors after an emergency meeting Wednesday night."⁴⁵

But he'll probably get another good job, and perhaps merits it. Without detailed insider knowledge, you can't be sure who bent the rules, who made misjudgements, or who was doing their best in the face of other people's folly.

A science fiction series called *The Expanse* is quite realistic about the pressures on leaders, as well as having scenes in zero gravity that are surprisingly convincing.⁴⁶ Also much that is improbable, including the key plot element of an object from another star and aimed at Earth becoming accidentally a moon of Saturn. But the politics are well above the wicked-persons view of most dramas, including those supposedly set in the real world. Even the worst villains can give plausible reasons why they are doing the right thing.

The deregulators of Texas did give plausible reasons why they were doing the right thing. But ought to see now that the system as a whole was a complete folly.

Huge profits were made from deregulation. And are even being made by some people from the current disaster:

"Bank of America reaps trading windfall during Texas blackouts

"Mayhem that left state without power produces hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue"⁴⁷

They may now have to pay it back, or may choose to do so. But it shows how market forces do nothing to discourage bad behaviour.

Actual payments are going to be argued over:

[World War I casualties#Casualties in the borders of 1914%E2%80%931918](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-america-55598dd04012)

⁴¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties#Total_deaths_by_country

⁴² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

⁴³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Revolution

⁴⁴ <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/China-Becoming-Scornful-of-the-USA>

⁴⁵ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/03/us/texas-storms-ercot-ceo-fired/index.html>

⁴⁶ At one time on Syfy and Netflix, but now on Amazon Prime. And available as disks for four of its five current seasons.

⁴⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/321c4fb2-ca11-4e15-9ef5-05598dd04012> (pay site)

"Texas grid operator made \$16 billion price error during winter storm, watchdog says"⁴⁸

With a mass of complex arguments, will it end with very few rich persons suffering anything much? That was certainly the outcome of the financial crash of 2007-8.

Cherishing Rattlesnakes

Texans are so fond of liberty that each hogs it all to himself or herself. They are happy to see their neighbours do without, if they rate them as inferior and undeserving. Are hold-outs against equal rights for those different from the WASP majority:⁴⁹ the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants who are heirs of the people who stole Texas from both Mexico and its original inhabitants.

They and the rest of the former Confederate States of America take selfish individualism to an extreme. Including the slogan **Don't Tread on Me**,⁵⁰ and a flag with a rattlesnake, usually coiled.⁵¹

The snake on a flag was originally a progressive symbol, with white males in Britain's North American colonies protesting at a corrupt British government whose Parliament was even less democratic than the one-seventh of the male electorate who voted after the 1832 Reform.⁵² But Western politics has been moving steadily leftwards for more than two centuries. A shift that my father Raymond Williams called a *Long Revolution*, though sadly there are also Short Counter-Revolutions. The useful phrase 'Short Counter-Revolution' was coined for Thatcherism by Jim McGuigan, who did an updated version of one of my father's books.⁵³ I would see it more broadly: the rise of European Fascism would also fit, and perhaps earlier reversals. But the broad drift of ideas from Hard Left to Moderate Left, Centrist and Centre-Right has held.⁵⁴ The economic counter-revolution of Thatcherism has not prevented a vast advance in socialist ideas of social equality. Failure to properly notice and reject a massive growth in economic inequality may be cured in time.

The historic leftward drift can also leave once-progressive ideas stranded on the Hard Right, and this has happened with 'Don't Tread on Me'. The Wiki mentions that the slogan and some derivative of the snake-displaying Gadsden flag are often used in the United States as a symbol for gun rights and limited government.⁵⁵ Not originally for free-market extremism, but this is now part of the package. So I'd suggest some US leftist do a version of the coiled-snake image with a new logo

'I am cold-blooded and poisonous'.

And maybe also

'Trump Is My Sort of Person'.

The snake-loving slogan is frequently linked with nostalgia for the Confederacy and its vision of unequal white people with a lower stratum of non-whites kept strictly below even the most inferior or unequal whites.

US liberalism has far too often been tolerant of the same inequality. Now non-racial and non-sexist, but sometimes even more mean-spirited to those outside of the elite.

⁴⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-weather-texas-ercot-power-idUSKBN2AX0SV>

⁴⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Anglo-Saxon_Protestants

⁵⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don%27t_Tread_on_Me

⁵¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadsden_flag

⁵² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>

⁵³ Raymond Williams: *A Short Counter Revolution: Towards 2000, Revisited*

⁵⁴ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/against-globalisation/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadsden_flag

The US Civil War was fought because the elite in the North wanted to dominate the new lands that had been conquered from Mexico or taken from Native Americans.

Lincoln was elected after clearly stating that he had no intention of interfering with slavery where it was legal under the particular laws of each of the USA's constituent states. And that he doubted he had the power to do so, since the original 1787 Constitution had accepted slavery as legal. Had also obliged states without slavery to return fugitive slaves, which is why many of them were moved on to Canada.

Lincoln's new Republican Party was also all for tariffs and state protection. This had always been part of US practice on some issues. It was justified both for the USA and Germany by a political liberal called Friedrich List.⁵⁶ He was suspicious of Adam Smith's claim that the remarkable growth of industry in Britain had happened *despite* the growth of state spending and *despite* the strong protection against foreign competition that existed in Britain as an undeniable historic fact. Said that Britain favoured Free Trade now because its own industry had become superior after a period of strict protection.

Brendan Clifford publicised these lost ideas among left-wingers who had forgotten them: but sadly, most of them preferred to remain ignorant. The original article is unfortunately not available on-line, but I did my own summary in connection with my own research on Adam Smith. You can find it as *Real Economic Growth Was Not Based on Adam Smith's Ideas*.⁵⁷

Protectionism was how industry was built in the USA, and also Germany as it unified. Also Japan, and the foundations of China's success was laid by the extremist state-run and protectionist system of Mao. Despite some errors, Mao managed to triple the economy. Maoist China grew faster than the USA or Britain in the same period.⁵⁸ And despite the failure of the Great Leap Forward, he lowered the overall death rate rather faster than other poor countries managed.⁵⁹

In the USA's 1860 election, Lincoln got a lot of votes by promising more protection in states with growing industry. This put him at odds with the South, which had flourished thanks to slave-worked agriculture and was happy to rely on Britain for anything hard to make. But the big issue was Lincoln's claim that he as President had the right to ban slavery from the Territories. These were lands with too few US citizens to justify organising them as a state with rights of autonomy. And the concept of land ruled just by the Federal Government arose because several states including Virginia agreed to give up specific claims to land to the west of them. Claims that often overlapped, so it was a way of avoiding the wars that happened in independent Latin America. But the main benefit was that it made the famous 1787 Constitution acceptable to enough voters to get it ratified. And part of the deal was a specific law that forbade slavery in what was then the Northwest Territory,⁶⁰ and later became six states without slavery. States that helped produce Abraham Lincoln (Illinois state legislator) and Ulysses S. Grant (born in Ohio).

The six new states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and the northeastern part of Minnesota were a boost to free-soil economics. But nothing was said about banning slavery from other Territories, or preventing them from emerging as Slave States. This happened unexpectedly with the newly created state of Missouri.

56 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_List
57 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading/how-real-economic-growth-was-not-based-on-adam-smiths-ideas/>
58 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>
59 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/china-three-bitter-years-1959-to-1961/>
60 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Territory

There's an old joke about a country-and-western song called *Missouri Loves Company*.⁶¹ But the grimly miserable reality is that Missouri jutted north of the Mason-Dixon Line. This was originally just the demarcation between several states, but mostly Pennsylvania and Maryland. It became a stock phrase to summarise the differences between North and South.

Northern alarm led to what was called the *Missouri Compromise*, limiting slavery along a north-south line in the Territories. But then anti-slavery elements managed to dominate California, the best of the spoils of the successful aggression against Mexico that began with the 1845 U.S. annexation of Texas. The US-born majority in Texas very much wanted to join, but the legality of territories seceding has always been uncertain. Annexation based on successful violence or threats of violence has always been part of a harsh reality that 'International Law' has always adjusted itself to. The UN now tries to discourage it, but it still happens.

There were demands that California be split, with the South probably becoming a slave state. This was resisted, and the preferred name 'Colorado' for the new state was given to a much less valuable piece of loot. More moderate Northerners were however willing to give the South land next to Missouri, with the Kansas-Nebraska Act that suggested the North be content with the chunk called Nebraska. Stephen A. Douglas,⁶² Lincoln's great rival in politics before 1861, intended it so. But he also relied on 'spontaneous politics' without specifically saying that Kansas was obliged to go with the South. The result was a miniature Civil War before the main event, known as *Bleeding Kansas*.⁶³ A sad series of gun-fights and massacres absurdly misrepresented in the Clint Eastwood film *The Outlaw Josey Wales*.⁶⁴ Anti-slavery irregulars called Jayhawkers did murder some slave-owners, but would hardly have wiped out the entire family of a white man working his own land with no slaves visible, which is how the film begins.

Falsehoods in the USA didn't begin with Trump, or with Nixon.

There's a great deal that's rotten in the state of Texas.⁶⁵ And in all parts of the USA. I've done a study of their 1860s versions: *Both Sides Were Racist in the US Civil War*.⁶⁶

Denialism

The USA still has defenders of deregulation. In another context I mocked them for effectively saying '*don't say I've failed just because I've failed*'. And in my view this happening again:

"The Case for the Deregulated Texas Power Grid... Other than extraordinary circumstances, Texas's deregulated system has in fact lowered prices, increased competition, and improved service for Texans."⁶⁷

By the same logic: apart from one person in six blowing their brains out, Russian Roulette is entirely safe and can relieve much mental stress.

There is a general failure to work out the likely results of your own actions.

And it's not even clear that prices are lower than if the old system had been kept:

61 A spoof of 'misery loves company', a common English phrase

62 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_A._Douglas

63 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleeding_Kansas

64 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Outlaw_Josey_Wales

65 I borrow this phrase from a 1960s Macbeth-derived play written against Lydon Johnson. With hindsight, I'd see *MacBird!* as part of the naïve left-wing errors of the period.

66 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/52-usa/both-sides-were-racist-in-the-us-civil-war/>

67 <https://www.aier.org/article/the-case-for-the-deregulated-texas-power-grid/>

"Who's To Blame For The Expensive Energy Bills In Texas?..."

"In the 1990s deregulatory fervor first took hold in California where electricity prices were already high compared with the rest of the US. This however was not the case in Texas, which, as an energy producing state rich in natural, fossil resources, enjoyed electricity prices below the national average. Nevertheless the ideological commitment to free markets held sway and Texas decided to deregulate. After all, the professional consensus among neo-liberal economists was that utility deregulation, embracing free market principles, would lead to efficiencies that would reduce prices drastically in an already low cost electric system.

"So, let's start with a fact: electricity prices in deregulated states—places where we were told to expect lower power prices— did not decline relative to price levels in the nation as a whole, after deregulation. Why? Our two best guesses are that 1) the savings from deregulation were not actually meaningful or the competitive power market simply transferred wealth internally without delivering any cost savings to consumers. This is probably what occurred in Texas."⁶⁸

Live Cheap, Suffer Often. That's how I see it.

The endless drive to cost-cutting has damaged civilisation, and not even delivered more material wealth for most people. Nothing beyond the gains that the system of the 1950s and 1960s delivered, and might have gone on delivering from the 1980s if the lurch into free-market ideology had been avoided. Ordinary people in Britain have a smaller share of the new wealth than they had a right to. Ordinary people in the USA have not seen their living standards improve since the 1970s.

All of the promises for ordinary people have proved false. But there are of course other possible excuses for failure:

Question: Isn't wind power to blame?

Answer: Not at all. Texas is full of wind, so people tap it using the ever-improving technology of the last few decades. But everyone knows that you get windless days. A sensible supply system will have power storage and other sources.

Texas in the storm had wind, but a lot of the wind turbines were frozen. But that was not the main problem. Other sources that would work for windless days failed:

"When critics pointed to a loss of nearly half of Texas's wind-energy capacity as a result of frozen turbines, they failed to point out double that amount was being lost from gas and other non-renewable supplies such as coal and nuclear..."

"The cold weather also affected a water system needed to run the South Texas Nuclear Power Station, causing one reactor to shut down." (*BBC Online*)⁶⁹

"It is possible to 'winterize' natural gas power plants, natural gas production, wind turbines and other energy infrastructure, experts said, through practices like insulating pipelines. These upgrades help prevent major interruptions in other states with regularly cold weather." (*Texas Tribune*)⁷⁰

But blaming Green values is popular. You can find a lot of it on the unregulated forums that the internet pioneers assured us would be a cheap and easy path to Freedom.

There is even one small truth. Had they not replaced coal by natural gas, the disaster would have been smaller. But that was only because they decided not to bother ensuring that gas would flow even in cold weather.

And did not create enough backup storage.

Weather Extremes

From the 1990s, we've suffered a run of increasingly serious crises caused by Climate Change.

68 <https://oilprice.com/Energy/General/Whos-To-Blame-For-The-Expensive-Energy-Bills-In-Texas.html>

69 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-56085733>

70 <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/02/17/texas-power-grid-failures/>

Climate disasters are part of human history. But over the last three decades, they have become much more common and very much worse.

For specific events, it is hard to be sure. Scientists whose lives are built around a search for truth do agree that some newsworthy events are probably natural:

"A big iceberg approaching the size of Greater London has broken away from the Antarctic, close to Britain's Halley research station..."

"Is this climate change in action?"

"No. The calving of bergs at the forward edge of an ice shelf is a very natural behaviour. A shelf will maintain an equilibrium and the ejection of bergs is one way it balances the accumulation of mass from snowfall and the input of more ice from the feeding glaciers on land. Unlike on the Antarctic Peninsula on the other side of the Weddell Sea, scientists have not detected climate changes in the Brunt region that would significantly alter the natural process described above. What is more - estimates suggest the Brunt was at its biggest extent in at least 100 years before the calving. The event was overdue."⁷¹

Natural climate disasters would happen anyway. But they have become more common and worse. Records that had held for decades or even centuries now keep getting broken.

What's just happened in Texas is part of a run of extreme events:

Question: If the problem is Global Warming, why was there abnormal cold in Texas?

Answer: It is actually Climate Change. The early models showed most of the world warming but a few patches getting cooler. Blue patches in a sea of red, which has been true for later models and later events.

More exactly, weather patterns have shifted, with the Arctic warming far faster than expected and upsetting everything:

"Cold air is normally concentrated around the north pole in the polar vortex, an area of low pressure that circulates in a tight formation in the stratosphere during winter. This rotation is likened by scientists to a spinning top, one that can meander if it is interfered with.

"This interference, researchers say, is occurring through changes to the jet stream, a band of strong winds that wraps around the globe at lower elevations than the polar vortex. The warming of the Arctic, it is thought, is causing the jet stream to shift."⁷²

A mass of cold air from the arctic moved south. Not the first time it has happened, but much the worst for North America since the Anglo settlers began recording the weather:

"So why is this normally boiling state suddenly freezing over?"

"According to the US National Weather Service (NWS), this is down to an 'Arctic outbreak' that originated just above the US-Canada border, bringing a winter snow storm as well as plummeting temperatures.

"Cold air outbreaks such as these are normally kept in the Arctic by a series of low-pressure systems, the NWS said. However, this one moved through Canada and spilled out into the US last week.

"Temperatures in the city of Dallas for example will reach a high of 14F (-10C) on Monday when it should be more like 59F (15C) at this time of year.

"For the first time in the US state, all 254 counties are under a winter storm warning, US media report. The temperature in Dallas is already colder than in Anchorage, Alaska, CBS News reports."⁷³

A run of bad weather is an observable fact, even for those who deny the causes. But those who ought to pay prefer not to pay.

Fog and darkness may be added to the public's understanding,

71 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-47692895>

72 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/feb/17/arctic-heating-winter-storms-climate-change>

73 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-56058372>

based on the confusing fact that climate change mixes some cold outbreaks with the general rise:

"From one extreme to another, the temperatures across Europe have been on a rollercoaster journey this winter.

"Greece or Spain have experienced some of the heaviest snowfall in several decades, temperatures have been exceptionally mild for the season in western Europe and there's been freezing cold in the east."⁷⁴

"Unseasonable European Warmth Smashes All-Time February Temperature Records".⁷⁵

"A record-breaking late winter heatwave sets new all-time February records across China and South Korea this weekend"⁷⁶

And if, like me, you get convinced by graphics, I have done a nice collection on Flickr of various graphic maps and climate events.⁷⁷

Reasonable Doubts?

Let's imagine some politician wanted to 'refute' the notion that drunks caused a lot of road accidents, meaning that breath tests etc. were justified. They could point to sober people crashing and drunks getting home OK. But it is all about the pattern. The social reality.

Both breath tests and curbs on smoking were resisted for many years, before becoming the accepted norm.

Resistance to sensible measures to stop the early spread of Covid-19 happened in Europe and the USA, with results I mentioned above. There was also a premature easing-up over the summer, causing a tragic 'second spike' in the USA⁷⁸ and in much of Europe.⁷⁹

There is continued resistance to large and costly measures to slow and stabilise Climate Change. Claims that not everything is certain or proven.

I trust scientists. But those who don't should look at the Insurance Industry. They would have no reason to 'talk up' Climate Change if it were some leftist folly. But they live by the accurate reckoning of risks. They are not skeptics.⁸⁰

The law has a useful concept needful for giving workable justice in an imperfect world: *proved beyond a reasonable doubt*.

Individual scientists can be foolish. The community as a whole is cautious. It needs strong evidence to become convinced of new ideas. And has insider knowledge of plausible theories that turned out to be wrong.

When radioactivity was first discovered, no one knew what it was. Some people asked if perhaps the Law of Conservation of Energy didn't always hold. The notion of atoms falling apart would have seemed just as weird, yet was accepted once solidly proved. Conservation of Energy remains valid, but slightly amended to allow for matter sometimes being converted into energy by the shuffling of subatomic particles.

Until the mid-1960s, the Steady-State model of the universe

was a respectable alternative to the Big Bang.⁸¹ I myself was a believer at the time in Fred Hoyle's very elegant version of Steady-State, which could explain why the universe was visibly expanding. But then improved astronomy showed that the very distant universe – thousands of millions of light-years away – was different from nearby parts. It had many more violent events, including quasars. And much later, a grand photographic project called the Hubble Deep Field showed very distant galaxies that were visibly disorderly: merging often and still putting themselves together.⁸² Steady-State now has very few supporters.

Just now, the Large Hadron Collider has cast doubt on a collection of very elegant theories of subatomic particles known collectively as Supersymmetry.⁸³ Most versions predicted particles that should have been found and definitely were not found. Critics say that Supersymmetry is 'running out of places to hide'. I find this fair, but don't ignore the small chance that it might be right after all. I note that quarks are always accepted as real, with elaborate but valid arguments to explain why no one has ever seen a free quark.

In the case of Climate Denialism, it has long since run out of places to hide. But it is still useful as an excuse for powerful industrial interests to avoid paying the share of costs that simple justice would suggest they pay.

Incidentally, the Large Hadron Collider did vindicate the idea of a Higgs Field, a previously unproven notion that neatly explained why most particles had an inherent mass. It also confirmed that at least one Higgs Boson existed. Disappointingly, early hints at unexpected features vanished as more data was collected. It turned out to be '*a boringly normal Higgs Boson*', since currently it gives no hint of the more complex physics which almost all experts are sure lies beyond the accurate but arbitrary Standard Model of particle physics.⁸⁴ Other data does hint at something, but there is not so far any agreement as to what.

Science does occasionally turn up something utterly unexpected. But also it is always something new. Not a revival of old ideas that had been discarded.

I can't think of a single case in which the community as a whole has moved to a new idea and it was worse than the old one. Can any of the Climate Denialists find such a case?

Having done a science degree, even though I got bad exam results and worked as a very ordinary commercial analyst-programmer, I switched my views when I saw the scientific community do so. A conversion in the 1980s, when it became clear that the air contained a lot more carbon dioxide than it had in previous centuries. I had been suspicious of Green Attitudes. I was and still am against the Deep Green approach. But I could assess a lot of the evidence myself, and trusted a consensus of experts on the rest.

The issue has been confused by the older habit of calling it Global Warming. Warming is the broad trend, but climate models always predicted regional cooling. This very much applies to the Texas Freeze. While they suffered, much of the USA was fairly normal. And I detailed earlier how we had an unusually warm February in parts of Continental Europe and much of East Asia

There was always a likelihood of weather patterns shifting. The biggest fear – switching off the Gulf Stream and a drastic cooling – is not as terrible as was once feared. The Gulf Stream is weakening, but only towards the end of the 21st century is it likely to get bad:

"Weakest Gulf Stream in 1,000 years could bring more 'extreme' winters to UK and Europe, says study

74 <https://www.euronews.com/2021/02/23/climate-change-are-europe-s-winter-weather-extremes-linked-to-global-warming>

75 <https://earthr.gizmodo.com/unseasonable-european-warmth-smashes-all-time-february-1846357348>

76 <https://www.severe-weather.eu/global-weather/record-heatwave-asia-china-south-korea-mk/>

77 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/45909111@N00/albums/72157718503259706>

78 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>

79 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/world/coronavirus-maps.html>

80 For instance <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jun/28/climate-change-climate-change-scepticism> and <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41952918?seq=1>.

81 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steady-state_model

82 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubble_Deep_Field

83 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supersymmetry>

84 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_Model

"The Gulf Stream that helps warm the UK and northwest Europe is at its weakest in over 1,000 years and could lead to more 'extreme and intense' winters, according to researchers.

"They say the slowdown observed in the 20th century is 'unprecedented' and likely connected to climate change...

"Climate modelling also suggests global warming could weaken the Gulf Stream by another 34-45% by 2100, according to researchers - who warn it could be a 'tipping point at which the flow becomes unstable'."⁸⁵

A bigger immediate worry for those with a global outlook is the South Asian Monsoon. Hundreds of millions of poor farmers depend on it. How robust is it?

"Since 1950s, the South Asian summer monsoon has been exhibiting large changes, especially in terms of droughts and floods. The observed monsoon rainfall indicates a gradual decline over central India, with a reduction of up to 10%. This is primarily due to a weakening monsoon circulation as a result of the rapid warming in the Indian Ocean, and changes in land use and land cover, while the role of aerosols remain elusive. Since the strength of the monsoon is partially dependent on the temperature difference between the ocean and the land, higher ocean temperatures in the Indian Ocean have weakened the moisture bearing winds from the ocean to the land. The reduction in the summer monsoon rainfall have grave consequences over central India because at least 60% of the agriculture in this region is still largely rain-fed.

"A recent assessment of the monsoonal changes indicate that the land warming has increased during 2002–2014, possibly reviving the strength of the monsoon circulation and rainfall.[38] Future changes in the monsoon will depend on a competition between land and ocean—on which is warming faster than the other.

"Meanwhile, there has been a three-fold rise in widespread extreme rainfall events during the years 1950 to 2015, over the entire central belt of India, leading to a steady rise in the number of flash floods with significant socioeconomic losses."⁸⁶

Amidst all this, you do get a few Denialists saying '*no, you fools, it is all down to the sun having a warm spell*'.

It is indeed true that solar output varies. But what we see there does not currently match what we have on Earth. NASA, which has no reason to be partisan, posted a clear summary:

"One of the 'smoking guns' that tells us the Sun is not causing global warming comes from looking at the amount of the Sun's energy that hits the top of the atmosphere. Since 1978, scientists have been tracking this using sensors on satellites and what they tell us is that there has been no upward trend in the amount of the Sun's energy reaching Earth.

"A second smoking gun is that if the Sun were responsible for global warming, we would expect to see warming throughout all layers of the atmosphere, from the surface all the way up to the upper atmosphere (stratosphere). But what we actually see is warming at the surface and cooling in the stratosphere. This is consistent with the warming being caused by a build-up of heat-trapping gases near the surface of the Earth, and not by the Sun getting 'hotter'."⁸⁷

Earth is both warming and changing, while the amount of sunlight we get stays much the same. But the sun might matter in another way:

""Ask Ethan: How Prepared Are We For The Next Giant Solar Flare?

"In 1859, the science of solar physics truly began with the largest

85 <https://news.sky.com/story/weakest-gulf-stream-in-1-000-years-could-bring-more-extreme-winters-to-uk-and-europe-says-study-1222895>. See also <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/25/atlantic-ocean-circulation-at-weakest-in-a-millennium-say-scientists> and <https://www.ft.com/content/589d034a-ee9d-4c74-b20b-4b750c2d904d> (pay site).

86 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monsoon_of_South_Asia#Impact_of_climate_change_on_the_monsoon

87 <https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/14/is-the-sun-causing-global-warming/>

eruption in recorded history: the Carrington event...

"Our early electric systems, like the telegraph, experienced their own induced currents, causing shocks, starting fires, and tapping wildly, even when the systems themselves were disconnected entirely...

"If you have a loop or coil of wire where the magnetic field changes inside, it will create an induced electric current. Humanity knew about this law well prior to the Carrington event; Faraday discovered it back in 1831. But the world has changed an awful lot since Carrington's day, as power grids, power stations and substations, power transport infrastructure, and even residential, commercial, and industrial electronics are all full of loops and coils of wire. The induced currents, if we were to experience a Carrington-like event today, would literally be astronomical.

"The estimates for how much damage — if we do nothing to mitigate it — would occur have risen into 11-digit numbers worldwide. The power grids of most countries would be completely and effectively leveled. The top way to mitigate the effects of such a flare would be through increased grounding, so that the large currents that would otherwise flow through grid wires would instead flow directly into the Earth. Every time power companies attempt to do this, however, what winds up happening instead is that the conducting substance used for grounding (such as copper) is stolen for its material value.

"As a result, we have under-grounded power stations and substations that would experience enormous induced currents, and that will typically lead to fires, followed by significant damage and destruction to our infrastructure. Not only are we talking about a multi-trillion dollar disaster (the damage to the United States alone has been estimated as high as \$2.6 trillion), we're talking about large swaths of the world's population being left without power for extended periods of time: potentially for years. When you consider what happened in Texas just very recently when they got hit with freezing temperatures and many areas lost power, there's the risk of an extremely large number of casualties; for many people, electricity is necessary to sustain their lives.

"The Carrington event was not some massive outlier that only occurs once every few million years, either. Many solar flares have struck Earth, some of which have caused localized damage to the power grid. A 1972 set of solar storms caused a widespread disruption of electrical and telecommunications grids, satellite disruptions, and even caused the accidental detonation of naval mines in Vietnam. A 1989 geomagnetic storm caused a complete outage of Quebec's electricity transmission system. And a 2005 solar storm knocked the GPS network offline. These events may have been damaging, but they were only warning shots compared to what nature inevitably has in store for us."⁸⁸

If Texans have heard of this, they probably thought 'true grit' would see them through. And perhaps still do.

My solution would be more state spending. Also a special law with very high penalties for stealing copper used to make electricity transmitters safe.

The Rat-Race That Surpasses Human Understanding

The good news is that the human race isn't going to go extinct. The resources exist to fix everything: they just need to be spent on the community rather than going to conspicuous consumption by the rich.

The bad news is that a lot more suffering is certain to happen. Even perhaps the deaths of tens of millions.

Particularly if the wrong fixes are allowed:

""Dusting the upper atmosphere could help counter climate change

"An experiment to test the idea could soon start in Sweden...

"The idea is that a future flight will release a small amount of calcium carbonate dust into the stratosphere, in order to help

88 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2021/02/26/ask-ethan-how-prepared-are-we-for-the-next-giant-solar-flare/>

researchers learn more about solar geoengineering.

"Geoengineering is the grand (and still mostly hypothetical) idea of deliberately fiddling with the Earth's systems to try to counter climate change. SCoPEX plans to test an idea called stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI), in which fine dust is injected into the upper atmosphere to boost the amount of sunlight reflected back into space. In the coming days, an advisory committee, also based at Harvard, will decide whether the initial flight can go ahead."⁸⁹

But it is the shifting or breaking of weather-patterns that is the big current issue. Adding a second abnormality to the atmosphere would be very likely to make things even worse. We might get a more even mix of hot and cold disasters, but that's no cure.

The big problem is business being given too much that it demands, and with too little state regulation. If ideological capitalism has fewer believers than it once had, the influence of the rich remains strong and damaging.

There is a lot more I want to say, particularly about grids and the need for super-grids. But this article has become very long: I will put most of it in a second study. I will just round off the main points I've made here, by explaining phrases I used earlier.

Hell or Texas

The famous Davy Crockett supposedly said '*you can go to hell: I'm going to Texas*'. Someone could have answered '*and then we'd be neighbours*': but it seems no one did.

In fact it's not certain he said it: at least not so directly. I looked it up on the Wiki, where libertarians have a strong presence and US views dominate. But off-message facts can still be found:

"He was defeated for re-election in the August 1835 election... During his last term in Congress, he collaborated with Kentucky Congressman Thomas Chilton to write his autobiography, which was published ... in 1834 as *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett, Written by Himself*, and he went east to promote the book. In 1836, newspapers published the now-famous quotation attributed to Crockett upon his return to his home state:

"*I told the people of my district that I would serve them as faithfully as I had done; but if not, they might go to hell, and I would go to Texas*"...

"Crockett arrived in Nacogdoches, Texas in early January 1836. He and 65 other men signed an oath before Judge John Forbes to the Provisional Government of Texas for six months... Each man was promised about 4,600 acres (1,900 ha) of land as payment...

"Crockett arrived at the Alamo Mission in San Antonio on February 8...

"Weeks after the battle, stories began to circulate that Crockett was among those who surrendered and were executed. A former African-American slave named Ben had acted as cook for one of Santa Anna's officers, and he maintained that Crockett's body was found in the barracks surrounded by 'no less than sixteen Mexican corpses', with Crockett's knife buried in one of them...

"Yet, in 1955, Jesús Sánchez Garza discovered the memoirs of José Enrique de la Peña, a Mexican officer present at the Battle of the Alamo... it asserted that Crockett did not die in battle."⁹⁰

If the surrender story is true, you can find excuses. He might have felt he could do more if traded back. Maybe his enemies felt the same, and had him killed to avoid that. But being Mexicans, they may just have been angry and

offended.

Live Free Or Die

My first blog on the crisis was called *Texas: Live Free, Freeze and Die*.⁹¹ I was of course aware that **Live Free or Die** is the motto of New Hampshire, not Texas. But it's much the same attitude you find there. The main difference, apart from weather, is that New Hampshire didn't fight a war to defend slavery.

The spirit in both places is the spirit of people who stole the land of the Native Americans. People who have been very wasteful with things that were often not of their own making.

They fail to realise how many things that succeeded in the USA had been imagined and largely invented in Europe. Including aircraft, automobiles, space rockets and nuclear weapons.

Someone should work out in detail just which success stories would be missing if the USA had resolved its crisis in the 1850s in a different way. Abolished slavery but also closed the door to new immigrants, which was the demand of the briefly-powerful **American Party**, commonly called the Know-Nothings.⁹² General Ulysses S. Grant was briefly a supporter, and it probably contributed to his bizarre decision to try to expel all Jews from the war zone on suspicion of helping the Confederates.⁹³

This last was less bizarre than it would seem today. In the 1860s, Jews in the various states generally had the same mix of views as the rest of the white population. Only later when enormous numbers of East European Jews arrived did Jews come to be seen as mostly left-wing. And the most notable Jew in the 1860s was **Judah Philip Benjamin**, Senator from Louisiana and Confederate Secretary of State for most of the war.⁹⁴

If we imagine that the USA had stopped immigration in the 1860s, they would be missing many of their high achievers - not all of them Jewish. Charlie Chaplin was not Jewish, though he let it be thought otherwise and had a Jewish half-brother. One of many great talents born in England.

Someone should do a list, saying who would be missing. Include those born in the USA, but at least 50% of their ancestors were not there before 1860. Maybe call it *A Jew-Free USA?*, though it would include many notable names other than Jews. Or if that's too provocative, *What If the Know-Nothings Had Won in the 1860s?*

Right-wing complaints about 'politically correct' get a hearing because far too many on the liberal left rely on being fashionable and fail to put the very strong arguments that can be put. I've done some on the specific issue of anti-Semitism,⁹⁵ but there is vast scope for more.

But the big problem is economic inequality, and its vast expansion in the West since the 1980s. And the reliance on 'market miracles' that fail to happen. A rejection of state control, which is mostly the least bad option in a complex world.

91 <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Texas-Live-Free-Freeze-and-Die>

92 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Know_Nothing

93 <https://longislandwins.com/es/columns/the-biases-behind-grants-decision-to-expel-the-jews/>

94 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judah_P._Benjamin

95 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/hitler-the-13th-chancellor/>

Also "Real Cures for Anti-Semitism" in an article about why Labour lost in 2019: <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/why-labour-lost-in-december-2019/>.

89 <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2021/02/27/dusting-the-upper-atmosphere-could-help-counter-climate-change>
90 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Davy_Crockett

The main article is a reply to an item on "Breeding Better Humans", which appeared in some copies of the last issue of Problems. That item read as follows:

Breeding Better Humans

"In the twisted story of eugenics, the bad guy is all of us..."

"In the early 20th century, a surprisingly broad roster of public figures aligned themselves with Galton's vision. It attracted people on the left and right, prominent writers and intellectuals, leading scientists and politicians. Virginia Woolf, TS Eliot, DH Lawrence, Julian Huxley, Winston Churchill, Marie Stopes – all held eugenic views. Churchill was vice-president of the first International Eugenics Conference, held in London in 1912. Although there were notable critics, to be a eugenicist was to be firmly in the mainstream."¹

But blanket panics about eugenics are unfair. Negative eugenics – seeking to kill off 'inferiors' or to forcibly sterilising them – was wicked and foolish. But encouraging the more intelligent to breed makes sense.

I'd also like to see governments step in and regulate the entire messy business of surrogate parents. Have agencies that pay a decent wage to women who are fortunate enough to have easy pregnancies, and who already have as many children as they'd wish to raise themselves.

Make sure that such agencies were not profit-making by having a powerful and well-funded licencing agency. Make sure that those who worked there got salaries no higher than they could easily get elsewhere. And compel those agencies to take the burden of raising children with defects that prevented them having a regular home,

I'd also change the law so that sperm donors or egg donors had a total right to privacy. Have their IDs stored by an agency that could guard against cases of incest, if the offspring of donors wanted to check. (It *can* cause nasty genetic illnesses, quite apart from moral and religious issues.) And have a fuzzed-out tape with voice distorted, explaining that the donor might have their own children or no interest in children. That half of the child's genes came from someone the donor never met and might not like. And insist the child gets this early, at a time when they have little idea of 'the normal' and will mostly accept whatever they are told as being normal.

I can see no realistic justification for preventing someone breeding in the classic manner, if that is their preference. Nor for asking them to breed or even donate against their wishes. But there should be enough volunteers along with small payments to make a huge difference to our future.

Gwydion. M. Williams

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/03/eugenics-francis-galton-science-ideas>

Breeding For Superior Beings

By Brendan Clifford

The project of *Breeding Better Humans*, broached in *Problems* No. 44, assumes that there is an identifiable form of "better human" to be aimed for, and that it could be aimed for, and that it could be achieved through selective breeding.

The proposal assumes that more intelligent humans will be better humans, and proposes that a State Apparatus be established to breed humans for Intelligence by means of artificial insemination, using the sperm of very intelligent people who cannot be bothered with the traditional business of producing offspring in individual families of their own.

Reproduction by families will not be forbidden, but a new social normality is to be established in which children would have no particular interest in who their parents were.

How long would breeding for intelligence take to bring about this new kind of more intelligent human on a scale that would have a discernible effect on social affairs? How many generations?

Breeding for a particular quality is a very hit and miss affair. The transmission of particular qualities from one generation to the next cannot be relied on at all. The progenitor carries in his breeding material, not only the qualities that are evident in himself, but also qualities from his various ancestors which have by-passed himself but may be a determining influence on his children or grandchildren.

But I gather that persistent breeding for a particular quality over many generations does tend to bring about the

dominance of that quality with a fair degree of regularity. However, human generations are long, compared with the generations of fruit flies, or even of dogs. So what is involved in the breeding of humans for a particular quality is a regime of selection conducted over a number of centuries?

Assuming that select breeding for Intelligence was maintained for long enough to produce a substantial body of pedigreed, extra-intelligent humans, what grounds are there for assuming that they would determine the course of social affairs if capricious breeding was allowed to continue for the mass of the people, though discouraged? The pedigreed need to be looked after. The mongrels look after themselves.

But is the project of breeding for Intelligence a conceivable project? Is there some distinct quality called Intelligence that can be identified and measured so as to be bred for?

When I went to London in the late fifties, Intelligence was very much in fashion, and the scientific racism produced by the Enlightenment was still much in evidence, despite all that had been said in the war propaganda. Of course the Germans had made a great mistake in thinking that *they* were a master race. That had been proved by trial by combat. But the idea that there were races that were superior to others by nature was still alive in intellectually superior circles.

I was myself more inclined towards the inferior races—no doubt because I came from one. Out of curiosity I did an IQ test. The result showed I just escaped being a moron. (I forget the actual classifications used.)

I was in my early twenties. I had lived all my life in an obscure region of rural Ireland. I was uneducated, not even having gone through the full term of elementary schooling. The world I had direct experience of consisted of about three parishes. It made sense therefore in terms of Intelligence, as it existed in Southern England, that I was judged to be an idiot.

But the ideology of the intelligence cult said that it could measure basic abstract intelligence, independent of all social, cultural and educational influence or training. However, that is something that was never established as being a discernible fact. And it is only within the sphere of the ideology of the intelligence cult that the word is assumed to have a precise meaning.

In Chambers Dictionary, *Intellect* is defined as “*the mind, in reference to its rational powers: the thinking principle*”.

Well, the mind thinks. It can't help it. If it wasn't thinking, it would not be a mind. A mind is something that thinks. And the greater part of the thinking done by minds is not of the kind that is called *intellectual*.

And, as to “*rational powers*”:

Rational: “of the reason; endowed with reason; sane; intelligent; judicious”.

And *Reason*: “ground, support, or justification of an act or belief; a premise, especially when placed after its conclusion; a motive or inducement; an underlying explanatory principle; a cause; the mind's power of drawing conclusions and determining right and truth.”

So: ground, purpose, inducement, motive, cause, and deduction.

The *Oxford Companion To Philosophy* says:

“An intelligent person is one in whom memory and the capacity to grasp relations and to solve problems with speed and originality are especially pronounced. Despite much study, psychologists have yet to settle on a precise characterisation of intelligence.”

And the *Oxford Companion To The Mind*:

“*Intelligence*: Innumerable tests are available for measuring intelligence, yet no one is quite certain of what intelligence is, or even of just what it is that the available tests are measuring.”

Intellect: “Mental abilities, usually distinguished from feelings, emotions, and also perception—though perception, we now generally believe, in fact depends on unconscious inferences”.

The derivation of *intelligence* is from the Latin words for “*between*” and “*choose*”. In other words it is *selection*.

Choices of one kind or another are always being made by everybody. So let's reserve the word for successful choices—choices which lead to success. In that case it just becomes *pragmatism*. And the thing about pragmatism is that it has no rules or principles. It begins with action in breach of principle, briefly establishes new principles by successful action, which are then broken in turn by further action. But action in breach of established principle is not always successful. It depends on fine judgment in actual situations, and so there is nothing standard about it that can be bred for.

Madawc Williams' suggestion is effectively for a biological remaking of the human race. He is not the first English progressive to have had that idea. During the high tide of fundamentalist liberal progressiveness that is called the Victorian era, eugenics became fashionable in intellectual circles on the Left, and it was natural that it should re-surface in the Thatcherite era in which human reproduction by families is treated as a reactionary hangover, and a mere matter of lifestyle choice.

Bernard Shaw, who was the most popular Socialist writer in England after Blatchford, rejected the replacement of social action by biological action, but he was not a scientist and he somehow acquired a sense of affinity with actual working class life in England, though he was by origin a drop-out from the Anglo-Irish gentry and a super-intellectual *poseur*. The Socialist intellectuals who were scientists seem on the whole to have been inclined towards Eugenics.

Shaw has a chapter on the subject in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide To Socialism And Capitalism*:

“There are some who say that if you want better people you must breed them as carefully as you breed thoroughbred horses and pedigree boars. No doubt you must, but there are two difficulties. First, you cannot very well make men and women as you mate bulls and cows... Second, even if you could, you would not know how to do it, because you would not know what sort of human being you wanted to breed. In the case of a horse or a pig the matter is very simple: you want either a very fast horse for racing or a very strong horse for drawing loads, and in the case of a pig you want simply plenty of bacon. And yet, simple as that is, any breeder of these animals will tell you that he has a great many failures no matter how careful he is.

“The moment you ask yourself what sort of child you want, beyond preferring a boy or a girl, you have to confess that you do not know. At best you can mention a few sorts that you don't want; for instance, you don't want cripples, deaf mutes, blind, imbecile, epileptic or drunken children. But even these you do not know how to avoid, as there is often nothing visibly wrong with the parents of such unfortunates. When you turn from what you don't want to what you do want you may say that you want good children; but a good child means only a child that gives its parents no trouble; and some very useful men and women have been very troublesome children... And grown-up geniuses are never liked until they are dead...”

“Even if we were willing to trust any political authority to select our husbands and wives for us with a view to improving the race, the officials would be hopelessly puzzled as to how to select. They might begin with some rough idea of preventing the marriage of persons with any taint of consumption or madness or syphilis or addiction to drugs or drink in their families; but that would end in nobody being married at all, as there is practically no family quite free from such taints. As to moral excellence, what model would they take as desirable? St. Frances... John Wesley, George Washington? Or Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon or Bismarck? It takes all sorts to make a world; and the notion of a Government department trying to make out how many different types were necessary, and how many persons of each type, and proceeding to breed them by appropriate marriages, is amusing but not practicable.”

The best way, he says, is to let Nature take its course. And, if the course of nature is obstructed by economic

stratification into classes which hinder sexual selection, the thing to do is to equalise economic conditions. But that was at a time when economic equalisation was unquestionably taken to be the Socialist way.

Born And Bred

In rural Ireland long ago people were described as originating by being "*born and bred*", the breeding coming after the birth. With other animals the breeding was almost entirely done beforehand. The most extreme instance of this was the cuckoo, which had no contact with its mother. She dropped her egg in the nest of another species of bird in which it was hatched out as part of a batch of eggs of another species, but it knew from the start that it was not a thrush, and what to do about it. But human existence is brought about by breeding which begins after birth.

The author of Shakespeare begins the misogynist play, *The Taming Of The Shrew*, with an interesting Prologue in which a capricious Lord orders his servants to pick a tramp off the streets, put him in an aristocratic bed and treat him as a lord when he wakes up, and see how he takes it. The tramp, finding himself treated as a lord, in lordly circumstances, concludes that he must be a lord, and had had a bad dream about being a tramp:

"Do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?
I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak;
I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things,
Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,
And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly..."

Shaw concluded that it all comes down to circumstances. And, under the circumstances existing in England in the 1920s—

"...we shall never get a well-bred race. If every family were brought up at the same cost, we should all have the same habits, manners, culture, and refinement... Nobody would marry for money, because there would be no money to be gained or lost by marriage... If the race did not improve under these circumstances, it must be unimprovable."

That was sufficient unto the day for a Socialist propagandist in the 1920s, when the family could still be described as the building block of society, and it was not meaningless to talk of working class culture, and it was largely transmitted through the family.

Workers' Control

Fifty years later I was acquainted with Nina Fishman, who came from Communist culture in Californian society and was charmed by what she saw as a stable, conservative working class culture in England in which life could be lived satisfactorily, outside the Darwinian scheme of things. But that culture had become brittle by 1970. And it was formally abolished within a quarter of a century. The work of destruction began when Margaret Thatcher ousted Ted Heath from the leadership of the Conservative Party and it was completed when Tony Blair took over the leadership of the Labour Party.

Nina saw England as being in transition from Capitalism to Socialism in the way envisaged by Marx, or perhaps more so by Engels. The working class was

growing in organisation, power and confidence through the development of the proletarianising consequences of capitalist development, and the capitalist class was preparing to give way to it.

Ted Heath won the General Election of 1970 with the promise of stopping Inflation at a stroke, and the ideology of "*Selsdon man*"—the freeing of private enterprise, as far as I recall. Within a year or two he abandoned Selsdon Man and adopted a policy of establishing an institutional framework for determining wage differentials by consultation between the representatives of the workers in the various branches of industry.

The industrial situation then is hardly imaginable today. The Trade Unions were the great power in the economy. Their leaders were household names. They appeared as a matter of course in radio and television programmes on public affairs. And one of the problems disrupting the smooth flow of production with the phenomena of leap-frogging in the establishment of wage-differentials between one organised body of workers and another. When one Trade Union got a wage increase, another Trade Union would take that as its starting point and demand more. And the power of the Trade Union movement as a whole was such that neither management nor Government could over-rule it. So Heath put it to the Trade Unions to determine differentials by arrangements with one another, rather than by strike action effectively against one another.

Heath lost the 1974 Election on the issue of "*Who governs the country*". But his approach was maintained and developed by Harold Wilson, who won the election with his ideology of a *white-hot technological revolution*. His Minister, Barbara Castle, had published a document, *In Place Of Strife*, about the Trade Unions determining this matter of wage differentials amongst themselves, which the Unions opposed strongly.

Wilson set up a Royal Commission, chaired by Alan Bullock, which proposed the setting up of a form of Workers' Control of industry by joint management boards, representing the Trade Unions and the Shareholders on an equal basis.

If the Unions had agreed to operate the proposals of *the Bullock Commission*, the transition from Capitalism to Socialism, as envisaged by Engels, would have taken a major step forward. The organised working class would have become a major force in the management of the economy. But the Unions, with the exception of only a few Union leaders, refused to undertake managerial responsibility. Management was the responsibility of the management, and let them get on with it and not try to shackle the working class with it!

But where does management get its power, if the workers are tightly organised against it, and they are by far the most numerous class in society?

Rejection of Workers' Control by the workers was followed by the *Winter of Discontent*. Margaret Thatcher, who had ousted Ted Heath from the Tory leadership, came to Office with a policy of *enabling management to manage*—which meant eroding the power of the Trade Unions: a process which has gone on ever since, regardless of which party is in government. And it was a Labour Government that put the finish touch to the project when Blair said that *workers should no longer expect a*

job for life, and adopted a policy of bringing in foreign workers in large numbers to help break up the habits of the native working class. This was done so effectively that one could now ask if a British working class exists at all in an organised sense.

What part did Intelligence, or the lack of it, play in this remarkable collapse of a powerful social structure that seemed to be firmly in place in the 1960s?

The conditions of life in Britain from the 1950s to the 1970s for the working class were comfortable. There was considerable stability and predictability, compared with what was past and what followed.

Working class power was evident in tightly organised Trade Unionism. Unemployment was so small that in market terms it was in effect as sign of a labour shortage. The mass expectation was that this condition of things would continue with marginal improvements, ensured by class conflict, and that was fine.

Life was not perfect, of course. That was blamed on Capitalism. But I could not see that there was any idea of what a perfect life might be like. And, as for Capitalism, it seemed that the major capitalists operated on close terms with the relevant Trade Union leaders, and they engaged in amicable argument with one another on the media.

How many people today could on the spur of the moment say who was the leader of the Engineers, or the Transport Workers, or the Post Office Workers? In the 1960s most people would have known. Their names were as familiar as the names of Government Ministers.

My first job was as a trolley-bus conductor with London Transport. London Transport had a management but no capitalist owner. Nevertheless, the management—which was almost entirely drawn from the workforce—was looked upon as if it was capitalist. I suppose that was inevitable, since it existed in a general market framework that was at least nominally capitalist. While I was there, there was a great Transport Strike (1959, I think), in which all the slogans appropriate to conflict with a capitalist were issued. It went on for a week or two and was then settled with some very minor alteration in wages. Life was good.

Why should that good life be given away by accepting the Bullock Proposals, which would have obliged the workforce to undertake the management of the enterprise they worked in?

The proletariat was on Easy Street, and it preferred to remain there rather than take a major step towards abolishing Capitalism, wasting good leisure time on uncongenial effort?

By the 1970s it had become clear that Trade Union power had become much too strong for the pseudo-capitalist system that emerged from the war to continue in the face of an all-out class-antagonism approach by the Unions. Therefore we supported the Bullock Report, and became the odd man out on the Left. (And in 1974 I had published a pamphlet in support of Heath on the same grounds.)

Things went awry very quickly thereafter.

Would superior Intelligence in society have brought about a course of development that was not Thatcherite—that was not a restoration of Capitalism proper?

If superior intelligence is to be found anywhere, I

suppose it is in the *intelligentsia*. Their business is to be intelligent and they work at it. If a sample of them and a sample of Trade Union leaders were given IQ tests, there can be little doubt who would come out tops.

But what I recall coming from the *intelligentsia* in the Bullock period is the suggestion that what Bullock was proposing was “*corporatism*”, which was then another word for *Fascism*, or else was “*people’s capitalism*”—and therefore should be rejected as a holding operation against socialist revolution.

Gormley And Scargill

An equally important event happened in the early years of Thatcherism—the succession of Arthur Scargill to Joe Gormley in the leadership of the Miners Union (which was then the core Union in the system, as the whole society was dependent on coal for commercial and living purposes).

Gormley was dull, Scargill was brilliant. Gormley conducted limited Strikes with realisable aims within the *status quo*, and was usually effective. His purpose seems to have been to slow down the decline of the industry. He always ensured he had the support of the workforce in what he did. Scargill conducted an unlimited Strike for a revolutionary purpose, split the miners, failed in his revolutionary purpose, accelerated the decline of the industry, and gave Thatcher a victory. I doubt that Gormley would have equalled Scargill in an IQ test.

(We supported the Durham miners, who refused to come out without a ballot. Scargill saw balloting as bourgeois.)

If some distinct quality called *Intelligence* were isolated and measured, I assume that what would be measured would be a skill at working out permutations within a closed system. Political life does not go on within a closed system, and in the end it has no rules.

Gormley was immersed in the life of the mining industry. One could say that he was bred to it. He was in that sense inbred to its procedures and practicalities, and knew what was negotiable and what was not, and he knew the place of the industry in the society.

Scargill, as far as I recall, had been a safety officer of the Union, and therefore was accustomed to saying what should be done, and having it done. Then, as leader, he committed the Union, without careful preparation, to a Strike for a purpose which seemed to us from the start to be unachievable, and which therefore gave Thatcher the opportunity for a major victory. One could say that he was ‘too clever for the job’. “*Clever*” is a very interesting word—usable as a disparaging word for Intelligence.

Education And Breeding

I recently overheard a discussion on education on BBC radio. Education is entirely outside my experience and I would never make a point of listening to a programme about it. But I was within hearing of a radio programme in which it was discussed, and what I heard said was that English education aimed at *excellence* while Scottish education aimed at *mediocrity*. I don’t know if that is the case or not, but the distinction made sense to me. In the post-family world breeding must be done in great part through education. And the masses must be shaped for

the service of the state.

Education for excellence would have as its purpose the production of an elite. Education for equality would be education for mediocrity. Excellence is a comparative term and it implies hierarchy. If one thinks of good, better and best, it is obvious that *best* cannot exist, except with something that it is better than.

Harold Wilson declared in the mid-1970s that Labour had become “*the natural party of power*”, having taken over from the Tories in that respect. It seemed possible at the time that this was on the brink of becoming the case. The organised working class was the strongest force in society. If the Labour Party had acted effectively to consolidate working class power, it might well have become the natural governing party—the *conservative* party—of the state.

A conspiracy was formed in upper social circles to enact a *coup d'état* against Wilson. But that was not what sent the Labour Party into the doldrums. The *coup* ran its course behind the scenes, but on stage the working class refused to become the ruling class. It refused to engage in the management of the economy in which it had gained negative power. It insisted that management should come from some other source. And the party of power cannot at the same time be a party of protest.

The efforts of Wilson, Barbara Castle and Alan Bullock therefore came to nothing. They are now forgotten.

The Ruling Class As A Protected Species

Another forgotten incident in the class struggle had happened thirty years earlier.

The Labour Party was in Office and in real power. The Tory Party was in disgrace because of “*appeasement*” [of Hitler] in the thirties. It had in fact governed jointly with Labour in the National Governments, but was accorded exclusive responsibility for it. Labour won the Election at the end of the War, and, because of the War, the country lay before it to do what it pleased with to a degree that was without precedent since 1649. It could have wiped out the old ruling class with the greatest of ease. In 1948 it realised it had almost done so without noticing. It then took measures to protect it. The aristocracy, on which Lloyd George had directed fierce class rhetoric around 1910—Liberal class rhetoric—was made a protected species in the late 1940s when Death Duties were exterminating it.

Three hundred years before that one of Cromwell's Parliaments had decided to destroy it, but Cromwell overruled it. He decided that the gentry were the salt of the English earth and that England could not afford to lose it. An essentially new gentry was then bred out of the Puritan Revolution, took power under the 1688 Revolution, ruled exclusively until the admission of the capitalist class to Parliament in 1832, shaped that middle class to its culture of State, and then in the 1860s began to admit strata of the working class gradually to its system.

The gentry had been the substance of English political life for a couple of centuries and, as its substance was eroded, it remained part of the scenery. The Labour Government of 1945, while engaging in far-reaching social reforms, decided that an aristocracy must be retained as part of the national scenery—and as a punching bag.

The Two Forms Of Reason

On a rationalistic conception of things, such as pure intelligence might produce, this must appear nonsensical. Life would be best lived on the basis of the bare facts of nature and economy. The rest, as the New Left put it in its Althusserian phase, belongs to “*ideology*” (as contrasted with science), or false consciousness, delusion.

Kant worked out the world in terms of *Pure Reason*—pure intelligence? Then, apparently under the influence of Rousseau, he realised that that wasn't playable, so he did it again in terms of *Practical Reason*—unreasonable reason?

From the radio discussion on education that I mentioned above, I gathered that Scottish education sees two elements as being involved: knowledge and skill. The knowledge would be learned and the skill would be practised. Intelligence I suppose would feature in the skill.

In a functional society the great body of knowledge must be received knowledge, worked up by others long ago and not subject to critical examination as it is passed on. Education is therefore in great part a process of regimentation.

That is the understanding I got from Bagehot. It was not what he liked saying, but he knew very well that there could not be a society in which everyone thinks out the world for himself. Great Swathes of people must have the same thoughts as a precondition of social existence. But at the very highest level a margin must be left open.

In England, where excellence is the object, the knowledge of the ages, which makes England what it is, seems to be passed on only through private schooling in the Public Schools. It is conservative in the sense that it communicates an idea of how English society as it presently exists came to be what it is, what its dynamic has been, and how inevitable changes might be undertaken conservatively. It is national and historic. It presents an object to the mind which can be thought about.

Mass education seems to me to be substantially ahistorical. It seems to produce a state of mind in which the knowledge of the past seems to be irrelevant to purposeful conduct in the present. The past, whatever it might have been, is over and done with. It was a place of misery, which has been overcome in producing the present. All that is required for effective action in the present is a set of general principles, or maxims, or clichés, or slogans.

There used to be a kind of working-class educational system in England—Mechanics Institutes. And there was a Workers' Educational Association. I assume that these were hegemonised by the Communist Party. They seem to have disappeared along with the CP. But the purpose of the CP in any case was not to develop the working class as a potential ruling class within the state but to prepare it for revolution. And revolution in the sense of an overthrow of the State had long ceased to be a practical possibility in England, due to the effectiveness of reform.

The distinct development of working class power as an element in the life of the state was connected with the career of Ernest Bevin, and between Bevin and the Communist Party there was a profound mutual hatred, and a scarcely less profound hatred between Bevin and the wing of the Labour Party led by Aneurin Bevan, who

dominated Labour affairs after Bevin died.

In the 1980s I had a considerable amount of contact with Labour Branches around the country—in an attempt to persuade the Party to organise in the Northern Ireland region of the state. It was not known, even by active party members, that the reason why there had never been a Labour MP from Northern Ireland was that the Labour Party had never contested an election there and that it refused to allow residents in Northern Ireland to join the party, even though it governed the region when it won an election, regardless of whether there was a devolved Government in being or not. It was known on the Trade Union side that there was a large and organised industrial working class in Belfast, but it was vaguely assumed that it never returned a Labour MP because it was riddled with fundamentalist religious conflict.

West Belfast elected an MP to Westminster in the 1940s with a mandate to take the Labour Whip. He was refused the Whip by the Party Executive. Politics is in the first place a practical activity, not a speculative debating forum. It is reasonable to say that Labour politics was snuffed out in Northern Ireland by the Labour Party—and then something else naturally took its place.

The crude facts of the case were the knowledge for the intellect to think about. In the absence of that knowledge the intellect intellectualised to no purpose.

I was not very surprised that basic facts about Northern Ireland were unknown to Labour Party members. The media did not present them—neither the State media nor the media of the Labour movement—of which there was still a remnant in the 1980s. On the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921, the Labour and Tory leaders agreed, for reasons never made public, that it was to be excluded from British political life, and the media acted in accordance with that agreement. But I was surprised to find that basic facts of recent Labour Party history, which were clearly relevant to current affairs, were unknown. This was particularly the case with regard to the very different lines of development represented by Bevin and Bevan.

Labour effectively had no past. It had therefore no perspective on the present. Intellect therefore had nothing to think about except rhetorical slogans inherited from a

distant past which had been superseded.

When Labour Shadow Home Secretary hissed “*Scum*” at her opposite number on the Tory benches, that was an expression of a Labour mind emptied of all historical content. I doubt that it had anything to do with inferior intellectual skill. It was a raw sub-working class reflex response to Tory suavity.

Intellect needs substance to work on. Blair did his best to empty Labour minds of substance. The witchhunt against Corbyn carries on the process. What is needed is the restoration of substance as a subject for thought, rather than breeding of intellect. English society is awash with free-ranging intellect.

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The Eugenics Congress, London 1912

By Pat Walsh

The First International Eugenics Congress was convened at Europe's largest hotel, the Hotel Cecil in London, on July 24, 1912. This Inaugural Banquet was presided over by Arthur Balfour, former Prime Minister and creator of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Its work took place over 6 days at the Great Hall, Imperial College, University of London. On 25th it heard papers on the subject of 'Biology and Eugenics'; on 26th, 'Practical Eugenics'; on 27th, 'Education and Eugenics'; on 29th and 30th, 'Sociology and Eugenics'; on 30th, 'Medicine and Eugenics'.

This great Congress was not a fringe event of right wingers. It was supported by the most prominent Establishment figures in politics, law, religion, science, medicine, academia and education. Members of the General Committee included High Clergy, Professors, Doctors and senior military figures in Britain.

The Eugenics Congress had delegates from the Board of Education, many local councils, the Royal College of Medicine, the Royal College of Surgeons, universities such as Oxford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, London and Bristol, Cheltenham Ladies College, feminist organisations like The Women's Freedom League, as well as from the Jewish Free School of London.

Major Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles Darwin, was President of the 1912 Congress and the Vice Presidents included Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty; Reginald McKenna, Liberal Home Secretary; the Lord Chief Justice; the Presidents of Royal College of Physicians, the Royal Society, Harvard University, the Lord Mayor of London, the Bishop of Oxford, Andrew Graham Bell and the President of the German Society for Racial Hygiene.

The Congress had a strong international element with Consultation Committees and academics present from the U.S., Belgium, France Italy and Germany. An accompanying Exhibition was included: "Professor von Gruber has sent over from the International Race Hygiene Congress held in Dresden in 1911 a collection of exhibits representative of German work." (Invitational Circular)

The Eugenics Education Society organised the 1912 Inaugural Congress and dedicated it to Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, who was the originator of the science of Eugenics and who had died the year before. Galton had pioneered Eugenics, partly to justify Anglo-Saxon world domination by popularising the idea of race hierarchy, with the Anglo-Saxons at the top and the "lesser races" beneath and needing reduction and strong ruling. The Eugenics Education Society was carrying on Galton's work by introducing Eugenics into the national consciousness like a new religion.

The Eugenics Education Society was founded in Britain in 1907 to campaign for sterilisation and marriage restrictions for the weak, to prevent the degeneration of the British race. A year later, Sir James Crichton-Brown,

who was prominent at the Congress, gave evidence before the 1908 Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, and recommended the compulsory sterilisation of those with learning disabilities and mental conditions, describing them as "our social rubbish" which should be "swept up and garnered and utilised as far as possible". He argued that,

"We pay much attention to the breeding of our horses, our cattle, our dogs and poultry, even our flowers and vegetables; surely it's not too much to ask that a little care be bestowed upon the breeding and rearing of our race".

In a memo to Prime Minister Asquith in 1910, Winston Churchill cautioned, "The multiplication of the feeble-minded is a very terrible danger to the race".

Over four hundred people from all over the world attended the Eugenics Conference. The Master of Ceremonies for the Inaugural Banquet at the Hotel Cecil was Major Leonard Darwin, who introduced the notables and international speakers from science, medicine and academia. The main thrust of the Eugenics Congress was that race improvement must be instituted as an imperative because the feeble-minded were outbreeding the educated, the non-Aryan was outbreeding the Nordic Aryan, and the Negro was outbreeding the white race.

Darwin's opening speech made it clear that Natural Selection is not Eugenics because fortunately or unfortunately modern society was caring for the poor, enabling them to breed in abundance and live. In the past disease, poverty etc. would have controlled their breeding in a natural way and decimated the surplus (as it did in Ireland). But Social Imperialism had interfered with this process, for good or ill in Britain, and the well-off couldn't breed as much to counteract it. The point of Eugenics was to reverse this demographic disaster by preventing the breeding of the poor, non-Aryan and black races. Otherwise there would be race suicide.

Major Darwin's Presidential Address contained the following explanation of what the Eugenics movement sought to accomplish and why it differed from support for pure Natural Selection:

"There is... certainly one agency which has had a great influence in the past and of which much is now known, and that is natural selection, or Nature playing the part of the breeder of cattle in refusing to breed from inferior stocks. This progressive agency, by continually weeding out the unfit, has always tended to make living beings more and more able to seize the opportunities offered to them by their environments. And it seems as if this forward movement had gone on during all the long ages since life first appeared on earth until recent times, when by our social methods we have been doing our best to prevent further progress being made by this same means. The unfit amongst men are now no longer necessarily killed off by hunger and disease, but are cherished with care, thus being enabled to reproduce their kind, however bad that kind may be. It is true that we cannot but glory in this saving of suffering;

for the spirit which leads to the protection of the weak and afflicted is of all things that which is the best worth preserving on earth; and we can therefore never voluntarily go back to the crude methods of natural selection. But we must not blind ourselves to the danger of interfering with Nature's ways, and we must proclaim aloud that to give ourselves the satisfaction of succouring our neighbours in distress without at the same time considering the effects likely to be produced by our charity on future generations is, to say the least, but weakness and folly...

"We must have a bridge to unite the domain of science with the domain of human action, and such a bridge forms an essential part of the structure of Eugenics. Both national societies and international co-operation are needed for the purpose of spreading the light, and the efforts already made in these directions will, it is hoped, be furthered by the holding of this Congress.

"We may thus conclude that though for the moment the most crying need as regards heredity is for more knowledge, yet we must look forward to a time when the difficulties to be encountered will be moral rather than intellectual; and against moral reform the demons of ignorance, prejudice and fear are certain to raise their heads. But the end we have in view, an improvement in the racial qualities of future generations, is noble enough to give us courage for the fight. Our first effort must be to establish such a moral code as will ensure that the welfare of the unborn shall be held in view in connection with all questions concerning both the marriage of the individual and the organisation of the state. As an agency making for progress conscious selection must replace the blind forces of natural selection; and men must utilise all the knowledge acquired by studying the process of evolution in the past in order to promote moral and physical progress in the future. The nation which first takes this great work thoroughly in hand will surely not only win in all matters of international competition, but will be given a place of honour in the history of the world. And the more nations there are who set out on this path, the more chance there is that some one of them will run this course to the end. The struggle may be long and the disappointments may be many, but we have seen how the long fight against ignorance ended with the triumphant acceptance of the principle of evolution in the nineteenth century. Eugenics is but the practical application of that principle, and may we not hope that the twentieth century will, in like manner, be known in future as the century when the Eugenic ideal was accepted as part of the creed of civilisation? It is with the object of ensuring the realisation of this hope that this Congress is assembled here to-day."

Former Prime Minister, Arthur James Balfour, chaired the Conference. Balfour's Address to the Eugenicists was printed in full in *The Times* of 25th July 1912:

"This International Congress, the first, or one of the first, which has ever been held upon the subject, has in my conception of it two great tasks allotted to it. It has got to convince the public, in the first place, that the study of eugenics is one of the greatest and most pressing necessities of our age. That is the first task. It has got to awake public interest, to make the ordinary man think of the problems which are exercising the scientific mind at the present moment. It has also got to persuade him that the task which science has set itself in dealing with the eugenic problem is one of the most difficult and complex which it has ever undertaken. And no man can do really good service in this great cause unless he not merely believes in its transcendent importance, but also in its special and extraordinary difficulty. I am one of those who base their belief in the future progress of mankind, in most departments, upon the application of scientific method to practical life. And, believe me, we are only at the beginning of that movement; we are only at the beginning of this marriage between science and practice. Science is old — even modern science is old, relatively old — but the application of science to practice is comparatively new. I hope and I believe that among these new applications of science to practice it will be seen in the future that not the least important is that application which it is the business of this international congress

to further.

We have to admit that those who have given most thought to the problems which are included under the word eugenics, those who have given most thought to the way in which the hereditary qualities of the race are transmitted, are those who at this moment take the darkest view of the general effect of the complex causes which are now in operation.

I hope their pessimism is excessive; but it is undoubtedly and unquestionably founded not upon sentiment, but upon the hard consideration of hard fact. And those who refuse to listen to their prophecies are bound to answer their reasoning, for the reasoning is not beyond what it is in the power of every man to weigh. It depends upon facts which it ought not to be difficult to verify; it depends upon premises whose conclusions follow almost inevitably. And those who roughly and rather contemptuously put aside all these prophecies of ill to the civilisation of the future are bound, in my opinion, to give the closest scrutiny to all these arguments before they reject them, and to say where and how, and in what particulars, they fail to support the conclusions drawn from them. Though certain broad conclusions may seem obvious, the subject itself is one of profound difficulty. I would go further, and venture to say that probably there is more difference of opinion at this moment among many scientific men with regard to certain fundamental principles lying at the root of heredity than there was, for example, in the seventies or eighties of the last century after the great Darwin's doctrines were generally accepted — as indeed they are, in their outline, part of the universal heritage of the race — but before all the more minute scientific investigations had taken place with regard to the actual method by which inherited qualities are handed on from generation to generation. Eugenics has got to deal with the fact of this disagreement, which is of scientific importance. It also suffers from another fact, which is of social and political importance — namely, that every faddist seizes hold of the eugenic problem as a machinery for furthering his own particular method of bringing the millennium upon earth.

"But further, I am not sure that those who write and talk on this subject do not occasionally use language which is incorrect in itself, and which is apt to produce a certain prejudice upon the impartial public. I read, for instance, as almost an ordinary commonplace of eugenic literature, that we are suffering at this moment from the fact that the law of natural selection is, if not in abeyance, producing less effect than it did when selection was more stringent, and that what we have got to do is, as it were, to go back to the good old day of natural selection. I do not believe that to be scientifically sound. I say nothing about its other aspects. The truth is that we are very apt to use the word 'fit' in two quite different senses. We say that the 'fit' survive. But all that that means is that those who survive are fit: they are fit because they survive, and they survive because they are fit. It really adds nothing to our knowledge of the facts. All it shows is that here is a class, or a race, or a species, which does survive and is adapted to its surroundings, and that is the only definition, from a strictly biological point of view, of what 'fit' means. But it is not all the eugenicist means.

"He does not mean that mere survival indicates fitness: he means something more than that. He has got ideals of what a man ought to be, of what the State ought to be, and of what society ought to be, and he means that those ideals are not being carried out because we have not yet grasped the true way of dealing with the problems involved. If you are to use language strictly, you ought never to attribute to nature any intentions whatever.

"You ought to say 'Certain things happen'. Everything else is metaphor, and sometimes it is misleading metaphor. For instance, those who are interested in this subject will read constantly that in certain cases the biologically fit are diminishing in number through the diminution of their birth-rate, and that the biologically unfit are increasing in number because their birth-rate is high. But according

to the true doctrine of natural selection, as I conceive it, that is all wrong. The professional classes, we are told, have families so small that it is impossible for them to keep up their numbers. They are biologically unfit for that very reason. Fitness means, and can only mean from the naturalistic point of view, that you are in harmony with your surroundings, and if your numbers diminish you are not in harmony with your surroundings, for there is not that adaptation which fitness in the naturalistic sense implies. In the same way, I am told that the number of feeble-minded is greatly increasing. That can only mean, from a naturalistic point of view, that the feeble-minded are getting more adapted to their surroundings (laughter). I really am not making either a verbal quibble or an ill-timed joke. It is all-important to remember, in my opinion, that we are not going to imitate; and we do not desire to imitate natural selection, which no doubt produces wonderful things, wonderful organisms, in the way of men, but has also produced very abominable things by precisely the same process. The whole point of eugenics is that we reject the standard of mere numbers. We do not say survival is everything. We deliberately say that it is not everything; that a feeble-minded man, even though he survive, is not so good as the good professional man, even though that professional man is only one of a class that does not keep up its numbers by an adequate birth-rate.

"The truth is that we ought to have the courage of our opinions, and we must regard man as he is now, from this point of view — from the point of view of genetics — as a wild animal. There may be, and there are, certain qualifications to that. I suppose there are both among barbarous and among civilised tribes marriage customs and marriage laws which have their root, I do not know whether in formulated laws of eugenics, but which at all events harmonise with what we now realise are sound laws of eugenics. Still, broadly speaking, man is a wild animal; and we have to admit that if we carry out to its logical conclusion the sort of scientific work which is being done by congresses of this sort, man must become a domesticated animal. I am aware that that is a sort of phrase which is liable to misinterpretation, but it is absolutely correct. The eugenicist thinks, and must think, that he ought deliberately to consider the health, the character, and the qualities of the succeeding generations. That is characteristic of domestication; that is totally absent from animals in the wild state. And what we have to do is ultimately — not we of this generation or the next generation, or for a limited number of years, but ultimately, we shall have to look at this question from an incomparably more difficult, but also more important, aspect of the very kind of questions which we have to consider when we are dealing with the race of domestic animals upon which so much of our happiness, and even our existence, actually depends. But to say that — I hope it does not seem too paradoxical or too extreme to those to whom I am speaking — shows how enormously difficult is the problem with which we have to contend.

"It is not a problem of the individual, but of society. I sometimes see it stated that, after all, society is the sum of the individuals who compose it. In one sense that is true — the whole is always the sum of its parts; but in that sense it is quite an unmeaning and useless proposition. In the only sense in which it means anything it is not true; and, whether we shall ever know exactly how a complex society should be composed and how we ought to lead up to its proper composition — whether we shall ever get that degree of knowledge, I know not: but the idea that you can get a society of the most perfect kind by merely considering certain questions about the strain and ancestry, and the health, and the physical vigour of the various components of that society — that I believe is a most shallow view of a most difficult question."

(The proceedings of the conference are detailed in Abstracts of Papers read at the First Eugenics Congress, University of London, July 1912 and Problems in Eugenics: Papers communicated to the First International Eugenics Congress, University of London, July 4th to 30th, 1912, Volumes I and II.)

The Scope and Importance to the State of the Science of National Eugenics,

by Karl Pearson

Published by Cambridge University Press, London, Third Edition, 1911.

[This was a lecture originally delivered as the fourteenth Robert Boyle Lecture before the Oxford University Junior Science Club, on May 17, 1907. There follow some extracts from the lecture made by Eamon Dyas]

"The nation must have the instruments and the training needful to protect itself and its enterprises; it must hold the sources of raw material and the trade routes requisite to develop the wealth upon which its population depends; it must have the education necessary to make its craftsmen, its traders, its inventors, its men of science, its diplomatists, and its statesmen the equals at least of those of its rivals on the world-stage. Nay, perhaps as important as all theses, it must have traditions and ideals so strong that the prejudices of individuals and the prerogatives of classes will fall before urgent national needs; it requires teachers, be they pressmen, poets, or politicians, who grasp the wants of the nation as a whole; who, independent of class and party, can remind the people at the fitting moment of their traditions, and their special function amid nations." (p. 9).

"Yet if we come to analyse these secondary conditions, we shall find in each case that their realization depends on the fulfilment of our primary education. Without high average soundness of body and soundness of mind a nation can neither be built up nor an empire preserved. Permanence and dominance in the world passes to and from nations even with their rise and fall in mental and bodily fitness. No success will attend our attempts to understand past history, to cast light on present racial changes, or to predict future development, if we leave out of account the biological factors. Statistics as to the prevalence of disease in the army or a defeated nation may tell us more than any dissertation on the genius of the commanders and the cleverness of the statesmen of its victorious foe. Lost provinces and a generation of hectoring may follow to the conquered nation whose leaders have forgotten the primary essential of national soundness of body and mind.

"Francis Galton, in establishing a laboratory for the study of National Eugenics in the University of London,

has defined this new science as ‘the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally’. The word eugenic here has the double sense of the English wellbred, goodness of nature and goodness of nurture. Our science does not propose to confine its attention to problems of inheritance only, but to deal also with problems of environment and of nurture.” (p. 10).

“I myself look forward to a future when a wholly new view as to patriotism will be accepted; when the individual will recognize more fully and more clearly the conflict between individual interests and national duties. I foresee a time when the welfare of the nation will form a more conspicuous factor in conduct; when conscious race-culture will cope with the ills which arise when we suspend the full purifying force of natural selection...” (pp. 11-12).

“The struggle of man against man, with its victory to the tougher and more crafty: the struggle of tribe against tribe, with its defeat for the less socially organized: the contest of nation with nation whether in trade or in war, with the mastery for the foreseeing nation, for the nation with the cleaner bill of health, the more united purposes of its classes, and the sounder intellectual equipment of its units: are not these only phases of the struggle for existence, the factors which have made for human progress, which have developed man from brute into sentient being? We have been told that ‘the cosmic process is opposed to the ethical’! But from the standpoint of science, is not the ethical the outcome of the cosmic? Are not the physique, the intellectuality, the morality of man, the product of that grim warfare between individual and individual, between society and society, and between humanity and nature, of which we even yet see no end?” (p. 22).

“Now may we not claim Plato as a precursor of the modern Eugenics movement? He grasped the intensity of inheritance, for he appeals to the herd and the flock; he realized the danger to the state of a growing band of degenerates, and he called upon the legislator to purify the state. Plato’s purgation, if you will accept the view I have endeavoured to lay before you today, has in fact hitherto been carried out by natural selection, by the struggle of man against man, of man against nature, and of state against state. This very cosmical process has so developed our ethical feelings, that we find it difficult to regard the process as benign. A hundred years ago we still hung the greater proportion of our criminals or sent them for life across the seas, not even euphemistically terming it a ‘colony’. We shut up our insane, making no attempt at cure; the modern system of hospitals and institutions and charities was scarcely developed; the physically and mentally weak had small chance of surviving and bearing offspring. There was a constant stern selection purifying in Plato’s sense the state.

The growth of human sympathy – and is not this one of the chief factors of natural fitness? – has been so rapid during the century that it has cried Halt! to almost every form of racial purification. Is not this the real opposition which Huxley noticed between the ethical and cosmic processes? One factor – absolutely needful for race survival – sympathy, has been developed in such an exaggerated form that we are in danger, by suspending selection, of lessening the effect of those other factors which automatically purge the state of the degenerates in body and mind.

“Do I therefore call for less human sympathy, for more limited charity, and the sterner treatment of the weak? Not for a moment; we cannot go backwards a single step in the evolution of human feeling! But I demand that all sympathy and charity shall be organised and guided into paths where they will promote racial efficiency, and not lead towards national shipwreck. The time is coming when we must consciously carry out that purification of the state and race which has hitherto been the work of the unconscious cosmic process. The higher patriotism and the pride of race must come to our aid in stemming deterioration; the science of Eugenics has not only to furnish Plato’s legislator with the facts upon which he can take action, but it has to educate public opinion until without a despotism he may attempt even the mildest purgation. To produce a nation healthy alike in mind and body must become a fixed idea – one of almost religious intensity, as Francis Galton has expressed it – in the minds of the intellectual oligarchy, which after all sways the masses and their political leaders.” (pp. 24-25).

“Education for the criminal, fresh air for the tuberculous, rest and food for the neurotic – these are excellent, they may bring control, sound lungs, and sanity to the individual; but they will not save the offspring from the need of like treatment, nor from the danger of collapse when the time of strain comes. They cannot make a nation sound in mind and body, they merely screen degeneracy behind a throng of arrested degenerates. Our highly developed human sympathy will no longer allow us to watch the state purify itself by aid of crude natural selection. We see pain and suffering only to relieve it, without inquiry as to the moral character of the sufferer or as to his national or racial value. And this is right – no man is responsible for his own being; and nature and nurture, over which he had no control, have made him the being he is, good or evil. But here science steps in, crying, ‘Let the reprieved be accepted, but next remind the social conscience of its duty to the race. No nation can preserve its efficiency unless dominant fertility be associated with the mentally and physically fitter stocks.’” (pp. 37-38).

“The biological factors are dominant in the evolution of mankind; these, and these alone, can throw light on the rise and fall of nations, on racial progress and

national degeneracy. In highly civilized states, the growth of the communal feeling – upon which indeed these states depend for their very existence – has not kept step with our knowledge of the laws which govern race development. Consciously or unconsciously we have suspended the racial purgation maintained in less developed communities by natural selection. We return our criminals after penance, our insane and tuberculous after ‘recovery’, to their old lives; we leave the mentally defective as flotsam on the tide of primordial passions. We disregard on every side these two great principles: (a) the inheritance of variations, and (b) the correlation in heredity of unlike imperfections.” (p. 38).

“If I speak strongly, it is because I feel strongly; and the strength of my feeling does not depend on the few facts I have brought before you today. It would be possible to paint a lurid picture – and label it Race Suicide. That is feasible to any one who has seen, even from afar, the nine circles of that dread region which stretches from slum to reformatory, from casual ward and stew to prison, from hospital and sanatorium to asylum and special school; that infernal lake which sends its unregarded rivulets to befoul more fertile social tracts.” (p. 39).

“How can the dominant fertility of the fitter stocks be maintained when natural selection has been suspended? I do not think any wise man would be prepared with a full answer to this question today. There is no sovereign remedy for degeneracy. Every method is curative which tends to decrease the fertility of the unfit and to emphasize that of the fit. We may find it difficult to define the socially fit, although physique and ability will carry us far; but when we turn to the habitual criminal, the professional tramp, the tuberculous, the insane, the mentally defective, the alcoholic, the diseased from birth or from excess, there can be little doubt of their social unfitness. Here every remedy which tends to separate them from the community, every segregation which reduces their chances of parentage, is worthy of consideration. Strange as it may seem, we are not much beyond the cure suggested by Plato – what is ‘euphemistically termed a colony’, for the degenerates of each sex.” (p. 40).

“As we found an antinomy between high civilization and race purification by natural selection, so there

appears to be a corresponding antagonism between individual comfort and race welfare. It is again the tendency of higher civilization to suspend the more drastic phases of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fitter. The man of education, or made position, says ‘the chances of my children are better if I have but few of them’, and we reach the startling condition of America, where the classes of ability – the classes which take as their standard an academic education – are not reproducing themselves, their average number of offspring being less than two; we reach the state of affairs which Mr. Sydney Webb tells us is demonstrable in another intellectual circle in this country, an almost childless population with no inheritance of its ability. And against this we have to set the maximum fertility which is reached by the degenerate stocks!” (pp. 41-42).

“The progress of the race inevitably demands a dominant fertility in the fitter stocks. If that principle be not recognized as axiomatic by the mentally and bodily fit themselves, if the statesman does not accept it as a guide in social legislation, then the race will degenerate, until, sinking into barbarism, it may rise again through the toilsome stages of purification by crude natural selection. I am not pessimistic in this attitude. I know that the English people has been aroused to self-consciousness more than once in its history, and I believe that now it can be brought to realize that safety lies in a conscious race-culture. If race feeling can be appealed to by men trained to see the bearing of great biological laws on human growth, then we shall not create a mere passing wave of national emotion conveniently satisfied by the appointment, dead before the report, of a Royal Commission. The time seems upon us when the biological sciences shall begin to do for man what the physical have done for more than a century; when they shall aid him in completing his mastery of his organic development, as the physical sciences have largely taught him to control his inorganic environment.” (pp. 43-44).

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