

# Labour & Trade Union Review

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## Cancun Not So Canny

### CANCUN CONFERENCE

*"Another One Bites The Dust, Hey Hey"*

Since the end of the Cold War the international organisations much favoured by the West have been discredited and falling like ninepins. The decent thing for NATO to have done in 1989 was to have wound itself up as its war was over. But no, with the 'pacifist' Mr. Solana and the 'socialist' Lord Robertson at the helm, it went looking for wars and expanding like mad. But it was all for nought. When the US wanted to engage in war it ignored NATO. Despite frantic pleas from it to join in, the US said thanks, but no thanks. So NATO is now a bit of a joke. Another major international organisation, the UN, will not survive the Iraq war with any credibility whatever, while the EU is now at sixes and sevens about itself. Indeed, the *Euro* referendum in Sweden shows its credibility is on the line. And, on the same day, the WTO Ministerial meeting in Cancun collapsed.

All this proves that the West is hardly fit to govern itself, never mind having pretensions to govern the world. The Cold War was characterised by a balance of roughly equal opposing forces and that, and only that, is what created peace and progress in the West. The sooner another such equal force to counter American power emerges—and it does not matter very much what kind it is—the better. That will be when we have 'peace' again. The West is not to be relied on for that. It had the world at its feet after the Cold War and, rather than the 'perpetual peace' which might have been expected, it has ensured an era of wars, each more discreditable than the last.

All the talk at the Cancun WTO Summit about farm subsidies and more market access for Third World countries etc. etc. was simply codes for how best to exploit the rest of the world. The WTO is a



protectionist body for western capitalism. That is now as plain as daylight. The only question is whether enough 'developing' countries have the will to finish the job they started at Cancun and destroy the WTO. Brazil, India and China got their act together this time and said enough was enough. They would have no more opening up of their markets via the 'Singapore issues'—shorthand for more uncontrolled inward investment, unrestrained competition and hegemonising of their economies by western capitalism. The WTO can be finished off very easily. It can be done without a march or a banner or a cracked skull. Simply have a free vote of its member-countries. The WTO has not yet got round to considering voting, even though we are constantly told that freedom comes with the free market. And there are a number of WTO Agreements which have the force of international law that have never been voted on, TRIPS, TRIMS, etc. Let's have a vote of the WTO membership on these!

"Are you ready, hey, are you ready for this

Are you hanging on the edge of your seat?"

But that is unlikely. After all the daddy of the WTO, Irishman Peter Sutherland, was never elected to anything in his life. Of course, that never stopped the boudid Peter from letting the world know what was good for it and threatening it with dire consequences if it did not listen to him. Now he has set himself up as the person to consult to save the WTO from itself.

Consensus is the rule in the WTO, which is a polite word for intimidation. That is what suffered a defeat at Cancun. And people can get a liking for not being intimidated.

"But I'm ready for you, yes I'm ready for you

I'm standing on my own two feet  
Another one bites the dust, heeey,  
OOOHHH showdown".

The 'developing' countries should assert their rights and put into practice every protectionist measure they think fit for themselves. After all, they will only be copying the EU and the US who have that in common. It must surely

have occurred to developing countries that there must be some connection between protectionism itself and the fact that the most powerful political forces in the world—the US and the EU—have been, are, and will be, as protective and protectionist of their economies as they think fit. Ireland is also proof of that, at least historically. Take a bow, de Valera.

Most discussion around the Ministerial meeting centred on the issue of agricultural subsidies in the EU and US and the alleged harm they were doing to the Third World. It all looks a very plausible argument: these countries are in desperate need of free access to the EU and the US for their agricultural commodities to enable them to 'trade their way to prosperity' as Michael Kitt, Ireland's main man in this area, is so fond of advising them. It's such an obvious fact of life to the alleged free traders that one can only conclude that they really believe that it is only blind stupidity, corruption or sheer perversity that obstructs this grand plan in the Third World.

The fly in the ointment is that the more the Free Trade tendency prevails, the more inequality and poverty increases in the Third World. For the other side of this plan is that the developing countries who adopt it also have to accept a dependence on the selling of basic commodities to the 'West'—and the price of these primary goods declines as a consequence of this very free trade. For this privilege of dependence on cash-crop production, they have 'to make offers' to the WTO—which is really to accept that their economies and their social infrastructures are open season for western capitalism. That's the deal, and countries that buy it are caught in a trap. They trade themselves into poverty rather than prosperity. The examples of coffee, cocoa and bananas show how disastrous reliance on exporting basic commodities in a free market can be for a country as a whole. It prevents a rounded, balanced development from occurring.

The west gets cheap commodities, as well as having the benefits of all the added value resulting from processing. The developing countries get trinkets for their commodities. That is why, for example, Germany is the greatest coffee 'producer' in the world and does not

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grow a bean. Figure that out and you will see what the WTO is all about. One gets the impression that Belgium and Switzerland produce most of the chocolate in the world—but not much cocoa grows in any of them as far as I know.

Even more insidious and damaging are the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations or 'charities') which 'oppose' globalisation. They want a nicer version of exploitation, a less crude version, but it amounts to the same thing. TrÛcaire is typical. All of them are equally horrified by protectionism. They are the wolves in sheep's clothing in the developing world. But,

"Hey, I'm going to get you too  
Another one bites the dust".

First published in The Irish Political Review

# Trade Union Diary

By Sean Brady

#### In Praise of Blair

Radio 4's 'Today' of 30 September had an interview with Neil Kinnock during which he praised Tony Blair for his political programme and style of governing. Kinnock is due to retire from the European Commission next year and is clearly looking for a new role. His words of praise for Blair should help, if Blair himself is still in position to do so.

It should come as no surprise that Kinnock is such an admirer of Blair. It was Kinnock who started the reforms that have changed Labour so dramatically; and Blair has repeatedly expressed his debt to the former Party leader. The first goal Kinnock set himself was to purge the Party of the Militant Tendency, which he achieved with much personal satisfaction.

Kinnock and Militant had a mutual hatred. Militant members were expelled, or left the Party, and in that sense Kinnock won. But Militant was right about one thing: Kinnock, they said, was a charlatan who would ditch his colleagues and his left-wing views at the slightest whiff of power.

It is rumoured that Peter Mandelson is favourite to take over Kinnock's role at the Commission. It would be truly ironic if he became responsible for unearthing the financial corruption at the heart of Europe. No one could be better fitted to carry out such a task. Perhaps Mandelson and Kinnock can be persuaded to switch jobs. Kinnock as New Labour's Machiavelli is a role for which he is well fitted.

#### Tyrants: Who's next?

Blair's view that the invasion of Iraq can be justified on the grounds that it got rid of a brutal tyrant (is there any other sort?) is supported, in part at least, by Clive Soley who knows a thing or two about brutality, having served as a

Probation Officer before he entered Parliament and, for a while in the 1980s, as Labour's spokesman on Northern Ireland.

Speaking in a Parliamentary debate on the United Nations on 11 September, he said: "People sometimes say to me, you intervened in Iraq. Who's next? Why not intervene in all these other countries? The answer is simply that different judgements must be made for different situations". Judgements which no doubt include whether a country like North Korea, which has weapons of mass destruction, would be likely to use them.

But this isn't the test that Soley applies to North Korea. No, for him, "The issue of North Korea is much more difficult. If there were a country that needed regime change, it would be North Korea, but there is a difference between North Korea and Iraq. Unlike Iraq, North Korea is located in an area of stability. It is surrounded by states – most notably, Japan, South Korea and China; there is also Russia – with an interest in maintaining stability".

If the reader is somewhat puzzled by this, let Soley continue. "That indicates how we should ask the UN to restructure itself. If there is a regional interest in restoring stability – there certainly is with North Korea, Zimbabwe and Burma – the UN needs two things. It needs the ability to work with the other regional powers in a way that secures change and stability, and it needs structures that enable it both to put pressure on the countries involved and to offer the carrot of help towards reform. In reality, however, if a regime is so awful that it destabilises the surrounding region, the UN needs the ability to intervene".

According to Soley, North Korea is located in an area of stability. Yet at the same time there is a regional interest in restoring stability. In the case of North Korea, securing regime change and stability requires pressure and the carrot of reform, not

invasion. In the case of Iraq however the regime was so awful it destabilised the surrounding region, and this justified the invasion. It's all so confusing.

If my memory serves me correct, Iraq last invaded another country in 1990. Since then it has concerned itself with purely internal matters; and bears no responsibility for any instability. The country that has destabilised the Middle East region – through its oppression and denial of human rights of the Palestinian people and its flagrant disregard for UN resolutions – is Israel. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is at the heart of the region's problems, but Clive Soley would

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never apply his solution to Israel. Israel is the exception to most rules of Western foreign policy.

Blair, however, is less confused about North Korea. Speaking on 'Today' on 1 October he described it as a deeply oppressive state that spends billions on arms. He could equally have described Saudi Arabia in such terms, but as it buys most of its arms from the UK and USA it would have exposed his hypocrisy. And the interviewer, James Naughtie, failed to remind him.

#### Are You Listening?

Blair has said he will listen to what people have to say about the government's record and its programme of reform for the public services. But will he act according to public opinion? All the signs are that he won't. He's already told the unions that the

reforms in education and health will proceed, regardless of their opposition. He's on safe ground here, for he can argue that Labour was elected on a platform of reform, admittedly without the detail, such as foundation hospitals, but at least the voters had some idea of what to expect.

It is surprising that the unions appear to be putting all their eggs into the one basket of public service reform where Blair has the advantage. It is also tactically naïve, if they want to weaken Blair. A far better tactic, with the prospect of success, would be to focus on Blair's position on Iraq. And Labour's conference presented the best opportunity to expose Blair's (and the government's) case for the invasion.

To their credit, the RMT and T&GWU forced the issue, demanding a debate on an emergency motion, but were denied by the

Conference Arrangements Committee who decide what goes on the Conference agenda. In a desire to placate the unions Party officials agreed that Iraq could be raised during the debate on foreign policy, on the same day that Conference discussed the highly unpopular foundation hospitals.

Allowing delegates to raise the Iraq issue during the debate on foreign policy got Blair off the hook. The foreign policy debate was centred on an uncontroversial policy paper on Iraq and the Party's consultation document 'Britain in the World', a wide-ranging report that Conference had to accept or reject as a whole. And although 'Britain in the World' carries a publication date of May 2003 there is no reference to Iraq anywhere in its 20 pages. Criticism of Blair's stance on Iraq therefore had no relevance to the Party's foreign policy.

## The occupation forces in Iraq

By David Morrisson

Labour MP, Paul Flynn, asked the following question in the House of Commons recently:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what countries have promised to provide troops to the coalition force in Iraq; how many were originally promised; and how many are deployed in Iraq from each country."

He received the following written reply from Foreign Office Minister, Bill Rammell, on 15 September:

"In addition to 11,000 UK and 140,000 US forces, over 30 countries are committed to join the Coalition in Iraq. The following countries are already deployed; Italy (3,000), Netherlands (1,100), Denmark (420), Lithuania (88), Czech Republic (330), Romania (510), Norway (140), Bulgaria (480), Dominican Republic (300), Hungary (300), Mongolia (250), Poland (2,300), Slovakia (120), Spain (1,250), Thailand (26), Ukraine, (1,800), Albania (70), Kazakhstan (25), Uzbekistan (135), Georgia (69), Macedonia (25), Azerbaijan (150), Moldova (42), Estonia (43), Latvia (142), Honduras (366), El Salvador (415), Nicaragua (111), South Korea (675) and the Philippines (55).

"Portugal will send 130 military police and New Zealand 44 engineers (for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance) later this month to assist the UK area. Tonga are also expected to deploy troops and Thailand and Denmark are committed to send further forces at a later date."

These states are nearly all members of the "coalition of the willing", who supported the US/UK attack on Iraq. Despite the best efforts of the US/UK, opponents of the invasion are, broadly speaking, not supplying occupation forces.

The following 49 states are part of the "coalition of the willing", according to the White House website:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Spain, Tonga, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom,

United States, Uzbekistan

A state didn't need to assist the US/UK in any way in their invasion in order to get on the list. All they had to do was say Yes, when the US Government asked if they wanted to be on the list.

*The degree to which these forces are being paid for in cash or in kind by the US (and possibly the UK) is not clear. It was reported on CBS television that the US is paying both expenses and salaries for the Kazak contingent, but that will hardly break the US Treasury since there are only 25 in it.*

Senator Edward Kennedy thinks that the US is paying out a fortune to get foreign troops for Iraq. The Washington Post reported on 19 September:

"Kennedy said a recent report by the Congressional Budget Office showed that only about \$2.5 billion of the \$4 billion being spent monthly on the war can be accounted for by the administration. 'My belief is this money is being shuffled all around to these political leaders in all parts of the world, bribing them to send in troops', he said."

That seems farfetched, but maybe there's some truth in it.

## Jonathan Powell's "bit of a problem"

By David Morrisson

How Prime Minister's right hand man "sexed up" the September dossier

The September dossier contains on page 19 an assessment of what it calls "Saddam's willingness to use chemical and biological weapons".

Until just before the dossier was published, this assessment gave the strong impression that these weapons would only be used for defensive purposes – which amounted to saying that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was no threat to anybody.

But just before the dossier was cleared for publication, the assessment was changed to remove this strong impression and, by so doing, give the impression that Saddam Hussein might use these weapons for aggressive purposes – which implied that Saddam Hussein's Iraq constituted a threat of some kind to the outside world.

This was a fundamental change in the dossier's message about the level of threat from Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It is of much greater importance than the 45-minute claim about which there has been so much controversy. It was essential for making the case for taking military action against Iraq.

The change was made at the instigation of the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell.

Iraq no threat

How this change came about was revealed at the Hutton inquiry on 23 September, when John Scarlett, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), was cross-examined by the BBC's barrister, Andrew Caldecott.

In the 11 September draft of the dossier, prepared like other drafts under Scarlett's direction, the assessment of

the circumstances under which Saddam would use chemical and biological weapons was as follows:

"Intelligence indicates that Saddam is willing to use chemical and biological weapons if he believes his regime is under threat. We also know from intelligence that as part of Iraq's military planning, Saddam is willing to use chemical and biological weapons against an internal uprising by the Shia population. Intelligence indicates that the Iraqi military are able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so." (Hutton reference BBC/29/0019)

While that formulation does not exclude the possibility that Saddam Hussein would use these weapons aggressively, it gives the strong impression that it was much more likely that he would use them as a defensive measure, that is, if his regime was under threat from either external or internal opposition. In other words, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was little or no threat to his neighbours and even less to Britain.

One doesn't need to be possessed of great intelligence (of either kind) to see that this was true in September 2002, and had been true since the end of the Gulf War – since Saddam Hussein knew that an aggressive act of any kind would be used by the US/UK as an excuse to overthrow his regime.

This 11 September draft was circulated to members of the JIC, on which sit the most senior intelligence figures in the land, including the head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove. None of them objected to this assessment that Iraq was no threat to anybody. So it was repeated in the 16 September draft and in the draft of 19 September, without objection from any JIC member at either stage.

Powell's "bit of a problem"

When the official deadline for comment on the dossier passed at 15:00 on 19 September, this assessment was still in place. But 45 minutes later at 15:45, John Scarlett received an e-mail, not from a member of the JIC, but from the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell. The e-mail was copied to Alistair Campbell and David Manning (Blair's foreign policy adviser). Powell wrote:

"I think the statement on page 19 that 'Saddam is prepared to use chemical and biological weapons if he believes his regime is under threat' is a bit of a problem. It backs up the Ö argument that there is no CBW threat and we will only create one if we attack him. I think you should redraft the para. My memory of the intelligence is that he has set up plans to use CBW on Western forces and that these weapons are integrated into his military planning." (CAB/11/0103)

Note that Powell did not challenge the assessment on the grounds that it was objectively wrong, but on the grounds that it was "a bit of a problem", in other words, politically inconvenient for his master. How could Parliament be persuaded to support military action against Iraq if it was no threat to anybody?

Powell was absolutely right: the current assessment, far from making a case for taking military action against Iraq, made a case for leaving Iraq alone. Furthermore, it was incompatible with Blair's assertion in the foreword to the dossier that Iraq was "a current and serious threat to the UK national interest".

This was not the first time Powell had expressed worries that the dossier didn't show that Iraq was a threat. Two days earlier, he had e-mailed Scarlett saying:

"Ö the document does nothing to demonstrate a threat, let alone an immi-



nent threat from Saddam Hussein. In other words, it shows he has the means but it does not demonstrate he has the motive to attack his neighbours, let alone the west." (CAB/11/77)

When he first gave evidence to the inquiry on 26 August, Scarlett denied making any changes to the dossier as a result of receiving this e-mail. However, two days later, he was effectively ordered to make a change, and he did: he made Powell's "bit of a problem" go away, by the simple expedient of removing any suggestion that Saddam Hussein would use chemical and biological weapons only if he was attacked.

(Of course, Powell merely expressed the opinion that the paragraph should be redrafted, but when the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff says he has "a bit of a problem" he wants fixed, which means the Prime Minister has "a bit of a problem" he wants fixed, it is prudent to treat it as an order).

Iraq now a threat

The amended assessment, which appears in the published dossier, is:

"Intelligence indicates that as part of Iraq's military planning Saddam is willing to use chemical and biological weapons, including against his own Shia population. Intelligence indicates that the Iraqi military are able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so."

The Prime Minister assured the House of Commons on 4 June:

"I want to make it clear to the House—I have spoken and conferred with the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee—that there was no attempt, at any time, by any official, or Minister, or member of No. 10 Downing Street staff, to override the intelligence judgments of the Joint Intelligence Committee."

If there was a political opposition worthy of the name in Britain, the Prime Minister would be dead in the water now that it has been revealed that his right hand was responsible for making a major change in the dossier. True, the Prime Minister's words were carefully

chosen on 4 June: no member of the Downing Street staff had attempted "to override the intelligence judgments of the Joint Intelligence Committee", he said, knowing that Scarlett could be relied upon to say that everything in the dossier was based on his intelligence judgement, even if it was inspired by Downing Street staff.

Scarlett wriggles

Cross-examined on 23 September by Caldecott for the BBC about Powell's request for redrafting, Scarlett performed heroically on the Prime Minister's behalf. Caldecott asked him:

"The suggestion there, is it not, is that the dossier should be redrafted to remove an express suggestion that Saddam Hussein is a defensive threat? And leave an implication that, in fact, he is an offensive threat; is that right?"

Scarlett replied:

"No. It is not right. It is not to leave the implication that he is an offensive threat, it is to take away the explicit, as it were, limitation that it is a defensive — not a defensive threat, but it is a defensive sort of point.

"This e-mail did prompt me and the assessment staff to look again at that particular passage. Now, we were acting under the instructions from the JIC to keep what we were writing in line with standing JIC assessments and also with recent intelligence.

"As I recall this particular paragraph — obviously this particular paragraph was under the heading of what recent intelligence was showing. Now, there had been an intelligence report which made that point, I mean a recent intelligence report which is why it was phrased like this.

"When we looked at it again, we also realised two things: first of all, that there was no standing JIC assessment which made it clear whether we were defining Saddam's threat, if you like, as defensive or CW posture as defensive or offensive. More to the point, there was recent reporting, in addition, which was not reflected here, but which was quite clear reporting, which placed his attach-

ment to CBW and the importance that he placed on it very much in the context of his perception of his regional position, his plans to acquire and maintain regional influence and, as one report, and maybe more, put it: dominate his neighbours. In other words, the recent intelligence was more complex than that phrase implied. Bearing those points in mind, we concluded that this was not right, the way this was phrased; and therefore we took that out. That is what I did."

So there you have it: Powell didn't "override" any of the judgements of the JIC. His e-mail merely prompted Scarlett to look again at the existing intelligence — and he found that the existing intelligence justified removing the suggestion that Saddam Hussein would use chemical and biological weapons only as a defensive measure. By sheer coincidence this change made Powell's "bit of a problem" go away: Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a threat after all.

That's what Scarlett is asking us to believe. He's also asking us to believe that the members of the JIC, and their staff in the intelligence agencies, read at least three drafts of the dossier, all of which contained this seriously flawed assessment that Saddam was no threat to anybody, and not one of them noticed it. And but for the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff having a "bit of a problem" with the paragraph, this seriously flawed piece of intelligence would have been communicated to the world as the best assessment of the UK intelligence services.

One doesn't need to be an intelligence professional to see that the final assessment is fairly meaningless, and deliberately so. An assessment worthy of the name would have provided separate judgements for the two distinct circumstances (a) if the Iraqi regime was under threat, and (b) if it wasn't. But the assessment in the September dossier could not deal separately with those cases — because it could not have avoided the conclusion that the chances of chemical and biological weapons being used in case (a) were much greater than in case (b). However, in that event Powell's "bit of a problem" would have remained, and the public might have got the politi-

cally inconvenient impression feared by Powell that "there is no CBW threat and we will only create one if we attack him".

CIA assessment

A couple of weeks after the September dossier was published, when the US Congress was debating a resolution to empower the President to take military action against Iraq, the CIA provided it with an assessment of the threat posed by Iraq's chemical and biological weapons. This was given in a letter dated 7 October 2002 to Senator Bob Graham, Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee (which is publicly available in the Congressional record).

The letter declassified a small portion of CIA evidence to Graham's committee at a closed session on 2 October. This reads as follows:

**Senator Levin:** . . . If (Saddam) didn't feel threatened, did not feel threatened [sic], is it likely that he would initiate an attack using a weapon of mass destruction?

**Senior Intelligence Witness:** . . . My judgment would be that the probability of him initiating an attack—let me put a time frame on it—in the foreseeable future, given the conditions we understand now, the likelihood I think would be low.

**Senator Levin:** Now if he did initiate an attack you've . . . indicated he would probably attempt clandestine attacks against us . . . But what about his use of weapons of mass destruction? If we initiate an attack and he thought he was in extremis or otherwise, what's the likelihood in response to our attack that he would use chemical or biological weapons?

**Senior Intelligence Witness:** Pretty high, in my view.

The British Government's dossier should have contained something similar on "Saddam's willingness to use chemical and biological weapons". Originally, it did. But since that gave the impression that there was no threat from these weapons, the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff had it excised.

## Demonstration Against Occupation of Iraq

By John Clayden

London September 27th

Demonstrations are primarily shows of strength, as most people except the anarchists and some far-left groups seem to realise. As far as this one went the show was sufficient, and regardless what the disputed attendance was, it was—much too healthy for the warmongers to say the movement is in decline so naturally they ignored it.

The two Georges (Monbiot and Galloway) spoke in Trafalgar Square, which with its newly completed pedestrian improvements makes it a charming venue for such events, and they injected a much welcome note of realism by pointing out that the United Nations must not be left to pick up the pieces in Iraq as that would only encourage them to more adventures elsewhere. And that the current utopian fantasies about it are misconceived because the power of the UNO has essentially always resided in the Security Council permanent member's veto and this is not a world democratic thing. (Contrary to what Tony Benn seems to think or hope or whatever.)

And contrary also to the views of a Communist Worker's Party of Iraq mem-

ber who told me that a secular democracy under the UN was their only hope of surviving religious political persecution. They want to build a free Trade Union movement and they have been organising unemployed protests through The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq. The Secretary Qasim Hadi and 4 others have been arrested. (Further information from Dashti Jamal 07734704742 d.jamal@ukonline.co.)

Asked wasn't Iraq a British construction and what if the Kurds and Shia had different democratic agendas — he thought Iraq was like the Soviet Union a multi national entity and essentially urban. But isn't it possible the US and Britain, and France and Germany for that matter, only insist upon holding Iraq together, regardless of any democratic wishes — for their own geopolitical reasons? (Otherwise wouldn't they have been Yugoslavianised.)

There wasn't time to elaborate the point that Northern Ireland has had a powerful trade union movement for generations and is still ruled undemocratically. But invited him to discuss further at our meetings on the first Wednesday of the month in the Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd.

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# The Intelligence and Security Committee Report Dossier not justified by intelligence

By David Morrisson

The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) is not a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which reports to the House of Commons. It is a Committee appointed by the Prime Minister, which reports to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister has the legal authority to decide whether or not its reports are published and to censor them at will prior to publication.

The members of the ISC are normally senior MPs, often ex-ministers. It is currently chaired by Labour ex-minister, Ann Taylor, and has four other Labour members (one a Lord), two Conservatives and one Liberal Democrat.

On 11 September, the Prime Minister published in full the ISC report *Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction – Intelligence and Assessments*. Paragraph 11 says:

*"The purpose of this Report is to examine whether the available intelligence, which informed the decision to invade Iraq, was adequate and properly assessed and whether it was accurately reflected in Government publications. This Report does not judge whether the decision to invade Iraq was correct."*

## ISC whitewash?

One might have thought that the ISC's report would be a whitewash, but, unlike the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report, it wasn't. It is very revealing about the gaps and uncertainties in the intelligence about Iraq's proscribed weapons, and the degree to which these gaps and uncertainties were glossed over in the September dossier to paint a much more coherent and threatening picture than was justified by intelligence.

Specifically, the report was critical of the way the dossier presented:

(a) the 45-minute claim – the dossier

didn't say it referred to (unknown) battlefield weapons and, in any case, it was of no significance;

(b) the claim that Iraq continued to produce chemical and biological weapons was based on very flimsy evidence – the intelligence services hadn't a clue as to what agents, if any, had been produced and in what quantities, and what quantities had been put into weapons: they just thought Iraq was producing something;

(c) the almost non-existent strategic threat from Iraq: the dossier failed to point out that the most likely use of chemical and biological agents was in battlefield weapons, rather than in strategic weapons that could hit Cyprus, or even London – at most Iraq had 20 al Hussein missiles which could hit Cyprus, but this was by no means certain (UN inspectors merely regarded them as unaccounted for) and, if they did exist, it was doubtful if they were functional;

A dossier which out of care for the intelligence evidence contained these doubts would never have been published – because it would have diminished the case for military action.

John Scarlett, the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), insisted to the ISC, and to the Hutton inquiry, that the dossier was all his own work, and that Downing Street did not interfere (which the ISC accepts in paragraph 108 of their report). So the ISC criticism falls on him rather than his political master.

However, his political master cannot have been pleased that the ISC made public pre-war intelligence assessments that military action in Iraq would heighten the threat from al-Qaida and related groups, assessments which he kept from Parliament in the run up to war.

He could, of course, have refused to publish the report, or published it with redactions, but that would have aroused more controversy than publishing it intact.

## 45-minute claim

*The dossier claimed that Iraq was "able to deploy chemical or biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so".*

It wasn't until the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), John Scarlett, gave evidence to the Hutton inquiry on 26 August that there was public confirmation that the claim referred to battlefield weapons, and not to strategic weapons capable of hitting, say, Cyprus.

The ISC report reveals (paragraph 49) that the claim was based on an MI6 report dated 30 August 2002, which said that on average it took 20 minutes to move chemical and biological munitions into place for attack (the maximum response time was 45 minutes). This information allegedly came from an Iraqi military officer, who was in a position to know, but MI6 received it through a third party. That was the sum total of the information: as the ISC report says:

*"The JIC did not know precisely which munitions could be deployed from where to where" (paragraph 57)*

(Furthermore, unbelievably, the ISC discovered that an error crept in during the incorporation of the MI6 report into a formal JIC assessment).

On this slim foundation the 45-minute claim was included in the dossier not once, but four times, and ended up in countless newspaper headlines on 24/25 September 2002. Of this, the ISC said:

*"The dossier was for public consumption and not for experienced readers of intelligence material. The 45 minutes claim, included four times,*

*was always likely to attract attention because it was arresting detail that the public had not seen before. As the 45 minutes claim was new to its readers, the context of the intelligence and any assessment needed to be explained. The fact that it was assessed to refer to battlefield chemical and biological munitions and their movement on the battlefield, not to any other form of chemical or biological attack, should have been highlighted in the dossier. The omission of the context and assessment allowed speculation as to its exact meaning. This was unhelpful to an understanding of this issue." (ibid, paragraph 112)*

And, of course, when the press reported the claim as applying to strategic rather than battlefield weapons, Downing Street made no effort to get it corrected (see Annex A below).

The 45-minute claim was excellent for making headlines implying an imminent threat, but objectively it amounted to very little. As the ISC said:

*"That the Iraqis could use chemical or biological battlefield weapons rapidly had already been established in previous conflicts and the reference to the 20–45 minutes in the JIC Assessment added nothing fundamentally new to the UK's assessment of the Iraqi battlefield capability." (paragraph 56)*

## CBW production

The ISC report also criticised the bald claim in Blair's foreword that "Saddam has continued to produce chemical and biological weapons" (paragraph 110). This could give the impression that "Saddam was actively producing both chemical and biological weapons and significant amounts of agents", the report said. Especially, when Government ministers are shouting it from the rooftops, they might have added.

In fact, according to the ISC, the JIC did not know what agents had been produced and in what quantities, and what quantities, if any, had been put into weapons (in paragraph 58, the report says that "there was no evidence of munitions being filled with chemical agents since the first Gulf Conflict"). The JIC "had merely assessed, based on intelligence, that production of some kind had taken place.

That, plus even more doubtful intelligence on the revival of Iraq's nuclear programme, was the flimsy basis for Blair's unequivocal assertion to the House of Commons on 24 September 2002 that:

*"[Saddam Hussein's] chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programme is not an historic left-over from 1998. The inspectors are not needed to clean up the old remains. His weapons of mass destruction programme is active, detailed and growing. The policy of containment is not working. The weapons of mass destruction programme is not shut down; it is up and running now."*

The ISC concluded, rather mildly:

*"We believe that this uncertainty should have been highlighted to give a balanced view of Saddam's chemical and biological capacity."*

## Not strategic weapons

The ISC report (paragraph 111) also criticised the dossier for not making it clear that the most likely chemical and biological munitions to be used against Western forces were battlefield weapons rather than strategic weapons, and that although there was a possibility that Cyprus could be hit, there was none at all that London could be hit.

The report reveals (paragraph 83) that the first draft of Blair's foreword made it clear that London could not be hit (at least not with a nuclear weapon). It contained the sentence:

*"The case I make is not that Saddam could launch a nuclear attack on London or another part of the UK (He could not)."*

That sentence did not appear in the published dossier. The ISC concludes:

*"It was unfortunate that this point was removed from the published version of the foreword and not highlighted elsewhere."*

As for hitting Cyprus, Iraq had at most 20 al Hussein missiles capable of doing that. This was the number unaccounted for by UN inspectors. But, if they existed at all, they had been hidden away since 1991, and therefore there was a large question mark over their

operability.

Given the US/UK domination of the skies over Iraq, there was no possibility of munitions of any kind being delivered from the air. Nowhere, in the dossier does it make that clear either.

## Risk from al-Qaida et al

Paragraphs 125 to 127 of the ISC report make interesting reading:

"125. The 27 November 2002 intelligence update reported that although there was no intelligence to indicate that Iraq had considered using chemical and biological agents in terrorist attacks, it could not rule out the possibility.

126. In their assessment *International Terrorism: War with Iraq*, dated 10 February 2003, the JIC reported that there was no intelligence that Iraq had provided CB materials to al-Qaida or of Iraqi intentions to conduct CB terrorist attacks using Iraqi intelligence officials or their agents. However, it judged that in the event of imminent regime collapse there would be a risk of transfer of such material, whether or not as a deliberate Iraqi regime policy. The JIC assessed that al-Qaida and associated groups continued to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests, and that threat would be heightened by military action against Iraq.

"127. The JIC assessed that any collapse of the Iraqi regime would increase the risk of chemical and biological warfare technology or agents finding their way into the hands of terrorists, not necessarily al-Qaida."

It is understandable that Blair kept those intelligence assessments from Parliament. The risk of chemical and biological weapons finding their way from Saddam Hussein to "terrorists" was a major part of his argument for war by 18 March:

*"The key today is stability and order. The threat is chaos and disorder—and there are two begetters of chaos: tyrannical regimes with weapons of mass destruction and extreme terrorist groups who profess a perverted and false view of Islam.*

*"Those two threats have, of course, different motives and different*



origins, but they share one basic common view: they detest the freedom, democracy and tolerance that are the hallmarks of our way of life. At the moment, I accept fully that the association between the two is loose—but it is hardening. The possibility of the two coming together—of terrorist groups in possession of weapons of mass destruction or even of a so-called dirty radiological bomb—is now, in my judgment, a real and present danger to Britain and its national security."

The impact of that argument would have been rather blunted if he had revealed to Parliament that the official intelligence assessment was that military action against Iraq would increase that possibility.

The ISC say (paragraph 128) they discussed this risk with Blair, who said that he had exercised his judgment and history will judge him on that. That is, of course, beside the point: for better or worse, he had devolved the decision on military action to Parliament, and therefore he was under an obligation to tell Parliament all the intelligence assessments relevant to the decision, not just the ones that bolstered his case.

#### Annex A Knowing it to be wrong: why no correction?

Despite knowing it to be wrong, the Government made no effort to correct the widespread interpretation of the 45-minute claim in the press on 24/25 September 2002 as applying to missiles with which Iraq could hit Cyprus. This was in stark contrast to the huge amount of time and energy applied in attempting to correct the alleged misreporting of Andrew Gilligan.

At the Hutton inquiry, the BBC were keen to highlight the fact that the Government complained about misreporting when it suited them, not out of a devotion to informing the public accurately. Geoff Hoon was cross-examined by Andrew Caldicott for the BBC on 20 September. The portion concerned with this issue is reproduced below.

Hoon admitted that he knew at the time that the claim referred to battlefield

weapons, but that neither he, nor anybody else in the Government, had made any effort to correct press reports that it referred to missiles. He said:

*"I was not aware of whether any consideration was given to such a correction. All that I do know from my experience is that, generally speaking, newspapers are resistant to corrections. That judgment may have been made by others as well."*

Why Hoon felt obliged to make a fool of himself by uttering this nonsense, and much more on the same lines, is a mystery. It was definitely the time for him to pass the buck to Downing Street since they, and not the MoD, were responsible for the dossier.

Caldicott suggested that the reason why a correction wasn't issued was:

*"It would have been politically highly embarrassing because it would have revealed the dossier as published was at least highly capable of being misleading."*

True, it would. But my guess is that the real reason is much simpler: it is that Downing Street fed them the line in the first place. The fact that so many papers carried it is evidence for this.

(The line that Brits in Cyprus could be annihilated by Saddam within 45 minutes of him deciding to do so has Alistair Campbell's prints all over it. In an e-mail to Campbell on 19 September 2002 (CAB/11/0103), Blair's Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell, asked what do we want the headline in the Standard on the day of publication, though unfortunately there is no public record of Campbell's reply. Asked at the Hutton inquiry on 19 August if he had any hand in the Standard headline "45 Minutes From Attack", Campbell said, modestly, that he didn't write the headlines for the Standard.)

#### Scarlett wriggles

Caldicott also asked Scarlett (on 23 September) if he had been concerned about press misinterpretation of the 45-minute claim. Scarlett wriggled uncomfortably, saying first that it only went on for a couple of days in a few newspapers, then that battlefield weapons killed a lot of people too and he ended by saying

that it wasn't his job to correct press misrepresentation.

In the course of suggesting that battlefield weapons were lethal too, he cited the Iran/Iraq war, where, he said, 20,000 Iranians were killed or wounded by battlefield chemical weapons. Since Iran suffered well over half a million casualties in total in that war, this means that over 95% of them were caused by high explosive, which unlike chemical weapons are not classified as "weapons of mass destruction". You can see the sense of it, can't you?

#### Jones the metal

Dr Brian Jones gave evidence to the Hutton Inquiry on 3 September. He is a scientist, by training a metallurgist. At the time the dossier was drawn up last year, he was a branch head in the Defence Intelligence Staff in the MoD, but he has since retired from the civil service. He held that position since 1996, when analysis activities on chemical, biological and nuclear weapons were drawn together in one branch. He appeared before the inquiry because two people in his branch had complained in writing about aspects of the dossier at the time of its preparation.

Prompted by James Dingemans for the inquiry and by Lord Hutton himself, he made interesting remarks on what weapons could reasonably be termed "weapons of mass destruction". It is not clear why the inquiry pursued this line, since it has no relevance to the death of Dr Kelly, but it did.

Here is what Dr Jones was prompted to say:

*"My personal opinion is that almost all — almost all — nuclear weapons truly fit this concept of being a weapon of mass destruction, that some biological weapons are perhaps reasonably described in that way because they could be used to produce very large numbers of casualties on the same sort of scale perhaps even as nuclear weapons, but there are many biological weapons that struggle to fit into that. Some are incapacitants for example rather than lethal."*

*"I think chemical weapons almost [all] struggle to fit into that category. There are certain agents and*

*certain scenarios where I would think that chemical weapons truly are describable as weapons of mass destruction. I think the sort of scenarios where I think that chemical weapons might be described as a weapon of mass destruction are where they might be used in enclosed spaces."*

*"An example might be the somewhat unsuccessful attempt to use them in that way by Aum Shinri-kyo on the Tokyo underground in the mid 1990s, where if large amounts of the nerve agent they tried to use had entered the atmosphere*

*then many more people would have died. But it is rather more difficult to think of them in those terms really on the battlefield perhaps where to produce large numbers of casualties you need very large amounts of material."*

Asked if he would term a battlefield chemical shell as a weapon of mass destruction, he said:

*"No, I think personally I would struggle to make that particular scenario*

*really fit into an equivalence of them facing a nuclear blast."*

Such a balanced perspective on "weapons of mass destruction" was noticeable by its absence in the September dossier, and in the Government's case for military action against Iraq in general. Understandably so, since you could hardly make Iraq out to be a threat by saying that it had first World War weapons, which had merely been relabelled "weapons of mass destruction".

#### Hutton Inquiry, 20 September 2003 Extract from the cross-examination of Geoff Hoon by Andrew Caldicott for the BBC

Q. So you knew, did you, that the munitions referred to were only battlefield munitions?

A. I was certainly aware that that was one suggestion, yes.

Q. Was there any other suggestion that they were not battlefield munitions but strategic munitions?

A. I recall asking what kind of weapons would be deployable within 45 minutes; and the answer is the answer that I have just given to you.

Q. Which was shells, battlefield mortars, tactical weapons of that kind?

A. Yes.

Q. Would your Department be responsible for correcting any false impression given by the press on an issue of this importance?

A. I think on an issue of this importance it would not simply have been the Ministry of Defence that was solely responsible. There would have been an effort across Government.

Q. Are you aware that on 25th September a number of newspapers had banner headlines suggesting that this related to strategic missiles or bombs?

A. I can recall, yes.

Q. Why was no corrective statement issued for the benefit of the public in relation to those media reports? A. I do not know. Q. It must have been considered by someone, must it not?

A. I have spent many years trying to persuade newspapers and journalists to correct their stories. I have to say it is an extraordinarily time consuming and generally frustrating process.

Q. I am sorry, are you saying that the press would not report a corrective statement that the dossier was meant to refer, in this context, to battlefield munitions and not to strategic weapons?

A. What I am suggesting is that I was not aware of whether any consideration was given to such a correction. All that I do know from my experience is that, generally speaking, newspapers are resistant to corrections. That judgment may have been made by others as well.

Q. But, Mr Hoon, you must have been horrified that the dossier had been misrepresented in this way; it was a complete distortion of what it actually was intended to convey, was it not?

A. Well, I was not horrified. I recognised that journalists occasionally write things that are more dramatic than the material upon which it is based.

Q. Can we forget journalists for the moment and concentrate on the members of the public who are reading it? Will they not be entitled to be given the true picture of the intelligence, not a vastly inflated one?

A. I think that is a question you would have to put to the journalists and the editors responsible.

Q. But you had the means to correct it, not them. They could not correct it until they were told, could they?

A. Well, as I say, my experience of trying to persuade newspapers to correct false impressions is one that is not full of success. Q. Do you accept that on this topic at least you had an absolute duty to try to correct it?

A. No, I do not.

Q. Do you accept that you had any duty to correct it?

A. Well, I apologise for repeating the same answer, but you are putting the question in another way. I have tried on many, many occasions to persuade journalists and newspapers to correct stories. They do not like to do so.

Q. Can I suggest to you a reason why this was not done? It would have been politically highly embarrassing because it would have revealed the dossier as published was at least highly capable of being misleading.

A. Well, I do not accept that.

Q. So your suggestion is that this was a disgraceful exaggeration by the press of what was clear in the dossier as a reference to battlefield munitions?

A. I am certainly suggesting that it was an exaggeration, but it is not unusual for newspapers to exaggerate.

Q. Can you tell me, if you happen to have it to hand, where in the dossier it is made clear that the CBW weapons which were the subject of the 45 minute claim were only battlefield munitions?

A. Well, I do not have it to hand; and I do not know whether it was made clear.



# New Labour: The Radish Road

by Gwydion M. Williams

The present Labour leadership are in power because they followed the 'Radish Road': red outside, white inside. They were leftists when this was the path to office, helping to defeat the authentic moderates of the Social Democrats, who were eventually absorbed by the ineffective and small-minded Liberals. The 'radishes' seemed very red back then, they showed their real characters later on. New Labour has capitulated to New Right ideas in the way the Social Democrats never did, become enthusiasts at a time when the Tories were feeling doubts.

Lots of people have noticed that New Labour have all along been Control Freaks, more interested in being in charge than in getting the job done well. This helped them flourish under a shoddy ideology and in incoherent times. Thus when there was every chance for a peaceful world in the 1990s, Blair showed himself more interested in pursuing a vendetta against Saddam Hussein. Tough on peace, tough on the cause of peace.

What happened in the 1960s and 1970s was a breaking-down of old social moralities, plus an incoherent, incomplete and unfinished attempt to build new ones. In the days of Harold Wilson's leadership, Incomes Policy was an attempt to extend socialisation. So was Barbara Castle's *In Place Of Strife*, the attempt to extending law into trade union matters. It could and should have been the next stage of socialism. But most of the left was 100% against *In Place Of Strife*—some because they thought it wouldn't work, but more because they feared it would succeed. For all of the anti-Stalin rhetoric, they didn't want to let workers run their own lives without ideological direction and without a repudiation of the evils of capitalism.

The left's fear of 'corporatism' and a belief that strife would make a better world paved the way for Thatcherism and the New Right, much more at home in a world of endless strife. But it wasn't just a matter of bad ideology, what was happening at the same time was the collapse of sexual and family norms that had been established by the first farmers back in the Neolithic. The fact that there wasn't much more family property to be passed on to legitimate offspring changed the basis of human life. Suddenly the bulk of the population were free wage workers, with private property as a useful extra rather than a necessity.

The freeing of labour from land or small workshops permitted and encouraged a sexual revolution that went far beyond the once-radical notions of the 1917 Bolsheviks. The last quarter of

the 20th century has seen socialist ideas about sex and family become the mainstream, even as there were setbacks on the economic front. It was maybe a bit unlikely that both transitions could happen at the same time and in the same society: both individual anarchic choice on sexual matters and an advance of social control for socialist ends.

Unlikely is not quite the same as impossible. Feasible left-wing economic and political options did exist in the 1960s and 1970s. As working class and middle class came together into a merged 'working mainstream', there was some interest in Workers Control and greater social consensus. But many of the same people who are now New Labour were then against a modest advance that fell short of overthrowing Capitalism.

It was bad tactics that caused defeat, plus the deep social transitions that absorbed a lot of the radical energies that the society contained. But the major changes have now happened, and people are discovering that individual anarchic choice on sexual matters creates a host of new difficulties. We should stop pretending that 'stable relationships' can work in the same way as traditional family structures. Recognise, in fact, that the state has to do a great deal more, and that it will cost money. You no longer have half of the human race centred on children, and the unpaid labour of women in stable family structures has to be replaced somehow.

We've overdosed on freedom, and need to ease up a little. I'm not looking for a return to Victorian values (which were lousy values in a cruel and often very damaging social structure). Nor to 1950s morality, definitely not. John Major's feeble efforts at restoring tradition were squelched easily enough, and it was only much later that we found out that it was 'Back To Basics, Front To Edwina Currie'. We need not go back to past certainties, and probably could not anyway. But we must establish new limits on freedom, in line with what we're now willing to enforce. And such a progressive rebuilding of society is only thinkable once you have dropped the liberal-enlightenment notion that people will spontaneously fall into a particular pattern, become a contented herd of The Individual where everyone thinks the same thing without coercion.

Actual living people are not inclined to be a contented herd of The Individual, nor should they be asked to. We must keep alive a 'right to be wrong', the ability for people to be different from the perfect modern model of a modern Individualist. But a 'right to be wrong' also means that some

will go too far, damage others as well as themselves, so some coercion is necessary. A society can only operate by a series of compromises between people with different viewpoints. There's no need to say that these are equally legitimate: just that they have a right to exist as part of the richness of life. (Richness of life is quite different from material wealth, of course, and material wealth is also quite different from money. Standardised Individualism generates wealth but impoverishes life and can leave people prosperous but deeply unhappy.)

The one point of continuity among the 'Radishes' has been an inability to distinguish between compromise and betrayal. This attitude was publicised by Trotskyism, but it went wider than Trotskyites. Trotsky himself had been unscrupulously ingenious when in power, though you would never guess it from his writings. But after Lenin died, Trotsky must have decided that he didn't have it in him to successfully manage a complex society in a complex world. He backed away from power and became more concerned with posturing in the mirror of history than actually producing positive results. And in this respect, his followers have been wonderfully loyal to him. In all of its decades of existence and with all of the talented people it has absorbed, what has Trotskyism actually achieved?

My own past is Maoist rather than Trotskyist, and I think that helps. The concept of 'radishes' is one I've borrowed from Maoism, and I make no apology for it. Maoism is dead now, but it was an alternative path out of 1950s politics, something that could have happened if some local struggles had done better—the Maoists of South Arabia, for instance, who did successfully kick the British out of Aden and hastened the end of colonialism. It was the existence of radicals who could have created an alternative 21st century that got the sex-drugs-pop radicals cherished as a cosy alternative to serious youth-rebellion. And Mao's view of his 'Capitalist-Road' rivals was vindicated by events, except that they have successfully continued the main aim of a strong and self-sufficient China, not so far capitulating to New Right ignorance.

If the highly talented individuals who constituted the various Trotskyist sects had been Maoist instead, history would have gone differently. Only Maoists ever came close to actual revolution, in South Arabia and Peru and a continuing rebellion in Nepal, which has successfully changed the old order even if it may never actually win. Meanwhile Trotskyism remains a considerable hold-out, but can only criticise the present from the viewpoint of the past. It resists new ideas, and new ideas are essential to make sense of events since the 1960s.

Trotskyism is however just one of whole school of don't-take-yes-for-an-answer ideologies

## Book Review

# Seán Moylan: In His Own Words

By Seán McGouran

*Seán Moylan: In His Own Words*  
*His Memoir of the Irish War of Independence, with a selection of speeches and poems*

Aubane Historical Society

In his Epilogue to Seán Moylan's text Brendan Clifford points out that sniping at the the War of Independence of 1918-1922 on the grounds of democratic invalidity is only functional if the fact of the Sinn Féin victory in the 1918 General Election is ignored. Moylan refers to the Sinn Féin victory almost in passing in his text because he realised that the expressed will of the Irish people in the first near-democratic election in the history of the UK state would be ignored by the men who ran the British Empire. This is despite the fact that they had, in Clifford's word, "deafened" the world with a hullabaloo about the 'rights of small nations' and 'democracy' during the Great War — after which they grabbed large parts of the Arab lands formerly part of the Ottoman empires. The Epilogue also points out that Parliament had unilaterally extended its own life past December 1915 (when there should have been a General Election) to December 1918. And besides that 'tweaking' of democracy, there was also the fact that the only real difference between 'constitutionalist' Home Rulers and Republicans was that the latter refused to accept the essential principle of the British Empire: might is right. Dáil Éireann and Oglagh na hÉireann / Irish Volunteers (the IRA or 'Volunteer Movement' as Moylan refers to it) had no option but to fight the British forces (the militarised police, the Royal Irish Constabulary, the RIC 'Auxiliaries' i.e. the 'Black and Tans', - this formation was recruited in two different drives and Moylan, like many other contemporary writers treats them sometimes as different formations - and the regular British Army.) Moylan while acknowledging the atrocities of the Black and Tans and the misbehaviour of the RIC writes that most of the excessive violence he witnessed in his own area (North Cork: for which he was MP / TD - Teachta Dála, as well as military commander) was engaged in by the regular British Army.

Seán Moylan's Memoir was a contribution to the Bureau of Military History set up in 1947, to collate participants' accounts of

their part in the War of Independence. It was submitted on May 6th 1953 (it is described as a Statement, but it was clearly composed by Moylan, a busy man who was the Minister for Education). Nearly two thousand persons, from every part of Ireland, and from as far afield as Argentina and India, submitted material to the Bureau, including no less than sixteen members of James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army, set up in 1913 as a defensive force for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union against the police (the RIC and DMP - Dublin Metropolitan Police) and the mobs mobilised by the Home Rule bosses, and the AOH (Ancient Order of Hibernians — a relatively new group attached to the main body of 'constitutionalist' Nationalism, something of a sectarian mirror-image of the Orange Order and the Ulster Unionists).

Moylan tells the tale of the establishment of a viable Irish State out of the shambles the British made of their own administration. The latter had all the force of a victorious empire behind it as well as centuries of oppression and the monopoly of power in Ireland — but when the people made up their minds that they were going to have a Republic they solidarised with those who were prepared to make the Republic a reality. Many of the people mentioned in Moylan's text were risking their livelihoods and lives, for collecting information, hiding equipment, or simply feeding Volunteers, especially the Active Service Units / 'Flying Columns'. As the war went on the behaviour of the British forces became more and more brutal — IRA Volunteers taken prisoner expected, as a matter of course, to be badly beaten and held in miserable conditions.

Moylan's text makes it clear that the War of Independence was a 'bottom-up' affair. Weapons were purchased with money gathered together by the Volunteers and to a great extent by Sinn Féin. He does no disguise his irritation with 'GHQ' — General Headquarters in Dublin which often made absurd demands of the people on the ground. Nor does he claim that the Volunteers were all angels - not that they mirrored the behaviour of the Black and Tans or the British Army, but that morale (and personnel) ebbed and flowed with the tide of war. Some men who had taken no actual part in the War, during the period of the ceasefire,

behaved like an invading army and not like a people's force. He also strenuously objected to the terms of the 'Treaty' forced on the Irish Republic's representatives in the London negotiations (they were threatened with 'immediate and terrible' war, and they were given to understand that such a war would be on the model of the Boer War. That meant, in its guerrilla phase, Concentration Camps for the non-combatants (of any age or infirmity — there had been a staggering percentage of deaths in a relatively short time), and 'blockhouses', meaning fortresses, to control the land (and the people). The British had also scorched the earth in South Africa, and systematically destroyed the Boer (meaning 'farmer' or 'peasant') homesteads — and appeared to be puzzled as to why the Boers hated them, and their Empire!

The headings in this text seem to indicate a rather staccato progression, a random sample: *Finances / Bands / Rockchapel / Kiskeam / Kanturk*, the latter three being villages or townlands in North Cork, but the narrative is clear, but not smooth. Seán Moylan unselfconsciously quotes Shakespeare, Dickens, Walter Scott and the great Gaelic poet Eoghan Ruidh Ó Súilleabháin — he also seem to have read his Russians. The scene-setting opening section reads like Turgenev (or the opening passages of Trotsky's *My Life*, which took its line from such works, though presumably the resemblance is purely accidental, Moylan rejects Marxism almost out of hand in the course of this Memoir), though he was clearly politically oriented towards Labour, though -usefully for the urban and rural working class, from within Éamon De Valera's Fianna Fáil party.

The quality of the writing of this book, and the fact that it is the story of a people which was simply not going to be intimidated out of its right to set up a Republic, rather than be retained within the British Empire makes it essential reading for everyone living under the New World Order.

Readers of *Labour and Trade Union Review* can purchase this important book at the special rate of £8.00 (inc. p&p).

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# The Pension Credit Means-testing gone mad

By David Morrisson

Until recently, around 2.5 million out of Britain's 11 million pensioners were eligible for means-tested benefit, which raised their basic state pension to the Income Support level. But, on 1 October, with the introduction of the Pension Credit, this figure increased to around 50% of the total, that is, well over 5 million, and this is set to rise further if, as expected, the gap between the basic pension and the Income Support level increases.

The Pension Credit is the latest attempt by Gordon Brown to patch up a pension system, which is in need of a drastic overhaul. The fundamental problem is that it is possible for employees to retire after a full working life (44 years for a man, 39 for a woman) with state pension entitlements well below the Income Support level. And if the basic pension continues to rise in line with prices while Income Support rises with earnings, this gap will increase as the years go by.

## Earnings link

In the 1970s, under the last Old Labour Government, Barbara Castle established for the first time a formula for the annual uprating of the basic pension: it was to be increased every year in line with prices or average earnings, whichever was the greater (historically, this has nearly always been average earnings). But when the Thatcher Government came to power in 1979, she abolished the link with earnings, and the basic pension was raised annually in line with prices under the Conservatives.

When New Labour came to power in 1997, instead of restoring the link with earnings, Gordon Brown determined to focus assistance on the poorest pensioners through the Income Support system, which for pensioners was renamed the Minimum Income Guarantee

(MIG). Since 1997, he has raised Income Support levels for pensioners dramatically, from under £70 a week for a single person in 1997 to around a £100 a week now, by raising the pensioner premiums, that is, the extra Income Support paid at age 60.

Income Support levels for pensioners have been rising in line with earnings or better and the Chancellor has promised that this will continue until the end of the current Parliament. On the other hand, the basic pension has risen in line with prices, apart from special increases before the 2001 election. As a consequence of this the gap between the basic pension for a single person who has had a full working life has risen dramatically, and is now over £20 a week for a single person.

## Good strategy?

On the face of it, concentrating help on the poorest pensioners sounds like a good strategy. But it necessarily involves means-testing, and as with all means-tested benefits take-up is much less than 100%. Out of the 11 million pensioners in the UK today, approximately 1.7 million receive Income Support, but it is estimated that about 670,000 more are entitled to Income Support but do not apply.

Also, like all means-tested benefits, Income Support produces perverse incentives. Pensioners with modest savings or additional pensions may be excluded from Income Support altogether (assuming they declare them), or may have their Income Support entitlement reduced compared with a pensioner with no savings or additional pension. This naturally causes resentment among pensioners with modest savings or additional pensions, since it penalises their past prudence.

Before the introduction of the Pension Credit, small additional pensions, which didn't bridge the gap between the basic state pension and the MIG could be literally worthless, and even if they did bridge the gap they are worth much less than their face value. So, why should people put money into an additional pension if the end result after many years of contributing is either no extra income, or very little extra income, on retirement above the MIG?

Today, as we have said, the difference between a full basic pension and the MIG for a single pensioner is over £20 a week. For nearly a million people who haven't worked a full working life and therefore do not receive a full basic pension, the gap is larger. What is more, the gap is scheduled to grow at least until the end of this Parliament – because the basic pension will rise in line with prices, whereas the MIG will rise in line with earnings.

If uprating continues to be done on these bases, the gap will continue to grow (so that by 2040 the basic pension will be less than half the MIG). Consequently, individuals will need larger and larger additional pensions to bridge it – and remember that even if an additional pension is sufficient to bridge it on retirement, 20 years later the gap will have grown and that may no longer be the case.

## Rely on MIG

Against this background, the best advice to people with below average earnings would seem to be: aim to rely on the MIG on retirement, don't bother saving (or if you do, hide your savings or dispose of them on retirement) and don't bother taking out a private pension either.

The latter has got its own special

uncertainties, the benefit on retirement being dependent on stock market performance over many years, and the rate of interest at the time of retirement. These uncertainties have become all too evident as world stock markets have plummeted. Small wonder then that the Chancellor's attempt to persuade lower paid workers to invest in his new Stakeholder private pension has been a failure.

Nothing daunted, the Chancellor has now applied another twist – the Pension Credit – to an already complicated system in an attempt to moderate the penalty paid by pensioners with modest savings or a modest additional pension, and by so doing encourage today's earners to save. This is an extraordinarily complicated benefit, the introduction of which will result in a massive extension of means-testing for pensioners.

It is essentially the MIG plus a credit of 60p in the £1 on income, other than income from the basic pension, up to a certain, rather low, limit. The idea is to reward pensioners a little for having the foresight to save or take out an additional pension (but it also applies to any SERPS income, even though SERPS wasn't a voluntary option). They will get the MIG plus a bit (maximum £13.80), whereas pensioners with no savings and no additional pension will just get the MIG.

It is inconceivable that this fiendishly complicated system will lessen the disincentive to saving that is inherent in using the Income Support system to top up the basic pension. For any incentive to be effective, it has to be understood. It will be hard enough to explain to today's pensioners how it will affect them, let alone trying to convince someone who is 20 years from retirement that its introduction is going to make it worthwhile to save or pay into a private pension for the next 20 years. It's a fair bet that the Pension Credit won't even be around in 20 years time.

People on low incomes know that they their basic pension will be topped up with Income Support when they retire. They also know that having savings

or another pension merely reduces the amount of Income Support they can get. There is therefore little incentive to save or take out a private pension, even if they have sufficient disposable income to do so. The introduction of the Pension Credit will not change that.

## Straightforward alternative

There is a straightforward alternative to this complex morass, which would encourage people to save for their retirement. The fundamental principle of it is that people retiring after a full working life have a state pension at or above the MIG, and that this pension be earnings related, so that pensioner incomes keep pace with the earnings in the rest of the society.

This would mean that if people choose to save by whatever means during their working lives, they would get the full benefit of their savings in retirement. The uncertainty inherent in taking out private pension would remain, but at least an individual who chose to take out a private pension would get to keep all of it on retirement. Likewise, for any other form of savings. And there would be no need for the monstrously complicated Pension Credit.

It may even be possible to do away with the requirement that people must buy an annuity with their pension fund on retirement, which removes one of the uncertainties in private pension schemes. In order to encourage people to provide for themselves in retirement, successive governments have given tax relief on pension contributions, and allowed people to take 25% of their pension fund as a tax-free lump sum on retirement. But they have insisted that people buy an annuity with the rest, the aim being to reduce or eliminate their dependency on state support in retirement. If the vast majority of people retire on income above the MIG, then the requirement to buy an annuity can be eliminated or at least greatly relaxed.

Almost all means testing of pensioners would be eliminated, even if the MIG continued to be uprated in line with earnings. Only people who have not had a full working life would need to have

their income in retirement assessed and topped up to the MIG.

## Will it happen?

Until recently, it would have been impossible to imagine that this obvious solution coming about. But, now, even some of New Labour's best friends, for example, the IPPR, have come to the conclusion that the pension regime they have put in place since coming to power in 1997 is a complicated mess, that this is going to get dramatically worse with the introduction of the Pension Credit, and that the only solution is an earnings related basic state pension at or above the MIG.

Significantly, also, private pension providers have realised that they are not going to be able to sell to people on below average income while the present complicated system exists. Standard Life and Norwich Union, the two biggest providers in Britain, are now saying publicly (Guardian, 30 September) that the entire state pension system should be replaced with a single flat-rate pension for all at the level of Income Support, so that pensioner means-testing would be greatly reduced, if not abolished. Then, and only then, will they have a hope of selling pensions to people on below average incomes.

And as this is written, the Conservatives have announced a manifesto commitment to raising the basic pension in line with earnings like the MIG, reversing what Margaret Thatcher did in 1980. They appear to be also proposing increases in the basic pension, which would close the gap between the basic pension and the MIG, and should therefore reduce pensioner means-testing. But it appears to be only a modest step on the road. Over the years have constantly deplored the growth of means-testing under New Labour, but this is the first time they have proposed something concrete to reduce it.



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that emerged in the 1960s. Trotskyism has retained elements of realism from its Leninist past, rival creeds are even more extreme. Feminism managed to discredit itself while achieving most of its original demands. Something similar is happening right now with the Ecological or Green movement.

The New Right won by default, teaming up with existing power when the left was more keen to prove its purity by refusal to compromise. Considered intellectually, New Right policies are a crazy mix of libertarian and authoritarian policies. Considered as a cover for the rise of an Overclass quite different from the old governing classes, it all suddenly makes sense. The rhetoric let ordinary people *think* that they were just about to be translated up into the Overclass and that their actual conditions of life were not something they needed to worry about or defend.

Some of the New Right also call themselves 'Conservatives', but if they are conservatives, then I'm an astronaut. Your identity is based on what you actually do, not what you might abstractly have *wished* to do. The reality of the 1980s was the demolition of a great deal that had survived earlier radical pressures, and functional conservatism hardly got a look in, just briefly and feebly under John Major. New Labour is in many ways a better vehicle for Overclass aspirations: New Labour can quite openly preach the merits of uprooting anything old without the troublesome need to put anything better in its place. What 'Neo-Conservatives' were unable to do, New Labour need not pretend it wants to do.

During the 1980s, the old governing class thought it was in control and recovering its 'natural' position. The late Dennis Thatcher was typical of British business, which has been generally substandard in the actual process of wealth creation. And very effective at blaming everyone except themselves. Their main success while Mrs Thatcher was fronting for right-wing policies was to manage to bring Western Europe down to British and American rates of growth. Britain and America did slightly worse in the era 1975 to 2000 than they had in 1950-1975, the era of Keynesianism. Western Europe was catching up fast, but since the 1970s have stopped closing the gap. Britain's skilled workforce and ingenious inventors still get wasted by a useless business class.

The suggested answer is Americanisation, and it's a damn stupid answer. For one thing, it is much easier to copy American vices than American virtues, which is based on the existence of a mass of Standardised Individualists who will plug themselves into whatever portion of the US military-industrial machine offers them the most satisfaction. Individual Britons can slot themselves into this same social structure if they wish, but Britain as a whole cannot reinvent itself as if fourteen centuries of Englishness had never existed, nor can we forget that we do have local identities that mean a lot more than the difference between New York, Texas or California.

As well as this, US growth figures are presented in a misleading way. The USA had still got huge

unpopulated regions (land taken after slaughtering the Native Americans) and so they can let in large numbers of immigrants. Taking the best and brightest from overseas means that the US economy grows faster than Europe—but growth *per individual* is much the same. And since we could not possibly let in vast new populations in the way the USA has done, nor run the massive trade deficits and budget deficits that the US gets away with, the notion of junking 'Old Europe' and becoming a flourishing Almost-America is a non-starter.

On this point, New Labour might be honestly mistaken. But they must know that US wealth has gone to the top 10% since the 1970s, after being distributed evenly to most people before that. Traditional distinctions between working class, middle class and ruling class have been eroded, instead you have a rich 'Overclass' that borrows its culture from all over. But the bulk of us belong in the Working Mainstream, people who may own some property but basically depend on paid work to live.

The 'underclass' are a mixed bunch, mostly not involved in wealth creation, but including both petty criminals and gentle people who live quietly without harming others. Its defining feature is a detachment from the society, people who are poor but have no self-identity. Coherent groups of poor people do also still exist, they are widespread, numerous and interesting. But all of them are under attack and will eventually be de-socialised or 'lumpenised', unless the balance of the society is changed radically.

Like the 'underclass', the new ruling class are detached and short on self-identity. The Overclass retain the ruling-class right to control other people's work, but have dropped whatever was left of social responsibility. Meantime the Working Mainstream are mostly producing a definite item that other people need, rather than deriving their power and position from controlling the work or wealth of others. This including the unpaid work of raising the next generation, which however gets defined as a 'burden', hence the pressure to cut back on state-funded education and a reluctance to spend more on childcare.

A society might theoretically slaughter its old people as soon as they stopped being productive. But the actual material wealth of a society is totally dependent on raising more people to do the work. If you assessed the process in terms of what you'd spend if people were marketable commodities, you see how fantastically wasteful the whole process is. Money spent on childcare may not generate profits from a cost-accounting point of view. But money spent on children's needs will result in vastly more material wealth for the whole society in the long run, quite apart from benefits to quality of life. It was the German and US investment in their children that ensured that they were catching up with Britain in the years before 1914,

and the same pattern is broadly true today.

To the New Right, of course, wealth cannot exist except by grace of market forces. This makes it hard to understand how wealth has been created in other ways—why in the pre-industrial world, Egypt's theocratic monarchy made it the richest country in the Mediterranean basin, and why bureaucratic China was the world's most populous state and the source of inventions such as paper, block-printing, the windmill, compass, wheelbarrow, gunpowder etc.

Civilisation is a prison we entered in order to become free. That's the only conclusion I could come to, when I cut loose from existing ideas and tried to figure out what had actually happened. The unknown societies of the early neolithic were succeeded by small states with a prototype bureaucracy. *And only in those states did progress occur to a more advanced human condition*, mostly under 'enlightened despots' who were despotic rather than enlightened when it came to defending their own privileges. The hunter-gatherer lifestyle had been satisfactory to those who lived it, it is still very satisfactory to the small number who've hung onto it, but it could do nothing to raise people above the level of clever animals.

Trade occurred where there was a state machine strong enough to make it a sensible idea to carry a mass of valuable and stealable goods into a crowd of people who were basically strangers. Trade and warfare were close companions, not alternatives: some societies were warlike without an interest in trade, as the Spartans were, but none took an interest in trade without discovering that wars of conquest made lots of new customers.

The New Right story of heroic progressive merchants versus smothering state machines is no more true than the adventures of Batman or The Incredible Hulk. Various tricks are used to avoid unsuitable facts. The New Right hold both that their system has always existed, and that it has never existed till maybe the 1980s. If it's good, they'll take the credit: if it's bad, they're not to blame.

Some unsuccessful national economies have practiced protectionism. But so have almost all of the highly successful economies, including Japan, South Korea after World War Two, the USA in the 19th century and Britain during its Industrial Revolution. The New Right conclude that the unsuccessful economies failed *because of* protectionism, whereas the successes succeeded *despite* protectionism. It's pure 'Enronism', taking a variable view of the facts according to the case you are making.

Taking a variable view of the facts according to the case you are making is also normal for barristers, which is Tony Blair's background. It's called 'trickery' when done in ordinary life, but within the legal profession, it is deemed to be a transcendental source of justice.

Applied to politics, and jazzed up with trendy and populist language, it becomes 'spin'. The particular character of particular individuals is not the important issue: it is a logical outcome of wider social trends.