

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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## What is a Real Opposition?

British politics depends on two parties competing for government. Currently, the Labour Party is the only meaningful opposition in a two party system which re-asserted itself in May, with the near demise of the Liberal Democrats. Scotland is in an anomalous position, sitting in the departure lounge waiting to exit the UK. The importance of this is that Labour will not disappear whoever is elected. The real issue is about what kind of opposition the Labour Party is to be over the next five years.

The Blairites thought that the two party system was just about alternance between two very similar parties and that the dominant ideology of England was Tory. Other interests could be ignored as there was no effective party to speak for them. By staying near the Tories they hoped to be in power semi-permanently. But they moved the centre of gravity of British politics remorselessly rightwards, compromising the Labour's social democratic heritage as they did so and leaving many traditional supporters looking for an alternative, which some eventually found in UKIP in England and in the SNP in Scotland.

Ultimately this stance demoralised both their own party and the electorate became disgusted with such a travesty of an opposition. Nationalist politics with a left flavour took hold in Scotland and with a right flavour in England. Miliband proved incapable of moving beyond the politics of a Labour Tweedledee to the Tory Tweedledum. A telling example is of Osborne's adoption of the Macmillan-Wilson era policy of training levies on firms to ensure that they take responsibility for preparing new generations of workers (to which this journal will return), something which Miliband and his advisors were terrified of doing for fear of being labelled 'class warriors' by the press. They paid for their craven approach through not advancing their vote in England to any significant extent and losing

heavily in Scotland.

The Labour leadership election campaign has made it clear that both the party and the country as a whole are fed up with Tweedledee politics. As we said in July, Corbyn's candidacy has proved to be a catalyst for a re-evaluation of what the Labour Party should be doing. Even on the narrow ground of parliamentary two party politics there is scope for moving beyond the alternation of two nearly identical parties. The Corbyn candidacy proposes a state-led approach to productive investment and more independence from the US in foreign policy. These ideas have resonance with the public as well as with Labour Party members. The party itself has been energised by the Corbyn candidacy, illustrating the isolation of the Blairite parliamentary party. They cannot split the party, knowing what happened to the SDP thirty years ago and being acquainted with the destruction of the centre party, the Liberal Democrats, this year. They have nowhere to go, but plenty of scope for making mischief within and beyond the Parliamentary Labour Party if the leadership election does not produce a result to their liking.

What of Jeremy Corbyn? Is he a Bennite dinosaur on a roll and nothing more, as the Blairites and most of the press allege? The evidence suggests that he is not a Bennite. He is absolutely right to reject the lie that Labour was responsible for the 2008 financial crisis, except in the sense that they allowed the banks too much freedom to cause financial mayhem, in the mistaken belief that being nice to bankers ensured their respectability. It would be catastrophic to admit to a mistake which they had never made and which the Tories would never cease to remind them of, particularly as they had admitted it themselves. Trade union support for his candidacy suggests a revival of the Labour-Union links that are essential to the party's long-term future. One of the most disgraceful features of the Miliband era was the freezing out of the TUC and a refusal to engage with its social partnership agenda proposed by its General Secretary, Frances O'Grady.

Although Corbyn is not a 70s style leftist dinosaur in the mould of the youthful Neil Kinnock, there is an area that

he and his supporters will need to address if they are to make a significant break both with the Blair era and the Wilson-Callaghan years. They need to work with the TUC and the unions, to develop economic and social policy based on social partnership, shifting control of firms away from the exclusive domination of shareholders to take into account the interests of employees by promoting worker participation up to and including board level as advocated so powerfully by O'Grady in the September issue of this journal last year. Other elements of such a policy shift should include working with the TUC on an economic policy which moves the British economy up the value chain, thus providing the desperately needed skilled, well-paid jobs that the country needs. There are signs at least that Corbyn recognises this. This will include more attention to vocational education policy. Here is a chance to outflank Osborne on the left, building on the opportunity for the left that he himself has created.

Labour and the unions also need to work together to help revive local economies through initiatives that allow local authorities to take more control over their own areas' regeneration. If the unions become more relevant they will be strengthened and Labour will benefit. We do not know whether the revived Labour ranks will take up such an opportunity. The future success of the Labour Party as a parliamentary opposition with practical social democratic solutions to real problems faced by voters, and with real roots in the country depends on it.

Labour will need to think carefully about its policy towards the EU. Corbyn and the Labour left are correct in rejecting the neoliberal labour market and economic policies that

the Commission has been pushing for the last twenty years. The European interest may well be served by a UK exit from Europe, but it is likely that English social democracy would suffer. There is however an urgent need to work together with other left parties in Europe to reverse these damaging policies and also to move away from vassal status to the US, whose most disastrous recent manifestation is the warmongering posture towards Russia, which suits the Americans but most definitely damages European interests. More than anything else perhaps, the biggest danger for a revived social democratic labour party will be the consequences of incurring the anger of the Americans.

At the time of writing, we do not know the result of the Labour leadership election, but it is highly likely that whatever happens, the candidacy of Jeremy Corbyn will revive the social democratic tradition within the party and curb the power of the Blairites and neo-Blairites such as those around Miliband. This change will not affect the parliamentary party at first and this is likely to lead to trouble as the new change of sentiment will take time to work through to party representation in parliament.

The position of this journal is clear. Labour has no future as a Tweedledee opposition if it aspires to government in 2020. Hoping to take over from Tweedledum on the occasions when he gets tired might mean a long wait. The public as well as the party is clearly fed up with this kind of alternation with little to choose between the parties. They expect proposals from an opposition which match the scale of the problems that the country faces. This is why Blairism is dead.

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### Labour Affairs

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#### Editorial Board

Dick Barry    Christopher Winch  
Jack Lane    Madawc Williams

labouraffairs@btinternet.com

Website: <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

#### Distribution

Dave Fennell

#### Editorial Address

No. 2 Newington Green Mansions  
Green Lanes  
London N16 9BT

Editorials and older articles  
at our website, [http://  
labouraffairsmagazine.com/](http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/)

This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry.

## IRISH ADMINISTRATION

On 22 August 1916 the House of Commons debated the question of Ireland and the potential for Irish volunteers to the British Imperial Army. Irish Nationalist MP T.P. O'Connor spoke in the debate, regretting a lost opportunity for Ireland. His full contribution is published following this short biography.

**Thomas Power O'Connor** (5 October 1848—18 November 1929), was a journalist, an Irish nationalist political figure, and a member of parliament (MP) in the House of Commons for nearly fifty years. He was born in Athlone, County Westmeath, the eldest son of Thomas O'Connor, an Athlone shopkeeper, and his wife, Teresa Power, the daughter of a non-commissioned officer in the Connaught Rangers. He was educated at the College of the Immaculate Conception in Athlone, and at Queen's College Galway, where he won scholarships in history and modern languages and built up a reputation as an orator. He entered journalism as a junior reporter on Saunders' *Newsletter*, a Dublin journal, in 1867. In 1870, he moved to London, and was appointed a sub-editor on the *Daily Telegraph*, principally on account of the utility of his mastery of French and German in reportage of the Franco-Prussian War. He later became London correspondent for the *New York Herald*. In 1885, O'Connor married Elizabeth Pascal, a daughter of a Judge of the Supreme Court of Texas.

O'Connor was elected Member of Parliament for Galway Borough in the c1880 general election, as a representative of Charles Stewart Parnell's Home Rule League. At the next general election in 1885, he was returned both for Galway and for the Liverpool Scotland constituencies, which had a large Irish population; he chose to sit for Liverpool, and represented the constituency from 1885 until his death in 1929. This was the

*only constituency outside Ireland ever to return an Irish Nationalist Party MP. He continued to be re-elected in Liverpool under this label unopposed in the 1918, 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1929 general elections. From 1905 he belonged to the central leadership of the United Irish League. During much of his time in parliament, he wrote a nightly sketch of proceedings for the Pall Mall Gazette. He became "Father of the House of Commons", with unbroken service of 49 years and 215 days. The Irish Nationalist Party ceased to exist effectively after the Sinn Fein landslide of 1918, and thereafter O'Connor effectively sat as an independent.*

### T.P. O'Connor:

I do not intend to comment upon the speech which has just been made by my right hon. Friend, except to congratulate him and the country upon the position which he now occupies. I intend to deal with the affairs of Ireland. The Chief Secretary for Ireland seems to me to be facing conditions similar to those which confronted Lord Fitzwilliam and Lord Cornwallis. After the rebellion of 1798 Lord Fitzwilliam came over to Ireland with the best intentions, but he came from a divided Cabinet, and he was disowned after he had made his proposals. Lord Cornwallis suppressed the rebellion, but he was confronted with a number of people who found severe fault with his main criticisms and with the manner in which the rebels had been put down. The conditions in Ireland are not favourable for my right hon. Friend (Mr. Duke) I am going to tell him of two or three things which have assisted to bring about the situation which he has to face. My hon. and gallant Friend the other night interrupted me in the course of some observations I made with regard to recruiting in Ireland. I hope he will permit me to give him, very briefly, the history of recruiting in Ireland up to-date. I must preface my remarks by saying that his panacea of

Conscription would be the best means of destroying what chance there is of a peaceful Ireland. As a matter of fact, the Sinn Fein-rebellion was largely an anti-Conscription rebellion, and any attempt to establish Conscription in Ireland, I am afraid, would have the most disastrous consequences both to the cause that he has at heart and to peace and good order in Ireland.

Let me refer to the condition of Ireland in 1914. Everybody will remember that momentous night when Sir Edward Grey, now Viscount Grey, made what was practically a declaration of war. In the course of his speech the Foreign Secretary made the observation that the one bright spot in the situation was the condition of Ireland. That speech of the Foreign Secretary was immediately followed by what I may now call the historic speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Waterford (Mr. John Redmond). I do not think anyone who is not acquainted, as I am, with the Irish race in the various parts of the world, including some of our own Dominions, can appreciate the momentous importance of that pronouncement of my hon. and learned Friend. It had immediate consequences all over the Irish world. In the United States there are many millions of our people, most of them, either through themselves or their ancestors, the victims of cruel wrong and enforced emigration. I venture to say that 80 or 90 per cent. of our race in the United States accepted the policy of the hon. and learned Member for Waterford and became the friends of the just cause of the Allies in this War. In Ireland there was a very remarkable and to me an astonishing state of things. I think even those who were formerly my political opponents will not question that I have devoted the greater part of my political career to an endeavour to bring about a reconciliation of the mass of the English and Irish races. I hoped to see them reconciled, but I must confess that I never anticipated that I should see more than a beginning of the reconciliation in my time. I thought it would require a generation or two after my generation had passed away to bring full and complete

good will between the two countries. But I saw in Ireland a change of heart so deep, so wide, and so prompt as to make it a matter of surprise to me.

Let me illustrate it by a few instances. I spoke of the Irish in America. In 1867 two Fenian prisoners were rescued by a body of Irishmen from a prison van. A police constable was killed in the course of the disturbance. I think he was killed accidentally. Five men were put on their trial for their lives. They were all convicted and sentenced to death. One of them was immediately released, three of them were executed, and one spent nine years in penal servitude. This gave the impetus to the national movement in Ireland, and the memory of these men is still celebrated. The fourth man, who was reprieved because he was an American citizen, and who served ten years' penal servitude, was named Edward O'Megher Condon. If any man would have had bitter feelings against this country, one would have thought it would have been that man, but, marvellous to say, Edward O'Megher Condon, sentenced to death and a convict for ten years, brought up in a school of hatred of this country and its institutions, the child of evicted tenants driven out of Ireland, declared himself on the side of the Allies. I could go through any number of cases of the same kind. I met here the other day a young fellow, a wounded soldier of the name of Egan. That does not convey much to those who are not Irishmen, but he was the grandson of Patrick Egan, and I remember the time when he was one of the most hated men in this country. He had to fly to France. His grandson has been fighting in the trenches. He was present on the night—this is the tragedy of the situation—with the Munsters when the Germans put up a placard—it was during the recent rebellion—to say “The English are shooting your wives and children in the streets of Dublin.” The Munsters went out across that No Man's Land, where every man's life was in danger, and they were not satisfied until they had captured and brought back that placard which was the denunciation of your Government.

Throughout Ireland there were scenes which I do not think anybody ever thought possible in our lifetime or in the lifetime of many generations to come. Recruiting was going on with energy. Members of Parliament, clergymen, and local leaders of the National party were all making speeches in favour of recruiting. My hon. Friend the Member for West Belfast (Mr. Devlin) by his own efforts raised thousands

of men. The recruits as they went to the station marched with bands and a cheering crowd, and there were cries of “God bless you!”—God bless the work which they were going to do in putting down those principles of savage and cruel oppression against which Ireland has always ranged herself and against which she must range herself to-day if she is to be true to her own traditions. Between the police and the Irish people, as everybody knows, there have been, especially in times of turbulence, a good deal of friction. Many of the constabulary joined the Army. Again, they went to the station amid the cheers and good will of their countrymen. There never was in the history of any country after six centuries of another point of view a change of heart so wide, so deep, and so remarkable as that which took place in Ireland after the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Waterford. I am sure when the history of this War comes to be written the historian will acknowledge that speech was one of the most eventful and one of the most helpful incidents at the commencement of the War

What happened? My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Waterford accompanied by my hon. Friend the Member for East Mayo (Mr. Dillon) and the Member for West Belfast went to the War Office. They had a series of suggestions to make. I think it was the very day after the declaration of War, so anxious were they to help in every way the cause which they had taken up. They made several suggestions, and they made one in particular. They suggested that their Volunteers, who at that time were still a united body, should be equipped and drilled by the War Office and have officers sent from the War Office. The remarkable thing is that when my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Waterford made that proposal to the Volunteers of Dublin one of the men who supported it was John McNeill. If that offer had been accepted by the War Office, you would have had many of those 20,000, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 or 100,000 men fighting on your side, because khaki is a catchy kind of thing, and when a man once gets it on his back, even if he is only a volunteer, he rarely resists the temptation to go into the fighting line. Thousands of these men would have gone into the fighting line and into the trenches. There would have been no Sinn Fein movement, because there would have been no men to draw upon. Many of the men who are in penal servitude to-day would have been in the trenches fighting, and would have given

up their lives for the cause of the Allies. During the recent rebellion there was a young fellow tried for his life. His life was spared, and he was sentenced to penal servitude for life. Will it be believed that that young man for two or three months was begging my hon. Friend the Member for West Belfast to get him a commission in the Regular Army, and all the appeals of my hon. Friend proved in vain. He drifted into the Volunteers. One thing led to another, and the result of it is that this man who was ready to fight in the cause of the Allies is to-day in penal servitude.

Every single suggestion made to the War Office in the interests of the Allies was, without exception, rejected by the War Office. An hon. Member asks me why. I do not know, but I have my suspicion. I believe that there was what was called the Unseen Hand there. I hope I am not going to revive any controversy by using the phrase, and, if I do so, I express my regret, but I believe there was a “Curragh Camp set” there which regarded any proposal made by Nationalists as a proposal that was rebellion pretending to be loyal. Everything was done—it seemed to be almost calculated in a Machiavellian spirit—not to encourage, but to discourage recruiting. Every little insult possible was given to national sentiment. For instance, a number of ladies were asked by the General of the 16th Division to make some banners; they made the banners, and the banners were refused, not, I am sure, by the General, but by the General under orders from the War Office. The War Office interfered. In the National University in Dublin they proposed to raise a corps of officers; there was a similar corps in Trinity College, but permission was refused. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Waterford (Mr. Redmond) went to the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister gave his assent to the corps being raised; but the War Office refused even to listen to the suggestion of the Prime Minister, and the corps was not brought into existence. It was in an atmosphere of that kind that men were confronted with a propaganda which ultimately led in the Sinn Fein rebellion. Some six or seven months after the beginning of the War a very remarkable Englishman was sent over to Ireland, Sir Hedley le Bas. What did he find there? He found that there was no recruiting, no placards, no posters appealing to the national sentiment, and, above all, no form of proper recruiting appeal. I make no apology for the fact that when you try and induce Irishmen to enter the Army

you must use a somewhat different kind of appeal from those you would apply to Englishmen, just as you have dealt with Wales differently. There were two places in Dublin where they positively refused to put up placards, one was Trinity College and the other was Liberty Hall, the centre of Larkin and the leaders of the Citizen Army.

Sir Hedley le Bas found that all over the country they employed the very last type of men to make a successful appeal to the people. In Waterford—I say nothing against the gentleman personally; I did not know even his name—they employed a gentleman who was a Unionist, who was not of the same religion as the majority of the people, and who was a landlord's agent! Although we have to a large extent settled the land question in Ireland, there are traditions which remain, and I say that a landlord's agent is not quite the man to appeal to the patriotic fervour of an Irish Catholic population. In Limerick the gentleman who was sent down was a Catholic, but he had stood on Orange platforms as a Unionist candidate, and he had been Unionist candidate in that very city a short time before. All my fellow countrymen know that an Irish Nationalist hates an Irish Catholic Unionist much worse than he hates the most virulent Orangeman. That was not the kind of gentleman whose personality would appeal to men to go and die for the cause of the Allies in the trenches. In Dublin a number of ex-Unionist candidates were selected for the purposes of recruiting, and I am not sure whether they did not import some dug-outs or found-outs from this country. These gentlemen could not make the best appeal to Irishmen, who, after all, are a courageous race, and some of whom are sensible. They actually called the people cowards and slackers, and used other terms of abuse. I need not tell you that men like that, instead of encouraging, discourage recruits.

I take another section of the Irish race, my countrymen in Great Britain, with whom I am more closely associated than with any other section of my people, and with whom I have, lived now for about half a century. No part of the Empire has given a more generous contribution, proportionately, to the fighting forces than the Irishmen in Great Britain. How are they treated? At the very beginning of the War I called a meeting and explained my views of the issue of the War—and from that explanation I have never wavered, and I do not waver now—and we determined

to recruit in this country for the War as far as we could, and I asked them to accept our views of the issues and policy which I ventured to lay before them. I made what would appear perhaps at that time a rather rash proposal, that we should sing "God Save the King." It had never been sung at an Irish Nationalist meeting in Great Britain before, and that great meeting of 5,500 Irishmen in Glasgow sang it full-heartedly, and accepted the same position as their fellow-citizens of English and Scottish descent. What happened? The Irish in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which is a great Irish centre, proposed to raise an Irish battalion. The Irish at Newcastle, as hon. Members on the Labour Benches know, are very closely associated both in the social and labour life of their English fellow-citizens. The hon. Member for Morpeth (Mr. Burt) has told me that in his early struggles for trade unionism he could not have succeeded without the assistance of many Irishmen who were his comrades. They proposed in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to raise an Irish battalion. Mr. Joseph Cowen, the son of one who was well known to this Assembly, put up £10,000 to be devoted to the raising of an Irish regiment and a Scottish regiment and a Newcastle battalion. The Irish immediately raised a battalion; they raised two; they raised three; they raised four; altogether they raised 5,500 Irishmen in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I took some small, obscure, but zealous part in raising those Irishmen in Newcastle. I said to myself, "Here is a chance to raise recruits, in Ireland; I will get these men to consent to go to Ireland to be drilled; I will go over myself; I will march at their head through the City of Dublin, and I dare say that forty or fifty thousand of their fellow-countrymen will welcome them to the land of their fathers." Does it require much imagination to see what effect such a procession would have upon recruiting in Dublin? I was refused. I got these men to go to Ireland, which was a sacrifice to them, because at Newcastle they were billeted with their mothers and wives.

In West Belfast my hon. Friend for that constituency (Mr. Devlin) has done very much in persuading his fellow-countrymen to join the Army, but for months they did not have a recruiting station in West Belfast, and the people had to go to other parts of Belfast to join the Army. That was a great mistake, and militated against the sentiment of the Nationalists in the city, and against their joining the Army in as large numbers as they would otherwise have done. In Kingstown there was no

recruiting station, and men who wished to join the Army had to go eight or nine miles to Dublin for the purpose. Sir Hedley le Bas found two or three remarkable things when he went to Dublin. He found that the Recruiting Committee there had only one Nationalist on it, and that in this great Nationalist city. When Sir Hedley made a certain suggestion for the purposes of encouraging recruiting, a member of the Committee, after the meeting was over, called him aside and said, "Why, Sir Hedley, you seem to be anxious to get Nationalists to recruit; we don't want them to recruit. The more Nationalists that join the Army the surer they are to get Home Rule." That is the kind of Committee that was set up to do recruiting. Sir Hedley also went to some of the military authorities, and the first thing they told him was, "Have nothing to do with the Nationalists; do not kow-tow with them; give them a wide berth." If you want to appeal to the people of Ireland, send to them gentlemen of the same political convictions and the same religion as the people to whom they appeal. The same story was found everywhere. The Irish Guards band made a most successful tour in Ireland and gained many recruits. When Sir Hedley suggested that the Lord Mayor of Dublin should be got to receive the band, he was told, "You must not touch the Lord Mayor; he is opposed to recruiting; it would be a dreadful mistake." But he went to the Lord Mayor and he found him one of the best friends of the cause of the Allies. The Lord Mayor did not refuse to receive the band. He gave them an entertainment, and they went through Ireland receiving addresses of welcome from the people and raised a number of recruits. I do not want the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for War to imagine I am attacking him in this connection. He is not responsible for that state of affairs, nor was his great predecessor. It was the unseen hand of the War Office that was responsible. All through Ireland every step was taken not to encourage but to discourage recruiting.

Let me take another point. I went down to visit the 16th Division here in England. I found an admirable set of officers—I need not say anything about the men, because they have proved their valour. What did I find? The men were 90 or 95 per cent. Nationalists and Catholics, while the officers were 75 or 85 per cent. Protestants. Nobody will accuse me of anything like sectarian feeling. I have not a particle of it; I hate it. But you must have regard for these religious and political affinities

between men and even between soldiers and officers. I am glad to be able to say that bad as that method of officering the 16th Division was, it turned out admirably. The officers won the hearts of the men, the men won the hearts of the officers, and there is the deepest and almost uninterrupted harmony between them. It was very unfair to my hon. Friend the Member for West Belfast and others who had done so much to recruit your forces that they should have knocked in vain, month after month, to get a commission for a man who is a Nationalist, while a gentleman who was a paid servant in the Unionist organisation was put over a regiment comprising 90 per cent. of Irish Nationalists.

That is not the end of this somewhat discreditable story. Our regiments went into action. No man will criticise the valour of the Irish soldiers. They were in the retreat from Mons, they were in the massacres in the Dardanelles, they were at Festubert, and they have been in some of the other recent engagements. The story of the Dardanelles is known to many Members of this House. It is as well known to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Trinity College as well as to any man on these benches. It is a story, dreadful in many respects, but a story of incomparable valour in the face of unprecedented difficulties. Several Irish regiments took a leading part in these engagements. Two of them, I believe, took the leading part. Will it be believed that the names of those regiments were absolutely omitted from any word of mention in the dispatches describing the engagements? All over the battle fronts it is the same story even to-day. Irish regiments have taken a large part in the engagements within the last few weeks, but their names have not been mentioned. It looks as if an Irish soldier is good enough to be killed but is not good enough to be mentioned in the dispatches describing those engagements. How could I or any Irishman feel anything but resentment at such a series of incidents and facts as I have mentioned? Some of the causes of the Sinn Fein rebellion were that our men were not equipped and organised under the War Office, and that Ireland began to feel that while this country was willing to take her soldiers, she was not willing to recognise them on the Nationalist principles for which they stood. There were other causes, but I will not go into them now, because I do not want to revive any controversy if I can help it. The creation of a Coalition Government was one of them. I do not blame the right

hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Trinity College for that transaction. I believe that his own judgment was against his entering into the Ministry, and, to do him justice, he left it as soon as he could. Was it not quite clear that, when the leader of one political party in Ireland declines to enter the Cabinet, the leader of the other political party ought to have been asked to do so, some months after the War had begun in this auspicious state of Irish feeling?

I come to recent events. My reference to them will be as brief and as considered as I can make it. There were two events in Ireland, a rebellion and the repression of that rebellion. The repression of the rebellion was a much more important and a much more far-reaching event than the rebellion itself. I do not want to go into that painful and tragic event more than I can help. I still think that if the same humane, generous, and wise spirit that induced General Botha to spare the rebels of his own race and of his own land had been extended to the rebellion in Ireland my right hon. Friend would have a much more favourable set of conditions to deal with and his task would be comparatively easy. When that rebellion started, 90 per cent. of the people of Ireland condemned and repudiated it; but when repression was in progress the sympathies of the 90 per cent. were on the other side. I do not want the right hon. Gentleman to accept my view or to disavow things that have been done. He had no responsibility. I do impress upon him, however, that the sooner he is able to remove from Ireland all signs and tokens of that very bitter incident in Irish life he will have a different Ireland to deal with. I see the Home Secretary here. I was astonished to hear an answer of his at Question Time to-day. There are a great many Irishmen still in prison or under internment. I hope he will expedite their release. I am going to make another suggestion. I do not want to use strong language, but I was shocked by his answer to-day in regard to Irish political prisoners who have been sentenced. There is not a civilised country in the world except this that does not make a distinction between the political and the ordinary prisoner. It is made in France. [An HON. MEMBER: "Not in Germany or Russia."] Hon. Members who say "Not in Russia" have not read as much about Siberia as I have. I have read an account of a reception by the Czar—I think when he was Czarevitch—which has made the foundation of a thousand perorations, dramas, and novels, of a man

with whom he entered into friendly conversation, who was the man who tried to take his father's life. The Home Secretary will not get any encouragement there for his doctrine. It is a false doctrine. He will get no confirmation of it in the treatment of political prisoners, even those in Russia after they have been sentenced and exiled. As to France, Frenchmen would regard it as an abnegation of all the doctrines of the French Revolution and its new gospel of humanity and liberty to treat a political prisoner as an ordinary prisoner. I hope my right hon. Friend will revise his views upon that matter, and try to extend generous treatment to men of this kind, who in no civilised country are classed in the same category as ordinary prisoners.

I end as I began, by saying that the position of the Chief Secretary is not one altogether to be envied. He will get fair play from us. So long as he follows what we regard as a wise policy he will not get injustice from us. I want to give him a few words of friendly warning. The path of coercion is a dangerous one. Once a Chief Secretary enters upon it he very soon finds himself in conflict with the Irish people. I ask him to be a little on his guard, for, after all, he is an Englishman, against the official classes. I remember reading many years ago a striking story of French life where a Deputy filled with the spirit of reform and good intentions tried to clear out some office. There was a Radical at the head of the office, there was a Radical majority in Parliament, there was a Radical President of the Assembly, but there was a fine fat old gentleman who sat in an armchair as the permanent official of the office, who put himself in the way. The Deputy said to himself, "That fellow or somebody like him was there in the days of the first Napoleon. Perhaps he saw Marie Antoinette going to the scaffold. He saw Louis XVI. and Louis XV., and all the other generations. He was there all the time." That old gentleman has been most of the time at Dublin Castle. It is bureaucracy without responsibility either to an English or an Irish Parliament. I warn the right hon. Gentleman not to respect its traditions, and not always, at least to take its counsel.

One further word of advice I will give him. The example comes to one's mind of the resemblance between his position and that of Lord Cornwallis after the rebellion. Lord Cornwallis protested in the strongest way against some of the savage cruelties with which that rebellion was put down. In his memoirs he over and over again lamented that all his kind intentions and inclinations as to clemency were scouted and denounced in the spirit of caste, class and bigotry by some Irishmen themselves. I am afraid there may be a little of that spirit in Dublin to-day. I implore the Chief Secretary to rise superior to it and to all its follies and bad suggestions.

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### French farmers

French farmers have spent the summer in disputes over the price of milk, pork and beef. They demonstrated, blocked motorways and access to supermarkets or headquarters of food firms, and demanded help from the government.

The government intervened by setting a minimum price for milk and pork. Supermarkets say they have accepted this price, but that the intermediate firms that actually buy from the producers have not. In the case of pork, the two main buyers of pigs have simply refused to turn up to the main sale of animals (in Brittany), with the result that the price of pork could not be set, and a large number of animals were left unsold and returned with their owners.

The problem is not new. Technology enables a vast increase in production, which results in more milk and pork than can be sold. Until April this year, milk quotas restrained the production of milk. Now farmers are free to produce as much as they like, or, in other words, obliged to run the race to produce as much as possible.

French farmers blame German and Spanish farmers, who also complain that they are in a difficult position. Each looks at their neighbour and complains about the low wages they pay, their less stringent environmental laws etc. All are also confronted with a drop in export: a large drop in Chinese demand for their product, and the Russian ban on European goods following the imposition of sanctions.

By adopting the free market, European has fragmented: when there were quotas, the different countries were not in competition with each other to the same extent. The ending of quotas

has led to a race to produce the most, and to conquer the greatest share of the market, with inevitable debt (to modernise and increase production) and financial difficulties.

There was a beginning of a European solution to the milk problem. There were differences between countries: different environmental and social regulations, or at least differences in how regulations were implemented; different countries had a greater or smaller number of small or less automatized farms, some governments subsidised more or less. The quotas permitted the survival of smaller farms and therefore limited the competition between countries. Now each country is fighting against all the others in the struggle to sell milk and pork. EU Agriculture Ministers are meeting on 7 September to discuss the crisis.

This fight will intensify with the EU-US trade 'partnership' treaty, TTIP, which aims to harmonise regulations and create one European-American market. Those who have the biggest and most mechanised farms will produce the most cheaply and sell the most. Their erstwhile competitors will disappear.

### French farmers union

The biggest farmers union (FNSEA) wants large scale mechanized production; its leader reportedly owns a large chicken processing concern, importing cheap poultry from Brazil. Smaller unions (Confederation Paysanne) defend small scale production; its programme is, to summarise: fix prices to cover costs, stop producing for export, develop meat quality, stop importing meat. All impossible with a liberal government.

The National Front's reaction is to

protest against Germany and Spain using the Posted Workers Directive to employ foreign workers at reduced rates; to make compulsory the labelling of origin of meat products, in order to enable customers to choose French products; to encourage local authorities, hospitals etc to use French products in their catering, a preference allowed by law; call into question sanctions against Russia, cause of the boycott of European products, and fight TTIP. These suggestions are in fact not radical and would not solve the problem.

TTIP will be the extension of the European free market to include the United States, and will make the situation worse for smaller European farmers. Nevertheless it may happen; voices are raised against it, but so far they are a minority. The population has an instinctive sympathy for the milk and pig farmers, as they have towards those whose livelihood is threatened, but it is skin deep. They are fatalists and accept that progress and technology are necessary and inescapable, and in a sense good. People have so far accepted that being modern and technologically advanced is good and that you shouldn't help those who cling to slower ways of producing. The fastest and most efficient way of doing something must be adopted, especially as it is the way to make the most money. Grouping animals together in one place, off the ground, surrounded by automatic distributors of nutritious food, is the quickest and most efficient way of producing a 120 kg pig, so it's now the only way to do it.

There are problems with it, that is, production that goes beyond what the market will absorb: degradation of animal welfare, the production of

amounts of waste that ruin the land and the sea. So far only the first problem causes widespread unrest, among those directly affected.

The Pope's 2015 Encyclical, *Laudato Si*, might begin to have an influence among the general population; the radio station Europe 1 (28.8) quoted his rejection of unthinking approval of technology and greed as a sensible and important thing to say.

### Teaching of morality in schools.

Greed used to be bad, admiration and love of nature used to be good, all sentiments which could lead to a solution to the agriculture crisis. The government is reintroducing morality in schools, after it was abolished after 1968, but it won't be teaching that greed is bad and nature good.

Schools will teach morality to children from the age of 5. The official programme is on line, and strangely it is prefaced by the 1883 letter from the then Minister of Education, Jules Ferry, to school teachers, regarding the teaching of morality. The idea presumably is to pretend that there is republican continuity in the action of the government. Jules Ferry is a respected figure as the founder of Republican Education, who wrenched schools from the grasp of the Catholic school. The other continuity is in the assumption of a universal morality that everyone is able to find in his conscience; in 1883, that assumption relied on the still present Christian belief; in 2015, it is just an assumption, supposed to be based on reason, i.e. anyone reasonable will agree there is a universal morality.

In fact, as the quotes below will show, the present day teaching bears no relation to the 1883 letter, neither in content nor in intent. The idea of reintroducing moral teaching came with the realisation that the perpetrators of recent attacks on French soldiers and writers on French soil were French. Unlike 1883, the 2015 programme treats the child as a lone individual, unconnected to a family or a community, except school and France, and the aim is to make him think, question his beliefs and give

them up: "The pupil is encouraged to think, name things, listen to other points of view, defend his position, question his position, doubt, find out more, and be prepared to change his opinions." The French text ends with 'renoncer' which I have translated as 'be prepared to change his opinions' but really means 'give up'.

The 1883 letter says the opposite expressly:

"It goes without saying that the teacher will avoid as a bad deed anything, in his language or his attitude, which might hurt the children's religious beliefs, anything that could trouble their spirit.

That 1883 letter has content, and presents the child as being part of a family he or she must love, respect and help. The teacher must teach the child to love nature and God. The Ferry directive begins:

"Secular moral teaching is different from religious teaching but does not contradict it. The teacher does not take the place of the priest or the father; he joins his efforts to theirs in order to make of each child a good and honest man."

"Later, when they have become citizens, [the children] may become divided by dogmatic opinions, but at least they will agree in practice to place the purpose of life as high as possible, to hate all that is base and vile, to admire all that is noble and generous, to have the same ready recognition of duty, to aspire to moral improvement, whatever the efforts it might cost, to feel united in this general cult of what is good, beautiful and true, cult which is a form, and not the least pure, of religious feeling."

This feeling of something greater than yourself extends to nature: "To lead children upwards to a feeling of admiration for the universal order and to religious feeling by presenting to them great natural beauty"

Then from age 9 to 11:

The child is considered as first of all part of a family: he has duties to his parents and grand-parents: obedience, respect, love, gratitude; helping the parents in their work, bringing them comfort when they are ill; supporting

them in their old age. Duties to brothers and sisters: love each other, the older ones to protect the younger ones, give a good example. Then the child at school has duties towards the teacher and his school mates. Finally the child has a duty to France, 'in her greatness and her misery'.

Regarding material goods: avoid debt, do not love money, and gain, too much; work (not waste time, work is obligatory for all men, nobility of manual work.)

Then from age 11 to 13, the teacher will show pupils the difference between duty and self interest, even when they seem to be the same, i.e. the imperative and disinterested character of duty.

And the distinction between written law and moral law: the first is a minimum of rules that society imposes on pain of penalties, and the second imposes to everyone in the secret of his conscience a duty that no one can force him to accomplish, but which failure to accomplish would lead to a feeling of guilt towards himself and towards God."

The modern moral programme assumes that there is a universal morality that everyone can feel. However the minister has given up on putting forward a 'lay morality', instead we have 'moral and civic education', which for the younger ones is limited to school rules, like listen to others and take turns speaking, which presumably teachers have always taught. Pupils are also assumed to have learned strictly nothing at home, not even to wash their hands.

What children see if they look around them is that right is on the side of the technologically advanced and the greedy. In that context, 'respect for others' is just a phrase. Yet school is supposed to teach children that it is the highest value in our society.

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.  
*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## 'Feed the Rich' – what Thatcherism was really about

Authentic conservatism died in the 1980s. If the Left had got its act together in the 1970s and pushed through the radical notions of Incomes Policy and Workers Control, then authentic conservatism would have carried on in reduced circumstances, defending what was left of old-fashioned values. But most people on the Left pushed militancy for its own sake, without realising that militant workers would get tired of struggle without clear gains. And it didn't help that much of the Hard Left sneered at actual left-wing achievements out of an unrealistic hopes for some more left-wing alternative.

Thatcherism was the functional alternative. Thatcherism was Radical-Right: its core idea was that the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been a mistake. That the 1960s in particular had been a mistake.

Economically, its mission to restore British greatness failed. In as far as it pushed the economy back towards 19<sup>th</sup> century values, it damaged it. Britain in 1979 had a crisis that could have been solved in an authentically conservative manner, by curbing Trade Union power but keeping the norms of what was then called the Mixed Economy. Functional conservatism would have meant keeping unemployment as low as possible, to prevent the risk of a detached Underclass developing here, as it has in the USA. Instead we had a Radical Right vision that hoped to turn the entire world into a gigantic collection of suburban households, each pursuing personal goals and delivering vast benefits. But it didn't happen. A recent report called *The Macroeconomic Impact of Liberal Economic policies in the UK* shows in detail that it did not happen. That economic growth was slower overall. That most Britons would be much better off if Thatcherism had never happened.<sup>1</sup>

Socially it was also a failure – at least it was for social conservatives like Thatcher, who yearned for the relative social stability of the 1950s. Lurking in the background of the New Right was a substratum of Libertarians who liked Free Markets but very logically linked it with

Free Individualism on sexual matters, and sometimes also on drugs. Much of this agenda, which Thatcher would surely have hated, became official Tory policy under nice-seeming David Cameron.

It was also the main positive achievement of the Blair years: he yielded on Free Markets and asserted the Free Individualism that a lot of Tories had anyway always privately favoured.

We can imagine an alternate world in which Thatcherism broadly failed. This would have been the case if the Falklands War had been either lost or prevented sensibly. We might have carried on with a reformed version of the successful Corporatist system that had flourished from the 1940s to 1960s and was still functioning in the 1970s, despite the crises of inflation and trade union militancy. (At the time of Thatcher's death, it was pointed out that overall growth in the UK was better in the despised 1970s than in any decade since. That she had entirely wasted the windfall of North Sea Oil – unlike Norway, which has kept it for the benefit of its citizens.)

There were a series of crises in the 1970s, including the end of cheap oil when OPEC realised that they could control the market. Things needed to be changed, and many things were changed. But the New Right economic changes were not an overall success. They damaged a system that was basically sound and needed just to be updated. Indeed, the system has remained broadly Corporatist, but special privileges are given to anything that has the appearance of Private Enterprise.

Ordinary Britons have paid a large price for Thatcher's attempts to repeal the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Talking about the '*Macroeconomic Impact of Liberalism*' report, *The Guardian* says:

"The economists find that average annual growth of per capita GDP fell from 2.6% per year in the three decades prior to 1980 to 2.2% per year in the following decades to 2007, and a decline of 0.2% per year since 2007. Productivity growth slowed even more sharply, from 2.9% per year in the three decades prior to 1980, compared with 1.7% from 1980 to 2007, and a decline of 0.2% per year

since 2007."<sup>2</sup>

But Thatcherism wasn't a failure *for the very rich*, the more-than-millionaire class that dominate business, the media and politics. Those people have got an unfair and unearned share of the new wealth created since the 1970s. An absurdly large slice of an undersized cake. Have gone on flourishing after the crisis of 2008, because a crisis caused by speculative finance was successfully blamed on state power and state spending:

"FTSE 100 chief executives (CEO) earn on average 183 times more than a full-time worker, research suggests.

"A report by the High Pay Centre, a think tank which monitors income distribution, shows that top bosses earned on average £4.964m in 2014.

"That compares to £27,195 median pay for a full-time employee in 2014, according to official figures.

"The High Pay Centre said the executive pay packages went 'far beyond what is sensible...to inspire top executives.'

"The pay gap did not increase dramatically between 2014 and 2013, when chief executives earned 182 times the average workers pay, but the High Pay Centre points out that it is much bigger than in 2010, when CEOs earned 160 times more.

"Pay packages of this size go far beyond what is sensible or necessary to reward and inspire top executives."<sup>3</sup>

Why did it happen? In part, because it's not the same system that previous generations of socialists protested at. Those people are no longer a coherent ruling class. They are an Overclass, detached from social concerns and vaguely believing that everything will work out OK if the 'best people' win out. It is eminently possible to demoralise such people, since the cleverer members of this stratum are worried by the stagnation since the 2008 crash and also the rise of increasingly extreme and successful versions of hard-line Islam.

The relative economic failure gets hidden, of course. You could call it the Leeson Effect. Created the appearance of brilliant success by hiding actual losses,

as rogue trader Nick Leeson did by hiding all his losses in an '88888' account which was not reported to his Head Office. As he explains in his biography, there were plenty of indications that all was not well. To keep on trading, he had to request vast amounts of hard cash to cover his losses, since the Singapore authorities were suspicious of him. But the experts at Barings Bank went on believing in his paper profits until the whole thing became public knowledge – or at least pretending to while they collected fat bonuses. Likewise all sorts of well-placed and powerful people have an interest in hiding the New Right failure.

It would be sensible to point out just what ordinary people have lost when it comes to the next General Election. Had the 1950s British growth rate of 2.55% been sustained, people *on average* would each be £5000 a year better off.<sup>4</sup> But of course people aren't averages, and the rich would have had a smaller cut of this much bigger pie.

It is entirely rational for the more-than-millionaire class to want to carry on with Feed-The-Rich policies. What's puzzling is why anybody else should believe in it.

Sadly, the arguments have simply not been made in this form. One gets a blanket condemnation of 'capitalism', which has reduced credibility after the Soviet collapse. The flourishing Chinese economy gets labelled capitalist, when it's much more regulated than the West's Mixed Economy ever was. It could be labelled 'capitalism with socialist characteristics', or the term 'Mixed Economy' could be revived. One way or another, get through that it worked much better than the Feed-The-Rich Capitalism that Thatcher promoted and that Blair and Brown accepted as an unalterable reality.

One could do a graphic for it. Show two sets of ten stick-people, showing the actual incomes of the ten deciles (tenths by income) in the actual world and in an alternate world where Thatcherism didn't happen and things stayed more like Germany or Scandinavia. Call it *Thatcherism Didn't Work*.

### Labour, Corbyn and Blamerism

Butskellism was a satirical term used in British politics to refer to the political consensus formed in the 1950s and associated with the similar policies of Chancellor of the Exchequer Butler of the Conservative Party and Hugh Gaitskell, then leader of the Labour Party.

The economic successes of Butskellism would seem a utopian dream by modern standards – but it worked at the time. There's no reason why it should not be tried in future. Most of Continental Europe never really moved away from it and they continue to do well.

Considering the reasons why the Labour Party was created, it might have been better to have lost in 1997 than to have won the way Blair won. The whole New Right agenda was fading under Major: Blair conceded its basics and gave it new life and vigour.

Before Blair, Labour's aim and actual achievement was a Mixed Economy and Welfareism, along with radicalism on family and sexual matters. Blair abandoned the economic radicalism and declared Feed-The-Rich policies to be the only possible future. The new consensus could be called *Blamerism*, the shared ground between Blair and Cameron. Cameron followed Blair's lead in recognising that society had fundamentally changed, not attempting to seriously defend older social values in the way Thatcher had. But since Blair had not questioned Thatcherite economics and had continued privatisation, the Tory Party was not going to act otherwise.

Harold Wilson once said 'the Labour Party is a moral crusade or it is nothing'.<sup>5</sup> Tony Blair decided that being nothing was a smart way to get re-elected. Wilson's deeds didn't live up to his words, but in a lot of ways he was effective in an imperfect world. He faced the problem of dumping the legacy of the British Empire, including Sterling as a reserve currency. He did manage to keep Britain out of the Vietnam War, whereas Blair pitched eagerly into a much more foolish war on Iraq. He also faced the problem of a Trade Union movement that was massively overplaying its hand, being militant in ways that ultimately alienated many of its members. That rejected Social Partnership and Workers Control when Labour were eager to offer it.

Of course there were deeper reasons for this. The 1945 Labour government made changes that in the long run successfully erased the former gulf between Working Class and Middle Class, as understood in Britain. Differences remain, but nothing like what they were, and with the bizarre phenomenon of some people from posh backgrounds pretending to be working class. The separation was anyway more social than economic, with quite a lot of small independent business people who count as working class, and much less of the absurd pretentiousness of the dwindling

Lower Middle Class. And there are huge numbers who are socially Middle Class but wholly dependent on paid employment. Too much of the left just ignored these changes. And some of those who did notice took the easy path of accepting Blamerism as an unalterable truth. This despite evidence that Corbyn's views on a lot of issues are much more in line with public opinion than Blamerism is.<sup>6</sup>

It didn't help that so many of the left combined a reverence for Marxism in the abstract with a hostility to those Marxists that had made some practical advances towards Marxist goals. Marxism offers a simple picture of how an industrial society works: a vastly more accurate picture than you get from conventional economics, yet still incomplete. It was always weaker on politics, tending towards citing 'revolution' as a one-size-fits-all solution (though Marx and Engels and even Lenin did on occasions say different and subtler things). But what you tend to get is now a too simplified version, inferior to people's understanding within any given society. Still very useful for understanding alien societies and for people of non-European backgrounds to enter the modern world. But such successes were mostly talked down by the Western left. There was a loud insistence that anything less than a perfect result must be due to wicked tyranny by whoever was in charge.

There was also a foolish distrust of the state by ordinary people, encouraged by most radicals. *Corporatism* was a dreadful monster that was about to devour us, rather than being accepted as a workable solution for the great diversity of human needs and ambitions in an imperfect world. Hostility to Corporatism and Big Government was the official ideology of the New Right – but not its actual practice. The state nowadays intrudes in areas of personal life that used to be sacrosanct. The rich know better than to bite the hand that feeds them: they keep and strengthen those aspects of state power that suit them.

Ordinary people get misled – noticing only the inconvenience of Trade Union membership, and unaware that the existence of strong Trade Unions ensured decent wages and employment rights even for those who would never think of being Trade Union members. And the media tell them that the actual deterioration for ordinary people is somehow due to globalisation, with great horrors threatened if globalisation were ever challenged.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a wave of rather incoherent anger that redefined

social life. Rather against its intentions, this protest did cause some substantial reforms without the need to smash what existed and start all over again. The acceptable limits of freedom expanded, in ways that have been allowed to slip out of public awareness. Britons under 40 seem unaware that it was ever considered unusual for a normal heterosexual couple to spend some time living together before getting married, or before splitting and seeking elsewhere. Or that BBC television ran something called *The Black and White Minstrel Show* from 1958 to 1978, featuring white Britons wearing the 'blackface' that was the respectable end of the vicious racism of the US South.<sup>7</sup> That song-and-dance show was hugely popular at the time, an embarrassment nowadays – but the left have let it get forgotten about.

Despite which, there is now a populist revolt against Blamerism. Something that can take either left-wing or right-wing forms: the 2015 British General Election saw a surge by the Scottish Nationalists and UKIP, both of which sounded rebellious. The 2010 election saw Tories and Liberal Democrats get 59% of the votes between them<sup>8</sup>: in 2015 it was down to 45%, with just under 37% voting Tory.<sup>9</sup> It was the oddities of Britain's archaic First-Past-The-Post electoral system that gave them victory, not a public opinion suspicious of deviations from Blamerism.

Ed Miliband let himself get intimidated by the media, rather than pointing out that they are dominated by business interests. He seemed hesitant about promising the people the things a majority of the people actually want. He was weak in contesting the Tory lie that Gordon Brown caused the current economic crisis by excess state spending. The crisis began with speculative finance in the USA, the sort of thing that was only possible because of the massive financial deregulation that began in the 1980s. He and others also showed a peculiar legacy of 1960s radicalism: he seemed to feel that British Labour should be ashamed of its own past. This made sense when 1960s radicals believed that they could transform everything: but the failures since then should have made them respectful of past Labour successes rather than submissive to Blamerism.

At the time of writing (22<sup>nd</sup> August), it is assumed that Jeremy Corbyn is going to win. His candidacy began as just another left-wing no-hoper standing in a leadership election that some centrist must win. But then his campaign took off: Labour supporters were sick of Blamerism. I don't

view him as an ideal candidate: I tend to wonder 'can anything good come out of *Islington?*' But the best of the rest is Andy Burnham, who did sensibly mention the need to re-connect to Labour's 'Spirit of 45', but also hesitant about challenging Blamerist values. And he should *not* be challenging the legitimacy of the vote: competitive electoral democracy will fall apart if everyone casts a slur on any outcome they don't like.

As I write, there are also some indications that the world is heading for another major economic crisis, without having properly recovered from the first.<sup>10</sup> We definitely live in interesting times.

### **The USA: the New Backwoodsmen bring forth Donald Trump**

Blamerism in Britain, Regantonism in the USA. Bill Clinton largely accepted the new consensus that Reagan had created, and Hillary Clinton is likely to be more of the same. And unlike the British Tories, the US Republicans have been unable to curb or neutralise the old-fashioned views of the authentic conservatives they need to win elections.

One problem is that authentic conservatives in Britain favour moderation and civilised values, and such a combination is much rarer in the USA. The USA suffers from a noisy populism that glorifies violence and ignorance. The rich are admired and the educated are resented.

Hence Donald Trump, currently front runner for the US Republican nomination.

"While most elite-funded and elite-supported Republicans want to increase immigration and decrease Social Security, a significant number of voters (across both parties) want precisely the opposite – to increase Social Security and decrease immigration. So when Trump speaks out both against immigration and against fellow Republicans who want to cut Social Security, he's speaking out for a lot of people."<sup>11</sup>

That's not quite accurate: Trump supporters are mostly white and Anglo and want Social Security mostly for themselves, deeply resenting anyone else getting it. This doesn't quite add up: or rather it would only add up with a properly fascist movement that based itself on an assertion of basic inequalities of race and nationality. Southern Democrats had a milder version of it, a semi-fascist politics that at one time was very fond of actual European fascism. People who were compelled to become anti-fascist because Hitler and Mussolini

were foolish enough to back the attack on the USA by Imperial Japan.

Civil Rights as pushed by Kennedy and Johnson lost the hearts of southern racists by making some genuine advances towards multi-racialism. US Republicans beginning with Nixon managed to sabotage functional multi-racialism by championing Individual Rights: but the Republican elite also had no interest in restoring the functional racist society that the US South used to have. Their main aim was to herd the racist sheep in directions that suited Big Business.

The US Republican elite play games. They tell ordinary voters they are part of the elite. And must be privately sniggering at those voters for believing it.

Multi-racialism doesn't just happen. In Britain, it is normal for people of different races to be living in the same street. That's because talk of 'individual liberty' was never allowed to override the needs of the society. It's still imperfect, but the main issue is immigration (much of it from Eastern Europe) rather than race.

Class War hasn't ended: it continues as a war by the rich against the rest of society. But also they are not going to take it very far, being an Overclass rather than people who truly aspire to rule. Just doing what they can get away with: very few of them would have the guts for a real war and many are 'Chicken-Hawks' who found legal loopholes to avoid the Vietnam War. You do have a few brave and tough characters, and perhaps the occasional would-be fascist dictator. But most of them have no intention of suffering much for whatever they believe in (if indeed they believe anything.) Alarmist talk of immanent US fascism misses the point. Authentic fascism will look after the needs of 'their people', but it also get millions of them killed – at least seven million non-Jewish Germans died as a result of a war he could easily have avoided or limited. The Overclass are shallow and have a pattern of fighting small wars with a mix of disillusioned professional soldiers, unreliable mercenaries and unsuitable paramilitaries like the National Guard. Naturally they do so without much success.

And it's not all negative in the Presidential race. Bernie Sanders as a self-declared socialist is making some impact as a candidate for the Democratic Party nomination, though it seems very unlikely he will actually get it. But he might shift the concept of what's normal, in a way that Obama has sadly failed to do.

Obama is likely to get his place in

history, thanks to his foes using the label 'Obamacare' for the basic Health Care that the US lacked for decades after most developed countries had it. It may be more than he deserves. He'd never really run anything before winning the Presidency, and both his political skills and his intentions have been weak.

### Unhappy Britons

"I was born with a plastic spoon in my mouth" sang *The Who* in their famous song *Substitute*.<sup>12</sup> Of course they were also born into a Britain that offered excellent free medical care and education, and where you had to be really determined to avoid getting a job. Part of the same incoherent anger I mentioned earlier. Don't take 'yes' for an answer. If it's not perfect, it is someone else's fault. All I need do is denounce them.

A sneeringly negative view of the better world created after 1945 didn't pave the way for something better: it paved the road down to Thatcherism. People mostly now don't try to put you down if you 'get around'. They mostly ignore your private life, especially if they figure you can make money for them. Whereas the Corporatist system did see an obligation to find jobs for everyone willing to work, nowadays people see no need.

And it makes us unhappy.

"Children in England are among the unhappiest in the world, behind countries such as Ethiopia, Algeria and Romania, research suggests.

"The Children's Society report, which looked at 15 diverse countries, ranked England 14th for life satisfaction of its young people, ahead of South Korea.

"More than a third of English children said they had been bullied in school, and half had felt excluded, it found."<sup>13</sup>

### Western Bubble, Chinese Scapegoat

From 2011 to 2013, the Financial Times Share Index (FTSE 100) was bouncing around between 5000 and 6000. From 2013 down to very recently, it has been between 6000 and 7000, recently pushing over 7000.<sup>14</sup> As of 25<sup>th</sup> August, it stood at just over 6000, with further falls likely.

The USA's Dow Jones shows much the same. It wandered between 10,000 and 13,000 from 2011 to 2013. Then went from 14,000 to a high of over 18,000 until the recent falls,<sup>15</sup> which have taken it down to 15666.44 when it closed on the 25th. Still way above where it was in 2011, despite a broad stagnation in the real economy.

That's to say, it is a *bubble*. A mass of heavily over-valued shares, helped by cheap money that Western governments have generously given to the more-than-millionaire class in the shape of Quantitative Easing.

A small wobble in the broadly-healthy Chinese economy is being blamed. But the previous absurd increases had nothing to do with China. Stock markets have always included pump-and-dump strategies, but the deregulation of the 1980s mean that the speculators are wholly dominant. They have maybe figured that this is a good time to dump.

They may also have figured that blaming China improves the chances that the Western public will carry on paying for their gambling losses for a few more years.

### Sex and Commerce

Sex can be used to sell anything except sex. That's the current rule for the Anglosphere. Young women are encouraged to sell their sex appeal without actually selling sex. But since there are far more aspirants than there are decent jobs, things slip.

I'd approve of banning the phoney implications of easy sex from advertising. I reckon it has a bad effect on both sexes – and note that some of the sexiest adverts are for products that only women might buy.

Feminist groups have sometimes protested. More often they have gone for the soft options of criticising overt pornography and commercial sex, relatively small interest-groups that are also very used to being unpopular. And they demand that prostitution as such remain illegal, despite massive evidence that it does not end but merely moves underground, with greater risk of crime.

Thankfully there are some contrary opinions:

"A crucial vote to protect the human rights of sex workers was passed today in Dublin at Amnesty International's decision-making forum, the International Council Meeting (ICM). Delegates from around the world adopted a resolution which authorized the International Board to develop and adopt a policy on the issue.

"Sex workers are one of the most marginalized groups in the world who in most instances face constant risk of discrimination, violence and abuse. Our global movement paved the way for adopting a policy for the protection of the human rights of sex workers which

will help shape Amnesty International's future work on this important issue,' said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International."<sup>16</sup>

The move has got less publicity than it deserved – which is why I'm mentioning it here.

No doubt most Feminists will continue to oppose it. They seem to have found a comfortable niche for themselves, given a nice niche based on an unrealistic claim to represent women in general.

Women are at least as diverse as men are. Everyone would see it as absurd if I said that I as a man felt offended by what some other men choose to do with their bodies. But what's sauce for the gander is also sauce for the goose, surely?

### Why Arabs Won't Westernise

At the time of the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, we were assured that ordinary Iraqis would be benefiting from the splendid Western package of Human Rights that the invading armies would bring with them. All of us in the Bevin Society said that it was foolish, well in advance of it failing to happen.

Likewise with the Arab Spring. Maybe 10% of Arabs had accepted some version of Western liberal values. Introduce competitive electoral politics, and the other 90% were going to assert themselves with some mix of authoritarianism and hard-line Islam.

This is another case of authentic conservatism withering in the West and being replaced by a slew of 1960s ideas, some of them mutated to be decidedly right-wing, but Radical-Right rather than conservative. 1960s Radicalism mostly ignored history and felt that it was demanding things that had always been valid and should be introduced immediately. There was little concept of human development – even though the way women were treated at the time would now be unacceptable, and there was some hesitation about including homosexuality in the new liberation. (Plus some debate before a vast majority decided that laws against under-age sex were not an oppression but a necessary part of protecting the vulnerable.)

But having made huge shifts in its own culture, the West started demanding that the rest of the world must immediately conform with whatever has just become fashionable in the West. Have people forgotten even that 'Human Rights' is itself a relatively new term, being coined after women made the very reasonable protest that 'Rights of Man' didn't clearly include them?

In the modern world, a government of foreigners can't develop a country. A colonial regime can do something, as Britain did in India, but that is only when attitudes are pre-national. And India did a lot more developing under its own government than ever happened under British rule.

People in the West seem to find this hard to grasp, so I'll give an analogy.

Supposing aliens had taken over Earth in the 1950s and tried to impose on the West what has become mainstream Western values as of 2015? Or even the moderate conservative version of these? Would there not have been massive resistance then to things we have voluntarily accepted by stages and as organic developments within many different societies.

Think in those terms and you can see why the West is failing in Arab World. Meantime in China, quiet changes have been successfully made by a party elite that is very much rooted in the society.

That's why the whole Iraq intervention was a complete goof. Saddam and the Baath were the only effective Westernising force. Now there's nothing functional.

### Why Asians Won't Entirely Westernise

Having wholly messed up the Arab world – and also re-ignited sectarian hatreds in first Former Yugoslavia and now Ukraine – the West is keen to do the same to Asia. Especially the various popular authoritarian regimes of East Asia.

Of course the real problem for the Western elite is that East Asia is returning to its historic role as something equal to Europe. Western Europe and the USA may *talk* about human unity, but what they mean is unity by everyone swallowing Europe's values, and then still consenting to play a secondary role.

China would need to remain poor and behave meekly in order to be truly acceptable to the Western elite. They'd be fools to listen to criticisms, and mostly they have not. (Though as I said last month, they inflicted the current stock-market crisis on themselves by swallowing Western notions of financial deregulation.)

It isn't just China. Just after the Soviet collapse, there was a wave of suspicion against Japan, even though Japan has a highly Westernised legal and political system. This faded only when Japan's economy stalled and they ceased to threaten to eclipse US and European Union power.

The amount of noise made about Human

Rights relates to how far a country is seen as a threat by the elite, who own or control almost all the media. So much more noise about Russia and China than India, even though India has not yet decriminalised homosexuality and the position of ordinary women is much worse. (Though if China ever fell into turmoil and ceased to be a challenge, India might find that they were next on the hit-list.)

Meantime very little said about the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, which reject Western values on the rights of ordinary people, but are very useful to the power of the Western elite.

### The British Royals and the Nazis

1930s pictures of our present Queen doing a Nazi salute shocked many people.<sup>17</sup> Not me. I know the actual history of mainstream and centre-right sympathy for Nazis in Britain up to maybe 1938, the moment when Nazi Germany suddenly came to be seen as a power-political threat to the British Empire, then the world's dominant power.

What was maybe more shocking than the future Queen as a child being influenced by her pro-Nazi uncle Edward was the wife of the future George 6<sup>th</sup> also giving the Nazi salute. The late and widely-admired Queen Mother for most of her daughter's reign, she was old enough to know what she was doing.

But hardly alone in liking Nazis. The *Daily Mail* was continuously pro-Hitler for as long as this was respectable.<sup>18</sup> Hitler by the time of the 1936 Berlin Olympics was openly a dictator who had set aside parliament, and had murdered a whole range of opponents (not just the obnoxious Brownshirts) in the Night of the Long Knives. He had also stripped German Jews of their citizenship, and made it clear that these Olympics would be a Nazi party. And everyone came who normally came. The Soviet Union was never included until after World War Two, and the only refusal came from the newly elected Spanish Republic. Even Harold Abrahams, Jewish co-hero of that brilliant 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire*, chose to attend in his later role as a sports reporter.<sup>19</sup>

Someone should do a film covering the bad moral choices that were made in 1936. Maybe call it *The Hitler Games*.

### Regiments Rule OK?

"We modern humans cooperate to an extraordinary degree. We engage in highly complex coordinated group activities with

people who are not kin to us and who may even be complete strangers. Imagine, in a scenario suggested by anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy of the University of California, Davis, in her 2009 book *Mothers and Others*, a couple of hundred chimps lining up, getting on a plane, sitting for hours extremely passively and then exiting like robots on cue. It would be unthinkable—they would battle one another nonstop. But our cooperative nature cuts both ways. The same species that leaps to the defense of a persecuted stranger will also team up with unrelated individuals to wage war on another group and show no mercy to the competition. Many of my colleagues and I think that this proclivity for collaboration—what I call hyperprosociality—is not a learned tendency but instead a genetically encoded trait found only in *H. sapiens*. Some other animals may show glimmers of it, but what modern humans possess is different in kind.

"The question of how we came to have this genetic predisposition toward our extreme brand of cooperation is a tricky one. But mathematical modeling of social evolution has yielded some valuable clues. Sam Bowles, an economist at the Santa Fe Institute, has shown that an optimal condition under which genetically encoded hyperprosociality can propagate is, paradoxically, when groups are in conflict. Groups that have higher numbers of prosocial people will work together more effectively and thus outcompete others and pass their genes for this behavior to the next generation, resulting in the spread of hyperprosociality. Work by biologist Pete Richerson of U.C. Davis and anthropologist Rob Boyd of Arizona State additionally indicates that such behavior spreads best when it begins in a subpopulation and competition between groups is intense and when overall population sizes are small, like the original population of *H. sapiens* in Africa from which all modern-day people are descended." (*Scientific American*,<sup>20</sup>)

Like other mammals, we can be vicious in individual conflicts. Like other social primates, we can have fights between rival groups. But wider cooperation - potentially with the entire world - is the specific human development.

So is it 'Regiments Rule OK'? Forming large *socially coordinated* groups seems to be a specifically human achievement. Some animals form vast herds, and birds form flocks, but these are mere mobs with no coordination. Animal herds attacked by

wolves, lions etc. do not gang up on the predator as humans would. And as apes and other strongly social creatures would, but only in bands of maybe 50 closely-related individuals.

This may well have been the key advantage of modern humans over earlier near-humans. Small family bands would have got into confrontations, as with other apes. But the *Scientific American* article suggests that the modern humans would have had wider alliances and probably called in hundreds of young men and mature warriors from neighbouring bands, intimidating the opposition. That's probably what happened to the Neanderthals: each group was on its own whereas the humans had networks of friendship and mutual aid and kept grabbing new lands.

Though even modern humans need coordination. A regiment, usually 800 to 1000 strong, functions in wars as a single cooperating unit. It's there to fight other humans or sometimes to oppress them, even massacre them, and most regiments will do so if ordered. But it's much too large a group for most of its members to know each other, never mind have close ties. The military and most other human bodies take a modular approach, groups within groups, the closer the stronger.

Not that it's just about war. 'Hyper-sociality' may well have made us the most successful of the apes. But it has been sharing and cooperation on other matters that have made us something greater.

### Ancient violence

If we humans really gained global dominance by being able to form armies rather than just bands of fighters, then we paid a price for it later on in our development. Plenty of ancient skeletons show signs of violent death. And it got worse after agriculture was invented, and people became much more likely to stand their ground rather than move on to avoid a fight:

"A mass grave containing at least 26 skeletons is further evidence of the brutal conflict that appears to have beset central Europe 7,000 years ago..."

"Individuals had their heads smashed. Some even had their legs broken, which could indicate they were also tortured... the condition of the burial pit fits an emerging pattern of widespread violence in Early Neolithic times.

"Similar mass graves have been unearthed at Talheim, also in Germany, and at Asparn/Schletz in Austria.

"The occupants were likely all drawn from agricultural communities whose

pottery decoration style has led to them being dubbed the Linear Pottery culture, which translates as Linearbandkeramik (LBK) in German.

"This group has left a rich archaeological record, which Christian Meyer and colleagues say highlights the unusualness of the mass graves.

"These people would normally have been buried in a ceremonial style, carefully positioned on their left side, and surrounded by artefacts of value.

"But in the pits, the bodies have been dumped in haphazard fashion, and are surrounded by all manner of waste objects."<sup>21</sup>

Another recent discovery suggests that the *possibility* of living off one fixed patch of land was known much earlier, but not followed up:

"Until now, researchers believed farming was 'invented' some 12,000 years ago in an area that was home to some of the earliest known human civilizations. A new discovery offers the first evidence that trial plant cultivation began far earlier – some 23,000 years ago..."

"Although weeds are considered a threat or nuisance in farming, their presence at the site of the Ohalo II people's camp revealed the earliest signs of trial plant cultivation – some 11 millennia earlier than conventional ideas about the onset of agriculture.

"The plant material was found at the site of the Ohalo II people, who were fisher hunter-gatherers and established a sedentary human camp..."

"Because weeds thrive in cultivated fields and disturbed soils, a significant presence of weeds in archaeobotanical assemblages retrieved from Neolithic sites and settlements of later age is widely considered an indicator of systematic cultivation..."

"The researchers found a grinding slab – a stone tool with which cereal starch granules were extracted – as well as a distribution of seeds around this tool, reflecting that the cereal grains were processed for consumption. The large number of cereals showing specific kinds of scars on their seeds indicate the likelihood of those cereals growing in fields, and the presence of sickle blades indicates that these humans deliberately planned the harvest of cereal."<sup>22</sup>

It seems likely that the wandering hunter-gatherer lifestyle was preferred for as long as it was possible. People might plant crops sometimes, but would not become dependent on them. But that

depended on there being enough free land. If there *wasn't*, due to some local drought or other disaster, a new way of life would emerge. People who had grown up with agriculture would then stick to it, and also push out seeking new lands.

It's definite that agriculture entered Europe from West Asia, with a mix of new people pushing in and existing peoples copying or being absorbed by the newcomers. And it's a pattern that kept on happening. Most people know that the English originated from settlers from what's now North Germany and Denmark. Much less known is evidence that the original Celts were also conquerors from Central Europe, probably moving in several waves and absorbing older local populations.

And of course there was also always a lot of violence between people who were culturally identical, as with the Central European massacres 7000 years ago. And as with the continuous local conflicts in the oldest Celtic and Germanic legends, reflecting the violent warrior cultures we find from archaeology.

It's an odd way for civilisation to have developed. And lots of people have wondered if it is some sort of error in human biology or culture. Even the Science Fiction ideas that we might be much more violent than the typical intelligent species capable of developing technology, and are currently being left alone to see if we improve.

Whatever about that, improvement is certainly useful and also entirely possible. Born in 1950, I grew up with the dominant idea that we were almost certain to kill ourselves in nuclear war. We avoided that: we can go on improving.

### Snippets

#### Islamic Greens

"Islamic environmental and religious leaders have called on rich countries and oil producing nations to end fossil fuel use by 2050.

"The Islamic Climate Declaration says that the world's 1.6bn Muslims have a religious duty to fight climate change.

"It urges politicians to agree a new treaty to limit global warming to 2C, 'or preferably 1.5 degrees.'

"The Declaration asks Muslims, in the words of the Koran, 'not to strut arrogantly on the Earth'."<sup>23</sup>

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#### The Right Hand of the Universe

CERN's Large Hadron Collider was recently re-started with boosted power. And has an interesting but unconfirmed

new discovery:

“W bosons, which carry the weak nuclear force, are supposed to come only in left-handed varieties. The debris from smashing protons at the LHC has revealed evidence of unexpected right-handed bosons...

“If confirmed, it would be the first boson discovered since the Higgs.”<sup>24</sup>

They expect to be able to confirm or reject the idea by October this year. If valid, it would go beyond the existing Standard Model for particles. (Whereas the Higgs Boson was long expected.)

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Populations in India and China

“A new UN study of global population trends predicts that India will overtake China to become the world’s most populous nation by 2022.

“The report also says that Nigeria will replace the US as the world’s third most populous country by around 2050.

“Africa is expected to account for more than half of the world’s population growth over the next 35 years.

“The current world population of 7.3 billion will reach 9.7 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion in 2100, it predicts.”<sup>25</sup>

China’s one-child policy was harsh, but has paid off. (And don’t believe stories about a demographic crisis: the problem almost everywhere is a lack of jobs for young people to do.)

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Climate Change Marches On

Globally, July 2015 was the hottest July ever.<sup>26</sup> Of course there are lots of regional variation. In the UK, it started hot: “a maximum temperature of 36.7 °C was recorded at Heathrow (Greater London) on the 1st, a new UK record for July.”<sup>27</sup> But then it cooled, so that the UK was slightly below average.

The year 2015 is expected to beat all previous records. The feared El Nino effect did not come this year, but is likely for 2016. And may be very bad indeed.

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Websites

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

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# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## **Transatlantic Trade And Investment Partnership**

The Scottish National Party initiated a debate on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership on 7 July. It was introduced by Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh. Some interjections and a brief part of the Minister's reply have been omitted.

### **Ms Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP):**

I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss this important issue here today. While the public debate around the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, seemed to quieten down after the white hot heat of the general election, the issue is once again in the spotlight following the debate on the Lange report in the European Parliament this week. It is right that, at this important moment in the development of this agreement, the House considers the deal and its possible implications for our public services, especially in light of yesterday's vote—although it is an indicative vote, and therefore non-binding.

After two years of negotiations, TTIP remains a highly controversial issue across Europe. To date, almost 2.5 million people have signed a Europe-wide petition in opposition to the proposals. It is clear from that, and from the high degree of public participation in consultations on the issues, that many people remain highly sceptical about the detail of those complex negotiations. That mobilisation of public opinion is a credit to the tireless campaigning work carried out by organisations such as War on Want and other campaigns, including that of 38 Degrees, which plays a valuable role in helping to inform the debate on a range of issues and in affording people the opportunity to make their voice heard.

Before I move to the areas of most concern to my constituents and me, I should state that some parts of the current proposals, despite their faults, have widespread support. I agree with the fundamental principle that has underpinned the negotiations. Europe and the US should work together to increase trade across the Atlantic. Trade is good for jobs. Scotland alone enjoyed £3.9 billion of exports to the US in 2013, making the US our single biggest market outside the EU. The US remains the largest inward investor in Scotland, with investment supporting some 100,000 jobs. I support measures that would grow the market for Scottish products in the US, and back any plans that will attract new investment to Scotland to support our growing economy. Our export potential is huge, and we must do all we can to support Scottish firms in maximising that.

It is in that context that I support a reduction in tariffs that would allow Scottish firms to compete on a level playing field with US manufacturers, because that would be good news for Scottish jobs. Despite these potential benefits, however, several key aspects of the proposals serve to undermine the whole process as things stand. The lack of transparency around the negotiations has prevented proper scrutiny and diminished public confidence. It is unacceptable that Members of the House and the European Parliament have been prevented from properly examining the documents in the process. At one stage, Members of the European Parliament were only allowed to see the documents relating to the treaty in a secret room and could not even remove them. It is self-defeating to act in the public good but prevent the public from properly examining the work that is being carried out on their behalf.

It is also of great concern to many that, in order to standardise the rules governing markets in the US and the EU, TTIP will lead to the lowest common standard of regulations. The European Union in particular has been a force for good in the creation of world-leading safety standards, which protect the best interests of workers and consumers. It is one of the many benefits of retaining membership of the European Union. We should celebrate those successes, not seek to undermine them. However, my main point is that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership has the potential to undermine public services in my constituency and across Scotland and the UK. We need to take decisive action now to prevent this outcome. The Scottish Government have already made a number of representations to the UK Government and the European Commission about the possible implications of TTIP for Scottish public services, in particular the Scottish NHS and Scottish Water. I welcome the tone of the responses to date, which have contained encouraging words about how TTIP does not pose any threat to the NHS. In particular, I welcome the statement by the European Commission Director General for Trade that

“the net effect of the EU's approach is that nothing in TTIP will lead to privatisation of the NHS”. However, the fact remains that both the Scottish public and the Scottish Government must be able to see the final legal text of any agreement to be fully assured on this vital issue.

### **Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP):**

I have been contacted by a number of people who work in the NHS and a number whose lives depend on a successful NHS. Their concern is that TTIP may be the first step along a road towards the kind of health service

that we see in parts of north America, where the first thing they do with a casualty coming into hospital is check their credit rating before checking for a pulse. I hear what my hon. Friend is saying about the assurances we have had from the European Commission. Does she believe that the people of Scotland have had sufficient reassurances to take the Commission's words at face value?

**Ms Ahmed-Sheikh:**

I do not think we have had sufficient reassurances, but the people of Scotland can be absolutely assured that every one of my hon. Friends will be here to ensure that we continue to represent their best interests and protect the public services that are dear to our heart and, indeed, to the people of Scotland, whom we represent. The lack of transparency on the detail continues to undermine the public statements made by Ministers and European officials. I am disappointed that yesterday the European Parliament failed to take the opportunity to amend the Lange report to explicitly protect public services such as the NHS and water.

What is demanded, and what we require, is a clear and unambiguous exemption from the deal that guarantees that democratically elected Governments in Scotland and beyond cannot be forced to privatise services and that any attempts to roll back previous privatisation will not be open to challenge under the new rules. These conditions must be explicit.

We come now to one of the areas of greatest concern: the process known as investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS. Including this type of measure in the agreement potentially undermines the right of European Governments to regulate effectively on a range of issues. As the Minister will be aware, the most relevant example of that is the recent action by the Uruguayan Government to legislate to increase the size of the health warnings on cigarette packs, in an attempt to reduce the number of people smoking and improve public health.

In response, the multinational tobacco giant, Philip Morris, used a similar process to sue the Uruguayan

Government. The concern of many of us, including the Scottish Government and our trade unions, is that similar measures could be used by private organisations here to limit our democratically elected Government's powers in a range of important areas. My right hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) has considerable experience in this area, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I understand that if he catches your eye he hopes to raise it before the Minister replies.

In February this year, SNP Members of the Scottish Parliament, led by our First Minister, signed up to a pledge proposed by Unite, which stated, amongst other clauses, that "TTIP must not give current or future US investors new rights that they could use to sue any level of government, public authority or NHS organisation because of their policies or actions relating to public healthcare."

My colleagues and I absolutely support that pledge. Of course we welcome the recent developments announced by the Commission in May, but there is still some distance to travel if the final agreement is to gain our full support. This Government must clearly state to our European partners that the UK will veto TTIP unless we receive an explicit exemption for the NHS and Scottish Water as part of a general public sector exemption. We are very proud of our public services. Governments in Scotland, the UK and beyond must therefore be able to manage those services for the greater good without fear that their democratic mandate might be overruled in the courts.

I hope that the Minister can start to set out today how this Government are making progress in delivering the kind of deal that Scottish MPs and the Scottish Government can support and the current timetable for agreement and ratification. In particular, I hope he takes this opportunity to set out how Parliament will be able to scrutinise the final proposal before it is ratified. We must have a full debate on this important matter. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership undoubtedly has great potential to help

grow the Scottish economy. We must ensure that that is not undermined by unwarranted and damaging provisions that put our public services at risk.

**The Minister for Skills (Nick Boles):**

It is a pleasure to respond to this Adjournment debate. I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the right hon. Member for Gordon (Alex Salmond) are disappointed that I am replying to the debate rather than his new friend the Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise. She was due to be here, but is on her way to "Question Time", where she may well meet the right hon. Gentleman again. I shall do my best to respond to the debate on her behalf. If I do not adequately answer any of the detailed questions that have been posed, I will make sure that she writes to hon. Members with all the details.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (Ms Ahmed-Sheikh) on securing this debate on an important subject that has been raised with me by constituents in a number of emails and letters over the past few months. I am glad she acknowledged that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a very beneficial free-trade area, and that her fine country and the entire United Kingdom rely on trade and have benefited from trade over centuries and generations. Indeed, we think that we are quite good at it and that we usually benefit more even than our trading partners from its expansion.

The Government are confident that the agreement will produce huge economic benefits on both sides of the Atlantic. Outside the EU, the US is the largest export market for British goods and services, and a successful deal could eventually boost our economy by as much as £10 billion each year. That is a large and abstract number, but it translates into additional disposable income of about £400 a year for the households that the hon. Lady and I represent. More money in people's pockets, cheaper goods and services, more jobs, and new markets for small and growing businesses—those are the things that we are talking about

when we talk about this agreement. It is not an abstract or technical process established by elites; it is an opportunity for people up and down the land to benefit.

**Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP):**

The Minister made an interesting point about a £10 billion benefit to the United Kingdom economy. Where did that figure come from, and what analysis was undertaken to produce it?

**Nick Boles:**

I do not have that information in my pack, but I shall be happy to provide it. As I have said, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise will reply in writing to any detailed questions that Members may have. The hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire referred to concerns, which have certainly been expressed to me, about the potential impact—or the alleged potential impact—on our national health service. All of us in the House have a responsibility to provide our constituents with the facts as we best understand them, and not to fuel scare stories. I therefore think it important to say that absolutely nothing in the proposed deal would threaten the public nature of our public services, and, in particular, our national health service.

The hon. Lady referred to, and I will now repeat, some of the words of the European Commissioner for Trade, Cecilia Malmström, who wrote to a Minister in January about the NHS. She said: “member states do not have to open public health services to competition from private providers, nor do they have to outsource services to private providers”.

She also said: “member states are free to change their policies and bring back outsourced services back into the public sector whenever they choose to do so, in a manner respecting property rights... it makes no difference whether a member state already allows some services to be outsourced to private providers, or not”.

The European Union negotiating position for the TTIP deal is to ensure that EU countries will be free to decide how they run their public health systems.

The NHS—our NHS: the Scottish NHS, the English NHS, and the NHS in all parts of the United Kingdom—is not at risk from this agreement.

**Ms Ahmed-Sheikh:**

The Minister will have noted that the proposal for a specific opt-out was defeated in yesterday’s vote. How can he be so sure that we will be protected in any future agreement, and can we be assured that we will have an opportunity to debate it?

**Nick Boles:**

I shall come to the point about debating it, but let me first deal with the hon. Lady’s point about an opt-out. Of course it would always be great for the text of any agreement to contain all the reassurances that are required, but, even before yesterday’s vote, the Government were entirely satisfied that the position regarding TTIP would not threaten the public status of our NHS or other public services. We were entirely satisfied that there was absolutely no intention on the part of the Commission in negotiating the agreement, or on the part of any other EU member state, to allow the status of either our public services or theirs to be threatened. We are satisfied with the substance, although I acknowledge that more reassurance for our constituents would be welcome if it could possibly be provided. I fear that, to some extent, the hon. Lady praised 38 Degrees, but I would not be so kind. I think that, all too often, that organisation whips up a great many ungrounded fears. It is important for us, as Members of Parliament, to try to reassure our constituents.

The hon. Lady referred to—and the right hon. Member for Gordon also dwelt on—some of the questions relating to the ability that corporate interests might be given to challenge regulations. I want to be very clear about what will be involved. The ISDS tribunals will be able to grant compensation for actions and decisions by Governments according to regulations that investors can show to have been unfair or conducted in an undue way. They will not be able to overturn, amend or eradicate any regulations that Governments bring

in legitimately.

I want to move on to the important question raised by the hon. Member for Ochil and South Perthshire about whether Parliament will have an opportunity to consider the Bill. I want to be clear so, if hon. Members will forgive me, I will read a little from the text in front of me. The agreement is expected to be a mixed agreement to which the UK is individually a party. It will therefore be subject to agreement by member states’ Parliaments—including that of the UK—the EU Council and the European Parliament. As part of this process the UK Parliament will receive the complete draft text of the agreement to scrutinise in debates in both Houses.

I hope that provides the reassurance that the hon. Lady seeks. I note that the party that currently governs Scotland is now very adequately represented in this House and I note the level of interest shown by her party late on a Thursday afternoon, so I am sure that she and her colleagues will provide the level of scrutiny that she seeks.

In conclusion, I am certain that this agreement could have enormous benefit for the people of Scotland and the people of the United Kingdom. I am satisfied that the agreement will not threaten the public services that we hold dear and that we want in large measure to remain public—there is nothing in it that will do that. I am also satisfied that there is no process in it that will usurp Parliaments or democratic processes for changing regulations or laws, but I endorse and support the desire for proper scrutiny of an agreement that will be a very substantial commitment by all member states of the EU. I congratulate the hon. Lady for starting that process here this afternoon. I have no doubt that she will continue it over the months to come.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Comment:**

The Minister confessed that he did not have the information at hand to support his contention that the UK economy would benefit from TTIP to the tune of £10 billion each year. That being so, he is, as Clem Attlee would have said, “not up to the job!” The

£10 billion is a figure plucked from a report by the Centre For Economic Policy Research (CEPR) for the European Commission, (EC), of which Boles must have been aware, and is the UK's share of an estimated 119 billion euros benefit for the EU as a whole. The figure has, however, been deemed erroneous by independent research.

A Keep Our NHS Public Briefing Paper, *'The questionable economic gains from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)*, published last year, argued that "it is clear that the figure of 119 billion euros relates to a projected 2027 economy — in other words to the potential impact of TTIP 10 years after its implementation. This means that the figures in the key findings are erroneous—that 119 billion euros is not the extra extra gain that TTIP would bring each year but the cumulative benefit that might be accrued by 2027..."

Note: The Briefing Paper also says that "the EC describes the CEPR as an independent research organisation. However, CEPR's website shows that it receives financial support from central banks and 'corporate members', including HM Treasury, while Platinum Membership is available for those who want 'an active influence on CEPR's research and policy direction'" In fact, the number of central banks providing CEPR with financial support is in excess of forty.

One would expect Keep Our NHS Public to pick holes in the TTIP, but it is also questioned by the Heritage Foundation (HF) a right wing research body based in the United States. In September 2014, research into the TTIP for the HF by Theodore R. Bromund Ph.D., Luke Coffey and Bryan Riley, examining the CEPR report, argued that the benefits of the TTIP "have been oversold by some of its proponents." The research paper, *'The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): Economic Benefits and Potential Risks'*, said, inter alia, "No U.S.-EU agreement, however, can do all that has been claimed of the TTIP, and there are reasons to believe that the TTIP's economic and

broader geopolitical benefits have been oversold by some of its proponents."

It went on to say: "A number of efforts have been made to model the economic benefits of a TTIP agreement. Such estimates are speculative and will remain so until—and, to an extent, even after—an agreement is negotiated and put into effect." And confirming that the economic benefits will be spread over ten years, the paper says, "Moreover, trade agreements do not work like pay increases: The gains do not come all at once. They arrive slowly as the agreement is implemented and the market adapts to these changes....in the case of TTIP, most Americans and Europeans would barely notice them. If, as the CEPR assumes, the gains would not fully materialize until 2027..."

### **Welfare Reform Bill**

MPs debated the Second Reading of the Welfare Reform Bill on 20 July, a day before they went into summer recess. Parliament returns on 7 September. Labour's Stephen Timms moved an amendment to the Bill which supported some of its contents. Timms is the member for East Ham, a constituency, one imagines, with a high level of poverty. Harriet Harman, Labour's acting leader, insisted on a policy of abstention on Second Reading, rather than opposition. In a Guardian interview on 10 August she regretted her decision for Labour to abstain. In the interests of space some interjections have been omitted from the debate.

**Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab):** I beg to move,

*That this House, whilst affirming its belief that there should be controls on and reforms to the overall costs of social security, that reporting obligations on full employment, apprenticeships and troubled families are welcome, and that a benefits cap and loans for mortgage interest support are necessary changes to the welfare system, declines to give a Second Reading to the Welfare Reform and Work Bill because the Bill will prevent the Government from continuing to pursue an ambition to*

*reduce child poverty in both absolute and relative terms, it effectively repeals the Child Poverty Act 2010 which provides important measures and accountability of government policy in relation to child poverty, and it includes a proposal for the work-related activity component of employment and support allowance which is an unfair approach to people who are sick and disabled.*

In government we addressed all the challenges set out by the Secretary of State. We stand for the right to work and the responsibility to work. We believe the Government have a responsibility to ensure full and fulfilling employment. We believe in making work pay so that people are always better off in work, and that work is the best route out of poverty. The deficit has to be eliminated. We believe in controlling the costs of social security so that it is fair on the working people who pay for it and so that it is there for people who need it because they cannot work or earn enough to live.

We support a number of measures in the Bill. We welcome the reporting obligations on full employment, apprenticeships and troubled families. We are committed to a cap on household benefits to help make families better off in work. We support reforms to mortgage interest support that will strengthen work incentives and deliver savings. But this Bill does some very bad things as well. It abolishes the duty of Government to tackle or even to report on child poverty, it breaks promises that the Conservative party made before the election to protect sick and disabled people, and it comes alongside a ruthless reduction in the support to working families through tax credits that will reduce work incentives and undermine the goals of universal credit. Universal credit is a reform which, even though it is running four years late, we still want to succeed.

Because we support some measures in the Bill, oppose others and want to change yet others to make them workable, we ask the House to support the reasoned amendment in my name and those of my right hon. and

hon. Friends.

**Mr Duncan Smith:**

I want to establish clarity for those on the Government Benches as well as those on the Opposition Benches. Putting aside the fact that in Committee he may want to table amendments to make changes, do the official Opposition support the principle that those with more than two children should not receive further child tax credits? Is that the principled position they support? That is missing from the right hon. Gentleman's reasoned amendment.

**Stephen Timms:**

The Secretary of State does not need to wait until the Committee because we will table a raft of amendments tonight: if our reasoned amendment fails and the Bill receives a Second reading, we will table our amendments. He will see in that list of amendments a series of amendments to deal with the unfairness in that part of the Bill. Those amendments will give him the answer that he seeks. They will appear on the Order Paper tomorrow so that the House can consider them over the weeks ahead.

**Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab):**

My right hon. Friend is right to talk about removing unfairnesses. There are a number of unfairnesses in the Bill that affect carers. The Conservatives seem blind to the impact of their measures on carers. Can my right hon. Friend say whether we will table an amendment to exempt carers from the benefit cap? Carers should not be affected by the benefit cap and they should never have been affected by the bedroom tax, but the Government would not listen about that either.

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That will indeed be the subject of one of our amendments, because at the moment carers who do not live with the person they are caring for are caught by the cap, and they should not be.

I want to turn to the impact of the Budget changes on tax credits and on universal credit, some of which are in the Bill and some not. Of course the increase in the minimum wage is welcome, but it does not make up for the measures in the Budget, though mostly not in the Bill, that cut tax credits for working families. The claim that they do make up for it—the Secretary of State repeated it in his speech—is, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, “arithmetically impossible”. The problem will be especially bad in the next couple of years. The increase

in the national minimum wage is phased in over five years, but big tax credit cuts hit immediately next year. Over 3 million working families will lose over £1,000 a year on average, and work incentives will be cut. That is the reason we voted against the Budget. When the Government bring forward the statutory instruments to implement those huge cuts to the incomes of working families, we will vigorously and fiercely oppose them.

**James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con):**

Do Labour Members not understand the fundamental idea that being in work should always make people better off than being out of work? If so, will the right hon. Gentleman lead his party through the Lobby in support of the proposals in this Bill that make people better off for being in work?

**Stephen Timms:**

I fear that the hon. Gentleman did not understand the Budget. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Budget reduced the income of 3 million working families by over £1,000 a year on average, and in many cases it lessens the incentive for the first person in a household to go into work. He need only read the very clear analysis of that point by the IFS.

**Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab):**

My right hon. Friend goes right to the heart of one of the difficulties involved. I support the idea of getting away from taxpayer-funded poverty pay to a situation where people are paid a genuine living wage. The IFS analysis shows clearly that the people most affected by this change are working families in the second lowest decile. If it goes through, together with the other changes, I will have to go back to my constituents and explain why I have made them poorer in work.

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight this, because the IFS is absolutely clear that the cuts in tax credits target working families. Those people will lose out from the changes not in this Bill but in the Budget—that is why we voted against them. This is not about making work pay; it is about making working families pay. As the party of working families, we will be fighting those changes tooth and nail in the period ahead.

**Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab):**

Returning to my right hon. Friend's commitment to amend unfairnesses in the Bill, will he confirm that one of his amendments might tackle the obscenity

of a woman who has been raped having to prove to the Department for Work and Pensions that she has been raped in order to be able to claim tax credits in future?

**Stephen Timms:**

We will have to hear from the Government how they envisage that part of their proposal working, but I can well understand the concern that my hon. Friend raises. Let me turn to the individual measures in the Bill, starting with the benefit cap. We support the principle that work should always pay and that people should be better off in work than on benefits. That is why our manifesto supported a household benefit cap and the idea that it should be lower in areas where there are lower housing costs.

**Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab):**

Does my right hon. Friend accept that Conservative Members do not seem to understand that two out of three children growing up in poverty are in working households?

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. For the first time, the majority of children below the poverty line—quite a significant majority, as she says—are in working families. That is a reflection of how things have gone over the past few years. To avoid hardship and unfairness with the reduction of the benefit cap, we will press for some people to be protected from the cap. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) referred to the position of carers. Under the current cap, carers who live with the person for whom they are caring are exempt, yet 8% of those affected by the cap are carers. That is because carers who do not live with the person they are caring for are included in the cap. We want that to change. We think that those with the very youngest children should not be affected by the cap. We also want protection for those affected by domestic violence. As it stands, those who have been affected by domestic violence can be exempted from job-seeking requirements at the jobcentre, but if they are living in supported accommodation a cap will apply. The amendments that we will publish tonight would exempt them along the same lines as the current exemption in jobcentres.

It is absolutely vital to keep the implementation and the impact of the benefit cap policy under scrutiny. There must be jobs for people to move into and childcare available to help them. We need to be vigilant against increases in homelessness and child poverty. We also need to make

sure that the policy does not have knock-on consequences for councils and others which mean that it ends up costing more than it saves. If the Bill goes ahead, we will seek to add a requirement for the Secretary of State to report to Parliament within a year on the impact of the policy.

There do need to be some safeguards in place, as I have been spelling out. Indeed, the Government themselves have recognised the need for a fund to protect people in exceptional circumstances. We welcome the extra £150 million for the fund for discretionary housing payments to help mitigate the worst impacts, but it will not be enough. Many local authorities have already exhausted their funds, which are vital in preventing those affected from becoming homeless. With the cap now lower, there will be more demand for discretionary help. We will therefore want to amend the Bill to require the Social Security Advisory Committee to review the funding for discretionary housing payments each year to make sure that sufficient resources are available.

**Caroline Lucas:**

The right hon. Gentleman has talked a lot about child poverty. The benefit cap, according to the Government's own figures, will push a further 40,000 extra children into poverty, yet he is talking about some amendments around the edges. Will he explain how much extra child poverty is acceptable to Labour Front Benchers?

**Stephen Timms:**

As the hon. Lady well knows, the big impact on child poverty will come from the huge cuts in working tax credits and other changes not in this Bill but elsewhere. I hope that she will join us in fighting very strongly against those changes when the House has the chance to do so.

**Andrew Bridgen:**

The shadow Secretary of State is making a brave effort to defend whatever his party's policy is on this, but he has very little credibility because the country knows that under the previous Labour Government the number of workless households doubled, so Labour policies not only trap people in welfare but trap people in poverty.

**Stephen Timms:**

Child poverty fell dramatically under the previous Government; now it has plateaued. I fear that because of measures announced in the Budget, it is going to rocket, and we are determined to stop that happening if we can.

Another reform in the Bill that we support in principle is the provision to turn support

for mortgage interest into a repayable loan. That is a sensible step, in principle, given that the benefit enables homeowners to retain an asset and potentially gain substantially from rising house prices. However, it must not make affordability problems worse for people struggling to stay in their homes. Repayments must not tip people into repossession and homelessness. The Secretary of State did not tell us what arrangements are proposed for repaying these loans. We will argue that those who access that support should be able to defer repayment until they sell the property without pressure from the Government to do so. The Budget announced an increase in the waiting period for support for mortgage interest from 13 weeks to 39 weeks. That is too long. As it is a loan scheme, why make people wait, particularly as that could force them into the hands of loan sharks? With support for mortgage interest becoming, in effect, a form of low-risk consumer credit, it should be readily available without nine months of delay to those struggling to make repayments.

We welcome the plans to reduce social rents, which will save 1.2 million households £700 a year, but we have grave concerns about the impact on housing associations and local authorities. They will face a huge reduction in rent revenue, drastically undermining their capacity to borrow and to build. The Office for Budget Responsibility says that many fewer homes will be built; the National Housing Federation puts the figure at 27,000. We will table amendments to address that.

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

Is my right hon. Friend aware that anything up to billions of pounds will go missing from local authorities? If we lifted the cap, they could build more homes and thereby help address the terrible housing crisis, particularly in London and the south-east?

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Affordable home building is already at a historic low, and the Government need to stop making things worse. We will table an amendment requiring the Secretary of State to produce a plan to make up the shortfall in house building funds that will result from this change.

**Jeremy Corbyn:**

Obviously, a reduction in local authority rents is good for tenants—I fully understand that—but does my right hon. Friend know whether the Government have given

any consideration to the effect that a consistent drop in rental income over five years will have on the housing revenue account; on housing maintenance, including of the common areas of estates; and, of course, on any future building programme that could have been funded by the housing revenue account?

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The proposal will affect not only new house building funds, but funds for maintaining existing stock. The Secretary of State needs to explain how that shortfall will be met.

We support the aim to provide 3 million apprenticeships, but the Government need to do more than just publish a target in a Bill. We want quality apprenticeships. There is deep concern among businesses and others that the quality of apprenticeships is being watered down in order to increase their numbers, so we will table an amendment to require that the UK Commission for Employment and Skills should provide an independent assessment of whether quality is being delivered.

**Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab):**

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the concern about the impact of the changes to housing rental income relates not just to the immediate shortfall in funding, but to the uncertainty they will create among registered providers, whose business plans are drawn up five, 10 or 15 years in advance?

**Stephen Timms:**

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Attention has been drawn to that issue, not least by the *Financial Times*, which has reported that housing associations' business plans and their loan covenants and agreements with lenders could be at risk, and that even some big associations could go bust. The implications are very serious.

**Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con):**

The right hon. Gentleman is a reasonable man, so I am surprised that he cannot see the advantages of the housing policy in, first, reducing rents for large numbers of tenants who are among the poorest people in the land; secondly, obliging housing associations to make a 1% productivity saving each year, which is very small compared with other parts of the public sector; and thirdly, reducing the welfare spend and therefore the budget deficit. Surely they are all advantages.

**Stephen Timms:**

I think the hon. Gentleman was momentarily distracted, because I have welcomed both his first and third points. We welcome the fact that rents are being reduced, but he needs to recognise the impact that the changes will have. As I am sure he will be aware, housing associations do not share his rather sanguine view of what the changes will mean, particularly for new house building at a time when we all recognise the need for substantial new socially rented housing, which is not being delivered at the moment.

The Bill does not provide a definition of “full employment”. In line with recent research and the previous Labour Government’s definition, our amendment will set the full employment target at 80% of the working-age population. To pick up on a point rightly made in an intervention by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes), in our view the annual report on progress to full employment must also set out progress on the target to halve the disability employment gap.

We will support policies that make work pay and increase opportunity, but where the Government are wrong we will not hesitate to say so. The Conservative party promised in its manifesto that it would “work to eliminate child poverty” It is now absolutely clear that it did not mean it: the Bill abandons any pretence that it did. Instead of eliminating the scandal of child poverty, the Bill attempts to eliminate the term. Labour in government was committed to reducing the appalling levels of child poverty left behind by the Thatcher and Major Governments, and we did so. We introduced the Child Poverty Act 2010, with cross-party support, including from the Secretary of State when he was in opposition and the Conservative party. It contained clear targets to reduce absolute and relative poverty, persistent poverty and material deprivation.

We have known for some time about the debate in the Conservative party about the validity of the relative poverty measure, but now it is not just changing the definition. It is interested not in stopping child poverty, only in stopping people talking about it. It is exactly the same with food banks: the Tories want to stop people discussing them. Clause 6(9) tells us that we should not refer any more to the Child Poverty Act and that instead it is to be known as the life chances Act, but there are fewer life chances for a child growing up in poverty, and poverty needs to be reduced. Getting rid of the targets and measures leaves the Government with

no commitment to tackle child poverty at all, just a requirement to publish a mix of loosely connected statistics. Instead of removing child poverty, the Bill seeks simply to remove it from the lexicon.

**John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab):**

My right hon. Friend is, like me, a London MP. The driver of child poverty in my constituency is a combination of low pay and high private rents. When the cap was introduced, the Prime Minister advocated—there was an element of logic in this—the idea that it would reduce rents in the private rented sector. That has failed in my area and right across London; rents have increased significantly. Have the Government produced any evidence to prove that the cap reduced rents in the private sector at all?

**Stephen Timms:**

I certainly have not seen such evidence. We have just seen the impact assessment, and the figures are in there, so we will have to see what information they provide. I am worried about the proposal—it was made in the Budget, but it is not in the Bill—of a cash freeze in local housing allowance for the next four years, irrespective of what is happening to rents in London and elsewhere. The child poverty changes are a shameful attempt to brush under the carpet what should be right at the forefront of Ministers’ minds as they make policy and manage the economy. It is, I am afraid, the final nail in the coffin for compassionate conservatism.

**Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con):**

It is always a mystery to me why more Labour Members do not agree with the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field) and, indeed, Alan Milburn, who think that the Government’s proposal to measure the root causes of child poverty is an improvement on what went before. Why does not the right hon. Member for East Ham (Stephen Timms) agree with them, or indeed with another 50 of his colleagues? Is it not the case that Labour is a shambles?

**Stephen Timms:**

I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Frank Field) will contribute to the debate, but I can tell the hon. Lady that he feels very strongly, as we all do, that this huge hit on 3 million working families—it will take more than £1,000 a year from them, with tax credit changes coming in next year—is a very bad thing to do. It will let down working families, and all Labour Members will

fight hard against the iniquitous change being made by the hon. Lady and her colleagues.

Before the election, the Government promised to protect those with disabilities from welfare cuts, but that promise has been broken. As has already been discussed, Parkinson’s UK reckons that there are currently 8,000 people in the work-related activity group with progressive and incurable conditions such as Parkinson’s and multiple sclerosis. Macmillan, in opposing the provision, points out that “thousands... will experience a significant drop in support at some point during their cancer journey.”

As my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) said in an intervention, that group includes people with learning disabilities and many with mental health problems. The Bill reduces the level of support for new claimants by nearly £30 a week, from £101 to £73. That change introduces a new perverse incentive, because it increases the incentive for people with health problems to get into the support group by providing a higher payment, meaning that even more people will not get help to return to work.

The recent marked increase in the ESA case load, at a time when unemployment has come down, has been sharpest in the support group. Anyone in the support group will be seriously deterred from taking the risk of trying employment, for fear that it will result in their receiving a much lower level of support if they are then reallocated to the work-related activity group. I say to the Secretary of State that a particular worry is that young people with mental health problems, who ought to be getting help to return to work, are being abandoned in the support group at the moment. We therefore want the ESA measures removed from the Bill.

The Bill seeks to restrict support provided through tax credits and universal credit to families with more than two children. We will aim to amend the Bill in Committee, for example to protect families with multiple births or those whose claim arises because of exceptional circumstances. We do not support locking in a cash freeze for four years for tax credits and benefits. We recognise that reducing the deficit will require savings on indexation, but those decisions should be made annually so that actual inflation can be taken into account. We do not support the accompanying sharp reductions in income thresholds for tax credits and the corresponding cuts to work allowances announced in the Budget,

which will be legislated for outside this Bill. They will be a huge setback to work incentives. The whole point of universal credit was supposed to be to improve work incentives; now it is being hobbled even before it has properly got started.

We want progress towards full employment. We want demanding targets for apprenticeships and help for troubled families. We want a household benefit cap, and to make sure that families are always better off in work. We want support for mortgage interest and reductions in social rents that will deliver savings to the taxpayer. We want better economic opportunities, and we want social security to be fairer and more affordable.

However, children who are growing up in poverty—as we have heard, the growing majority of them are in working households—need a Government committed to improving their position. People who because of illness and disability are found by the Government's own tests to be not fit to work, as can happen to anybody,

need social security to assure them of a decent basic standard of living. Families who are doing the right thing and going out to work, often when they are already struggling with low or stagnant wages and increasing insecurity and uncertainty about their future, need a Government who are on their side, not one who will pull the rug out from under them, as the tax credits announcements in the Budget will do.

These are not just matters of morality and social justice, although they most certainly are; this is also about how we secure our future prosperity and stability, ensuring that everybody in Britain can play their part, make the most of their talents and make the most of the ambitions of all.

Labour's amendment was lost by 308 votes to 208. The Second Reading was passed by 308 votes to 124, with 48 Labour MPs defying the official line to abstain (Labour's Kelvin Hopkins was a Teller for the Noes, but included among those recorded as opposing the Bill.) UKIP MP Douglas Carswell voted with the Tories

against the amendment and in support of the Bill.

In addition to the 48 Labour MPs, those who also voted against the Bill were 55 SNP (SNP's Owen Thompson was a Teller for the Noes), 7 Lib Dems, 7 DUP, 3 Plaid Cymru, 3 SDLP, 1 Green, and 1 Ulster Unionist (UUP). Of the 48 Labour MPs who voted against the Bill, 34 supported the amendment.

The 13 Labour MPs who abstained on the amendment and also voted against the Bill were: Diane Abbott, David Anderson, Richard Burgon, Jeremy Corbyn, Margaret Greenwood, Imran Hussain, Sir Gerald Kaufman, Ian Lavery, John McDonnell, Michael Meacher, Ian Mearns, Grahame M. Morris, David Winnick.

I am sometimes a fox and sometimes a lion. The whole secret of government lies in knowing when to be the one or the other.  
*Napoleon Bonaparte*

## Continued From Page 24

not been slow in noticing the gaps in the market, and facsimile products are appearing. The trade mark, "*Made in Italy*", is now suffering the same fate as counterfeited Gucci watches. *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (18.10.14) says that in Moscow it is possible to find "*Casa Italia*" mozzarella, "*Italia*" salami, or "*Sono Bello Quattro formaggi*" pizzas, among increasing numbers of fakes.

Underpinning this counterfeit "Italian" food is Russian investment in the production of the raw materials used to manufacture these products. By last October it was reported that milk production had already risen by 20% in the Central Urals. The article also noted the investment of 2 million roubles in a plant to manufacture "*parmesan*" and "*mozzarella*" cheeses. Not good news for the Italian economy.

Jacopo Berti puts the blame on Premier Matteo Renzi in an article in *bellunopress* on 24 July. This is a man needing to make a political point. He is from the M5S (Beppe Grillo's party) and was an unsuccessful challenger to incumbent Luca Zaia (Lega Nord) for the Presidency of The Veneto. Renzi, he says, is putting the interests of Merkel and Obama before that of the Italians. He sees The Veneto as being a major loser in the sanctions war. He operates in a politically tense area. This is one that has resisted, indeed refused, Renzi's request to take more migrants. Zaia's refusal said that this was an "*exodus on a biblical scale*". and no more.

The migrant situation is and has been the really pressing problem for Italy. The Italians are conflicted. Their culture suggests they should be welcoming and, as already mentioned, The Pope confirms this. *Corriere della Sera* (11 .06.15) ran an editorial saying that the far poorer south, with its under-invested services and infrastructure, is more willing to be accommodating to the migrants, many of whom stay there. This contrasts with the rejectionism of the North. Treviso, a Lega Nord stronghold,

had protests from residents who objected to 101 migrants being housed near them; they were removed elsewhere. The Mayor of Vicenza was reported as saying that there is now no Land of Milk and Honey, although to be fair to him he does denounce the excessively extreme anti-migrant screams of the Lega Nord.

To conclude, two stories with different flavours:

On 23 August around two hundred or so migrants protested in Milan by pouring onto the street and stopping the traffic. They were angry that the official documents giving them legal status were not being processed swiftly enough. They also wanted to be integrated. Plus they needed to demonstrate to the press that the conditions of their camp were very poor. They were sleeping eight to a tent and they had leaked in the recent heavy rain. "*We want our documents*" said the headline in *La Repubblica*. The response by the Lega Nord was so totally predictable as to almost be unnecessary to reproduce. However, Roberto Calderoli (Lega Nord), already infamous for saying that when he looked at Cecile Kyenge, a black MP, he "*can't help but think of an orangutan*", was outraged. They should be grateful for what they had been given. Others said that if they were unhappy they should go back home. Calmer voices condemned the EU for lacking the leadership to help Italy deal with its influx in a humane way.

Finally, a touching story, surprisingly from The Veneto's town of Portogruaro. Their local group of migrants had worked with volunteers from the community to renovate a disused and severely run-down football and basketball pitch. The locals were grateful and the migrants were obviously pleased and also thrilled to be accepted. Two hundred or so locals and migrants marched together to the Town Hall and then on to The Oratory of Sant'Antonio to celebrate. The march was called The *Half-caste March*, the migrants held a banner saying: *Thank you Portogruaro* and they all sang the national anthem, "*Fratelli d'Italia*" (Brothers of Italy), together as they processed. Makes you weep, doesn't it?

# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## NO TIME TO BE SILLY

The traditional August silly season in the press was as absent in Italy as it was in the UK. There were stories about strong sea currents sadly drowning two swimmers in the same place on separate occasions. There were pictures of women wading in floods in Pisa caused by an unusual August spell of bad weather. And predictably, Silvio Berlusconi was still agonising about his successor.

Also as predictable were the repeated reports about the continuing influx of migrants and the inability of other European countries to act on the seriousness of the situation. There were reports of a 27 year old unemployed Senegalese man who lives in Italy making a sexual attack on a woman on a beach in Rimini. This provided a wonderful opportunity for Matteo Salvini, the Secretary of the *Lega Nord*, to stir up anti-migrant feelings on his Facebook site. "*Papa Francesco (the Pope) asks for compassion for the migrants and a welcome for strangers....Once again it was a migrant, a stranger - for him there isn't any compassion. Amen*".

There is one under-reported subject, and August could be blamed for its lack of prominence. Such important news possibly has to wait until everyone gets back to work and the mainstream media wakes up again. The internet is already reporting and discussing it. The topic is the harsh effects of the Russian sanctions on the Italian economy.

As a brief background, sanctions on Russia were imposed on the financial sector and on certain individuals' financial interests and also on all energy-related equipment and technology. Also on the import and export of arms and related material. But this, as Lilit Gevorgyan, a Russian Analyst at IHS, says, is symbolic because such trade is "*limited in volume*".

*La Repubblica* ran a short article on 8 August and that seemed to be it. The EU's own website (31.01.15) explains the origins of the sanctions thus: they

*"were introduced in response to Russia's destabilising role in Eastern Ukraine"*. The retaliatory Russian sanctions must be seen, as Paolo De Castro, Italian MEP, says, to be "*bad news for European agriculture....this ping pong of sanctions between Russia and Europe does more damage to the Europeans than the Russians.*" He asks for some serious consideration to be given to the struggling agri-industry by increasing efforts to make a diplomatic settlement, instead of hitting producers. (*agronotizie.image-linenetwork*, 26.06.15) Others would agree with De Castro. For example, The Guardian *commentisfree* website on 22 July reproduced a piece by Conservative MP Daniel Kawcsyynski. He questioned the effectiveness of the anti-Russian campaign, noting that Russian cooperation should be seen as useful, rather than the opposite, and that the West needs its help to combat terrorism.

The UK could be seen to be shooting itself in the foot. The value of wealthy Russians' property in the UK is rising against the rouble, which is devaluing because of the sanctions. This has the unwanted effect of making this a lucrative long-term investment for them. It could also be wise for Russian investors to move their financial dealings from the UK and Europe to the Far East. This would be to their and not the UK's advantage.

The Russian sanctions were imposed on Europe, the US, Australia and Canada. Looking at 2013 figures, Russia's largest imports by far were fruit and vegetables. Italy is being hit particularly hard by not being able to export fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products including cheese - think of Parmigiano and Grana Padano Parmesan cheeses and Mozzarella cheeses. Also meat and meat products - the salamis and other meat derivatives such as Parma Ham. A piece in *The International Business Times* (07.08.15) quoted a Professor of Modern Russian History at the

University of Chicago saying that these foods were a symbol of sophistication for the new Russian middle classes. They see the West as "*the centre of civilization: good food, good wine (and) sensual pleasures*". Actually wine (and baby foods) are not included in the list of embargoed goods.

The *La Repubblica* article of 8 August gives the costs of sanctions to the Italian agri-industry at €240m for the last twelve months. The full cost including indirect and other affected sectors was estimated by Banca Intesa to be €700m. However the story is more complicated. A spokesperson for the EU Commission dryly said that European exports to other countries are now increasing and so are compensating for such losses and that the solution was in Russian hands, awaiting their compliance with the Treaty of Minsk. This complacent statement masks the reality and doesn't help Italy. For example there is now a glut of milk in Italy, which has resulted in a fall of 20% in the price given to producers. This fall also applies to other areas and is penalising large and small producers alike.

In mid-August there was a real silly-season event when the Russians bulldozed 20 tons of smuggled European cheese. Jean-Michelle Javel of a French Milk Coop threw up his hands in a gallic way and called it *fromagicide*. *Il Sole 24 ORE* (11.08.15) reported that the ordinary Russians, who were already feeling the weight of sanctions, were unhappy about the waste of good food. Someone suggested that people would try to dig it up when the winter comes. Apparently the historical periods of starvation and endemic under-supplies of food have left behind what the *International Business Times* calls "*a food neurosis*".

But behind the scenes and very significantly for Italy, Russian producers (and those in allied countries) have

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