

# Labour Affairs

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## Corbyn's Heavy Burden

In the eight months since he was elected Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn has been subject to a constant barrage of biting criticism and negative reporting. He won by a huge majority over his three opponents but this has not been respected by many of his Parliamentary Labour Party colleagues. The build up to last months local elections was coloured by accusations of anti-semitism and extremism against Corbyn and Sadiq Khan, the eventual winner of the London mayoral election. Both Corbyn and Khan stood accused of associating with, indeed supporting, anti-semites and Muslim extremists. Furthermore, Labour MP Naz Shah and Ken Livingstone, the latter a Corbyn supporter, committed the 'cardinal sin' of being anti-Israel and anti-Zionist, a term often falsely identified with anti-semitism.

Corbyn's opponents in the PLP used the elections as a litmus test of Corbyn's leadership. Given the chaos within the Conservative Party it was said that Labour ought to achieve a notable success. Only that would temporarily appease his opponents. But it was also forecast that Labour could lose heavily, providing further proof that with Corbyn as leader Labour would not form a government at the 2020 general election. A coup was hinted at but nothing came of it. Now, following Labour's decent showing, it is widely agreed that a challenge to Corbyn's leadership would be confined to the long grass at least until next year's County and Metropolitan District elections.

Sadiq Khan's victory over his Conservative Party opponent Zac Goldsmith was particularly significant. Khan was elected in spite of a deluge of media distortion and misrepresentation fed by Goldsmith and bearing the hallmark of Lynton Crosby, the Conservative's Campaign Manager for the 2015 general election. Khan was accused of sharing a platform with an alleged Muslim extremist and befriending other Muslim opponents of western governments. The fact that Suliman Gani, the alleged extremist, had also shared a platform with a Conservative backbencher and had vocally supported Kahn's Conservative opponent at the 2015 general election cut little ice with Goldsmith or with the media. Khan was a Muslim and therefore a supporter of extremism and that was that.

In support of Goldsmith, Prime Minister David Cameron made the preposterous statement that if Khan were elected London mayor the safety of Britain would be put at risk. Much was also made of Khan's 'support' for Corbyn in spite of the distance he placed between himself and Labour's leader. To facilitate a wider choice, Khan had added his name to Corbyn's nomination for the Labour leadership election but then voted for Andy Burnham.

Naz Shah, newly elected at the 2015 general election as Labour member for Bradford West, had posted a map on Facebook in 2014 which showed the state of Israel superimposed on a map of the United States. This was more than a year before Corbyn became leader and drew no criticism at the time. So, why now? One can only assume it was used to attack Corbyn. Yet in spite of a fulsome apology to the House of Commons she was suspended from the Labour Party pending an inquiry into anti-semitism within Labour. The same fate of suspension awaited Ken Livingstone. Livingstone had connected Hitler with Zionism in 1933 when he supported the transfer of Germany's Jews to a settlement in the middle east, 'until he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews'

Shah and Livingstone are not alone in their 'crime' of anti-semitism. They are joined by the ubiquitous Norman Finkelstein, a prominent American Jewish intellectual and critic of Israel who posted the superimposed map on his Facebook on 3 August 2014 which Shah picked up and relayed on her Facebook the following day. Finkelstein said the map was seen as a joke in the USA. It was a joke used as a stick to beat Corbyn with by the British media and his PLP opponents. Both have their own ulterior political motive: to smear Labour and to get rid of Corbyn.

Leading up to the local elections Labour was seen as a hotbed of anti-semitism, although less than two dozen members were accused of the 'crime' out of a total membership of 388,000 plus. But the period since 5 May has been strangely quiet. The hysteria appears to have subsided, which suggests that the brickbats of anti-semitism and extremism were primarily an attack on Corbyn. Corbyn's record opposing anti-semitism and extremism is beyond reproach, but Cameron continued

to label him as an extremist and an apologist for terrorism and accused Labour of having a problem with anti-semitism. Labour's record fighting anti-semitism is well documented, including active opposition in the 1930s to Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, and more recently the racist National Front and British National Party.

The elections themselves, while not a huge success for Labour were not the catastrophic failure forecast by some. At least in England and Wales. Labour however performed badly in Scotland, losing eleven seats to the SNP and two to the Conservatives. But it had in any case been decimated at the 2015 general election, losing seats across Scotland to the SNP. Scottish Labour is no longer the left of centre party, a label now claimed by the SNP.

Scottish Labour's problem is that it is too closely identified with Labour in England, perceived as a Westminster centric party which campaigned strongly against independence in the Scottish referendum. In spite of having just one Westminster seat in Scotland, the Conservative party with 31 seats, including 24 Regional top-up seats, is the second largest party in the Scottish Parliament. Labour, with 24 seats, 21 of them Regional top-ups, trails in third. The SNP's 63 seats are four short of an overall majority but they can govern with the support of any of the other parties.

In the elections to the Welsh Assembly Labour won 29 seats but were two short of a majority and require the support of Plaid Cymru to govern. Labour lost Rhondda to Plaid Cymru's leader Leanne Wood, otherwise the general picture remained pretty much the same. The notable exception was UKIP winning seven seats, but these came from the top-up seats in the five regions, not those contested on a constituency basis. The Conservatives held onto their six constituency based seats and won a further five Regional top-ups, but lost three seats overall. The Liberal Democrats came away with a loss of four top-up seats, holding onto Brecon and Radnorshire, their only

constituency seat.

It looks very likely therefore that Labour will need to win hand-somely in England if it is to be the party of government in 2020. On the evidence of the elections in England there is a long way to go but there are a few healthy signs. There are 353 councils in England. 124 of these were contested in May, with Labour losing just one council to No-Overall-Control and 18 councillors in total. Corbyn said that the party's performance had exceeded expectations and had "hung on" but his critics claimed that Labour had done badly given the rifts in the Conservative party which Labour failed to exploit. However, this ignored the constant carping by Corbyn's PLP critics and the consistently bad press he and Labour received in the pre-election weeks.

Corbyn has appealed to his critics in the PLP to stop the infighting and focus their attacks on a divided government. Their behaviour to date suggests this may have little effect. And as party members choose the leader it is difficult to see how they can overturn last years' victory for Corbyn should they be successful in calling for another election. So what should they do? They could leave Labour and set up another party, but the failure of the SDP thirty years ago would cause them to pause for thought. It merged with the Liberals, but the resultant Liberal-Democrat Party has become pure liberal. It has no significant remnant of the SDP's attempt to save the values of the traditional Labour right. So it looks as though Corbyn is in for an uncomfortable ride of further criticism for as long as he is Labour leader.

Until we totally change the way we elect our leaders, until we remove private money from public campaigns, lying will be the de facto method of governance in this country.  
Peter Schuyler

Truly successful decision making relies on a balance between deliberate and instinctive thinking.  
Malcolm Gladwell

# Labour Affairs

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# Parliament and World War One

by Dick Barry

## PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT. 19 December 1916

*Prime Minister Lloyd George moved the Second Reading of the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill on 19 December 1916. In the first part of a very long speech he focused on the offer from Germany of a conference to discuss peace terms.*

### **The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Lloyd George):**

I am afraid I shall have to claim the indulgence of the House in making the observations which I have to make in moving the Second Reading of this Bill. I am still suffering a little from my throat. I appear before the House of Commons to-day, with the most terrible responsibility that can fall upon the shoulders of any living man, as the chief adviser of the Crown, in the most gigantic War in which the country has ever been engaged—a war upon the event of which its destiny depends. It is the greatest War ever waged. The burdens are the heaviest that have been cast upon this or any other country, and the issues which hang on to it are the gravest that have been attached to any conflict in which humanity has ever been involved. The responsibilities of the new Government have been suddenly accentuated by a declaration made by the German Chancellor, and I propose to deal with that at once. The statement made by him in the German Reichstag has been followed by a Note presented to us by the United States of America without any note or comment. The answer that will be given by the Government will be given in full accord with all our brave Allies. Naturally, there has been an interchange of views, not upon the Note, because it only recently arrived, but upon the speech which propelled it, and, inasmuch as the Note itself is practically only a reproduction, or certainly a paraphrase of the speech, the subject matter of the Note itself has been discussed informally between the Allies, and I am very glad to be able to state that we have each of us

separately and independently arrived at identical conclusions.

I am very glad that the first answer that was given to the statement of the German Chancellor was given by France and by Russia. They have the unquestionable right to give the first answer to such an invitation. The enemy is still on their soil; their sacrifices have been greater. The answer they have given has already appeared in all the papers, and I simply stand here to-day, on behalf of the Government, to give clear and definite support to the statement which they have already made. Let us examine what the statement is, and examine it calmly. Any man or set of men who wantonly, or without sufficient cause, prolonged a terrible conflict like this would have on his soul a crime that oceans could not cleanse. Upon the other hand it is equally true that any man or set of men who out of a sense of weariness or despair abandoned the struggle without achieving the high purpose for which we had entered into it—being nearly fulfilled would have been guilty of the costliest act of poltroonery ever perpetrated by any statesman. I should like to quote the very well known words of Abraham Lincoln under similar conditions: "We accepted this war for an object, and a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God I hope it will never end until that time." Are we likely to achieve that object by accepting the invitation of the German Chancellor? That is the only question we have to put to ourselves.

There has been some talk about proposals of peace. What are the proposals? There are none. To enter at the invitation of Germany, proclaiming herself victorious, without any knowledge of

the proposals she proposes to make, into a conference, is to put our heads into a noose with the rope end in the hands of Germany. This country is not altogether without experience in these matters. This is not the first time we have fought a great military despotism that was overshadowing Europe, and it will not be the first time we shall have helped to overthrow military despotism. We have an uncomfortable historical memory of these things, and we can recall when one of the greatest of these despots had a purpose to serve in the working of his nefarious schemes. His favourite device was to appear in the garb of the angel of peace. He usually appeared under two conditions, firstly, when he wished for time to assimilate his conquests, or to reorganise his forces for fresh conquests; and, secondly, when his subjects showed symptoms of fatigue and war weariness, and invariably the appeal was always made in the name of humanity; and he demanded an end to bloodshed at which he professed himself to be horrified but for which he himself was mainly responsible. Our ancestors were taken in once, and bitterly they and Europe rue it. The time was devoted to reorganising his forces for a deadlier attack than ever upon the liberties of Europe and examples of that kind cause as to regard this Note with a considerable measure of reminiscent disquiet. We feel that we ought to know before we can give favourable consideration to such an invitation that Germany is prepared to accede to the only terms on which it is possible for peace to be obtained and maintained in Europe. What are those terms? They have been repeatedly stated by all the leading statesmen of the Allies. My right hon. Friend

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

has stated them repeatedly here and outside, and all I can do is to quote, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House did last week, practically the statement of the terms put forward by my right hon. Friend: Restitution, reparation, guarantee against repetition so that there shall be no mistake, and it is important that there should be no mistake in a matter of life and death to millions. Let me repeat again—complete restitution, full reparation, effectual guarantees. Did the German Chancellor use a single phrase to indicate that he was prepared to concede such terms? Was there a hint of restitution? Was there any suggestion of reparation? Was there any indication of any security for the future that this outrage on civilisation would not be again perpetrated at the first profitable opportunity?

The very substance and style of the speech constitutes a denial of peace on the only terms on which peace is possible. He is not even conscious now that Germany has committed any offence against the rights of free nations. Listen to this from the Note: Not for an instant have they (they being the Central Powers) swerved from the conviction that the respect of rights of other nations is not in any degree compatible with their own rights and legitimate interests. When did they discover that? Where was the respect for the rights of other nations in Belgium and Serbia? Oh, that was self-defence! Menaced, I suppose, by the overwhelming armies of Belgium, the Germans had been intimidated into invading that country, to the burning of Belgian cities and villages, to the massacring of thousands of inhabitants, old and young, to the carrying of the survivors into bondage; yea, and they were carrying them into slavery at the very moment when this precious Note was being written about the unswerving conviction as to the respect of the rights of other nations! I suppose these outrages are the legitimate interests of Germany? We must know. That is not the mood of peace. If excuses of this kind for palpable crimes can be put forward two and a half years after the exposure by grim

facts of the guarantee, is there, I ask in all solemnity, any guarantee that similar subterfuges will not be used in the future to overthrow any treaty of peace you may enter into with Prussian militarism? This Note and that speech proves that not yet have they learned the very alphabet of respect for the rights of others. Without reparation, peace is impossible. Are all these outrages against humanity on land and on sea to be liquidated by a few pious phrases about humanity? Is there to be no reckoning for them? Are we to grasp the hand that perpetrated these atrocities in friendship without any reparation being tendered or given? I am told that we are to begin, Germany helping us, to exact reparation for all future violence committed after the War. We have begun already. It has already cost us so much, and we must exact it now so as not to leave such a grim inheritance to our children. Much as we all long for peace, deeply as we are horrified with war, this Note and the speech which propelled it afford us small encouragement and hope for an honourable and lasting compact.

What hope is there given by that speech that the whole root and cause of this great bitterness, the arrogant spirit of the Prussian military caste, will not be as dominant as ever if we patch up a peace now? Why the very speech in which these peace suggestions are made resounds with the boasts of Prussian military triumphs of victory. It is a long paean over the victory of Von Hindenburg and his legions. This very appeal for peace is delivered ostentatiously from the triumphant chariot of Prussian militarism. We must keep a steadfast eye upon the purpose for which we entered the War, otherwise the great sacrifices we have been making will be all in vain. The German Note states that it was for the defence of their existence and the freedom of national development that the Central Powers were constrained to take up arms. Such phrases cannot even deceive those who pen them. They are intended to delude the German nation into supporting the designs of the Prussian military caste. Whoever wishes to put an end to their existence and the freedom of their

national development? We welcomed their development as long as it was on the paths of peace. The greater their development upon that road, the greater will all humanity be enriched by their efforts. That was not our design, and it is not our purpose now. The Allies entered this War to defend themselves against the aggression of the Prussian military domination, and having begun it, they must insist that it can only end with the most complete and effective guarantee against the possibility of that caste ever again disturbing the peace of Europe. Prussia, since she got into the hands of that caste, has been a bad neighbour, arrogant, threatening, bullying, litigious, shifting boundaries at her will, taking one fair field after another from weaker neighbours, and adding them to her own domain, with her belt ostentatiously full of weapons of offence, and ready at a moment's notice to use them. She has always been an unpleasant disturbing neighbour in Europe, and no wonder that the Prussians got thoroughly on the nerves of Europe. There was no peace near where she dwelt.

It is difficult for those who were fortunate enough to live thousands of miles away to understand what it has meant to those who lived near their boundaries. Even here, with the protection of the broad seas between us, we know what a disturbing factor the Prussians were with their constant naval menace, but even we can hardly realise what it has meant to France and to Russia. Several times there were threats directed to them within the lifetime of this generation which presented the alternative of war or humiliation. There were many of us who hoped that internal influence in Germany would have been strong enough to check and ultimately to eliminate this hectoring. All our hopes proved illusory, and now that this great War has been forced by the Prussian military leaders upon France, Russia, Italy, and ourselves, it would be folly, it would be cruel folly, not to see to it that this swashbuckling through the streets of Europe to the disturbance of all harmless and peaceful citizens shall be dealt with now as an offence against

the law of nations. The mere word that lead Belgium to her own destruction will not satisfy Europe any more. We all believed it. We all trusted it. It gave way at the first pressure of temptation, and Europe has been plunged into this vortex of blood. We will, therefore, wait until we hear what terms and guarantees the German Government offer other than those, better than those, surer than those which she so lightly broke, and meanwhile we shall put our trust in an unbroken Army rather than in a broken faith. For the moment, I do not think it would be advisable for me to add anything upon this particular invitation. A formal reply will be delivered by the Allies in the course of the next few days.

I shall therefore proceed with the other part of the task which I have in front of me. What is the urgent task in front of the Government? To complete and make even more effective the mobilisation of all our national resources, a mobilisation which has been going on since the commencement of the War, so as to enable the nation to bear the strain, however prolonged, and to march through to victory, however lengthy, and however exhausting may be the journey. It is a gigantic task, and let me give this word of warning: If there be any who have given their confidence to the new Administration in expectation of a speedy victory, they will be doomed to disappointment. I am not going to paint a gloomy picture of the military situation—if I did, it would not be a true picture—but I must paint a stern picture, because that accurately represents the facts. I have always insisted on the nation being taught to realise the actual facts of this War. I have attached enormous importance to that at the risk of being characterised as a pessimist. I believe that a good many of our misunderstandings have arisen from exaggerated views which have been taken about successes and from a disposition to treat, as trifling real set backs. To imagine that you can only get the support and the help, and the best help, of a strong people by concealing difficulties is to show a fundamental misconception. The British people possess as sweet a tooth as

anybody and they like pleasant things put on the table, but that is not the stuff that they have been brought up on. That is not what the British Empire has been nourished on. Britain has never shown at its best except when it was confronted with a real danger and understood it.

Let us for a moment look at the worst. The Roumanian blunder was an unfortunate one, but at worst it prolongs the War; it does not alter the fundamental facts of the War. I cannot help hoping that it may even have a salutary effect in calling the attention of the Allies to obvious defects in their organisation, not merely the organisation of each but the organisation of the whole, and if it does that and braces them up to fresh effort it may prove, bad as it is, a blessing. That is the worst. That has been a real setback. It is the one cloud—well, it is the darkest cloud—and it is a cloud that appeared on a clearing horizon. We are doing our best to make it impossible that that disaster should lead to worse. That is why we have taken in the last few days very strong action in Greece. We mean to take no risks there. We have decided to take definite and decisive action, and I think it has succeeded. We have decided also to recognise the agents of that great Greek Statesman, M. Venizelos.

I wanted to clear out of the way what I regarded as the worst features in the military situation, but I should like to say one word about the lesson of the fighting on the Western front, not about the military strategy but about the significance of the whole of that great struggle, one of the greatest struggles ever waged in the history of the world. It is full of encouragement and of hope. Just look at it. An absolutely new Army! The old had done its duty and spent itself in the achievement of that great task. This is a new Army. But a year ago it was ore in the earth of Britain, yea, and of Ireland. It became iron. It has passed through a fiery furnace, and the enemy knows that it is now fine steel—an absolutely new Army, new men, new officers taken from schools, boys from schools, from colleges, from counting-houses, never

trained to war, never thought of war, many of them perhaps never handled a weapon of war, generals never given the opportunity of handling great masses of men! Some of us had seen the manoeuvres. What would now be regarded as a division attacking a small village is more than our generals ever had the opportunity of handling before the War. Compared with the great manoeuvres on the Continent, they were toy manoeuvres. And yet this New Army, new men, new officers, generals new to this kind of work, they have faced the greatest Army in the world, the greatest Army the world has ever seen, the best equipped and the best trained, and they have beaten them, beaten them, beaten them! Battle after battle, day after day, week after week! From the strongest entrenchments ever devised by human skill they have driven them out by valour, by valour which is incredible when you read the story of it.

There is something which gives you hope, which fills you with pride in the nation to which they belong. It is a fact, and it is a fact full of significance for us—and for the foe. It is part of his reckoning as well. He has seen that Army grow and proved under his very eyes. A great French general said to me, “Your Army is a new Army. It must learn, not merely generals, not merely officers, but the men must learn not merely what to do, but how and when to do it. They are becoming veterans, and therefore, basing our confidence upon these facts, I am as convinced as I ever was of ultimate victory if the nation proves as steady, as valourous, as ready to sacrifice and as ready to learn and to endure as that great Army of our sons in France. That is all I shall say at the present moment about the military situation

“WHY MUST THE WAR GO ON?”  
**31 December 1916**

**Captain GANZONI** asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that a leaflet entitled “Why must the War go on?” written by the hon. Member for Stirling Burghs, and

Continued On Page 6

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Reactions to factory closures

Some years ago, a French website gave details of factories as they were closing; there were so many they gave up trying to keep up. Nevertheless, closures still provoke strong reactions, as in the following example.

#### Longwy enamel

Les *Emaux de Longwy* have produced decorative enamel in Longwy, on the Belgian border, since 1798. In recent years the firm being in difficulties, the workers accepted unpaid overtime, loss of bonuses, being paid late, first on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, then the 15<sup>th</sup> then the 20<sup>th</sup>. They were told, 'if you refuse, we close'. In November 2015, the manager said, 'since we are looking for someone to take over the firm, we'll stay as we are, and not bother to hold the scheduled staff representative elections.' The staff representative accepted this, but on 1<sup>st</sup> January she was told, 'you no longer have a mandate, so you no longer attend

the planning meetings'. After talking with the other employees, the by now ex-staff rep. went to see the labour inspector, who told her to start a union branch in the firm, which she did, to the indignation of the manager.

When the tribunal of commerce declared the bankruptcy of the firm, the employees decided to strike. The union federation office sent them a lawyer, and together they demanded to have their say in who would take over the firm. They studied the various proposals with the management and the tribunal of commerce. Their favourite, who had had discussions with the union CGT Federation for Glass and Ceramics, and who promised not to shed jobs, was chosen, after the employees threatened to strike if the tribunal of commerce's favourite was chosen.

The *Emaux de Longwy* website boasts of their latest creations and their commercial success. The union

representative says that relations with the new owner were good to start with, but are deteriorating; she was confident that the employees could defend themselves again.

#### Industrial taps in Ham

Pentair, a firm in Northern France making industrial taps, had 133 employees and was doing well: it was in the black and has funds for the next two years. It received 2 million euros in Tax Credit, under the government scheme of tax credits in exchange for job creation. Before Christmas 2015, the owner, an American pension fund, announced closure and relocation in the Far East. The accountant declared publicly that the closure was for the benefit of shareholders, the local MP, a right winger, blamed financiers. But the employees were resigned. They were told that the factory would be taken over, that everything would be sorted out and they didn't need to do anything. They are organised as a group, the 'Pentair' but are just awaiting events.

#### The CICE

This is the 'Tax Credit in Exchange for Employment' that firms are taking advantage of. It stands for 'Credit d'Impôt Compétitivité Emploi' [Tax Credit Competitivity/Employment]. When the law creating this credit was passed, the leader of the Employers Union (the MEDEF), Pierre Gattaz, wore a badge saying 'A million jobs'. The CICE is meant to help firms face up to international competition. Meanwhile, the major supermarket chain, Auchan, even though it pays tax in Belgium, receives this Tax Credit; and yet, in 2015, since receiving this subsidy, it was employing 1400 fewer people, compared with the previous year, and even though it had opened two new shops. Nevermind that it pocketed credits which depend on a promise to take on more staff. But see below (Labour Inspectors) on the power or absence of power of those tasked with

Continued From Page 5

published by the Union of Democratic Control, has been distributed from house to house in the city of York; and whether he intends to take any action in consequence of the statements and imputations contained therein?

**Sir G. CAVE:** My attention has been drawn to this leaflet, and it is receiving my consideration.

**Mr. PONSONBY:** Before the right hon. Gentleman answers, may I ask whether he is aware that this leaflet was submitted to the Censor before publication?

**Sir G. CAVE:**

No, Sir, I am not aware of it. My attention has been called to this leaflet. I will consider it.

**Mr. BUTCHER:** In view of the pestilential character of this leaflet, will you take steps to prosecute the hon. Member?

**Mr. PRINGLE:** Are we to understand that a leaflet which is passed by the Censor is of a pestilential character?

**Mr. GOLDSTONE:** Are there pro-Germans in the Censor's office?

Note: Francis John Childs Ganzoni (19 January 1892-15 August 1958) was a Conservative MP for Ipswich a seat he won in a by-election on 23 May 1914. He served in the First World War with the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment where he rose to the rank of Captain.

checking on labour practices.

### Plus ça change

In 1982, protesting against the taxes and contributions Mitterrand had heaped on enterprises, Yvon Gattaz, the father of the Pierre Gattaz mentioned above, and also head of the Employers Union, said: '[In these circumstances] our enterprises won't be able to run, or even walk. It's a race. You have to be in the starting blocks, jump the hurdles. They've given us lead shoes with these contributions we have to pay. The enterprise horse is so heavily laden he can't carry his rider and can only fall by the wayside.'

Thirty years later his son, Pierre, is also an amateur of metaphors: 'Our rucksack has been filled with stones between 2011 and 2013, with 30 billions worth of contributions. To run the marathon of international competition, we need this rucksack emptied as quickly as possible.' Different image, same message.

### Flexibility

A new meaning for the word 'flexibility' entered French dictionaries in 1983; according to *Larousse*, in their journal entry for the year 1986 'the word was launched by Yvon Gattaz, president of the CNPF [predecessor of the MEDEF] when he publicly asked the president of the Republic more suppleness for enterprises to help them cope with international competition.'

The change is not just in words but in reality. Between 1980 and 2007, the number of part-timers went from 6 to 18% of the work force, non permanent contracts have gone from 17 to 31% of the total; since 2007 the number of so-called self employed and other forms of precarious employment has also increased.

French workers are still not flexible enough. Pierre Gattaz: 'We need to no longer be subject to article 158 of the World Labour Organisation [charter] which demands that employers justify redundancies. As long as this supra-national constraint remains, we won't get to the bottom of the problem.'

### Labour Inspectors

Tefal is suing a labour inspector who was making difficulties regarding an illegal agreement the firm had negotiated regarding working hours. Tefal complained to the local director of

Labour Protection, the superior of the inspector in question. He put pressure on her to drop the case. Subsequently the inspector received, anonymously, transcripts of conversations between Tefal and the director; she passed them on to her union, which leaked it to the press. Tefal sued for breach of confidentiality. The inspector is now sentenced to a suspended fine of 3000 euros and was removed from the Tefal case.

### The future

The reports above are taken from a magazine called *Le Fakir*, published in Northern France by François Ruffin. Ruffin made the film '*Merci Patron*', a showing of which started the movement '*Nuit Debout*', nightly meetings in Paris on the Place de la République and in other French cities. Ruffin does not control what goes on in these meetings, and is exasperated by unrealistic demands, for 'general strike' for example. His view is that nothing will be done without an alliance between students and other relatively well off elements (those in *Nuit Debout*) and the working class. This alliance is not taking place yet, even if the leader of the CGT came to speak at Place de la République.

The example given by the employees of *Les Emaux de Longwy* shows the way forward: for workers to take the future of their firm in their hands. But movements such as this, even though not unique, are piecemeal and isolated. There is no national movement calling for worker participation, and more of it, as the answer to globalisation and factory closures. And it would most probably be too prosaic, and hard work, for the chatterboxes of *Nuit Debout*.

### The 49-3

This is the article of the 1958 Constitution which allows the Cabinet to impose a law that would not get a majority vote in Parliament, in the field of finance and the financing of Social Security, and, once a term, for any other law. This is how the government forced the passing of the Labour Law, the so-called El Khomri law, in the face of street and Parliament opposition. Hundreds of *Nuit Debout* participants gathered outside France's [National Assembly](#) to protest at the use of the '49.3' as it's called. The bill now goes to Senate. The last word has

not been said, as the railways, petrol refineries, lorry drivers etc go on extended strike. The CGT is leading the fight against the Labour Law, against its main rival, the CFDT, which has accepted the new law. At the moment the CGT represents more employees, especially in public services, but it may lose this majority in the next round of factory-based union elections in 2017. At the moment, relations between the two main unions could not be worse. One anti CFDT slogan reads: 'When slavery is re-established, the CFDT will quibble about the weight of the chains.' This disastrous division is not something that worries the *Nuit Debout* participants, and yet it must be a crucial factor in future political developments, and yet another factor in the weakness of employees in the face of management actions.

### WARMING EARTH FREEZING HEARTS

There is a world out there  
ill at ease  
its colourful coat ripped  
and with crunchy blackened  
bees  
half-standing are the trees  
without leaves  
the wheat fields scorched  
birds hop without wings  
in the landscape of the  
torched  
not a sound from the  
wrecked houses  
the sky is empty  
even the stars have been  
doused  
as if from a cordite deity  
the warming-earth warriors  
give it a wide berth  
while raving about the pollution  
of the earth  
no black diesel tank  
fumes  
do they sniff  
nor acknowledge  
that exploding bomb plume  
the soil grows mines  
rather than potatoes  
yet they remain incognito  
measuring the planet  
in Imperial  
while war becomes just  
another  
TV serial.

Wilson John Haire.

# Zionism's Suicidal Militancy: A Discussion Article

by Gwydion M. Williams

Brezhnev's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia caused the Soviet Union's collapse in 1989-91. It prevented the sort of reforms that let Communist China flourish.

The British Empire doomed itself in the 1930s when a Tory opposition led by Winston Churchill prevented Dominion status for India, which Gandhi would have settled for.

Future historians may say that not implementing the Oslo Accords in a way acceptable to Palestinians doomed Israel. That and the crazy policy of knocking over secular Arab dictatorships, which began in 1991 with the First Gulf War. Saddam Hussein might have settled for a writing-off of the debts he ran up in his failed war against Iran, in which he tried to do the West's work against the first wave of Islamic militancy. But Western leaders saw it as a wonderful opportunity to transform the Arab World into a collection of docile pro-Western regimes governed by Western-style multi-party parliaments. This foolishness continues in Syria, despite its massive failure. Implacable anti-Western Islamist movements grow increasingly strong: they were marginal in 1991. But fools return to their folly like a dog returning to its vomit.

Israeli Governments, most of them right-wing, played a covert but significant part in the process. Most Israelis are typical colonialists – they sometimes have vast amounts of *knowledge* about the people they rule, but very little *understanding*. They can't *afford* to understand, because then they'd have to see themselves as no better than the other side. A few do see it, as did some brave souls within the British Empire and other empires. Too few to change the suicidal militancy of the majority.

And in Britain? Just before the May Local Elections, there was an astonishing wave of claims of anti-Semitism against the Labour Party. Followed by a remarkable silence when it turned out that the voters had

ignored it—Labour outside of Scotland lost very few seats and less than the Tories lost. It's like the old story of the boy who called wolf – a scare story used too often loses its power, and may fail even when the danger becomes real.

Jews exist as many small minorities and one aggressive state that has been doing 'ethnic cleansing' since 1947 on what it sees as its own Holy Land. To reject the ethnic cleansing whoever's doing it is quite different from being hostile to the local Jewish minority, or to Jews in general.

Broad hostility to Jews does of course exist, including extreme forms like attacks on Jewish cemeteries. But Labour has always been the main force for general inclusiveness, giving relative security to Jews. Tories play around with prejudice to win votes, while also admitting rich Jews to the elite. Tories are the party that keeps racism alive, just as the US Republicans have been since the 1960s. (Though both parties try to have it both ways in their quest for votes.)

Racism against one group can very easily extend to anyone who isn't 'one of us'. Jews used to play an heroic part in anti-racism: some still do, but less than before.

Labour's crime was that Corbyn as party leader had sympathy for the Palestinians. The idea was that Labour would suffer an electoral disaster, after which the anti-Corbyn majority of MPs would remove him. I never saw this as feasible – a clear majority of party members would have backed Corbyn regardless, while a spoof like refusing to re-nominate him would have split the party and consigned the anti-Corbyn wing to the same fate as the SDP in the 1980s. Never the less, some apparently clever people were part of it. Some even stuck to the agreed line after it was clear that the only Labour major failure was in Scotland, where Labour had distanced itself from Corbyn and remained resolutely to the right of the Scottish Nationalists.

It is of course possible that a wrecked Labour Party would have been a welcome outcome. I'd suppose that most of the anti-Corbyn MPs have just failed to understand the new reality. But they could expect a secure personal future if they lose their seats, just so long as they have acted as loyal servants of the elite.

So Labour has been attacked as anti-Semitic. It's a dangerous game. There is a potential for a right-wing movement among the white working class that's anti-Jewish but not sentimentally attached to Hitler and the Nazis. Even, just possibly, one that could bridge the gap with British Muslims by saying that British Muslims are OK but no more immigrants, including those from Eastern Europe.

So far, groups like the National Front and 'British National Party' that tried to tap into this feeling have been wrecked by the revelation of their neo-Nazi core. By a conviction that Hitler was a misunderstood genius, even though fascism and similar movements were becoming the norm when he came to power in 1933. Even though he caused the deaths of at least seven million non-Jewish Germans, and lost far more ethnic-German territory than the unjust Versailles Treaty had taken. To imitate Hitler is to imitate someone with some gifts but far more foolishness. And fondness for Hitler goes flatly against the gut instincts of the people that such movements need. But one can't count on the Far Right remaining stupid.

The nature of mainstream English right-wing nationalism was understood by UKIP – which of course is not anti-Jewish, though it has somehow become bitterly anti-Scottish. It has worked with some odd allies within the European parliament, but insisted on a clear break with neo-Nazi views. But parties to the right of the Tories have so far come in waves and burnt out. If there is a decisive rejection of Brexit – anything like the 55 to 37 extreme shown by one recent poll,<sup>1</sup>

they might fall apart and leave the field open to something else. There has so far been no one clever enough to tap into anti-Jewish feelings while also being clearly hostile to Hitler, and *also* with the skills to put together a popular movement of the ignorantly resentful. Hopefully it will never happen, but that is hopeful.

Those May local elections also saw the failure of an extremely dirty campaign by Zac Goldsmith as Tory candidate for London Mayor. If there are anti-Jewish prejudices within the society, there are much stronger and more blatant anti-Muslim sentiments. He tried to tap into them. This is of course another suicidal impulse – Muslims are not going to stop being Muslims, but there is a reasonable case within Muslim tradition for rejecting the violent Islamic hard-liners. But most Muslims within Europe have reacted to hostility by becoming firmer in their assertion of Islamic traditions. And the West has nurtured an extreme interpretation of Islam favoured by Saudi Arabia, so long as those preaching it do not follow through the logic of their creed and become overtly anti-Western. But since that *is* the logic, it's hardly surprising that a lot of individuals follow it through, even while the Saudi princely government remains a bunch of hypocrites who do nicely out of Western friendship. The suppressed 28 pages of a US report into the attack on the Twin Towers apparently shows links between Saudi government workers and al-Qaeda.<sup>1</sup>

Are Jews discriminated against? If there were ethnic and religious quotas for MPs, there would be twenty-eight Muslim MPs and three Jewish MPs.<sup>1</sup> In fact there are 13 Muslim MPs, more than ever before.<sup>1</sup> (8 women, and overall 9 Labour, 3 Tory and a Scottish Nationalist.) There are nineteen Jewish MPs,<sup>1</sup> 11 Tory and 8 Labour, in line with the greater number of Tory MPs.

British Jews have earned the advantages they have. Won it in the face of widespread bias against them. Jews tend to be clever, hard-working and value education. Ashkenazi Jews have an average IQ 10% higher than the norm, which also means a much greater

number of individuals with extremely high IQs:

“While only about 2% of the U.S. population is of full Ashkenazi Jewish descent, 27% of United States Nobel prize winners in the 20th century, 25% of Fields Medal winners, 25% of ACM Turing Award winners, 9 out of the 19 world chess champions, and a quarter of Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners have either full or partial Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry.”<sup>1</sup>

Also more than a quarter of German winners of the scientific Nobel Prizes, before Hitler drove them out and enriched Britain and the USA with their talents. Jews do tend to succeed by being smarter, and of course it gets resented. But it's an error to see hostility to Jews as anything unique.

There's a fascinating book called *World On Fire* by Amy Chua. Born in the USA, but her parents came from the rich and privileged Chinese minority in the Philippines. (She also has a Jewish husband.) Best known for *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, but *World On Fire* is vastly more interesting.<sup>1</sup> She points to a global phenomenon of 'market minorities, with Jews in Europe and Europe's offshoots just one example.

Amy Chua comes from a small Chinese group called the Hoklo. Another similar group, the Hakka, has been even more remarkable among other Chinese. Lee Kwan Yew, creator of Singapore's success, came from a Hakka family. So did the founder of Taiping, a radical 19<sup>th</sup> century creed based loosely on Christianity that came close to overthrowing Imperial China and had points in common with Chinese Communism. Deng Xiaoping is also sometimes called a Hakka, though his daughter's biography says it's just one version of the family's origins.<sup>1</sup> Regardless, Hakka are not sharply separated from other Chinese. Lee Kwan Yew didn't speak the distinctive Hakka language and he promoted Standard Chinese (Mandarin) as one of four official languages for Singapore.

All market minorities are at risk at times of social tension. There is an interesting film called *Half of a Yellow Sun* dealing with violence against the

highly successful and entrepreneurial Igbo people (Ibos) within Nigeria.

For Jews, they used to be at particular risk because Europe based its morality on Christianity: the continued existence of Jews who'd ignored the message of Jesus was a theological embarrassment. It was also common before World War Two for many Catholics and some Protestant to denounce Jews as 'Christ-killers': crucifixion was a Roman punishment seen as blasphemous by religious Jews, but that didn't stop it.

Currently, Zionism serves as an irritant for Jews outside of Israel. On almost all issues, individual Jews are found on both sides and there is nothing that could sensibly be called Jewish politics. But the vast majority of Jews do support Israel. Accept the foolish policy of taking too much of the West Bank territories that Jordan took in 1947 and Israel conquered in 1967 in the Six-Day War. It is of course 'Judea and Samaria', territory of vast historic and religious significance to Jews. But it's also home to Palestinians, and important to Muslims everywhere.

Israel failed to get an agreement with Yasser Arafat because they took too much. Asked him to accept a set of fragmented territories equivalent to the Bantustans that White South Africa once tried imposing on Africans.

There are less than 15 million Jews globally, 6.4 million in Israel. There are 1.57 billion Muslims: in the long run this has to count for more. And it might not be all that long a long run. Hilary Clinton follows the standard pro-Israel line: Trump is vastly less predictable. He's so far been acceptably pro-Israel, but has switched very quickly on other topics. He's anti-Muslim, but might suddenly say 'it's not our fight'. His electoral base is people who don't much like Jews, though other prejudices currently take priority.

In watching Israel and Islam, I fear I'm watching a car-crash in slow motion. A disaster slowly unfolding and bound to get worse. If a better ending is possible, it would have to come from the left. But the chances are bad.

## Labour Briefing

# Anti-Semitism and the Labour Party:

A personal statement by Graham Bash

As a Jew (all my life) and Labour Party member (48 years) I am outraged at the way allegations of anti-Semitism have been used to silence legitimate criticism of Israel and undermine Jeremy Corbyn as my party's leader.

I know what anti-Semitism is. I was brought up to learn how the Jewish East End fought with the dockers against Mosley's fascists at Cable Street. I was told at school how it was a pity that Hitler didn't finish off the job of murdering all Jews. And very quickly I learned what it was like to be made to feel an outsider. It was hardly surprising that I started going on anti-fascist demos in my late teens and very soon afterwards joined the Labour Party, which I remain a member of to this day.

I know what anti-Semitism is. Apart from socialist, anti-racist politics, my other love is football. How many times as a West Ham fan have I had to endure my own team's fans singing "I never felt more like gassing the Jews"? Or being attacked by my team's own fans for daring to put up a 'West Ham fans United Against Racism' banner at Upton Park.

I know what anti-Semitism is - I have a sensitive ear for anti-Semitic comments - and, without doubt, the place I have encountered it least is within the Labour Party. In 48 years, I have encountered anti-Semitism once, perhaps twice, compared to countless episodes outside.

Of course I have encountered deep antipathy to Israel, and its murderous actions to deny justice for Palestinians, but that is what I would expect from a democratic anti-racist party - and these are views shared by me and many other peace loving socialist Jews.

Throughout most of my years in the party, I have worked closely with Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. They have always been the first to fight injustice and inequality and from them there has never been a hint of anti-Semitism.

What is happening in the party today is an attempt to cynically use rare examples, and usually false allegations, of anti-Semitism as part of a McCarthyite witchhunt against supporters of Jeremy.

As if to prove the point, the latest victim is my own partner Jackie Walker, of mixed heritage (Afro-Caribbean and Jewish), outrageously suspended from the Labour Party, simply for telling the truth that her Jewish ancestors were involved in financing the Slave Trade, that the African holocaust was even worse than the Jewish holocaust, and that anti-Semitism is not a major problem in Corbyn's Labour Party.

Jackie has been an anti-racist campaigner all her adult life and was a central figure in Thanet Stand Up To UKIP which played an important role in stopping Farage from getting into Parliament at the last General Election. She is a founder member of the Kent Anti-Racist Network, vice-chair of Momentum and, until her suspension, vice-chair of Thanet South CLP.

I am proud of my heritage and the family traditions that helped my development on the road to being an anti-racist, international socialist. This current witchhunt will not deflect me, or countless thousands like me, from the struggle for justice worldwide and for a socialist Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn.

*'I am writing to you in protest against the outrageous suspension of Jackie Walker from the Labour Party on spurious grounds of anti-Semitism. I call on you to reconsider this action and lift the suspension immediately'.*

Please e-mail your protest today to the General Secretary, Iain McNicol, and copy to Ann Black (Chair of NEC Disputes Panel) and Jim Kennedy Jim. (Chair of NEC Organisation Committee). E-mails are:  
 iain\_mcnicol@labour.org.uk  
 annblack50@btinternet.com  
 Kennedy@unitetheunion.org

### MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN THIS TO YOUR BOY OR GIRL

Just because you're on benefits  
 it doesn't mean it's your fault  
 maybe you don't even think of  
 that industrial blitz  
 when workers were treated as  
 dolts  
 remember when dad said:  
 my boy isn't goin' down the mine  
 to get silicosis  
 or be thought dead  
 when the sirens whine  
 giving me thrombosis  
 now they import coal  
 and it's all concreted over  
 that hole  
 and now dad is saying:  
 my boy needed to go down there  
 for he's falling apart up here  
 and no one cares  
 as he anaesthetises himself  
 and only answers with leers and jeers  
 and those with wealth  
 like William Morris  
 designed wallpaper and delph  
 and as if he had his wish  
 borrows  
 the green cloak  
 to throw over that quiet valley  
 where only thunder echoes  
 in this unemployed ghetto  
 one pithead winding gear  
 looms  
 a rusting wagon with the last dram  
 of coal  
 bears witness to she who would manage  
 with a new broom  
 the old miner with the blue-pitted skin  
 leads the industrial tourists  
 through a landscape  
 of rapine  
 cynical of another government tryst  
 the slagheaps  
 with trees flowers where graze  
 sheep  
 pristinely clean  
 this valley  
 where no smoke clouds  
 dallies  
 and no workmates  
 with their banter  
 the joy of Friday and leaving work  
 at a canter  
 you never knew this  
 discipline self-discipline  
 you missed  
 just because you're on benefits  
 it doesn't mean it's your fault  
 being at the end of your wits  
 they lock up diamonds and gold  
 in those bank vaults  
 with murdered industry long gone  
 the unions were paralysed in this  
 new dawn  
 now Britain lives by the  
 roulette wheel  
 a complete steal  
 what's left to  
 feel.

Wilson John Haire.

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Don't Forget the Mixed Economy.

The secret of the last 35 years is that the supposed capitalist counter-revolution never actually happened. The size of the state sector was not reduced – just rigged so that private profit could be made from things that the state had competently provided. Taxes were not reduced except for the very rich. The state continues to dominate the economy, but now it looks after the rich rather than ordinary people. Full employment, achieved from the 1940s to 1960s, came under strain in the 1970s. Thatcher managed to convince people it was not possible: this allowed her and her successors (including New Labour) to follow policies that made unemployment very much worse.

The supposed grand achievement – a property-owning democracy – has been undermined by the reality of the Free Market. It's much harder than it used to be for young people to buy a house. Prices have risen to ludicrous levels, with a big expansion in private renting:

“A Daily Mirror investigation found a third of ex-council homes sold in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher were now owned by private landlords.

“In one London borough almost half of ex-council properties are now sub-let to tenants.

“Tycoon Charles Gow and his wife own at least 40 ex-council flats on one South London estate.

“His father Ian Gow was one of Mrs Thatcher's top aides and was Housing Minister during the peak years of right-to-buy.”<sup>1</sup>

Market forces favour those with an initial small advantage, which they can work on to make it vastly larger. Or can if they are selfish and ruthless: people neglect to mention these as factors in 'success', yet it is almost always the case. No one gets rich by being polite

to their competitors, or by doing more for their customers than is needful to keep them as repeat customers.

Thatcher and her heirs (including Blair) did produce one profound change – they speeded the decline of British manufacturing. Fancy finance and cultural products were supposed to take its place – but these are optional. Goods and foods are necessities: we do now produce enough food to feed ourselves, having run short during two world wars thanks to the Victorian policy of neglecting agriculture and counting on the rest of the world to feed us. But the weakness of manufacturing could prove just as serious:

“Britain has never properly recovered from the 2008 financial crisis. At the end of 2015, inflation-adjusted income per capita in the UK was only 0.2% higher than its 2007 peak. This translates into an annual growth rate of 0.025% per year. How pathetic this performance is can be put into perspective by recalling that Japan's per capita income during its so-called “lost two decades” between 1990 and 2010 grew at 1% a year,

“This is remarkable, given that the value of sterling has fallen by around 30% since the crisis. In any other country a currency devaluation of this magnitude would have generated an export boom in manufactured goods, leading to an expansion of the sector.

“Unfortunately manufacturing had been so weakened since the 1980s that it didn't have a hope of staging any such revival. Even with a massive devaluation, the UK's trade balance in manufacturing goods (that is, manufacturing exports minus imports) as a proportion of GDP has hardly budged. The weakness of manufacturing is the main reason for the UK's ever-growing deficit, which stood at 5.2% of GDP in 2015.

“Some play down the concerns: the

UK, we hear, is still the seventh or eighth largest manufacturing nation in the world – after the US, China, Japan, Germany, South Korea, France and Italy. But it only gets this ranking because it has a large population. In terms of per capita output, it ranks somewhere between 20th and 25th.”<sup>2</sup>

British industry always had good workers, clever inventors and standard managers. This was known in the 1960s and 1970s, with much discussion of how to fix it. It was assumed that the state could and should fix it. Then Thatcher came along, saying ‘let business run itself’. But British businesses mostly gave up trying to deal with the hard and messy world of manufacturing *goods*, in favour of clever financial games. Supposed rescues for ailing manufacturers often turned out to be spoofs that extracted money and left behind something that either vanished or was taken over by foreigners.

Britain was the first country to have modern industry, and it wasn't ever that modern in its outlook. The British economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century typically grew at 1% a year – astonishing in a world where most economies were static, but Britain as ‘workshop of the world’ was nothing like modern enough. Britain was being overtaken by the USA and Germany when they followed the same path without the same inhibitions about the use of state power.

The British version of capitalism was obsolete even before the 1914-18 war threw the whole world into chaos. Tory dreams of restoring British greatness by returning to those ‘good old values’ are ridiculous.

Why do people vote for such policies? They forgot that they were living in a Mixed Economy. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were mainstream thinkers

who reckoned that the post-war Western system was no longer capitalist. It was definitely very different from the pre-1914 system, which British governments tried in vain to restore in the 1920s and 1930s. Left-wing militants managed to get it re-labelled as capitalist. Since words mean what a majority of speakers think they mean, let's concede that it was indeed capitalist. But a blend of capitalism that freely borrows from socialism, and which took it for granted that state power was needed to make sure that the bulk of the population were looked after. It was very foolish to blur the distinction between this and pre-1914 Capitalism, or both with the Imaginary Capitalism of the economic textbooks.

Thatcher's innovation was a Mixed Economy system that gives the poor and the working mainstream as little as possible, while looking after the rich. The ideological aim was to return to pre-1914 capitalism, even though this system never anywhere grew faster than 2% a year and mostly much more slowly. Beyond that, there was a dream of creating Imaginary Capitalism: the asocial world that right-wing theorists dream of. (But actual business people are intensely social, always seeking useful contacts, so the chances of it ever becoming real are remote.)

People were persuaded that an imperfect system should be smashed rather than improved. Or persuaded until they actually faced the consequences of trying to smash it. The near-collapse of the global capitalist system in 1987 is almost forgotten, eclipsed by the much more dramatic collapse of the Soviet system in 1989 to 1991. Yet it happened.

In 1987, money was pumped into the entire system to keep it afloat. This was before it was clear that Labour as New Labour would take such a timid view of New Right doctrines. In the crisis that began in 2008, the grip of New Right doctrines had got stronger. They managed to sell a stimulus package in which the lion's share went to the rich. 'Quantitative Easing' is a fancy label for the government bailing out financial institutions that might otherwise have needed to be nationalised and would have lost a lot of money for the very rich. Once this had been swallowed, austerity was pushed as a necessary cure – since money used to shore up the bad debts of the rich has to come from somewhere if inflation is to be avoided.

The Tories are obsessed with restoring an obsolete version of capitalism. Failure only makes them more determined to be more of the same. And before Corbyn, Labour had also surrendered to the notion that this obsolete version of capitalism was the only possible capitalism. This

despite the example of Germany and the Scandinavian countries flourishing with something quite different.

Labour under Corbyn has now become anti-austerity. But like most people, they seem to have forgotten about the Mixed Economy, even though '*Mixed Economy Capitalism rather than Feed-the-Rich Capitalism*' would make an excellent sound-bite. Still, the idea is around, for instance an article in the influential US magazine *Foreign Affairs*,<sup>3</sup> though it carefully avoids mentioning how far it was a borrowing from socialism.

### China – a debt crisis?

Suppose I were to keep separate accounts for food, books, entertainment, holidays and general bills. And supposing I found it necessary to borrow from my 'books' account to pay an unexpectedly large bill. Does that mean I am in imminent danger of ruin?

It's the same thing with Chinese debts. If my 'bills' account owes money to my 'books' account, that would mean less books unless it can be repaid. But it's all *me*. If I don't owe money to anyone else, I have no problem: just fewer books than I'd like. Likewise, China has vast internal debts, but a single party is in total control of the society.

There are no important external debts. China holds gigantic amounts of US debt, enough that it could cause a crisis by selling it cheap. Enough that it could thwart a hostile Trump Presidency by threatening not to buy the bonds that the USA needs to fund its deficit. The main debts are internal, bad debts held by the banks from unprofitable industries. They matter only if they can be enforced. But banks, unlike the stock market, cannot act against the will of the government if the government is determined.

There is quiet and covert discussion among the Chinese leadership about how to handle the situation. One idea is to swap debt for equity; the bank becomes a major shareholder in the borrower. This is useful only if the borrower has a genuine net worth or can be reformed. If they go bankrupt then the shares are worthless, so it might amount to a covert method of writing off the debt at the expense of savers in those banks. Just what they should do, I don't feel qualified to judge. But I'd be amazed if the leadership allowed the economy to self-destruct in order to meet the needs of creditors.

Not everyone see it so. The *Economist* magazine for 7<sup>th</sup> May had a huge Special Report on Finance in China, plus an editorial saying that disaster was certain eventually,<sup>4</sup> though they did not say when. They've not been accurate before about China's imminent ruin, and they

frequently repeat the myth that there was only economic failure under Mao. The Chinese economy actually tripled under Mao, matching the average global growth rate despite a US boycott. There were a series of bold and radical policies, some of which went wrong, as bold and radical policies sometimes do in the real world. But overall there were huge gains.<sup>5</sup>

### Fifty Years On from the Cultural Revolution

In a century or two, China's Cultural Revolution may be seen like China's Taiping. They were a 19<sup>th</sup> century rebellion that tried to create a modern and collectivist China with equality for all, including women. They failed because they needed a political understanding that hadn't yet been developed.

1960s radicalism showed that radicals both east and west were better at protesting than at running anything. Radical leftists who overreach and attack the moderate left may end up damaging leftism as a whole. May give victory to their enemies. Thatcher in Britain, Reagan in the USA, Deng Xiaoping in China. Maybe also Iran's Islamic Republic and Solidarity in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

The idea everywhere was 'Power to the People'. Sadly, the views of most actual people were different from those of young radicals. And it's easier to get people enthusiastic for 'something different' than to actually produce a popular new system.

China, understandably, has been saying very little. A few cautious editorials, according to *The Guardian*, including one saying

"A significant reason is that the lessons the Cultural Revolution taught us has given the nation a certain immunity. Nobody fears turmoil and desires stability more than us."<sup>7</sup>

I'd take that to be a quiet reminder of why the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown was necessary, though the *Guardian* article does not see it so.

### Iraq – Denying Responsibility

If you recommend a cure to a sick person, and the cure makes them worse, do you admit fault? Or do you blame them for having been sick in the first place?

"In the euphoria of the uprisings in 2011, when one awful Arab autocrat after another was toppled, it seemed as if the Arabs were at last turning towards democracy. Instead their condition is more benighted than ever... Egypt is even more wretched than under the ousted dictator... The state has broken down in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen. Civil wars rage and sectarianism is rampant, fed by the contest between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The jihadist ‘caliphate’ of Islamic State (IS), the grotesque outgrowth of Sunni rage, is metastasising to other parts of the Arab world...

“First, many blame the mayhem on Western powers—from Sykes-Picot to the creation of Israel, the Franco-British takeover of the Suez Canal in 1956 and repeated American interventions. Foreigners have often made things worse; America’s invasion of Iraq in 2003 released its sectarian demons. But the idea that America should turn away from the region—which Barack Obama seems to embrace—can be as destabilising as intervention, as the catastrophe in Syria shows.”<sup>8</sup>

Syria is more hopeful than Iraq or Libya: it has a government that may restore peace. And the West should have been telling the Syrian opposition to be moderate when Assad offered open elections – try it and see if he means it. But the New Right inherited from New Left defectors the notion that ‘*we want the world and we want it now*’. Compromise with awkward realities is seen as treason.

The problem also was that Assad might have won such elections. Or at least emerged as the largest coherent force as the opposition splintered into its naturally antagonistic parts.

In both Africa and the Arab world, colonial rule lasted long enough to discredit existing power structures, but not long enough to produce a new elite able to take over. Or not except in Egypt, long an informal British colony and still notably stable. That’s why I was one of those who felt from 1991 onwards that the brutal secular dictatorships of the Arab world were the best thing you were going to get there. Some once-hopeful socialist and communist movements are now marginal. Pro-Western elements are weak and ineffective: lacking large numbers of people willing to die for their cause.

19<sup>th</sup> century Europe had plenty of martyrs and militants for liberal values, which is why Europe saw the triumph of liberal values in the long run. In the Arab world, remarkably few have been heroic. Most stay silent or flee.

### Snippets

#### Austria: the Centre Cannot Hold

By a margin of 31,026 ballots, Austria elected a Green rather than a Far-Right candidate as President.<sup>9</sup>

Candidates forming the two normal governing parties got 11.3% and 11.1% in the first round, in which the Far Right candidate got 35.1%.<sup>10</sup> In the 2013 parliamentary elections, the Social Democrats got 29.2%, the centre-right 26% and the Far Right 17.4%.<sup>11</sup> The Far Right might be the strongest party in the next elections,

scheduled for 2018.

‘Business as usual’ with all of the unresolved crises is just not working.

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#### Dishonest But Not Illegal (Yet)

Tax evasion is when people lie about the money they’ve earned.

Tax avoidance is when people lie about what the money is or how it will be used. A business based almost completely in Europe or the USA can pretend it really belongs in some little tax-haven that it would never bother with apart from the tax trickery.

A tax avoider is a tax evader with good political connections. They can persuade legislators to create clever gaps in the tax net that only the rich can afford to use.

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#### The Heat Is On

Britons must be surprised to learn that this April was yet another hot month: another record breaker.

April was indeed mild in Britain, slightly colder than average.<sup>12</sup> But abnormally warm for the world as a whole.<sup>13</sup> Britain was lucky, *this time*.

India is far from lucky:

“A city in northern India has shattered the national heat record, registering a searing 51C – the highest since records began – amid a nationwide heatwave.

“The new record was set in Phalodi, a city in the desert state of Rajasthan, and is the equivalent of 123.8F.

“It tops a previous record of 50.6C set in 1956.”<sup>14</sup>

May and June tend to be the hottest months there. The monsoon then usually arrives, cooling things a little.

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#### Iraq – Sadr Reappears

Years ago, Moqtada al-Sadr was a major force as a Shia Religious hard-liner. He sounded as if he was going to challenge US rule. The authorities tried to frame him for the murder of a pro-Western cleric.<sup>15</sup> Then he unexpectedly withdrew and went quiet.

Now he’s back:

“A state of emergency has reportedly been declared in Baghdad after supporters of the Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr stormed the Green Zone and entered the parliament building.

“Hundreds of people gathered in protest at the failure of Iraqi MPs to convene for a vote to approve new ministers. The unrest comes after weeks of political turmoil in Baghdad over efforts by the prime minister... to replace party-affiliated ministers with technocrats. MPs failed to reach a quorum to approve the measures on Saturday.”<sup>16</sup>

The Shia majority can win elections, but not actually rule. I doubt if Sadr would be any better. But having not

been in government, he sounds credible as ‘anti-corruption’. A policy that usually replaces corrupt rulers with new rulers who are just as corrupt and mostly less competent.

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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/>.

(Endnotes)

1 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/right-to-buy-housing-shame-third-ex-council-1743338>

2 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/18/making-things-matter-britain-forgot-manufacturing-brexite>

3 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-03-21/making-america-great-again>. You can register for one free article a month.

4 <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21698240-it-question-when-not-if-real-trouble-will-hit-china-coming-debt-bust>. Subscribers only.

5 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/42-china/mao-and-china/>

6 See <https://gwydionwilliams.com/46-globalisation/the-radical-rightists-of-1979/> for my review of a book that also links these five, though not entirely as I have done.

7 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/17/cultural-revolution-reduced-to-footnote-as-communist-party-says-china-has-moved-on>

8 <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21698652-europe-and-america-made-mistakes-misery-arab-world-caused-mainly-its-own>. Subscribers only.

9 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36362505>

10 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian\\_presidential\\_election,\\_2016#Results](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian_presidential_election,_2016#Results)

11 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian\\_legislative\\_election,\\_2013](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austrian_legislative_election,_2013)

12 <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2016/april>

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14 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/20/india-records-its-hottest-day-ever-as-temperature-hits-51-c-thats-1238f>

15 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/politics-various-articles/us-shysterism-in-iraqi-in-2004/>

16 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/30/moqtada-al-sadr-supporters-enter-baghdad-parliament-building-green-zone>

## Letters to the Editor. The EU Referendum.

In his article on the European Referendum in last month's Labour Affairs, Mark Cowling points to the fact that many European trade unions advocate social partnership and industrial policy, positions long advocated by Labour Affairs. He thinks it strange that Labour Affairs cannot endorse remaining in a political entity in which these views appear to be popular and influential. European trade unions are champions of these policies.

The problem is that the British trade unions have shown no interest in these policies. Instead they have shown continual contempt for them. British trade unions have been well aware of how European trade unions operate and have no desire to emulate them. They have done nothing to support them and Britain remains an outlier for such policies within the whole of the EU. Only a couple of Eastern European and Mediterranean countries have a worse record, as the TUC's own research shows.

In Ireland, British trade unions come into continuous contact with Irish trade unions, which have a more European orientation. The British-based unions take every opportunity to undermine social partnership initiatives undertaken by the Irish trade unions. They are actually a hindrance to the policies that Labour Affairs and Mark Cowling support.

The TUC is different. We published an interview with Frances O'Grady nearly two years ago, in which she clearly argued for a trade unionism which engaged with the business of governing industry and the state? Jim Larkin jr. of Ireland was explicitly mentioned as a role model for the kind of trade unionism that she envisaged. What has been the reaction from the trade union movement? 'A complete ignoral' in Ernest Bevin's words! In 2014 a motion passed at the GMB conference advocating industrial democracy and social partnership was scuppered by that union's leadership. Actions speak a great deal louder than words and 44 years of membership of the EU have shown clearly that British trade unions are intent on digging themselves into the same hole that they always have been digging into. Mark need only look to the behaviour of his own union, UCU, to see ample evidence of this.

Of course there are exceptions, some of the TUC leadership and the leadership of ATL and under Eamonn O'Kane, NAS/UWT are examples of good union practice. Unionlearn, under the guidance of the TUC does some excellent work. But the overall picture of British trade unions is that they are like the Bourbons after the French Revolution – they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They will only have a negative influence on European trade unionism. Jeremy Corbyn and Frances O'Grady are quite right to draw attention to the social protections afforded to workers under EU legislation. But these have to be fought for and extended. If British trade unions want to have all this on a plate and do nothing for it, then they are not going to contribute either to the welfare of British workers or to those in Europe. European trade unionism will, sadly, be better off without them – something they probably realise already.

Christopher Winch

Mark Cowling's case for Remain is based on the benefits that will 'trickle down' to the UK working class from continuing membership of the EU. By a kind of osmosis there will be advantages for the British working class in continuing membership. However this is not one way traffic. There are also influences on the European working class from continuing UK

membership. And they are all negative. The British working class has taken from the EU but what has it given or what has it to give to the European working class? I can't think of any positive benefits on offer to Europe. It's a case of ask not what the UK can do for the EU but what the EU can for the UK.

40 years ago the British working class was able to control society but it proved only a negative control and could not convert itself into a positive control. As a result it fell before Thatcherism. The British working class learned nothing from the EU in those decades. And the only example it set for the EU and the world in those decades was how to lose the class struggle.

That loss was illustrated very well in the last issue's editorial and the Froggy piece of Labour Affairs. The position of the steelworkers today in the UK and Germany were compared and the UK position was pathetic. And the proposed new Labour Law in France is openly promoted as Blairite – a British labour contribution to Europe! The EU working class has not suffered such disastrous defeats in recent decades so what has the UK working class to offer it at the present time? Labour and the Unions have totally supported Cameron's 'reformed EU' mantra. That is plainly a policy of less EU not more and less EU means more neo-liberal and more anti working class policies. The fact of the matter is that the Labour movement from Gaitskell on the Right to Michael Foot and Benn on the Left treated the EU with contempt when it was developing and the UK Labour movement has never appreciated the point of the EU.

The choice is between the EU developing or being held back by the UK. There is no in-between. It is like trying to mix oil and water. That is the issue in the referendum and it will continue long after the referendum.

The UK working class must learn from its recent disastrous experiences and design a way forward. Looking to anything outside itself to do so is pointless and will prevent it from creating a way forward. Only when it does so by learning from its own experience will it be of any use to itself and then possibly to Europe.

Jack Lane

Mark Cowling is right to say that the concessions won by David Cameron make little difference to the conditions of UK membership of the EU ("The concessions are cosmetic rather than real."). He is wrong however to imply that the EU (previously the EEC) has prevented conflict and war on the European continent. This places Mark in the company of Cameron who ludicrously stated that a Brexit could lead to a reoccurrence of instability and possible war between EU nation states. It is impossible to imagine that one or more of the 6 EU/non-Nato member states would launch an attack on one or more of the 22 EU/NATO member states. Perhaps Cameron intended to say that the UK's presence in Europe has a stabilising effect and should it leave it may have to go back in to sort out the mess that would ensue. But thanks largely to the UK, the EU is not one, big happy family and continuing UK membership under a divided Tory government is likely to create further disharmony and instability, without leading to actual military conflict

Dick Barry.

# Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier (No 2)

by Michael Murray

A dictionary definition of “foot soldier”: “...a dedicated low level follower..

In this month’s Diary:

1. Canvassing: “Knock, knock, knocking on Heaven’s door”

2. Labour Party suspensions: The foot soldier turns shit house lawyer

**Canvassing: “Knock, knock, knocking on Heaven’s door”**

By now, readers will know that the results of the North London Assembly Elections and London’s Mayoral election was a clear win for Labour’s Jeanette Arnold and Sadiq Khan, respectively.

I said in Diary (No 1) I felt I was participating in making history by my modest contribution to helping get these two candidates elected. In both cases that was true. The elections marked a consolidation of Labour’s position in the capital city (and the rest of the country) against all the dire predictions. In the particular case of Sadiq Khan it was demonstrably true: the first Muslim Mayor of London or any other European capital city – and that against a vile racist campaign by Goldsmith and the Conservative Party – or that increasingly out of touch Etonian Old Boy part of it. Not all Conservatives were comfortable with the tactics used.

Of course the first duty of the political party foot soldier is getting out election, and other local informational, leaflets, knocking on doors and engaging with local and constituency-wide voters. Since rejoining the Labour Party during the Corbyn summer of 2015 I’ve been lucky to have been in a position to make myself available for that. And there has been plenty of it, what with the London Mayoral/ Assembly elections and now the EU Referendum campaign.

But my first experience in canvassing this corner of Hackney North and Stoke Newington was accompanying the ward councillors in their regular walkabouts to keep in touch with

constituents about what in Ireland was called “parish pump” politics. In this part of North London, with a high level of local authority housing, a lot of the issues raised with the councillors deal with tenant grievances. education provisions, cleansing services, local policing, security cameras, “ASB,” (anti-social behaviour) local planning issues and environmental issues generally.(1)

Our two local Labour councillors are assiduous in their representation of people’s issues to the proper authorities. To me, as an Irish person, the clear “division of labour” between councillors and Members of Parliament is striking, though it will be taken for granted anywhere in Britain. The councillors look after local stuff and the MPs the national, except, of course where they overlap. Irish TDs (MPs) would seek to be involved as much as possible in local issues as the multi-party, proportional representational system is highly competitive and the Parliamentary representative must live in the public eye to hold his or her seat. This was labelled clientelism years ago by Ireland’s current President, Michael D. O’Higgins. (2)

Towards the end of the Mayoral/ London Assembly electioneering campaign, and at a high-point of the “anti-Semitism” attacks on Labour a councillor and myself turned into a Hasidic Jewish street. We were approached from a distance by an animated group of Hasidic men and women, in their usual dark suits, dresses, hats, and male hairstyles that will never catch on – not even amongst the highest paid football players. Watching them accelerate towards us I thought the worst. That morning a mass circulation freebie carried the banner headline: **“Khan to Corbyn: Get A Grip on Anti-Semitism.”**(3) It was typical of the orchestrated media onslaught against Corbyn’s Labour Party. But I needn’t have worried. As they got closer, they were all smiles.

And full of profuse thanks to the councillor for her successful efforts to get a damaged pavement, which leads to our popular local Kurdish/ Turkish general store, fixed, and, also, the councillor was thanked for sorting out access for their community to a garden allotment space.

Afterwards I asked the councillor if she thought their appreciation would express itself in support for the Labour candidate. (And this definitely would not happen in Ireland, except, perhaps, with a nod or a wink) she said she always stressed her role as their councillor over her party affiliation. And, of course, in Ireland, she would have been promised that the “client” would “remember” her, come polling day, with a vote. What the client would not necessarily spell out is whether “remembering” would entail a “Number One” vote, or a second - or a fifth - choice on a multi-choice Proportional Representation slate. But the client would “remember” the obliging councillor, wink, wink. And the client wasn’t going to admit they’d asked another party’s councillor for the very same service, playing one against the other.

I really enjoy my local ward canvassing: getting to talk to the neighbours, a mixture of ethnicities from all corners of the world. Locally, this mix is primarily Turkish, Kurdish and the afore-mentioned Hasidic Jews. There is a sprinkling of other ethnic groupings: Peninsular Spanish, Latinos and Portuguese. Older Irish and West Indian immigrants of the 1950s, though numerous in this area in the past are scarce on the ground: the biggest ethnic change since I lived, and canvassed, here last in the 1970s/early ‘80s. Working class Londoners are notably scarcer too, the result of social cleansing and gentrification linked to the wipe-out of inner city semi-industrial employment. Then there are corners of the ward called “high churns,” as in a big turnover of private, mostly

bed-sit tenants, leaving us with lists of registered voters who have moved on. So, listing new occupants, reminding them to register to vote, telling them who their councillors are is part of the job too. And, of course, proselytism: sussing out their likely support level for Labour and if they might be interested in joining the Party.

Canvassing in the wider Hackney North and Stoke Newington is particularly interesting. I get to know corners of the city I might not otherwise have reason to visit. And this large North East London constituency is rich in historical and architectural points of interest.(4)

Since returning to London two and a bit years ago, I've voted in Local, General and European elections. I have to say, I miss PR, for all its downsides – including the type of paralyzing result thrown up in this year's Irish General Election, though this could be attributed to an incipient national identity crisis and political deficit amongst the fragmented parties in Ireland these days rather than the PR system itself. In this constituency I felt constrained having to choose just one candidate for my Member of Parliament. I found, on first impressions, I respected the Green candidate. And a third candidate impressed me also. And, though I was clear about my order of political preference between my chosen top three I had to choose one candidate only in the British First Past the Post system. So, FPP, as it's called, is not nuanced sufficiently to reflect the broad political choice that mostly presents itself these days, reflecting a radically changed class society in Britain, and one that clearly challenges party politics (5) Thus, I would argue, it is not fit for purpose in today's political environment. Consider: in the 2015 General Election, between them, the Green Party and UKIP polled over 5 million votes for the gain of a combined total of just 2 Parliamentary seats.(6) That may change, of course, but not anytime soon.

That said, I remember with a little nostalgia, those we used to call the "plumpers" in Ireland: people who

marked the ballot paper for their party only, and ignored the remainder of a long list of candidates and alternative parties. Of them it would be said: "Fianna Fail (or other party) to the arsehole." In London, as I'm sure elsewhere in Britain, the Labour Party activists note on the canvassing sheets the constituent's support for Labour, and its degree: often a qualitative assessment from 1 to 5. So, on the final days of the election campaigns, the local party knows who should be prioritized for a reminder coming up to the election, which, in Ireland and Britain is called "getting the vote out." And central office, through aggregating the canvassing sheets can get some inkling of what way the political wind is blowing. By the same token, while we were canvassing for the Mayoral/ Assembly elections we also carried out a simple "straw poll" on voting intentions in the forthcoming EU Referendum for central office.

The advice at this stage might be, enjoy the moment, be relieved that the nascent Corbyn-led Labour Party survived its first major hurdle, not just in London, but nationally - and "don't talk about the war," by which I mean the alleged "anti-semitism" incidents, and the way they were handled, including the suspensions. This often appeared as a knee jerk response to orchestrated outside pressure, which a robust political party would not be pushed into. And that worries me knowing all the potentially divisive issues coming down the track.

**(ii) The foot soldier turns shit house lawyer.**

In the closing stages of the Local Elections, just as the neo-liberal ideology of the Tories, and its resultant social and economic policies on Health, Housing, Education and Welfare were on the ropes – on top of the newly released Panama Papers – a grenade was thrown: the accusation of "anti-Semitism," levelled first at named individuals, then in a monstrous generalization, at the Labour Party as a whole. A foot soldier on the front lines of the canvassing and cajoling, I saw over my shoulder the Party which should have been leading and

supporting our efforts, in an election battle there for the taking, go to pieces. It was a well-timed grenade, granted. But one that should have been easily side-stepped. And who knows what the election results might have been had this been handled more adroitly.

Look at the response of the Jewish Socialist Association by comparison, ignored by the same media of course, whose banner was proudly and prominently displayed at the London May Day meeting, clearly demonstrating their support for Jeremy Corbyn, the main speaker on the day.

*"Accusations of anti-Semitism are currently being weaponised to attack the Jeremy Corbyn-led LP with claims that Labour has a "problem" of anti-Semitism. This is despite Corbyn's longstanding record of actively opposing fascism and all forms of racism, and being a firm supporter of the rights of refugees and of human rights globally."*

*"A very small number of such cases seem to be real instances of anti-Semitism. Others represent genuine criticism of Israeli policy and support for Palestinian rights but expressed in clumsy and ambiguous language, which may unknowingly cross a line into anti-Semitism. Further cases are simply forthright expressions of support for Palestinian rights, which condemn Israeli government policy and aspects of Zionist ideology, and have nothing whatsoever to do with anti-Semitism."*

*"The accusations...refer to comments, often made on social media, long before Jeremy Corbyn won the Labour leadership. Those making the charges now, did not see fit to bring them up at the time, under previous Labour leaders, but are using them now, just before the mayoral and local elections, when they believe they can inflict most damage on the Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn." (7)*

I enlisted in the Royal Navy at age 15, an economic conscript from the impoverished Ireland of the late 1950s. So, I know "shit house lawyer" is an army expression. In the Navy, it was

“lower deck lawyer,” much classier. And in the Navy there was the wonderful title “The Accused’s Friend,” for someone who would feel competent enough to speak up for a shipmate on a charge. (8)

So, in the spirit of “The Accused Friend,” and not QR&AI’s, and as a returning Party member with only a few months served, I would like to comment on the suspensions.

In the course of my trade union life, I developed a great attachment to what are called “*The Principles of Natural Justice*,” not least, because years ago I too was suspended – on full pay, pending dismissal. My employer was a trade union organization. Like the Labour Party, out to change the world. The suspension stretched out for six or seven months, after which, after due process, I was re-instated. Not with good grace, mind, but we won’t go there. Let’s just say “*If you stand long enough by the banks of the Tiber, you’ll see the bodies of your enemies float by.*” Time alone, sees to that. But I know the whole experience took its toll on my health – and taught me a lot about people, especially those who see themselves as changing the world. And it taught me the value of having a good sense of Natural Justice for pure survival.

So let me explain in general terms, what is meant by “Natural Justice” without making specific reference to cases, or naming names though I am bearing them in mind as I select the most relevant Principles. I know *there is not one* of the dozen or so Natural Justice Principles on the list below that does not have a bearing on some aspect of the cases we have heard and read about. I’ll leave it to you to make the connection.

(I) To have clearly understood and regularly updated rules/standards/procedures in place in compliance with the law.

(II) Rules/standards/procedures must be **consistent**, which means:

\*Made known to all

\*Applied equally to all

\*Applied consistently over time

(III) Accord people the right to **hear in full** complaints made against them **(and by whom)**

\*Given reasonable time to prepare a response

\*(Access to information)

\*Accord people the right to answer them (with appropriate representation, including legal)

(IV) Management must carry out a full investigation **before taking any action**

(as far as is “reasonably practicable”)

(V) Fair and proportionate penalty (what penalty would the “reasonable employer/comparable organisation” sanction?)

(VI) Appeal mechanism: internal to the organisation and external “third parties” and legal redress through Tribunals or Courts.

\*Designated senior manager(s) as final *internal* appeal stage

\*These must not be involved in earlier stages of investigation/hearing

This list of *The Principles of Natural Justice* were prepared for use in the context of a management-employee relationship.(9) I’ve selected those relevant to the Party-Member relationship where, of course, loss of earnings is not necessarily involved and where, instead, the potential damage to a member is reputational – and, supremely important to most active members – a denial of democratic rights to participate in the Party during a period of suspension.

### Notes and References

(1) This is not a complete list of local authority responsibilities, which are under continuous review by the Conservative government, leading to more centralization, on the one hand and more privatization on the other. One example raised recently at our branch is the proposed privatization of the local public planning function – a contradiction in terms, you would think, but typical of the dogmatic neo-liberalism of this Conservative government. On the other hand, spontaneously, at local level throughout Britain, local authorities are becoming more pro-active in what is called “the social economy,” fighting to re-invigorate communities devastated by de-industrialisation over recent decades, through a variety of initiatives, mostly cooperatively based. This is part of Labour’s “New Economic” thinking being developed jointly with Labour-led local councils – and an exciting prospect.

(2) **Clientelism** is an “*exchange system where voters trade political support for the outputs of the public decision-making process.*” Wikipedia.

(3) Evening Standard, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2016. We vote seeking foot soldiers could have done without that headline, three days before polling. And wondered what motivated Sadiq Khan to issue such a statement, so joyfully picked up by a generally hostile media.

(4) “*London, the Biography*,” Peter Ackroyd, 2001; “*Hackney, That Rose Red Empire*,” 2010 for that enhanced sense of place which makes living in a big city a fuller experience.

(5) Books that examine changed class and society in Britain, and discuss some of the political implications, are: “*Social Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,” by Mike Savage, et al. This is based on the ground breaking, and largest ever “**Great British Social Survey**,” based on a survey of 161,000 respondents; “*The Precariat*,” Guy Standing, 2016 Paperback edition. LSE’s Richard Hyman describes it succinctly: “*..an incisive account of how precariousness is becoming the new normality in globalized labour markets and offers guidelines for all concerned to build a more just society.*” Essential reading for the foot soldiers if they are to play a full part, and not to become a pawn in, any party’s politics.

(6) The Guardian, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

(7) Full statement in **Labour Affairs, May, 2016**; also, [www.jewishsocialist.org.uk](http://www.jewishsocialist.org.uk).

(8) “**The Accused’s Friend**”: Years later I did some workplace rep’s training for the Fire Brigade Union in London and came across that term with the same meaning of a workplace rep who specialized in Disciplinary cases. The Fire Brigade service was founded by ex-RN Officers and so this term – and other operational ones – were carried over.

(9) M J Murray: “*The Principles of Natural Justice applied to Disciplinary and Work Performance Issues*,” ICTU.

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## Prime Ministers' Questions 4 May 2016

PMQs included a heated exchange between Corbyn and Cameron on anti-semitism and terrorism during which Cameron continued to label Corbyn as a terrorist sympathiser. There was also an admission by a government minister that the UK owes other European countries £674 million for the health costs of UK born residents living in Spain and elsewhere. In contrast the UK is owed just £49.5 million for the costs of NHS use by so-called 'health tourists.' This information was not reported by the anti-immigrant Daily Mail or any other right-wing paper.

### Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)

Later today, commemorations begin for Holocaust Memorial Day in Israel. I hope that it is agreed in all parts of the House that we should send our best wishes to those who are commemorating the occasion, and also send a very clear statement that anti-Semitism has no place in our society whatsoever and we all have a duty to oppose it.

#### The Prime Minister

First, I join the right hon. Gentleman in saying that we should always support Holocaust Memorial Day, whether here in the UK, where we have a number of commemorations, or in Israel. But I am going to press him on this point, because he said "it will be my pleasure and my honour to host an event in parliament where our friends from Hezbollah will be speaking... I've also invited friends from Hamas to come and speak as well." Hamas and Hezbollah believe in killing Jews, not just in Israel but around the world. Will he take this opportunity? If he wants to clear up the problem of anti-Semitism in the Labour party, now is a good time to start. Withdraw the remark that they are your friends!

### Jeremy Corbyn

I have made it very clear that Labour is an anti-racist party and that there

is no place for anti-Semitism within it. We have suspended any members who have undertaken any anti-Semitic activities or work or made such statements, and have established an inquiry led by Shami Chakrabarti. The point the Prime Minister makes relates to a discussion I was hosting to try to promote a peace process. It was not an approval of those organisations. I absolutely do not approve of those organisations.

#### The Prime Minister

I am afraid the right hon. Gentleman will have to do this one more time. He referred to Hamas and Hezbollah as his friends. He needs to withdraw that remark. Let me give him another chance: are they your friends or are they not? Those organisations, in their constitutions, believe in persecuting and killing Jews. They are anti-Semitic and racist organisations, and he must stand up and say they are not his friends.

### Jeremy Corbyn

Obviously, anyone who commits racist attacks or who is anti-Semitic is not a friend of mine. I am very clear about that. I invite the Prime Minister to think for a moment about the conduct of his party and his candidate in the London mayoral elections and their systematic smearing of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Sadiq Khan), our candidate for Mayor. I wish him well, and I invite the Prime Minister to undertake to ensure that the Conservative party in London desists from its present activities in smearing my friend.

#### The Prime Minister

I completely reject the right hon. Gentleman's comments about Labour's candidate for the London mayoralty. As I have said before at the Dispatch Box, we are not responsible for everything someone says when they share a platform with us, and we cannot control everyone who appears in a picture, but there is a pattern of behaviour with the right hon. Member for Tooting (Sadiq Khan). He shared

a platform with Sajid Shahid, the man who trained the ringleader of the 7/7 attacks and accused the United States of bringing 9/11 on itself. He shared a platform with an extremist who called for Jews to be drowned in the ocean. When this was put to the right hon. Member for Tooting, he described it as mere "flowery" language. If he wants to know why he has a problem with anti-Semitism, let me tell him: it is because his candidates share a platform after platform with extremists and anti-Semites and then excuse their words. One more time: say you withdraw the remark about Hamas and Hezbollah being your friends!

### Jeremy Corbyn

Last week, the Prime Minister tried, as he often does, to smear my right hon. Friend the Member for Tooting for his association with Sulaiman Ghani. It turns out that Mr Ghani is actually an active Conservative supporter who has shared platforms with the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith). The Prime Minister should also reflect on the words of Lord Lansley some years ago when he said that racism was "endemic" within his party. We have set up a commission of inquiry; I suggest that the Prime Minister might think about doing the same thing.

#### The Prime Minister

But I am not going to let the issue about the right hon. Member for Tooting rest. The Leader of the Opposition raised the case of Suleiman Ghani, whom the right hon. Member for Tooting shared a platform with nine times. This is a man who says that it is wrong to stop people going to fight in—[Interruption.] No, as long as it takes. Do you want to know the views of a person that your leader has just quoted? He has described women as—[Interruption.] The hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) might be interested in this. He described women as "subservient" to men. He said that homosexuality was an "unnatural" act. He stood on a

platform with people who wanted an Islamic state. That is why the Leader of the Opposition's attempts to deal with anti-Semitism are utterly condemned to failure. He will not even condemn people who sit on platforms with people like that.

#### **Jeremy Corbyn**

I did point out to the Prime Minister—I was trying to help him—that the gentleman concerned is actually a Conservative. Maybe he would care to think about that. He might also consider that Shazia Awan, a former Conservative parliamentary candidate, has said this of the Tory mayoral campaign: "I'll be voting Labour. A lifelong Tory voter and ex-candidate, I'm ashamed at the repulsive campaign of hate".

#### **Healthcare Costs (EU and UK Citizens)**

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con)** How much was (a) collected in payment for NHS care received in the UK by EU citizens and (b) paid for healthcare received by UK citizens in other EU countries in the last 12 months.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison)** For 2014-15, it is estimated that the UK owes other European economic area countries and Switzerland £674 million and is owed £49.5 million by other EEA countries and Switzerland for healthcare activity received in that year.

**Mr Hollobone** My constituents in Kettering are increasingly fed up with our national health service paying for the healthcare of foreigners who come to this country to freeload on our system. What more can be done to make sure that hospitals and other healthcare providers bill foreign citizens for the NHS services that they use in this country?

**Jane Ellison** The Government take extremely seriously the issue of making sure that only those who should have access to NHS services do access them. Let me make an important point about the figures that I have just given. Some 80% of that imbalanced statistic represents our pensioners who choose to retire to Europe, typically for sunnier weather. The figure is 80% because many more UK pensioners retire to Europe than European pensioners retire here, and there will always be

an imbalance. I am sure that even the keenest Brexiteer would not claim that Britain would be sunnier outside the EU.

#### **Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech 12 May 2016**

The Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government's legislative programme has pursued a one nation approach; helping working people by supporting aspiration and opportunity.

My Ministers have continued in their long-term plan to deliver economic stability and security at every stage of life. To this end, work has continued to bring the public finances under control and to reduce the deficit.

To support working people, legislation was passed to guarantee that key taxes would not rise during this Parliament, to ensure that those working 30 hours a week on the National Minimum Wage will not pay income tax and to increase the provision of free childcare to working families.

To support aspiration and opportunity, legislation was passed to grant housing association tenants the right to own their home.

My Ministers have pursued policies to reform the welfare system to modernise and deliver equity to tax-payers, including measures to cap welfare payments.

In the first year of this Parliament, my Ministers have driven forward important constitutional reforms.

Landmark legislation was enacted to enable a referendum on membership of the European Union to be held later this year.

My Government has sought to develop a productive working relationship with the devolved administrations. In relation to Scotland, legislation was passed to implement the recommendations of the Smith Commission, devolving substantial new powers to the Scottish Parliament. A draft Bill was published setting out a new framework for devolution in Wales in accordance with the Saint David's Day Agreement. Legislation was enacted to implement the Fresh Start Agreement and reform the welfare system in Northern Ireland.

With regard to England, groundbreaking legislation was passed

which will allow significant powers to be devolved to directly-elected Mayors, helping to create a Northern Powerhouse.

In the House of Commons, changes have been implemented to create fairer procedures to ensure that decisions affecting England, or England and Wales, can only be taken with the consent of the majority of Members of Parliament representing constituencies in those parts of our United Kingdom.

Modernising the public services continues to be a priority for my Ministers. Newly enacted legislation will deliver transparency to the way in which trades unions operate and will protect essential public services from strike action.

Legislation was passed to improve schools, with new powers to turn around failing and coasting schools and create more academies. This legislation also made provision to establish regional adoption agencies in England to ensure every child can be provided with a stable home.

It has been a key priority for my Government to achieve a strong, sustainable and balanced economy where the benefits are more evenly shared across the country and between industries.

New legislation passed in this session will ensure that the Bank of England is well equipped to fulfil its vital role of overseeing monetary policy and financial stability.

A Small Business Commissioner was established in statute to help small businesses compete and grow. Legislation was also passed to ease the regulatory burden on businesses.

To help build a modern competitive workforce, the Institute for Apprenticeships was established as part of the drive to create three million high quality apprenticeships.

In recognition of the vital role charities play, legislation was passed to give the Charity Commission new powers to protect the integrity of such bodies by preventing abuses of charitable status.

The defence of the Realm is an utmost priority for my Government. In this session legislation has been passed to support our gallant armed forces. My Ministers will continue with legislation to provide a new framework to govern the use and oversight of investigatory

powers by law enforcement and the security and intelligence agencies.

My Ministers have pursued policies to reform the criminal justice system, including new legislation to improve the integrity and effectiveness of the police, and a comprehensive new framework to ban the new generation of psychoactive substances.

The new Immigration Act will provide powers to tackle illegal working and the exploitation of workers, and make it easier to deport those with no legal right to remain.

The Duke of Edinburgh and I were pleased to welcome His Excellency the President of The People's Republic of China and Madame Peng in October, during whose visit my Government launched a new partnership with China. We enjoyed our fifth State Visit to Germany in June, and our visit to Malta in November, for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

My Government has continued to play a leading role in world affairs, promoting British interests and values, and protecting British citizens abroad, including in response to terrorist attacks in Tunisia, France, Belgium and elsewhere.

My Ministers have been at the forefront of the European Union and international response to Russian aggression in Ukraine, successfully ensuring the maintenance of tough sanctions.

My Government has played a leading role in the Global Coalition against Da'esh and co-hosted the London Syria conference which secured commitments to help refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. With European Union and other international partners, my Ministers have worked to address irregular migration across the Mediterranean and its causes.

The United Kingdom played a key role in delivering the Paris Climate Change Agreement.

Members of the House of Commons, I thank you for the provisions which you have made for the work and dignity of the Crown and for the public services.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels

**The NHS And TTIP: Cameron Accepts Amendment To Queen's**

## Speech

David Cameron was forced to accept an amendment to the Queen's Speech on 18 May to remove the threat to the NHS from TTIP. The Queen's Speech had excluded reference to TTIP. Consequently, Labour MPs, with 25 Tories, mostly pro-Brexit, and a handful of SNP members, indicated support for an amendment saying that the House of Commons should: "respectfully regret that a Bill to protect the National Health Service from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership was not included in the Gracious Speech." The amendment was to be debated on 25 May. If carried it would have been the first time since 1924 that a government had been defeated on the Monarch's Address to Parliament. The defeat in 1924 led to the resignation of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald formed a Labour Government.

With a government defeat inevitable, a Number 10 spokesman said: "As we've said all along, there is no threat to the NHS from TTIP. So if this amendment is selected, we'll accept it." The amendment was tabled jointly by former Conservative health secretary Peter Lilley, and Labour backbencher Paula Sherriff. Lilley said: "I support free trade. But TTIP introduces special courts, which are not necessary for free trade, will give American multinationals the right to sue our government (but not vice versa) and could put our NHS at risk. I cannot understand why the government has not tried to exclude the NHS." Paula Sherriff described the government's support for the amendment as "another humiliating climbdown. They will now be the first government in history to officially 'regret' their own programme within days of announcing it, just months after doing the same on their budget."

Speaking in Stroud at the launch of an event about workers' rights Jeremy Corbyn, who urged Labour MPs to support the amendment, said: "Yes we will be backing that", (but) "I would personally go much further because my concerns about TTIP are not just about the effect on public services but also the principle of investor protection that goes within TTIP—planned rules which would in effect almost enfranchise global corporations at the expense of national governments. This

protection of the NHS is an important step but it's not the whole step."

## Junior Doctors Contract 19 May 2016

Jeremy Hunt reported to the House of Commons that a revised JDC has been agreed between the Government, NHS Employers and the BMA. However, his statement omitted to say that the new contract had to be approved by the Junior Doctors. A point made later by Dr Sarah Woolaston.

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt)** With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on the junior doctors contract. For the last three years there have been repeated attempts to reform the junior doctors contract to support better patient care seven days a week, culminating in a damaging industrial relations dispute that lasted for more than 10 months. I am pleased to inform the House that after 10 days of intensive discussion under the auspices of ACAS, the dispute was resolved yesterday with a historic agreement between the Government, NHS Employers—acting on behalf of the employers of junior doctors—and the British Medical Association that will modernise the contract by making it better for both doctors and patients. The new contract meets all the Government's red lines for delivering a seven-day NHS, and remains within the existing pay envelope. We will publish an equalities analysis of the new terms alongside a revised contract at the end of the month, and it will be put to a ballot of the BMA membership next month, with the support of its leader, the chair of the junior doctors committee of the BMA, Johann Malawana.

I express my thanks to the BMA for the leadership it has shown in returning to talks, negotiating in good faith, and making an agreement possible. I also put on record my thanks to Sir Brendan Barber, the chair of ACAS, for his excellent stewardship of the process, and to Sir David Dalton for his wisdom and insight in conducting discussions on behalf of employers and the Government, both this time and earlier in the year. The agreement will facilitate the biggest changes to the junior doctors contract since 1999. It will allow the Government to deliver a seven-day NHS, improve patient safety and support much needed productivity

improvements, as well as strengthening the morale and quality of life of junior doctors with a modern contract fit for a modern health service.

The contract inherited by the Government had a number of features badly in need of reform, including low levels of basic pay as a proportion of total income, which made doctors rely too heavily on unpredictable unsocial hours supplements to boost their income; automatic annual pay rises even when people took prolonged periods of leave from the NHS; an unfair banding system that triggered payment of premium rates to every team member even if only one person had worked extra hours; high premium rates payable for weekend work that made it difficult to roster staff in line with patient need; and risks to patient safety, with doctors sometimes required to work seven full days or seven full nights in a row without proper rest periods.

The Government have always been determined that our NHS should offer the safest, highest quality of care possible, which means a consistent standard of care for patients admitted across all seven days of the week. The new contract agreed yesterday makes the biggest set of changes to the junior doctors contract for 17 years, including by establishing the principle that any doctor who works less than an average of one weekend day a month—Saturday or Sunday—should receive no additional premium pay, compensated for by an increase in basic pay of between 10% and 11%; by reducing the marginal cost of employing additional doctors at the weekend by about a third; by supporting all hospitals to meet the four clinical standards most important for reducing mortality rates for weekend admissions by establishing a new role for experienced junior doctors as senior clinical decision makers able to make expert assessments of vulnerable patients admitted to or staying in hospital over weekends; and by removing the disincentive to roster enough doctors at weekends by replacing an inflexible banding system with a fairer system that values weekend work by paying people for actual unsocial hours worked, with more pay for those who work the most.

The Government also recognise that safer care for patients is more likely to be provided by well-motivated doctors

who have sufficient rest between shifts and work in a family-friendly system. The new contract and ACAS agreement will improve the wellbeing of our critical junior doctor workforce by reducing the maximum hours a doctor can be asked to work in any one week from 91 to 72; reducing the number of nights a doctor can be asked to work consecutively to four, and the number of long days a doctor can be asked to work to five; introducing a new post, a guardian of safe working, in every trust to guard against doctors being asked to work excessive hours; introducing a new catch-up programme for doctors who take maternity leave or time off for other caring responsibilities; establishing a review by Health Education England to consider how best to allow couples to apply to train in the same area and to offer training placements for those with caring responsibilities close to their home; giving pay protection to doctors who switch specialties because of caring responsibilities; and establishing a review to inform a new requirement for trusts to consider caring and other family responsibilities when designing rotas.

Taken together, these changes show both the Government's commitment to safe care for patients and the value we attach to the role of junior doctors. While they do not remove every bugbear or frustration, they will significantly improve flexibility and work-life balance for doctors, leading, we hope, to improved retention rates, higher morale and better care for patients.

Whatever the progress made with today's landmark changes, however, it will always be a matter of great regret that it was necessary to go through such disruptive industrial action to get there. We may welcome the destination, but no one could have wanted the journey, so today I say to all junior doctors, whatever our disagreements about the contract may have been, that the Government have heard and understood the wider frustrations they feel about the way they are valued and treated in the NHS. Our priority will always be the safety of patients, but we also recognise that to deliver high-quality care we need a well-motivated and happy junior doctor workforce. Putting a new modern contract in place is not the end of the story. We will continue to engage constructively

to try to resolve outstanding issues, as we proceed on our journey to tackle head on the challenges the NHS faces, and make it the safest, highest-quality healthcare system anywhere in the world. Today's agreement shows we can make common cause on that journey with a contract that is better for patients, better for doctors and better for the NHS. I commend my statement to the House.

**Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab)**

I start by putting on record our thanks to Sir Brendan Barber and ACAS for the role they have played in finding agreement between the two sides in this dispute. I also pay tribute to the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, which proposed these further talks and encouraged both the Government and the BMA to pause and think about patients.

I have not been shy in telling the Health Secretary what I think about his handling of this dispute, but today is not the day to repeat those criticisms. I am pleased and relieved that an agreement has been reached, but I am sad that it took an all-out strike of junior doctors to get the Government back to the table. What is now clear, if it was not already, is that a negotiated agreement was possible all along. I have to ask the Health Secretary why this deal could not have been struck in February. Why did he allow his pride back then to come before sensible compromise and constructive talks?

When he stands up to reply, he may try to blame the BMA for the breakdown in the negotiations, but he failed to say what options he was prepared to consider in order to ensure that the junior doctors who work the most unsociable hours are fairly rewarded. It was a "computer says no" attitude, and that is no way to run the NHS.

Why did the Health Secretary ignore my letter to him of 7 February, in which I asked him to make an explicit and public commitment to further concessions on the issue of unsociable hours? I was clear that if he had done that then, I would have encouraged the BMA to return to talks. Why did he insist instead on trying to bulldoze an imposed contract through, when virtually everyone told him not to, and the consequences of doing so were obvious for all to see—protracted industrial action, destroyed morale and

a complete breakdown in trust?

On the detail of the new contract, will the Health Secretary say a little more about the agreed changes that will undo the discriminatory effect on women of the last contract he published? Does he now accept that the previous contract discriminated against women? Will he be clear for the record that he now understands this was never “just about pay”? Can he confirm that concessions have been made not only in respect of the mechanism for enforcing hours worked and breaks taken, but in ensuring that the specialties with the biggest recruitment problems have decent incentives built into the contract?

Moving on to what happens next, can the Health Secretary tell us what he will do if junior doctors vote against this offer? Will he still impose a contract, and which version of the contract will he impose—his preferred version or this compromise one? Can he say whether the possibility of losing a case in the High Court about his power to impose a contract had anything to do with his recently discovered eagerness to return to talks? We all know that the High Court told him he had acted above the law when he tried to take the axe to my local hospital, so I can understand why he does not want that embarrassment again.

Finally, let me caution the Health Secretary on his use of language both in this Chamber and in the media. His loose words and implied criticism of junior doctors is partly the reason why this has ended up being such an almighty mess. May I suggest that a degree of humility on the part of the Secretary of State would not go amiss? May I recommend a period of radio silence from him to allow junior doctors to consider the new contract with clear minds, and without his spin echoing in their ears? I remind him that he still needs to persuade a majority of junior doctors to vote in favour of the contract for the dispute to be finally over.

I hope with all my heart that yesterday's agreement may offer a way forward. Junior doctors will want to consider it; trust needs to be repaired, and that will take time. I hope for the sake of everyone, patients and doctors, that we may now see an end to this very sorry episode in NHS history.

**Mr Hunt** The hon. Lady is wrong

today, as she has been wrong throughout this dispute. In the last 10 months, she has spent a great deal of time criticising the way in which the Government have sought to change the contract. What she has not dwelt on, however, is the reason it needed to be changed in the first place, namely the flawed contract for junior doctors that was introduced in 1999.

We have many disagreements with the BMA, but we agree on one thing: Labour's contract was not fit for purpose. Criticising the Government for trying to put that contract right is like criticising a mechanic for mending the car that you just crashed. It is time that the hon. Lady acknowledged that those contract changes 17 years ago have led to a number of the five-day care problems that we are now trying to sort out.

The hon. Lady was wrong to say that an all-out strike was necessary to resolve the dispute. The meaningful talks that we have had have worked in the last 10 days because the BMA bravely changed its position, and agreed to negotiate on weekend pay. The hon. Lady told the House four times before that change of heart that we should not impose a new contract. What would have happened if we had followed her advice? Quite simply, we would not have seen the biggest single step towards a seven-day NHS for a generation, the biggest reforms of unsocial hours for 17 years, and the extra cost of employing a doctor at weekends going down by a third. We would not have seen the reductions in maximum working hours. We would not have seen many, many other changes that have improved the safety of patients and the quality of life of doctors.

The hon. Lady was also wrong to say that the previous contract discriminated against women. In fact, it removed discrimination. Does that mean that there are not more things that we can do to support women who work as junior doctors? No, it does not. The new deal that was announced yesterday provides for an important new catch-up clause for women who take maternity leave, which means that they can return to the position in which they would have been if they had not had to take time off to have children.

The hon. Lady asked what would happen if the ballot went the wrong

way. What she failed to say was whether she was encouraging junior doctors to vote for the deal. Let me remind her that on 28 October, she told the House that she supported the principle of seven-day services. As Tony Blair once said, however, one cannot will the end without willing the means. The hon. Lady has refused to say whether she supported the withdrawal of emergency care, she has refused to say whether she supports contentious changes to reform premium pay, and now she will not even say whether doctors should vote for the new agreement.

Leadership means facing up to difficult decisions, not ducking them. I say to the hon. Lady that this Government are prepared to make difficult decisions and fight battles that improve the quality and safety of care in the NHS. If she is not willing to fight those battles, that is fine, but she should not stand at the Dispatch Box and claim that Labour stands up for NHS patients. If she does not want to listen to me, perhaps she should listen to former Labour Minister Tom Harris, who said: “Strategically Labour should be on the side of the patients and we aren't.” Well, if Labour is not, the Conservatives are.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con)**

I congratulate both sides on returning to constructive negotiations and on reaching an agreement. I pay particular tribute to Professor Sue Bailey and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges for their role in bringing both sides together. I welcome the particular focus, alongside the negotiations around weekend pay, on all the other aspects that are blighting the lives of junior doctors. I welcome the recognition that we need to focus on those specialties that it is hard to recruit to and on those junior doctors who are working the longest hours, as well as the focus on patient safety.

However, we are not out of the woods yet. We need junior doctors across the country to vote for this agreement in a referendum. May I add my voice to that of the Opposition spokesman on health to say that what is needed now is a period of calm reflection? We need to build relationships with junior doctors into the future.

MAYBE YOU CAN EXPLAIN THIS  
TO YOUR BOY OR GIRL

Just because you're on benefits  
 it doesn't mean it's your fault  
 maybe you don't even think of  
 that industrial blitz  
 when workers were treated as  
 dolts  
 remember when dad said:  
 my boy isn't goin' down the mine  
 to get silicosis  
 or be thought dead  
 when the sirens whine  
 giving me thrombosis  
 now they import coal  
 and it's all concreted over  
 that hole  
 and now dad is saying:  
 my boy needed to go down there  
 for he's falling apart up here  
 and no one cares  
 as he anaesthetises himself  
 and only answers with leers and jeers  
 and those with wealth  
 like William Morris  
 designed wallpaper and delph  
 and as if he had his wish  
 borrows  
 the green cloak  
 to throw over that quiet valley  
 where only thunder echoes  
 in this unemployed ghetto  
 one pithead winding gear  
 looms  
 a rusting wagon with the last dram  
 of coal  
 bears witness to she who would manage  
 with a new broom  
 the old miner with the blue-pitted skin  
 leads the industrial tourists  
 through a landscape  
 of rapine  
 cynical of another government tryst  
 the slagheaps  
 with trees flowers where graze  
 sheep  
 pristinely clean  
 this valley  
 where no smoke clouds  
 dallies  
 and no workmates

with their banter  
 the joy of Friday and leaving work  
 at a canter  
 you never knew this  
 discipline self-discipline  
 you missed  
 just because you're on benefits  
 it doesn't mean it's your fault  
 being at the end of your wits  
 they lock up diamonds and gold  
 in those bank vaults  
 with murdered industry long gone  
 the unions were paralysed in this  
 new dawn  
 now Britain lives by the  
 roulette wheel  
 a complete steal  
 what's left to  
 feel.

Wilson John Haire.

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regions. For a country where nepotism and influence are such a dampener on democracy, this is a retrograde step.

The progress towards their referendum is as heated in Italy as in the UK. Boschi recently made a huge gaffe by saying that real Italian partisans will be voting "yes" to the constitutional reforms. The hornets' nest exploded. Italy's partisan groups were started immediately after World War Two with the aim of ensuring a future of national freedom, peace and anti-fascism. Carlo Smuraglia, President of the main group, *Anpi* (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia) was outraged at being directed how to vote. The left-wing candidate for Mayor of Rome, Stefano Fassina, concurred with their thoughts. *"This is a very serious statement, very worrying, confirmation of the culture of intolerance towards dissent that the Renzi government manifests every day."* (Huffingtonpost.it 23.05.2016) And it is a serious vote loser for Renzi's government.

The 93 year old communist and partisan Smuraglia responded to the 35 year old Boschi with an article in *Anpi's* magazine saying that she didn't know what she was talking about. He talked about her government forcing through agreements in parliament by running confidence votes to curtail discussion. In essence he decried the vacuous and noisy nature of current politics. As a communist with enormous life experience, the world of lightweights in politics was an anathema. *"I find this out of place compared with a campaign that should be quiet, calm and focussed on content. Enough"*.

# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## ALWAYS THE SILLY SEASON?

Brexit? There is little time for the Italian press to divert themselves from their current exceptionally busy and volatile political scene. Included in the programme are the municipal and mayoral elections on 5 June, there are also the internal miseries of the leaderless and rudderless *M5S* (The Movimento 5 Stelle), plus an October referendum. All are being conducted in the customary forthright and passionate Italian way.

Municipal and mayoral elections are held every five years and the campaigns in a significant number of mayoralties have been exceedingly controversial. One particular conflagration followed the announcement by Georgia Meloni, a well known political figure, that she had decided to stand for the Roman mayoralty. Meloni is pregnant. Berlusconi immediately said motherhood was incompatible with office, while his favoured male candidate said that she shouldn't have to work a 14 hour day, dealing with potholes while she was breastfeeding. Women were outraged by the misogyny and protested loudly. Similarly a candidate in Milan, Patrizia Bedori stood down after becoming increasingly unhappy about adverse and offensive comments about her appearance. This is a familiar problem for British female politicians and prominent women such as Cambridge Professor Mary Beard who have to cope with trolling.

Gianroberto Casaleggio, the owner, or managing director of *M5S* died suddenly in April leaving a large gap in the Italian political scene. *M5S* is a significant political force as it netted the largest number of votes in the last general election. The movement was not established with a leader and democratic structure in the accepted political way and it has Beppe Grillo the famous comedian as its figurehead, carrying their public branding. Casaleggio was in effect his puppet-master and since his demise Grillo has not made any

moves to lead the Movement. Neither has son Davide Casaleggio or two of the three current hierarchy; only Luigi Di Maio's voice comes through as a spokesperson.

Di Maio is ambitious and, at 29 is the current and youngest-ever Vice President of the Lower House. On 21 May he appeared in an interview on the regular political TV show *Otto e mezzo*. This is hosted by Lilli Gruber a 59 year old ex-politician of the left. Gruber is ferocious. Di Maio looked slightly fearful but he has appeared on the programme before. The setting was noteworthy for its symbolism. Sleek in black, with long dressed fair hair, Gruber wore the most impossibly high, sharp stiletto heels. The camera would occasionally shoot from a low vantage point that emphasised her shoes as deadly, killer weapons, a metaphor for her ability (usually) to flatten (puncture is probably a better word) her interviewees.

However, Gruber made a significant point. Grillo had hit the headlines in Italy and the UK after his provocative remark about waiting for London's new Muslim Mayor Sadiq Khan to blow up Westminster. Gruber suggested to Di Maio that it was untenable for a comedian, whose working method is ridiculing people, to also expect to have credibility as a politician. He has to be one or the other, not both. There is no satisfactory answer to this. Di Maio did his best, saying that Grillo wasn't the leader but was there to guarantee the rules.

And although it may seem extraordinary to have a comedian as a significant player in politics, there are precedents elsewhere. It is unimaginable that old style comics such as Frankie Howard or Tony Hancock would be fronting a political movement. But politics has changed and the illusory familiarity of celebrity status actually confers a largely unquestioned credibility onto people who are just self-opinionated publicists. Or was it ever thus? Figures such as Stephen Fry and Russell Brand,

and Boris Johnson and Donald Trump are considered as leaders not for their strong manifestos but rather because of their capacity to entertain.

On 16 May *Corriere della Sera* published an article headed "Boris Johnson: *The European Union has the same objectives as Hitler*". Although there is, for many reasons, growing anti-EU antipathy in Italy his pronouncement was viewed with horror. Johnson is generally seen as a clown, bracketed with Grillo or Trump. Fittingly for the early silly-season, *Corriere* also ran a piece based on a Bianca Jagger Tweet. Her tweet saw a likeness between Johnson and Trump and it suggested that "they were separated at birth". This article expanded a little on Johnson's views but continued to say that his fellow "demon" Trump believed that Brussels is "an infernal hole" and that "isolation is good, integration is stupid." Fittingly *Corriere* illustrated the piece with a photo of Boris looking ridiculous on his bike.

*La Repubblica* ran an interesting video interview with Vittorio Zucconi, its New York correspondent of 30 years, who attempted to answer the question about why Trump was being taken seriously. At first everyone laughed, he said. Then this changed to incredulity and then the reality of his popularity hit home as truth. "The smile turned to fear.... His aims are simplistic but to his supporters he represents *"Anything But" the traditional politicians*".

The Italian government's proposed changes to the electoral system, which reduces the numbers in the Lower House (Camera) and radically changes the Upper House (Senate), were the particular responsibility of Maria Elena Boschi, the Minister for Reform. This Bill will be put to the country in a referendum in October. If approved, the Senate will be appointed from the

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