

Labour Affairs

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Five-To-One: A New Incomes Policy

Everyone complains about bloated executive pay. The top boss typically gets 84 times the wages of the average worker in Britain. In the USA it is 354 times as much.¹ Almost all of us are against it – but what do we do about it?

The popular answer to this has been appeals to individual virtue, plus a notion that shareholders might cure it. This has failed to work. During the crisis that began from financial speculation in 2008, the wealth of the rich has been protected and their share has even increased. Ordinary people have paid the price.

The obvious fix is more social control. The TUC has proposed that ordinary workers should have a say on the matter, through their trade unions having members on-company Remuneration Committees. But hardly anyone else wants to know. The Labour Party have made a much more timid proposal.

This goes back to the mistakes of the 1970s. In the 1970s, a large majority of socialists intentionally undermined and defeated what should have been the next stage of socialism. Thatcher's later victory was a win by default, after militants on the left had intentionally defeated Incomes Policy and Workers Control. They pursued a policy based on a foolish expectation that if they prevented moderate reform, a socialist revolution would follow.

But there was also a much wider prejudice against regulation of all sorts: a feeling that went way beyond the left. This was what Thatcher and Reagan tapped into, though what they actually did was re-write the rules in favour of the rich. People who had problems with particular state-enforced rules – mostly regarding sex or drugs – took the attitude that the state as such was their enemy.

The West since the 1960s has concentrated on expanding individual freedom. But it has done so under a liberal-left outlook that ignores that we humans are social creatures. The core notion is of a magic entity known as 'The Individual', with an inherent set of rights that exist naturally.

If the artificial limits are removed, all would be well. As Rousseau famously put it,

"Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know."²

He later tried to explain it as a 'social contract' that was made in ancient times, which individuals should be free to opt out of. This might work for small farmers each producing for their own needs – but the Earth could not support even a hundredth of its current population on that basis, even if most people wanted it. We are all in practice tied to an economic system that is increasingly a single global entity.

Libertarians, who'd claim to be in the tradition of Rousseau, assert that economic ties make us free. They hold that whatever we get from the free market must be what we're worth. Logically this means that someone getting 300 times the wages of an average worker must be 300 times better. Someone unemployed must be wholly worthless. This may well be what they think privately, though naturally it's not how right-wing politicians put it. They like to evade the issue, which is why it would be good for the left to concentrate on it.

It turns out that most Europeans would like the difference between top wages and average wages to be much lower than it is. Danes, Swedes and Norwegians would favour 2, 2.2 and 2.3 to 1 (though the reality is 48, 89 and 58 to 1). In Britain, a majority would favour 5.3 to 1. Even in the USA they'd rate 6.7 to 1 as fair.³ On this basis, the left could sensibly say that 5 to 1 would be a reasonable ratio, enough to reward skill and hard work. And they could fairly say that anything beyond that is exploitation.

Lots of people will say this much. But when you suggest that a mix of state power and trade union power are the way to fix it, they don't want to know. State power

over the economy is seen as a threat to freedom.

This is unjustified. Freedom is not the same thing as a lack of state regulation. This might seem too obvious to need saying, except that since the 1960s the default reaction has been "STATE REGULATION – BAD!"

Remarkably, this hasn't stopped the same people demanding state regulation when it suits them. Smoking has been banned from public places. The rights of women and the rights of gays are increasingly asserted, mostly through state power. This is mostly presented not as state power advancing into new areas, but as a manifestation of 'the law'.

If someone said 'trust me, I'm a lawyer', it would be seen as a joke. But law is operated by lawyers, with judges being promoted from among these same lawyers and sharing their assumptions. In other words, they claim to represent 'The Law', existing as something transcendent. In deeds, they constantly try to bend the rules for what they see as good ends. Judges not only allow this: they do it themselves. It's known as 'judicial activism', and often sees judges overturning the wishes of elected representatives with some phoney claim to Higher Authority.

This is not a complaint: this is a description of reality. Since there is no obvious way to leap suddenly to some superior reality, it is the system within which we should think about improving the world.

We should not be afraid of State Regulation. Once you erase the phoney difference between State Regulation and The Law, you see that you can't have civilisation without some sort of system of regulation / law. Realistically, state regulation is part of freedom, as is individual initiative. The issue should be the particular mix that best applies.

Consider the basic matter of road traffic. We assume that some rules are necessary and must be imposed. All motor vehicles display government-issued number plates – this has been true from the beginning and so is not often questioned. Likewise we accept

road lanes, priority at junctions and rules for parking. New rules like speed limits, seat belts and breathalysers were seen as horrible infringements of liberty, when first introduced, but were later accepted.

For the road, safety rules are fairly obvious. Each individual wants convenient parking places, but does not want roads blocked by other people parking. Priority is inconvenient when it is against you but convenient when you are favoured – and interestingly, when someone needs to be let into a queue of traffic, they will mostly not wait long before some complete stranger altruistically allows this. As for rules of speed and safety, being run over or killed by someone else's is obviously a serious interference with one's personal liberty.

The notion of 'let things drift' works OK for some areas. People walking on ordinary streets mostly sort themselves out. Putting people into streams can help with moving big crowds. The Vatican hierarchy maybe invented this for the West when they imposed two separate streams for pilgrims crossing a particularly narrow bridge in Rome. Dante put a version of this into his vision of hell, presumably as a protest against what he saw as a gross interference with liberty. But in the longer run, people saw the logic of this.

So why did we let things slip on controlling the economy? More specifically, on controlling the rich, people whose individual economic decisions affect us all so much? Partly it was due to the increasing loss of power and coherence by the Soviet Union. They made a mess of their attempts to reform and upgrade their economy, the same process that China later managed very nicely. (And China is still vastly more state-controlled than Western Europe ever was.) Signs that the Soviet and communist threat was fading re-emboldened the rich, who from the 1940s to 1960s had been convinced they had to make a lot of concessions just to survive.

People began to re-write history, including claiming that the New Deal in the USA had actually interrupted a 'natural' recovery that would have

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happened without it. Fog and darkness were spread upon economics by a vast tribe of well-paid economists encouraged by rich right-wingers. A Swedish bank even managed to persuade the Swedish Nobel Committee to create a “Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences”, which borrows the prestige of the three well-respected science prizes.

There were also an increasing number of people doing what had been defined as middle-class jobs. Many of these decided they were doing fine without a union. As indeed they were – for as long as there was a solid body of unionised labour keeping up standards. Things changed when trade union power declined.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, people in the West enjoyed the basic freedoms of a decent job for anyone willing to work, and somewhere decent to live. In Britain, there was also free education for anyone who passed the right exams, and basic health care for whoever needed it. A less well off society than we have now found it fairly easy to fund these things.

People have been talked into thinking that these things are impossibly difficult, when in fact they are fairly easy. In the name of freedom, the economy was adjusted to favour a small super-rich minority. From the 1950s to 1970s, the benefits of economic growth flowed fairly evenly to everyone. Since the 1980s, the rich have had an increasingly large and unfair share.

The initial Thatcherite promise was for trickle-down: that business freed from constraints would generate extra wealth and make everyone better off. This was soon shown to be untrue, but they were allowed to drop it without the left doing anything to keep it in public memory. Britain did no better in the 1980s than in the ‘disastrous’ 1970s, and things since they have got worse.

Had Thatcherism been defeated, which might have happened had Britain lost the Falklands War or had there been no Falklands War, things could have carried on much as before. In such

an alternative history, Britain would probably be better off than it is now. (Particularly since Britain pioneered the financial deregulation that led to the crisis that began in 2008 and is still depressing our economy.) It is also definite that the working mainstream of the society would have a bigger chunk of that wealth, while the elite would have had to stay more modest. And there would be jobs for everyone, and affordable housing.

The half-forgotten crisis of 1987 and the unresolved crisis that began in 2008 showed that New Right rhetoric about Free Markets was just rhetoric. Whenever the interests of the rich were threatened, the state stepped in with massive public spending to avoid a slump. But in the 2008 crisis, the public had become so demoralised that they have largely accepted public spending to secure the financial gambles of the rich, while austerity is applied to the things that ordinary people need.

It’s time to call a halt. Trade Union power and state intervention to secure social justice worked well enough for as long as they were applied, from the 1940s to 1970s. Adjustments were surely needed in the 1970s, but could have been done differently. There was no need for a drive to return to 19th century values, which is what the Thatcher / Reagan policies amounted to.

Incomes Policy would have been part of any left-wing stabilisation, and Incomes Policy was the main thing the left could not stomach. If we accept now that this was a major error, things can begin to move forward again. So what can we do to recover the situation? Worker’s control, which was on the agenda in the 1970s, but rejected by the left is now (modestly) on the agenda again, thanks to the TUC. A start could be made by putting elected workers on remuneration committees, but as a prelude to a significant representation of workers on Boards of Directors. They would be able to keep a check on the behaviour of senior employees of companies who see fit to pillage those companies for their own benefit. The road to greater income equality will not be smooth, but more worker representation on boards is the first step.

(Endnotes)

1 [<http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/09/ceos-get-paid-too-much-according-to-pretty-much-everyone-in-the-world/>]

2 [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/The_Social_Contract]

3 [<http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/09/ceos-get-paid-too-much-according-to-pretty-much-everyone-in-the-world/>]

Advertising is legalized lying. *H. G. Wells*

A nation cannot become free and at the same time continue to oppress other nations. The liberation of Germany cannot therefore take place without the liberation of Poland from German oppression.

Engels, Speech on Poland (1847)

A man with a club is a law-maker.

Jack London, The Call of the Wild

A man has no more religion than he acts out in his life.

Henry Ward Beecher, Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit

Worldly fame is but a breath of wind that blows now this way, and now that, and changes name as it changes direction.

Dante Alighieri

Work isn't to make money; you work to justify life.

Marc Chagall

Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

Munitions Of War Bill— 28 June 1915

On 28 June 1915, the House of Commons debated the Second Reading of the Munitions Of War Bill, introduced by Ronald McNeill, Conservative member for Kent East. The purpose of the Bill was to expedite the production of war munitions, such as bullets and rifles. McNeill delivered a long speech to which Labour's Philip Snowden and James O'Grady responded. Snowden and O'Grady indulged in an acrimonious dispute over who, of the two, was the authentic voice of the trade union movement. The key point at the heart of their dispute was a matter of trust in the Government over compulsory arbitration. Snowden wanted a guarantee, written into the Bill, that compulsory arbitration would be for the duration of the War only. O'Grady, on the other hand, believed that compulsory arbitration was an integral component of Socialism. The key parts of McNeill's speech are published below, followed by the contributions from Snowden and O'Grady. In his contribution, Snowden says that Britain had prepared for war with Germany five years before it occurred. No one, including Lloyd George who replied on behalf of the Government, challenged Snowden on his statement that Britain had prepared for war five years previously.

A brief, incomplete, biography of Philip Snowden.

Philip Snowden (18 July, 1864--15 May, 1937) was born in the village of Cowling, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His parents were devout followers of the religious ideas of John Wesley and as a boy Snowden was brought up as a Methodist. At the age of 15, he went to work in an insurance office. Snowden joined the Keighley Liberal Club and he agreed to present a paper on the dangers of socialism, but while researching this paper he became converted to this new ideology.

Snowden left the Liberal Party and joined the local branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). In 1889 he was elected to the Keighley Town Council. He also served as editor of a local socialist newspaper. In 1903 he was elected as the national chairman of the ILP. Like Keir Hardie, Snowden was a Christian Socialist, and in 1903 together they wrote a pamphlet on their beliefs, *The Christ that is to Be*.

He made several attempts to enter the House of Commons. He was defeated at Blackburn in the 1900 General Election and at the Wakefield by-election in 1902; finally succeeding in the 1906 General Election at Blackburn. Snowden was a pacifist and refused to support Britain's

involvement in the First World War. He and his wife Ethel joined the Union of Democratic Control. (UDC). Other members included Arthur Ponsonby, J. A. Hobson, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, Fred Jowett, Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, H.H. Brailsford, Bertrand Russell and Koni Zilliacus.

The UDC soon emerged as the most important of the anti-war organisations in Britain and by 1915 had 300,000 members. Frederick-Pethick-Lawrence explained the objectives of the UDC: "As its name implies, it was founded to insist that foreign policy should in future, equally with home policy, be subject to the popular will. The intention was that no commitments should be entered into without the peoples being fully informed and their approval obtained. By a natural transition, the objects of the Union came to include the formation of the terms of a durable settlement, on the basis of which the war might be brought to an end." Snowden also gave his support to the No-Conscription Fellowship, formed by Clifford Allen and Fener Brockway, an organisation that encouraged men to refuse war service.

Like other anti-war Labour MPs, Snowden was defeated in the 1918 General Election. He was eventually forgiven and was elected to represent Colne Valley in the 1922 General Election.

James O'Grady KCMG (6 May, 1866-10 December, 1934) was a trade unionist and Labour Party politician. He was the first colonial governor appointed by the Party from within its own ranks. He was born in Bristol to Irish parents. His father was a labourer, and after leaving school at ten, O'Grady did various jobs before training as a cabinet maker. and became active in the cabinet-maker's union.

A member of the Independent Labour Party and supported by the Labour Representation Committee, he was elected at the 1906 general election for Leeds East constituency. O'Grady was re-elected in the January 1910 and December 1910 elections. When the Leeds East constituency was abolished for the c1918 general election, he was returned unopposed for the new Leeds South East constituency. He held the seat until he stepped down from Parliament at the 1924 general election.

In the Commons, he spoke frequently, particularly on foreign affairs, and was noted as a strong supporter of the First World War. He was also Labour's only Roman Catholic MP. Through his role in the Amalgamated Union of Cabinet Makers, he had been President of the TUC on 1898, continuing his union activities whilst

an MP. After a variety of posts in unions related to the furniture trades, he became general secretary of the National Federation of General Workers in 1918.

In 1924, Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Government offered O'Grady the post of British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, and he accepted. But O'Grady did not in the end get the job, because the government postponed exchanging ambassadors. Instead he became Governor of Tasmania, taking office on 23 December. His next appointment was in 1931, as Governor of the Falkland Islands, but he retired in 1934 due to ill-health. He died later that year, aged 68.

Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a second time"---(Mr Lloyd George).

Mr Ronald McNeill:

The right hon. Gentleman (Mr Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions) in speaking of the past said: 'We assumed that victory was our due as a tribute of our fate. Our problem is to organise victory and not take it for granted.'---(OFFICIAL REPORT, 23rd June, 1915, col. 1186). Those last words are so true that in no offensive sense at all I should be included to say they were a platitude. It is our business to organise victory and not take it for granted. But of whom was the right hon. Gentleman speaking when he said, 'We assumed that victory was our due as a tribute to our fate'? I do not believe for one moment that the majority of the Members of this House and still less that any considerable body of opinion in the country ever entertained any such delusion. I believe from the beginning of the War, although of course there was lack of appreciation of all that was required, that the country realised and that this House realised that we were up against an enemy for which we were quite unprepared and that it would require most strenuous efforts in order to accomplish the task which lay before us. I believe we did assure, certainly many of us on this side of the House assumed, though I do not know whether we rightly assumed it or not, that the Government, met no doubt with a terrible task for which we were by the very nature of our system unprepared in a great measure, as the right hon. Gentleman pointed out last week, were doing everything that was conceivably possible to be done for organising victory from the first.

How do we stand today? The right hon. Gentleman last week used some very remarkable words. He said that several of the Powers had probably attained the limit of

their possible output, but we had 'only just crossed the threshold of our possibilities.' That was a very remarkable pronouncement to make after ten months of war. I would ask the House to throw its mind back to that memorable week when the War broke out. Speculation was rife how long the War would last. We were divided, roughly speaking, into pessimists and optimists, accordingly as we expressed the opinion that it would take years or months. What does the House think would have been the attitude of mind of anyone here, or of any thinking person in the country, if they could have been told then that, by the end of the following June---that is to say, when we had had been fighting for ten months---a responsible Member of the Government would come down to the House of Commons and say, 'We are now, after ten months, just crossing the threshold of our possibilities of producing the essentials for carrying on war'! I do not think that any person would have been made against us for such a prophecy, showing such a want of confidence in the power and zeal of the Government. It would have been put down, perhaps rightly so, to gross party feeling on our part.

Would it have been believed that practically the winter would be wasted, and when the spring campaign came---when we would know that energetic operations would be carried on by the enemy, and we should have to be prepared to meet them---there would be no readiness for it, but that, in the middle of the summer, when practically only a few weeks remained of what in the old days was considered the fighting season, we should have the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of Munitions telling us that, if we produce our maximum within the next few months, we may then equal, or even surpass, the enemy! Yet, at the end of June, we are being told that, if we get to our maximum within the next few months, we shall be able to meet the enemy.

When the right hon. Gentleman spoke of the dire necessity and dire peril, and when he showed that he himself and the responsible Government were doubtfully and reluctantly, as I think, consenting to the measure before us, that was the moment chosen by the right hon. Gentleman---the Member for Rotherham (Mr J. A. Pease)---to make a speech, in which the Minister of Munitions was charitable enough to say he detected signs of friendliness to the Government. That right hon. Gentleman spoke about uttering threats to the nation. He raked up against his right hon. colleague that old stale slander about having accused the working classes of being drunken. This right hon. Gentleman, who had lately retired from the Government, and who ought to have had knowledge of the seriousness of the situation, seemed

much more anxious, as I thought, to vindicate the Government, of which he was a member, than to do anything to help the present situation. He appeared to be very apprehensive lest some form of compulsion, either in an industrial or in a military sense, should be introduced, in order to get over the emergency of the moment. He talked about it being an inappropriate thing to introduce Prussianism into this nation at a time when we were fighting against it. I do not recollect that the right hon. Gentleman showed any very great indignation when the right hon. Gentleman opposite introduced compulsory insurance from Prussia.

Mr Pringle: I opposed it.

Mr R. McNeill:

I was not talking about the hon. Member (Mr Pringle); I was speaking of the more important right hon. Gentleman below me. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman, who has been responsible for administering a system of compulsory education, regarded that, to use his own phrase, as a 'Bureaucratic tyranny.' I do not wish to discuss the matter in detail, but I cannot see that in principle there is any great difference, or that there is Prussianism in asking a man to serve his country when its existence is at stake in any way the Government may want him; or whereas it is not Prussianism, but merely British tradition and a British principle to compel a man, whether he likes it or not, to send his children to a certain class of school or to insure himself against unemployment or sickness. I cannot say that I was greatly impressed by the eloquence of the right hon. Gentleman in that respect. I may say that I am one who has never at any time looked with pleasure or complacency upon the question of compulsion in any shape or form in this country. I am much more opposed to compulsion than the right hon. Gentleman, who has acquiesced in it in half a dozen different directions. Nevertheless, I am convinced by speeches we have heard from different parts of the House, and from a review of the whole situation, that what we require at the present moment is some such form of national service as was spoken of in a very eloquent and impressive speech only the other day by the hon. Member for East Northamptonshire (Sir L. Chiozza Money).

I am not going to argue the question of compulsion against the voluntary system, but I feel very strongly that hon. Members in different parts of the House, and people outside, make a very great mistake when they assume that those who are in favour of national service at the call of the State at such a time as this think that it is required mainly in order to fill up the ranks of our fighting forces at the front. If we require some form of compulsion or national service, it is not in order to get recruits but

in order to make organisation efficient. It is not in order that we may have greater numbers under the command of the Field-Marshal, but that the work of all our people throughout the country should be given to the State in that particular form and in that particular place where it is most required at the present moment, and where it will be most useful.

Mr Snowden:

Before I proceed to make any observations on the speech of the Home Secretary I would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield (Mr S. Roberts) upon the force and eloquence with which he represented the interests of the armament firm with which he is connected. I think the fear which the hon. Member expressed in regard to that part of the Bill which proposes to limit the profits of employers in munitions factories indicates that the firms with which he is associated were not at any rate partners to that understanding to which the Home Secretary refers.

Mr S. Roberts:

We were partners. It is only the wording of the Bill to which I referred.

Mr Snowden:

The Home Secretary, with all his powers of persuasive presentation, has never had a more difficult task than he had this afternoon, and I think that his powers shone more brilliantly than on this occasion. But any Member of this House, listening to the explanation of the Bill which the right hon. Gentleman has given, might be excused for believing that it was the most harmless and inoffensive measure which was ever presented to this House. I do not complain that there were certain proposals in the Bill to which the right hon. Gentleman made no reference. We shall have an opportunity of dealing with those points on the Committee stage of the Bill. A great many compliments have been paid to the Labour party in this House from a quarter whence compliments are not usually given to trade unionists, and I might give my Friends a word of warning when compliments about trade unionism come from the quarter which has hitherto been hostile to trade unionism---(HON. MEMBERS: "No!")---they ought to look carefully at the proposals which are under consideration.

My friends who have spoken have given what was described by one speaker as a welcome to the Bill. I want to say that there is far more involved in this Bill than the question of trade union interests, important though they are. I do not want in the least to minimise the influence of my trade union friends as leaders of the organisations of trade union interests, but I think that it ought to be stated that in giving their support to this Bill they do not speak with the authority of the rank and file of trade unionists. (HON.

MEMBERS: Why not?") I want to say further---(An HON. MEMBER: "Speak for yourself")---that they do not represent the unanimous opinion of those who were represented at the conference at which this Bill was approved by a majority. If my information is correct, and I have no reason to doubt it, something like one-third of the delegates represented at that conference voted against these proposals; and, I may point out further, that the two greatest trade unions in the country were not represented at that conference--the miners and the textile workers---the two organisations which by their votes dominate the decisions of the annual Trade Union Conference. Therefore, though I readily admit the right of my trade union Friends to express their own minds as they think fit and to give their support to this Bill on their individual responsibility, I want it to be distinctly understood that they do not speak with the mandate from the trade unions which they are supposed to represent.

Mr Hodge:

May I be permitted to say that I speak with the full authority of my union? The right hon. Gentleman knows quite well that that vote was not taken upon the provisions of this Bill; it was taken upon the understanding that was to come between himself and the representatives of the Engineers Society some time ago.

Mr Lloyd George indicated assent.

Mr Snowden.

And I may also say that the voting on that question was a very small vote of the membership of the whole society. But, as I have said, though trade unions are vitally interested in this matter, this is not only a measure of importance to trade unions, but it is a measure of vital importance to the whole of the working classes of this country. Something else is at stake here than trade union rights and liberties---the whole question of the civil liberty of the people of this country---and therefore a Bill of this character ought to be very carefully and critically considered by this House. I am not opposed to organisation. I came into politics in order to advocate a new system of social organisation. Socialism, of which I have been an advocate for a great many years, is a system of industrial and social organisation. I believe that I am the only one among the Members of the Labour party in this House who has been an advocate of compulsory state arbitration.

Mr O'Grady indicated dissent.

Mr Snowden:

My hon. friend the Member for Leeds East appears also to have been in favour of it. But this I do know, that on a great many occasions I have been criticised very severely and have had to encounter a great deal of opposition because of my

advocacy of compulsory State arbitration. I have always regarded that as being the logical outcome of the Socialist principles which I have professed, but I have never advocated the national organisation of our industries, and the organisation of national service, I have never advocated compulsory State arbitration, under such conditions as are proposed in this Bill. I have never advocated compulsory arbitration except on a basis of trade union rights and trade union safeguards. I have never said that with State compulsory arbitration you should destroy all trade union rights. I have always advocated that we should be democratic, not that compulsory State arbitration should be in the hands of a Minister possessing powers which were described, both in the words of some other Member of this House and of the Home Secretary a few weeks ago, as despotic. I do not believe in strikes: I think that strikes are unthinkable at a time like this. I quite agree with what the Home Secretary said: If this War has to be continued, there can be no two options as to the need of doing what is necessary to secure the largest possible output of these instruments of war. But I certainly do not share the optimism which was expressed by the Home Secretary a few minutes ago, that by trade unionists sacrificing their rights at present they are not prejudicing their position after the War. I may have something more to say on that when I come to deal with the conclusion of the Bill.

I submit that the Government have not made out a case for this Bill. The Home Secretary himself said just now that the people who might be affected by this Bill are very small number indeed. An hon. Member speaking from the other side of the House in the early part of the debate this afternoon, spoke of the shirkers in connection with the provisions of this Bill. You can keep him at his machine, but it is simply the old story of bringing the horse to water, while you cannot compel him to drink. I submit, from the admission of the Home Secretary himself just now, that there is no need for this Bill. But one of my reasons for saying that the Government have not made out a case for this Bill is the speech of the Minister for Munitions last week, which was one of the most striking indictments of the whole Government that could possibly be delivered.

Nearly eleven months after the War he came to the House and said that it had been discovered the Germans had big guns. It reminds one of the statements which were attributed to the then Prime Minister at the time of the Boer War, expressing surprise when he discovered that the Boers had horses. **The Minister of Munitions, in the peroration of his speech last week, referred to the preparations which Germany had been making for a long**

period of years, and if he did not state, at any rate he implied, that we had been unaware of what Germany was doing, and that we had not expected such preparations on the part of Germany. But, surely, the right hon. Gentleman spoke in ignorance of a statement made by one of his own colleagues not a month ago, when the Chancellor of the Duchy told the people that he was sent to the Admiralty four years ago in order to prepare for war with Germany in case Germany attacked this country! And was the right hon. Gentleman aware of the statement made by Lord Haldane, only a few weeks ago, that for five years Sir John French had been making preparations for precisely such a campaign as this? How, therefore, in view of these statements of his own colleagues, can the Minister of Munitions come to this House in the eleventh month of the War and say that they were not prepared for these things which have eventuated? (my emphasis).

No, what this Bill implies is this: It tries to put the blame upon the working man for the mismanagement and inefficiency of the Government. (HON. MEMBERS: No!) We were told by an ex-Minister, only a fortnight ago, that the War Office blundered in this matter. Those who say 'No!' shall know, if they will listen to just a few facts. The hon. Member for Sheffield, who now has left the House, said that these big shells can only be made by the old-established armaments firms. We have at Woolwich the best equipped armament works in the country. Has the War Office, have the Government, taken full advantage of their plant there? I will read a few statements which I find in a Woolwich local paper, dated 26 March, which is three months ago. These statements are in regard to the condition of things at the Woolwich Arsenal:---'In the sighting room the old hands say they have never seen the shop so slack before.

I now come to the provisions of the Bill itself. The Home Secretary, in his explanation of the Bill, made a strong point of what he claimed to be the basing of compulsion upon voluntary arrangements. Can the right hon. Gentleman imagine any scheme of compulsory arbitration which is not based upon voluntary agreements? There is no system of compulsory arbitration in the world which does not, first of all, admit of a matter being settled by voluntary agreement between the parties. Therefore---I do not use the word offensively, because I do not think the right hon. Gentleman meant it---to say that it is a quibble. This is compulsory arbitration, it is compulsory arbitration deprived of its democratic character, and the men are coming into this system of compulsory arbitration practically with

their hands tied behind their backs. A point was raised by my hon. Friend here as to what is meant by the extension of the King's Proclamation of the power of compulsory arbitration to trades which are not yet included in the Bill.

I accept the right hon. Gentleman's intention. Nobody who knows him would doubt for a moment his intention or would doubt for a moment that, if he were to remain in office always, he would endeavour to carry out to the very letter and in the very spirit every promise that he has made in this House. He said that it was not the intention of the Government to proclaim a whole trade because of some petty local dispute. But what we want is something more than intention---we want it explicitly stated in the Act itself, and therefore that is the point to which I will direct attention on the Committee stage of the Bill. The right hon. Gentleman knows quite well, and everybody in this House knows, that industrial disputes are now practically always of a very wide character.

Take the case in my own part of the country of a dispute in connection with one cotton mill. There was a threat by the employers to close down every cotton mill in Lancashire. Therefore, in order to prevent a strike or lock-out in circumstances like these, it would be open to the Minister of Munitions by King's Proclamation to proclaim the whole cotton trade of Lancashire as being subject to the compulsory arbitration powers of this Bill. Take the case of the miners. A local dispute becomes a national dispute under the powers of Part 1. of the Bill. The Minister of Munitions will have the power to bring all the miners within the Bill, and thus, in regard to the two great unions which are opposed to compulsory arbitration, the Minister will have the power to bring those two great trades under the compulsory powers of this Bill.

I turn to Part 11. of the Bill. I was very glad indeed to hear what the Home Secretary said in regard to the real character of the trade union regulations. Though it may be possible to point out in particular individual instances that output is limited, it is not true to say that, over the whole field of trade unions, they restrict output. As a matter of fact they do not, and you find that output is always greatest where the trade is best organised. I am quite sure that my trade union Friends, in agreeing to the temporary suspension of trade union rules, are making very great difficulties for themselves in the future. It is no use saying that they will not be prejudiced in their negotiations after the War. They will be. Let us just imagine this: A trade union and the employers have a conference on the question of wages. What will the employers be able to say? If my hon. Friends say that the workmen can turn

out ten of a certain article in a day, the employers could turn round and say that they turned out twenty and thirty of that particular article during the War. What are my hon. Friends going to say? They are raising great difficulties for themselves which they will have to face when the War is over.

I want to enter another word of protest against a matter which certainly demands consideration in Committee on the Bill, and that is the proposal to give the Minister of Munitions power to make any regulations he likes applicable to a controlled establishment. I do not think that is a power that ought to be entrusted even to the present holder of the office of Minister of Munitions. There is to be a very heavy penalty on any workman who breaks any of these regulations. Supposing one of the regulations insisted upon a minimum output, and a workman does not make that output, he could be brought before the Munitions Tribunal and fined £3, which, as I understand the Home Secretary---and I believe power is taken in the Bill---can be deducted from his wages. I am not prepared to accede to giving the Minister of Munitions the power of making regulations of that character, and I should like to see the regulations as a schedule to the Bill. I come to the question of profits. A sop which has been given to the workpeople to induce them to swallow unpalatable parts of the Bill. I understand the hon. Member for Sheffield to say there was danger that these munitions firms might be worse under the provisions of this Bill than they otherwise would have been. Let me mention this fact, that the last two years have been the most profitable period of trade we have had for something like forty or fifty years, and, therefore, those firms who have made large profits during the last two years are going to take advantage of that. If the get 20 per cent more than the average of the last two years---

Mr Lloyd George:

If they paid a dividend of 5 per cent they would pay 6 per cent next.

Mr Snowden:

If they paid 10 per cent it would be about 12 1/2 per cent. I do not see the point of the right hon. Gentleman's interruption.

Mr Lloyd George:

I understood the hon. Gentleman to say 20 per cent additional profit.

Mr Snowden:

Twenty per cent of the actual profit, not additional. If a firm has made a net profit of a million pounds during the last two years, next year they will be able to distribute a million two hundred thousand and will be able to raise the dividend from say, 10 per cent to 12 1/2 per cent.

Mr Crooks:

The Kaiser will put it all right when he comes.

Mr Snowden:

I desire to refer to the Clause of the Bill which will not permit a man to leave his employment unless he gets a reasonable certificate. A man is to be compelled to stop there and cannot leave without that certificate from his employer, and if he does he is to be kept out of employment for six weeks, that is to say, six week's starvation have to be imposed on that man. I just want to say a word about the Schedule in the Bill.

Mr Lloyd George:

My hon. Friend does not surely pretend that that is a fair representation of that provision, and if he is explaining its provisions I hope he will do so more fully. It is clearly rather important, because it means if he leaves for good reason he is entitled to put his case before the Munition Court and to get a certificate.

Mr Snowden:

Yes. I have no desire to misrepresent any provisions of the Bill. The Second Schedule of the Bill deals with the suspension of trade union rules and practices. We were told by the Minister of Munitions the other day that trade unions must rely on the honour of a great nation for the restoration of those rights after the War. I prefer a very definite Clause in an Act of Parliament rather than the honour of a great nation. I venture the statement that there is nothing at all in this Bill which guarantees or gives an assurance for the resumption of those rules and practices after the War is over. We ought to try to realise, or, at any rate, to call before our imagination the industrial conditions which will exist after the War is over. The outbreak of peace will in some respects be as awful as the outbreak of war. You are allowing an influx of unskilled men and women, numbering hundreds of thousands, whose competition in the future will be a terrible menace to those skilled before the War. I fail to find in any words of the Schedule any guarantee that the employers will be compelled to observe the old conditions after the War is over. How that is going to be done I do not know, except continuing in some form compulsory arbitration, or, at any rate, conferring on the Government compulsory powers to enforce the observance of those rules when the War is over. Unless that is done in the Bill itself in words which are incapable of more than one construction then all that is said is so much waste paper.

Mr O'Grady:

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr Snowden) knows very little of the trade union movement and he has no right to make the statement he has made with respect to the delegates who were at the conference with the Treasury. Let me indicate to the House how mistaken a man can be, however well intentioned his remarks

are. He spoke of the vote in the conference with the Treasury, which, by the way, was a confidential conference, though probably somebody has been giving the show away. A certain vote was taken, and the hon. Member said that more than one third of the delegates voted against this Bill. That is absolutely a misstatement. Curiously enough I was one of the men who voted against the majority, and that is why I am making this statement, but the vote which we took was not upon this Bill at all. It was on the principle of applying compulsory arbitration to all disputes during the War. There were 16 who voted against the application generally of the principle of compulsory arbitration and 50 who voted to the contrary, but on this Bill there was not a single dissident.

I want to remind my hon. Friend that after all it is impossible to get a poll of our men on this Bill. Time is a great factor in the matter, and to suggest that we should put this Bill before our members, and particularly before an organisation like the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which has branches in Australia and in Canada, and to make the result of their vote decide on a Bill of this character, is not a practical proposition at all. Every single item of this Bill, with the exception of the principle of compulsory arbitration, has been voted upon by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in the form on the Treasury Agreement.

I want to tell the House this further fact that the only difference between this Bill and the Treasury Agreement, which has been adopted and carried by a majority, is the single question of compulsory arbitration, and I have advocated it for years because it is the logical outcome of my belief in Socialism, and for that reason too my hon. Friend should be in favour of compulsory arbitration as contained in this Bill. The point he makes is that under Socialism, with compulsory arbitration operating, a workman would go into Court fairly free, but under this Bill he goes in with his hands tied behind his back. We have not got the millennium yet, and we have not got the establishment of Socialism yet. We have got to deal with things as we go along, and as we find them and on the facts of the case. I want to suggest to my hon. Friend that the Courts before which the men will place their grievances are Courts on which the men will have their own representatives, and not as is the case now in most cases where arbitration is carried on either voluntarily or by compulsion. After all it depends on the Courts and, as the hon. and learned Member for Exeter (Mr Duke) so well put it, I hope the Courts will be made more local than they are. I understood that under the Bill itself the Courts would be local Courts, to which the men could go and get these

matters rectified without delay.

Mr Lloyd George was understood to say that that was the intention

Mr O'Grady:

But the strongest point made by the hon. Member for Blackburn, and put in a somewhat different way by the right hon. and learned Member for Exeter, was the difficulty of getting these cases tried at once. Let me go on to speak about the trade unions. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn, that up to the present we have been casting blame upon the workman. But who have been doing it? The late Government attempted to do it. I protested on that occasion, and I have protested since. But my hon. friend the Member for Blackburn has also blamed the workmen for the state of things which has existed in regard to the production of munitions of war. My hon. Friend wrote an article in the "Daily Despatch", in which he said that the figures of drunkenness were appalling. Of course, he went on to water it down. But he made this declaration finally---I am speaking from memory, but this is the substance of it---that while under normal circumstances the position is absolutely intolerable and something must be done. If that is not casting blame upon the workmen, I do not know what is. It is idle for my hon. Friend to challenge the Government; I challenged them before he did. We disagreed with the statement that was made, and we said so publicly. But for an hon. Friend of ours to come along and lay the blame on the Government without considering what he himself has done, and what he contributed towards it---well, well, I do not know where we are getting in these matters.

Let there be no mistake about this Bill. I do not want to discuss it from an academic point of view. I want to put the plain practical aspect of it before the House, and particularly before my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn. After all, the men are asked under this Bill to volunteer. To do what? To enter into a contract with the Government to do a certain amount of work for six months---to do it faithfully and well, if you like. That is an ordinary civil contract. I have entered into contracts with my employer when I was at the bench. If I did not fulfil the terms of the contract, what followed? I was hauled up before a Court---and before a Court which I thought was prejudiced. What is a man asked to do now? You go to him and say, "Will you volunteer to go and work on certain conditions?" What are the terms? The terms are specifically stated in the note that he signs. His trade union rates of wages and his overtime rates are guaranteed by the State. The only conditions he is asked to relax are those rules---built up, I agree, after centuries of fighting and suffering---having to do, say, with the prevention of

semi-skilled workmen doing the work of skilled workmen. I might remind my hon. Friend that this Bill goes much further than the trade unions can carry their own members, because---this is the point---if unskilled workmen are employed on this work, they will not depreciate the rates of wages which have been built up by the trade unions.

So that, on the whole, I respectfully suggest to the House that the criticism of my hon. Friend---well meant, I do not dispute that---is not well founded. I have followed him, if I may respectfully say so, for a large number of years, and I agree with him in all points on the political policy of the organisations to which we belong. But I protest against the attitude which he has taken up on this Bill, because the effect of it is to sow dissension between trade union rank and file members and their elected, accepted leaders. I know he does not mean that. I suggest that, in these critical times, that is not only a bad thing from the point of view of trade unionism, but it is a very grave thing as far as the safety of the State is concerned. Moreover, has he the facts which are in our possession? Good God!---I say that quite reverently---we get letters from members of our societies, our fellow trade unionists in the trenches appealing to the leaders of the trade unions to do all they can to persuade our fellows in the workshops, even at the sacrifice of trade union rules, to set to and turn out these munitions, in order that they may get a "fair show". I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn, that when these men come back from the field of battle, as I hope they will, and resume their membership of the trade unions, they will declare that the greatest work that the unions and their leaders ever did was to save some of their lives out at the front, by enabling them to have a "fair show".

I know that this Bill is faulty in some particulars. We have not drafted the Bill. I do say, however, that there has never been a point which we have raised in conference with the Minister of Munitions, or with the other authorities, but there has been a frank attempt to meet our views. You will see that this Bill---and this is its virtue---deals with a perilous situation in plain and simple terms; and I venture to say that the workmen themselves, when they study the Bill, will agree that, after all, we did the best we could in the circumstances. They, like their brothers in the trenches, will, under the terms of the Bill, set to work, knowing that their interests are being safeguarded, and they will do their best to respond to the appeal made in this House and outside for patriotism, and work to help carry this country to victory in the present War.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



The integral veil

A spectator was asked to leave a performance of *La Traviata* at the Bastille Opera House on October 3rd this year, because her face was covered with a veil. She was a tourist from one of the Arab states. She and her husband left without fuss, not even asking for their money back.

There was no policy in place to restrict access, and the woman had taken her seat in the front row normally. During the performance her veiled face was picked up by the security cameras, and noticed by members of the choir; it was they, mostly female chorists, who demanded that the woman be asked to leave. Since they had the law on their side, they got their way.

The law dates from 2010; it says that no one is allowed in a public place with their face covered, be it a balaclava, helmet or face veil. France was taken to the European Court of Human Rights over this, but the ECHR found in favour of France, because of the particular situation in France. French opinion is attached to *laïcité*, that is keeping religion strictly private, with freedom of belief but not freedom of public expression of that belief. All French are equal, and anything that might divide them is kept out of sight.

There are further arguments in favour of this law: the integral veil is not part of mainstream Islam, but of an extremist fundamentalist variant connected with anti-European jihad, so should be discouraged anyway. Feminists also protest against the integral veil, seen as a restriction on female liberty; it is this strand that led to

the opera goer's eviction.

Seen from England the episode seems peculiar, since there is no such law in England. In both countries religion has decayed and churches are nearly empty, but attitudes to religion are quite different. England had its anti-religion crusade such a long time ago that it doesn't know it had one. It has had its own mild home-grown established state religion since Henry VIII; the Church of England is not part of an international religion, unlike Catholicism or Islam. Thanks to this, religion has been a harmless part of everyday life not worth abolishing. Churches are well kept, whereas French churches, unless they are fine examples of romanesque or gothic art, are semi-derelect through lack of funding.

France has had a war against Catholicism that lasted until its defeat in 1905, and the triumphal establishment of an atheist state, with an anti-Catholic establishment. Religion being out of sight is seen as a hotly contested achievement and now the only way to live. Muslims are expected to conform to this.

There is a little bit of disquiet about this anti-burqa law. The Bastille Opera authorities were not unanimous in their desire to expel the veiled woman, she and her husband had paid over 200 Euros each for their seats, and the Opera does not want to discourage foreign tourists.

The other disquiet is that the law cannot be enforced systematically. In predominantly Muslim areas, the police are unable to go in to perform arrests. A law that can't

be enforced is a bad law.

Martine Aubry

Martine Aubry, daughter of Jacques Delors, Mayor of Lille, ex leader of the Socialist Party and ex-minister of Labour, piloted the 35 hour week in 1998/2000 and defends it to this day.

She has not been in office under François Hollande's government. She offered some ideas in an interview in the *Journal du Dimanche* of 19th October:

Tax.

Since 1990 the French have paid a new tax called CSG, *Contribution Sociale Généralisée*; it was meant to be a contribution to social security, and generally an answer to the economic crisis. It is the only tax levied at source. All French workers liable to tax, that is half of earners, fill a tax return. The CSG is not as proportional as income tax: middle earners pay more proportionally than top earners. CSG is payable on all income, including from capital and from gambling.

Martine Aubry wants CSG to be combined with income tax, the whole being levied at source. This would give middle earners more money, and avoid enormous tax debts when personal circumstances change for the worse.

A new social-democracy

Aubry wants a return to a pre-Thatcher and Reagan society, against the Blair and Schröder new version of liberalism which pits aspirational employees against each other, and which has given up on full employment. The State, with trade unions (both employees and employers TUs), and associations must work to stand in the way of corporations

imposing their will. The state must regulate globalisation. Already existing regulations must remain: Sunday rest, unemployment benefit, lois Auroux, the 35 hour week. Abolishing them would make things worse and would not create employment. Public service is a vital principle, as well as local political authority.

The 35 hour week has not been abolished by the right when they were in power and Aubry has found that in practice business is happy with it.

The lois Auroux of 1982 were inspired by a desire for industrial democracy, the idea that democracy is not just political, voting in general elections, but should also be present in the place of work; workers should have rights and the ability to exercise initiative individually and collectively in the work place.

Under these laws, workers have the right to discuss their conditions of work. The works committee is financed by a proportion of the wage bill. There is an annual obligation to negotiate wages, duration and organization of work; there is a hygiene, security and working conditions committee. The lowering of the age of retirement to 60 and a fifth week of paid holiday were also part of the lois Auroux.

Martine Aubry was part of the ministerial cabinet that piloted these laws.

Three main issues

Aubry sees three main issues that need tackling: the digital revolution, environment protection and inequality between regions. The digital revolution is a source both of new products and of a reduction in the number of jobs through automation. The inequality between regions is between the old industrial regions which have collapsed, and prosperous regions with newer industry.

Growth

According to Aubry, government policies, more tax and less public spending, have limited growth; this must change. 50% of firms in France say demand is

too low. French firms which are exposed to international competition must be helped in order to be more competitive; this help must focus on research and development, innovation, training, organisation of work, investment in new technologies.

Tax incentives offered by the state must go exclusively to firms that invest and reinvest. Any lowering of taxes (as offered by Hollande) must be conditional on a firm wide agreement between employers and employees on competitiveness and training. There are two tax credits for firms today: one for competitiveness and one for research. They should be put together. Subjecting this tax allowance to these conditions would free up 20bn Euros.

This money should be used in government/local authority partnerships for local investment, especially in the building industry. It should be used for subsidized jobs for the young; they are not ideal, but they are essential.

The Duflot law must be acted on to encourage buy to let, rents must be kept under control, there must be more subsidy for housing; family legislation, e.g. child benefit, parental leave, tax credits for children, must be maintained. Water and energy prices must be kept down for essential needs.

Aubry says it is a shame that the previous ministers Montebourg

et al, called the rebels, have left the government and their ideas were not discussed in Parliament. They should anyway not be called rebels since they are people who understand the economy, who were working for the success of the government and respect the prerogatives of parliament.

Martine Aubry is not afraid of sounding old fashioned, Sarkozy would even say archaic. About society she says:

“The market has taken over the whole of life; speculation affects everything, including food. Everything is for sale, including our bodies. It is the reign of ‘everyone for himself’.”

About Sunday work she says:

“We need to decide what sort of society we want to live in. Must consumption be the be all and end all of our life? Can’t we keep one day in the week for ourselves, for our family, for culture, for sport?”

Aubry’s record in office is good. Perhaps we should hope that she makes her presence felt. The population is not sure whether France should ‘modernise’ à la Blair, or remain faithful to the old principles of solidarity and public service. A successful mayor of a large city, like Aubry, is a good role model for a non-liberal future.

When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him:
‘Whose?’
Don Marquis

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

We have the best government that money can buy.
Mark Twain

Will a Conservative government withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights?

by David Morrison

The Conservative Party has proposed that the UK has a veto over decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, the body responsible for enforcing the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) [1].

In a “strategy paper” entitled *Protecting human rights in the UK* [2], published on 2 October 2014, the Conservative Party said that, if they win a majority in next May’s General Election, they will ensure that:

“The European Court of Human Rights is no longer binding over the UK Supreme Court.

“The European Court of Human Rights is no longer able to order a change in UK law and becomes an advisory body only.”

There is a serious obstacle to this proposal, namely, that all signatories to the Convention – today there are 47 of them – are obliged under the Convention itself to abide by the decisions of the Court. Article 46(1) of the Convention states:

“The High Contracting Parties undertake to abide by the final judgment of the Court in any case to which they are parties.”

So, signatories to the Convention are not allowed to pick and choose which decisions of the Court they will abide by. They are obliged to abide by all of them; otherwise they are in breach of the Convention.

It could hardly be otherwise: a judicial system in which individuals or entities can veto any or all of the judgments to which they are parties is an absurd concept.

It was no surprise that the Council of Europe, the human rights body that is responsible for the ECHR (and other conventions), responded to the Conservative proposals as follows: “We take note of these proposals by the Conservative Party. We also take note they are not draft legislation. As they stand, the proposals are not consistent with the ECHR.” [3]

Removing the UK’s treaty obligation

Understandably, the Conservative

paper does not mention the UK’s obligations under Article 46(1) of the Convention. Nor does it state specifically that the UK will be in breach of the Convention if Court judgments are ignored. However, it does say that when individuals take the UK to the Court “resultant judgments of the Court will be seen to be binding on the UK as a treaty obligation”, the treaty in question being the Convention.

A state’s obligations under a treaty can be removed in one of two ways:

(1) by a state withdrawing from the treaty or

(2) by amending the treaty to remove the obligation, which inevitably requires the consent of every signatory to the treaty.

On the face of it, the paper rules out (1), saying:

“We would like the UK to remain a party to the Convention, as part of our membership of the Council of Europe.”

The paper continues:

“We hope, therefore, that the Council will recognise these changes to our Human Rights laws. During the passage of the British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities [of which more later], we will engage with the Council of Europe, and seek recognition that our approach is a legitimate way of applying the Convention.”

What does this mean in practice? That a Conservative Government would seek to persuade the Council of Europe to somehow remove the UK’s treaty obligation to abide by judgments of the Court? But, unless the UK is going to withdraw from the treaty, its treaty obligation can only be removed by amending Article 46(1) of the Convention, for which the agreement of all 47 signatories is necessary. The Council of Europe cannot amend the Convention off its own bat.

While the paper doesn’t say so explicitly, it seems to be asking that the UK alone be accorded a veto over Court judgments: other Convention signatories, for example, Russia, would still be required to abide by all Court judgments.

Needless to say, none of this is going to happen. The Convention is

not going to be amended to allow the UK (or all Convention signatories) to ignore any or all of the judgments of the Court. As I said above, a judicial system in which individuals or entities can veto any or all of the judgments to which they are parties is an absurd concept.

Needless to say also, the authors of this proposal are fully aware that this is not going to happen. What then? According to the paper:

“In the event that we are unable to reach that agreement [with the Council of Europe], the UK would be left with no alternative but to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights, at the point at which our Bill comes into effect.”

On the face of it, the Conservative Party is now committed to the UK’s withdrawal from the Convention – since amending the Convention to accord the UK a veto over the European Court’s judgments is impossible.

Human Rights Act to be repealed

In the paper, the Conservatives also propose to repeal what they refer to as “Labour’s” Human Rights Act [4]. In this 1998 Act, the Labour Government put the European Convention on Human Rights into UK domestic law and enabled individuals to have their Convention rights enforced in UK domestic courts without having to take a case to the European Court of Human Rights. However, it continued to be open to individuals to do that if they wished.

In upholding an individual’s Convention rights, Section 2 of the Human Rights Act obliges UK courts to “take into account” any “judgment, decision, declaration or advisory opinion of the European Court of Human Rights”. This attempts to ensure that decisions by UK courts are in harmony with the superior European Court.

Under Section 4 of the Act, if the Supreme Court is satisfied that a provision in legislation is incompatible with a Convention right, it is empowered to make a formal declaration of incompatibility. The Supreme Court cannot strike down legislation, which

it considers to be incompatible with the Convention: only Parliament can do that.

The Conservatives propose to repeal the Human Rights Act. Their primary objection to the Act is the Section 2 requirement that UK courts take into account rulings of the European Court when they are interpreting Convention rights. This means, they say, that “problematic Strasbourg jurisprudence is often being applied in UK law”.

They propose to enact a British Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, which will also write the Convention into domestic law, but with significant qualifications to the meaning of some of the rights enshrined therein, for example, the paper says:

“We will set out a clearer test in how some of the inalienable rights apply to cases of deportation and other removal of persons from the United Kingdom. ...

“Our new Bill will clarify ... limitations on individual rights in certain circumstances. So for example a foreign national who takes the life of another person will not be able to use a defence based on Article 8 [right to family life] to prevent the state deporting them after they have served their sentence. ...

“Some terms used in the Convention rights would benefit from a more precise definition, such as ‘degrading treatment or punishment’, which has arguably been given an excessively broad meaning by the ECtHR in some rulings.”

These qualifications may become clearer in the draft bill which the Conservatives promise to publish “shortly”.

Taken together with the fact that the Bill will not require UK courts to take into account rulings of the European Court, these qualifications make it inevitable that the judgments of the UK Supreme Court on Convention rights will differ to some degree from those of the European Court – which is, of course, precisely what the Conservative Party wishes to achieve.

In these circumstances, it makes no sense to maintain an individual’s right to take a case to the European Court and potentially have a domestic judgment overridden. It makes sense therefore for the UK to withdraw from the Convention and, with that, from the jurisdiction of the European

Court, in other words, to allow British courts to uphold the rights of British citizens as defined in the British Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, untrammelled by interference from the European Court. The alternative – that the UK continues to accept interference from the European Court, but be accorded the right to veto any interference it doesn’t like – is an absurdity, which won’t happen.

Will a Conservative government withdraw?

But will a Conservative government actually withdraw from the European Convention? It’s very unlikely.

There would be immense pressure from the Foreign Office not to do so. How can the UK continue to preach to states around the world about the universality of human rights when the UK itself has withdrawn after 60 years from a human rights convention it helped draw up?

How can the UK seek to persuade states to submit to international systems of justice like the International Criminal Court when the UK itself has withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, because it didn’t like some of its judgments?

Anti-European dog whistle

Whatever about that, the new Conservative “policy” is a useful anti-European dog whistle to help keep voters in the Conservative fold and out of the clutches of UKIP at next May’s General Election. Lest there be any doubt that the new “policy” is first and foremost an anti-European dog whistle, listen to the following from David Cameron’s conference speech a few days earlier:

“Of course, it’s not just the European Union that needs sorting out – it’s the European Court of Human Rights. When that charter was written, in the aftermath of the Second World War, it set out the basic rights we should respect. But since then, interpretations of that charter have led to a whole lot of things that are frankly wrong. Rulings to stop us deporting suspected terrorists. The suggestion that you’ve got to apply the human rights convention even on the battle-fields of Helmand. And now – they want to give prisoners the vote. I’m sorry, I just don’t agree. Our Parliament – the British Parliament – decided they shouldn’t

have that right.

“This is the country that wrote Magna Carta ... the country that time and again has stood up for human rights ... whether liberating Europe from fascism or leading the charge today against sexual violence in war. Let me put this very clearly: We do not require instruction on this from judges in Strasbourg. So at long last, with a Conservative Government after the next election, this country will have a new British Bill of Rights ... to be passed in our Parliament ... rooted in our values ... and as for Labour’s Human Rights Act? We will scrap it, once and for all.” [5]

Conservative MP and former Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, described the proposals as “almost puerile” [3], adding: “I also think they are unworkable and will damage the UK’s international reputation.” By universal consent, he had been an excellent Attorney General for four years until he was removed and replaced by a non-entity last July. The reason for his removal is now evident.

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We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it.

*George Bernard Shaw,
Candida*

We are not makers of history.
We are made by history.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

To be a poet is a condition, not a profession.

Robert Frost

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

The Deregulation Recession

The big problem with pre-socialist Radicalism was that it demanded Freedom without defining it.

The great merit of socialism is that it recognised that freedom for some can be oppression for others. Particularly when it comes to ownership of the means of production.

A lot of the 1960s radicals forgot about that. Their protests against 'The System' was too generalised to mean anything much. Many of them were incorporated without much fuss as shiny new consumer products within a modified and modernised version of 'The System'.

This has been especially true of the Internet, the great hope of libertarians, anarchists and the liberal-left.¹ There was a rapid growth and dominance of a new crop of gigantic multinational corporations that have behaved even worse than the corporations that they displaced. Companies like IBM did provide a 'job for life' for those who fitted in. Modern corporations demand less and give less. The trend since the 1980s has been to split the population into Stars, Plebs and the Unwanted. The Stars make enormous amounts of money, but may be dropped at any time and sometimes work themselves to death (as Michael Jackson did). The Plebs include people in what used to be comfortable and secure middle-class occupations, who now find themselves undervalued and likely to be sacked. They are no longer distinct from what used to be classed as working-class trades. And where the system is strongest, in the USA, both middle-class and working-class Plebs have seen their incomes stagnate at 1970s levels. The USA has got a lot richer, but the Stars have all of the increase and the Plebs none of it.

No one else has been quite so extreme. But always the Stars have got much more than their fair share.

Below the Plebs are the Unwanted, people blamed for not having jobs even though jobs are being continuously destroyed. Up until the 1980s, the fear had been that the unemployed would turn to either Communism or Fascism. It was then noticed that a lot of them became passively helpless, while many

turned to drugs or to hopeless dreams of joining the Stars. Also a lot would blame immigrants. So the numbers of the Unwanted were allowed to grow and their needs neglected, while the Stars flourished and life for the Plebs got more stressful.

It would be a horrible system even if it could deliver continuous growth. The actuality was that it damaged long-term growth in the West, with an awkward lurch into crisis in 1987 that might have prevented the West's Cold War victory in 1989-1991. The state stepped in then to prevent the system crashing, but continued with further massive deregulation.

The predictable outcome was the financial crisis of 2008, and the recession that has happened since. But the general anti-state bias that had spread across society meant that only a minority of protestors said that regulations needed to be re-imposed. Mostly there was a meaningless demand to 'abolish capitalism', which had no connection with real politics. And left-wing parties were hesitant about demanding a reversal of the whole deregulation process, because voters seemed unsure on the matter. So the crisis was solved by the state pumping money into the financial system to cover the debts of the financiers, and launching austerity measures to balance the budget.

The process needs to be given its proper name – the **Deregulation Recession**.² Caused by a mass of Fancy Finance which involved the ordinary banks where the Plebs keep their money, and which are supposed to be the source of funds for small business. But priority was given to looking after the Stars, a lot of whose wealth would have evaporated if shaky financial institutions had been either nationalised or allowed to fail.

Depressingly, people in Europe and the USA are mostly still tolerating this. Letting their attention be diverted to other issues.

Ebola – a Predictable Disaster.

Ebola was discovered in the 1970s. A rare virus, but one that killed about 50% of those it infected, and was also highly infectious. Something needed to be done, but actually very little

was done. Whereas the elimination of disease had once been seen as a noble cause deserving whatever money was needed, the shift into the 1970s was towards profit and away from a general duty of public care. So the then-rare disease was not tracked down and eliminated. And errors by under-funded African health programs contributed to the spread:

"In their hospital they regularly gave pregnant women vitamin injections using unsterilised needles. By doing so, they infected many young women in Yambuku with the virus. We told the nuns about the terrible mistake they had made, but looking back I would say that we were much too careful in our choice of words. Clinics that failed to observe this and other rules of hygiene functioned as catalysts in all additional Ebola outbreaks. They drastically sped up the spread of the virus or made the spread possible in the first place. Even in the current Ebola outbreak in west Africa, hospitals unfortunately played this ignominious role in the beginning."³

The West has now sent in some help, as well as screening arrivals from Africa who might have the illness. There might also be some cure or vaccination, now that the West knows it might be at risk. But it seems unlikely that there will be any general policy of clean-up. Nor of re-funding and repairing damaged health services.

Meantime Cuba, which has built up an excellent health service, is playing a large role in the fight against the disease.⁴

ISIS and Turkey

Turkey has no intention of allowing its Kurdish minority to secede. On this basis, there is no logic in helping their enemies flourish in Syria. The border city of Kobane is being defended by much the same people as those who'd like Kurds to be able to secede from Turkey.

The West complains without being at all consistent. They caused the trouble in Syria, by encouraging the Syrian opposition to refuse various compromises that Assad offered. They demanded that Assad step down before it was tested whether he actually had

majority support, which quite possibly he has.

It looked briefly as if ISIS had managed a strategic deception, concentrating Western attention on the Turkish-Syrian border while they advanced down the Euphrates towards Baghdad.⁵ But the latest reports claim they are being knocked back everywhere.⁶ How things go next is anyone's guess. It will very much depend on whether the new Iraqi government manages to balance Shia and Sunni factions.

Islamic Terrorism

Up until the West's victory in the Cold War in 1989-91, there was no pattern of global Islamic Terrorism. Nothing that discontented Muslims in the West might want to join. There were of course three outstanding issues involving Muslims: Israel/Palestine, Kashmir and Mindanao in the Philippines. And of course Afghanistan, but the anti-Soviet opposition was split between religious and secular elements. But each of these was local and particular. Global Palestinian terrorism had been secular and had utterly failed.

The West led by the USA broadly created the problems it now faces. Peace was made in some places, including an uneasy peace that has given Mindanao considerable autonomy within the Philippines. The West also pressurised the Apartheid regime in South Africa to accept majority rule and allow a fairly peaceful transition that surprised everyone. But no pressure at all was put on India to let Kashmir decide its own future. Afghanistan was utterly neglected once Soviet troops pulled out, leading to the destruction of the most functional secular elements when the former pro-Soviet elements were overthrown. This was followed by a futile war between warlords, which was the context of the rise of the Taliban. And when the Oslo Accords offered the prospect of a small Palestinian state co-existing with Israel, Israel was allowed to claim far too much of the West Bank. And also allowed to continuously undermine the authority of Arafat and the PLO, blaming them for acts by anti-agreement Palestinians.)

(As I've said before, Israel has no chance of long-term survival without a peace that most Arabs see as just. I can understand the sentimental attachment that Israelis have to places important in Jewish history in what is now the West Bank, but holding on to them in the long term will be impossible.)

The real blunder was Iraq. Saddam had run up enormous debts fighting Iran, the first modern Islamist state. The West took an amazingly naïve view, thinking that without Russia as a global rival, they could easily discard former allies who were dictatorial and independent-minded. Nothing at all was done about the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, of course: they were undemocratic monarchies but not

very independent-minded. But Romania's army was encouraged to overthrow former ally Nicolae Ceausescu. Indonesia was pressured into disgoring East Timor, dumping Suharto and moving to multi-party democracy. In Zaire / Congo, the overthrow of the West's former friend Mobutu was encouraged, and the country disintegrated. In Former Yugoslavia, the Croats and Bosnians were encouraged to secede without taking account of their Serb minorities, when it would have been possible to have dismantled the place peacefully after letting it join the European Union. But worst of all was Iraq, where the West somehow failed to notice that the main alternative to Saddam's secular dictatorship were a slew of populist Islamist movements that were bound to split the country between Sunni and Shia.

Remarkably, the West learned nothing and forgot nothing. It should have been obvious that the Arab Spring would unleash dangerous forces. Instead there was vast enthusiasm, and then utter surprise when this led to further chaos everywhere except Tunisia, which itself is far from safe.

Fighting Russia to the Last Ukrainian?

"It is easy to foresee what lies ahead. Putin will await the results of the elections on October 26 and then offer Poroshenko the gas and other benefits he has been dangling on condition that he appoint a prime minister acceptable to Putin. That would exclude anybody associated with the victory of the forces that brought down the Viktor Yanukovich government by resisting it for months on the Maidan—Independence Square. I consider it highly unlikely that Poroshenko would accept such an offer. If he did, he would be disowned by the defenders of the Maidan; the resistance forces would then be revived."⁷

Thus spoke George Soros, in an article in the influential *New York Review of Books*. Is he saying that protestors in Kiev should stop the elected President making a deal with Russia? He had earlier explained why he was so opposed to a compromise peace:

"Anti-Europe parties captured nearly 30 percent of the seats in the latest elections for the European Parliament but they had no realistic alternative to the EU to point to until recently. Now Russia is presenting an alternative that poses a fundamental challenge to the values and principles on which the European Union was originally founded. It is based on the use of force that manifests itself in repression at home and aggression abroad, as opposed to the rule of law."⁸

Europe's troubles stem from the Deregulation Recession that began in 2008 and has not yet been fixed. Speculators like Soros created it: and while Soros has undermined the economic doctrines which justified speculation, he has always rejected the idea of going back to regulation. Essentially he has no answer, except perhaps to stoke up antagonism with Russia.

Soros's line is regrettable, because in

the early 1990s he did correctly say that a Marshall Plan for Russia would have been the right move. He ought to recognise Putin as a natural result of the neglect and decline that Russia suffered under Yeltsin. And that Putin broadly stopped the rot and is trying to hang onto what Russia has still got.

Ukraine could also have stabilised, but the West seems to prefer a Ukraine that is wholly obedient to the West. And to want it 'on the cheap': the trouble started because the European Union was unwilling to pay the price for a trade agreement that would have done damage, particularly in East Ukraine. The February 2014 overthrow of a government that balanced the interests of the European Union and Russia was a provocation. Putin reacted by supporting the wish of the elected government of Crimea to secede. More loosely he supported secessionists in the parts of East Ukraine that felt close to Russia and were unwilling to be ruled by an anti-Russian government that had doubtful legitimacy. This led on to an indecisive civil war, with Kiev causing outrage by sending in tanks and artillery without trying to negotiate. But as it happened, they got nowhere.

Things began to get back to normal with the election of Poroshenko with 55% of the vote in the first round of the election. In second place was Yulia Tymoshenko with nearly 13%, noted for corruption and political inconsistency, one of those who bungled power after the original Orange Revolution. Poroshenko tried to win the civil war in the east, but made an uneasy peace when this proved impossible. He is now likely to make the best deal he can with Putin, accepting that he can do nothing about Crimea and tolerating the seceded regions in East Ukraine. And also accepting that if Russia is not a friend, Ukraine has to pay the proper market rate for gas.

Such a deal would be unpopular with a minority, of course. Svoboda and other neo-Nazi elements would be the main force in such protests, assuming that elections produce the "wrong" result. Neo-Nazi elements in Ukraine in World War Two tolerated Jews for their brief period of operation, only because the Nazis refused to tolerate Ukraine's expressions of far-right nationalism. Had the Nazis been smarter, the far-right would have co-operated with the deportation and killing, as happened elsewhere.

The Parliamentary Elections of Sunday 26th October were indecisive, but two biggest winners were the rival party blocs of President Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. These are the men who made the cease-fire deal with the Separatists, and will presumably make a deal with Putin if they can get parliamentary approval. Figures are still incomplete, but it seems they will have almost half the seats between them. Other parties are a mix of fragmented and sometimes hostile opinions, incapable of governing.

Virtually all parties are new, or at least a new mix of old elements. "Self Reliance", an attempt at Christian Democracy, got

11%. The Radical Party, left-wing but hard-line on fighting the Separatists, did much less well than some polls had indicated, getting less than 8%. Yulia Tymoshenko and the Fatherland Party, including the bulk of the 'Revoluting Oranges' from the 2004 protests, got less than 6%. The "Opposition Bloc", representing a continuation of the 'Party of the Regions' and of attempts to compromise by the President overthrown in February, got less than 10%. The Ukrainian Communist Party lost votes and has definitely fallen below the 5% threshold for representation. Broadly, a majority of voters rejected the parties that could actually bridge the gap between East and West, but supported the parties that would be expected to make a deal with Russia and avoid a renewal of war.

The Neo-Nazi Svoboda lost votes and seats and are much weaker than before, despite there being no elections in the parts of the country least likely to vote for them. Latest figures (27th September) suggest they will fall below the 5% threshold for MPs from their Party List, though they will have a few MPs elected directly from constituencies.⁹ They have been pushed back to the far-right margins, from which they emerged in the 2012 election. It would be highly surprising if they didn't have another try at street violence, most likely in protest at a probable deal with Putin. The question is, would the West actually support such a protest – assuming it also got enough middle-class participants to make it respectable?

The USA, with some European Union support, has had a policy of encouraging riots whenever an election produced a result they did not like, or whenever a duly elected government looked vulnerable. I'd call this Naïve Machiavellianism: they think they are being wonderfully clever and wicked tricksters for a good end. But few ends are well-served by continuous trickery: trickery for sheer survival is generally accepted but trickery for small advantages undermines politics in general.

New 'Maidan Protests' could only come from the people who comprehensively lost this latest round of elections. If it gets Western support, this would confirm for any who doubted that the West's concern is not at all about democracy

Hong Kong Fade-Out

I said last month that Beijing was not going to let Hong Kong have an open election for its Chief Executive. Would not allow a system that might elect someone they could not work with.

All of this is entirely in line with the original promises. The British Empire ruled Hong Kong without any sort of local democracy, under governors appointed from London. It was Beijing who first introduced a democratic element, saying in their proposed Basic Law:

"The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim

is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures."¹⁰

Specifying "nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee" said clearly that only approved candidates would be allowed to stand.

The student movement now seems in decline, and increasingly unsure what it is about. A vote on the concessions they had been offered was due to be held on 26th-27th October, but was then suddenly called off.¹¹ A gradual and peaceful decline is now the most likely outcome.

Elections All Round The World

Sunday 26th October was a day that saw quite a few elections in several unconnected countries. I earlier discussed the vote in Ukraine. The others are Brazil, Tunisia, Botswana and Uruguay.

Brazil saw a narrow win for Dilma Rousseff and the Workers Party, the main party of the Left. After the popular discontent over the Football World Cup, this is definitely a positive result. Re-election after 12 years in power is rare where there is genuine multi-party competition.

Tunisia has seen secular forces get together and apparently emerge as stronger than the moderate Islamists.¹² How this goes next is anyone's guess. Tunisia had previously lurched into crisis after the murder of some secular leaders, but recovered. It all depends now on what coalitions are formed. And on whether the Islamists stay moderate with no immediate prospect of electoral victory.

In Botswana, elections on the same day changed little. The centre-right ruling party was re-elected, though losing a few seats.

In Uruguay, the first round of voting for both President and Parliament seems to have ended with the candidate of the left-wing ruling party getting the most votes but being short of an outright win. The second round happens in November.

A Dawning Chinese Century?

"China has toppled America to become the biggest economy in the world, according to figures from the International Monetary Fund.

"The White House seemed caught flat-footed by the news, crowing on Wednesday about America's relative economic strength in comparison with the rest of the world.

"The US has been the global leader since it overtook Britain in 1872, but has now lost its status as top dog.

"The latest IMF figures show the Chinese economy is worth \$17.61 trillion compared with \$17.4 trillion for the U.S."¹³

But this is only as measured by Purchase Parity. A lot of goods are much cheaper in China, mostly because wages are still much lower. Yet in terms of most goods, China is ahead:

"China produces far more key agricultural and industrial products than the US – for example, China's steel output

is about 10 times that of the US. It also produces larger amounts of other products such as grains, fruits, vegetables, fish, coal, clothes, computers, TV sets and motor vehicles, etc, than the US."¹⁴

The USA still has a much bigger military, possessing about half the world's total military force by most estimates. But whether this will do them any good is another matter.

The USA is unlikely to lose its dominance without a few more wars. But it is also increasingly committed to just the wrong solutions to its decline. So some sort of fall is almost certain.

China seems unlikely to disrupt its highly successful system of Moderate-Socialist Populist Authoritarianism any time soon. Protests occur, a great many protests, but only on matters where the Central Government might concede the point and sometimes does. Only in Hong Kong is there now any support for actually breaking the system and trying a copy of the mature Western system. There have been too many examples now of countries where this has gone drastically wrong. Where it has proved to be a veritable 'house built upon sands', resting on no solid political tradition and soon leading to chaos.

Snippets

Britain this year had a normal summer: warm but not unusually so. A few small parts of the globe were cooler than average. Globally, though, the six months from April to September have broken all records:

"Over the weekend, NASA announced that last month was the warmest September since global records have been kept. What's more, the last six months were collectively the warmest middle half of the year in NASA's records – dating back to 1880.

"The record-breaking burst of warmth was kicked off by an exceptionally warm April – the first month in at least 800,000 years that atmospheric carbon dioxide reached 400 parts per million.

"According to the National Climatic Data Center, which keeps a separate record of global temperatures, this April ranked as the warmest April on record. Followed by the warmest May on record. Followed by warmest June on record. (July wasn't quite as hot – just the fourth-warmest July on record.) But August – again, you guessed it – was the warmest August on record. The NCDC will release its numbers for September later this month."¹⁵

It's one world, and conventional ideas of race are nonsense. Last month I mentioned how the original European population was probably blue-eyed but dark skinned. Now genetic studies show that 45,000 years ago, a population in what's now Siberia was intermediate between the future populations of Europe and Asia.¹⁶

It also seems that it was these fully modern people who interbred with the Neanderthals. All humans outside of Africa have some Neanderthal DNA, but we now

have a much clearer idea of when the mixing occurred:

“Prof Paabo and his team published research in 2010 that showed that all non-African humans today have Neanderthal DNA. But that genetic material has been broken into much smaller chunks over the generations.

“By extrapolating the size of DNA chunks backwards, Prof Paabo and his colleagues were able to calculate when the first interbreeding with Neanderthals occurred. His study shows that it was between 50,000 and 60,000 years ago.”¹⁷

This may have happened when modern humans first came out of Africa, and would have found it useful to mix with Neanderthals, who had local knowledge.

Something that always seemed odd to me was that sophisticated cave art had only been found in Europe. I felt it was related both to the number of suitable caves and the number of people willing to delve into them just for fun. This now seems confirmed with the discovery and dating of ancient art in what’s now Indonesia, very similar to European cave art.

“Scientists have identified some of the earliest cave paintings produced by humans.

“The artworks are in a rural area on the Indonesian Island of Sulawesi.

“Until now, paintings this old had been confirmed in caves only in Western Europe...

“Australian and Indonesian scientists have dated layers of stalactite-like growths that have formed over coloured outlines of human hands.

“Early artists made them by carefully blowing paint around hands that were pressed tightly against the cave walls and ceilings. The oldest is at least 40,000 years old.

“There are also human figures, and pictures of wild hoofed animals that are found only on the island...

“The minimum age for (the outline of the hand) is 39,900 years old, which makes it the oldest hand stencil in the world,” said Dr Aubert.

“Next to it is a pig that has a minimum age of 35,400 years old, and this is one of the oldest figurative depictions in the world, if not the oldest one,” he told BBC News.”¹⁸

(Endnotes)

1 [http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/26/couch-potatoes-killed-internet-dream]

2 This name was suggested by Angela Clifford after several of us agreed on the need to find some suitable name for what was clearly a new process.

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16 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-29649499]

17 Ibid.

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IF AT FIRST YOU DON’T SUCCEED
FAIL FAIL FAIL AND FAIL AGAIN.

They came to Afghanistan
 thinking it was cloud-cuckoo-land,
 there wasn’t much of a plan,
 maybe they should have thought of something
 beforehand,
 some plan but not as brainless as
 Piltdown man,
 nor as brainless as
 newsman
 anchor man,
 permatan man
 conman
 stuntman
 bagman
 adman
 the old hand
 the yes-man
 the Abominable Snowman
 the hired hand
 Superman
 caveman.
 All into a quicksand,
 the glove-puppet hand
 hand-to-hand or
 underhand
 sharing contraband
 in crash-land
 in wasteland
 in never-never land
 giving the backhand,
 offhand,
 in dreamland,
 all to down
 the dollar-a-day man.
 Then England,
 back to England
 with the dead man
 the without-a-limb man,
 to England-can-take-it land
 to anthill land,
 still without a plan,
 but ravenous
 for another land.

Wilson John Haire.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

RENZI'S JOBS ACT

The Italian political scene is a complex labyrinth of causes and interconnected relationships, which make finding the beginning of many subjects very difficult. And Matteo Renzi's *Jobs Act* is no different.

In October, Italy's under 25 jobless figure rose to 44.2%, and productivity was still not growing. Renzi, Prime Minister and leader of the centre left Partito Democratico (PD), is moving away from his party's traditional core support. He aims to eliminate the conservatism of the left. Instead of working with the "old guard" he surrounded himself with young, enthusiastic and presumably grateful supporters.

He has started to cultivate an international persona, although at home he was derided for his bad English. The Huffington Post of 9 October listed his contacts with international movers and shakers and wrote about his endorsement by Italian industrial leaders. The article said that he has strived to make internal political alliances and that he is dynamic rather than cautious, as were the previous Monti and Letta administrations. His bizarre politically-inspired pact with Silvio Berlusconi has propped up his government and softened the impact of internal PD dissent. This so-called Pact of the Nazareno exists but its details are secret. Very Italian, very calculated, very offensive to many but pleasing to others because it has delivered a stable government of sorts. There is some Union support for his programmes. However the Cgil, *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (the largest Trade Union in Europe with 5.5 million members) and its National Secretary Susanna Camusso, are bitterly opposed to both him and his policies.

Now Renzi is up and running with his *Jobs Act*. And here he deliberately gives an impression of modernity and internationalism by using the English language *Jobs Act* as the bill's title. This legislation was passed by the Senate, the upper house, in late October. It had

been précised in 29 September's *La Repubblica* into four worthy-sounding key points.

1) To extend the rights and universality of protection, offering an extensive social safety net for workers on short term contracts.

2) To reduce the numbers of types of employment contract (there are 46 in Italy, the majority of which are neither secure nor long term) in favour of indeterminate ones with increasing protection as the individual's employment lengthens.

3) To guarantee consistent national services and social protection for workers.

4) To structure the use of sackings for economic reasons, substituting the uncertainty of judicial rulings on individual cases with compensation. To extend the possibility of reinstatement that exists currently only for discrimination and disciplinary cases.

On Saturday 25 October a million people demonstrated in a rally against the *Jobs Act* in the Circo Massimo in Rome. This was organised by the Cgil. The reason behind their opposition is that Renzi's seemingly socially helpful act will actually replace L'articolo 18, *The Workers Statute*, that gives a far greater degree of protection and compensation. In short, L'articolo 18 gives very clear guidelines for workers subject to sackings for discriminatory, disciplinary and economic reasons, even talking about training contracts and situations where families work together. It details time limits for claims and stipulates levels of compensation that are given in multiples of a month's salary.

The Circo Massimo, (or Circus Maximus in Latin or English guide books), scene of the Cgil rally in Rome, is a vast area that was once the site of Roman chariot racing. It has become a historically significant place for rallies and celebrations. Italians celebrated their last football World Cup victory here, it was the scene for a 3million strong Cgil demonstration in 2002, and so

was an obvious venue.

Meanwhile Renzi was showing that he wanted to win this battle. He made it very clear that the country should be following his lead in increasing flexibility in the jobs market with the aim of reducing unemployment and stimulating economic growth. He said, in his characteristically provocative way, that there were to be no more jobs for life.

Then on the following Wednesday, 29 October, Maurizio Landini, the General Secretary of Fiom, *Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici*, who are allied with Cgil, led a rally in central Rome. This was to support the workers of AST from Terni who had been made redundant by their German Company. Landini says that he had discussed the route of the march with the police, planning that it would go from the German Embassy to the Development Ministry. Mario Portanova writing in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* said that the police acted provocatively by using an "incredibly large deployment of police and equipment". The police and workers have generally had an easy relationship with each other and this was an unexpected show of force. The Huffington Post shows a picture of a scene with helmeted police with batons raised. They were clearly outnumbering a demonstrator who was being beaten. And there were injuries. The General Secretary of Silp, the police union was reported as saying: "What happened in Rome is something that should never have happened".

Portanova goes on to say that he sees that this marks the second time in the year that force has been used against a march. He writes that "according to me this is a political statement from the *presidenza del consiglio* (ie: Renzi) that this is the end of tolerance".

One of Matteo Renzi's strong supporters, MEP Pina Picierno appeared

Continued On Page 18

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

UK Operations Against ISIL

Parliament returned from its summer and conference break on 13 October. On 13 October and three days later, on 16 October, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon presented statements on the UK's activities against ISIL. In the first he told MPs that RAF flying missions began on 27 September, the day after the House of Commons had voted in favour of military operations. He referred to the 'highly accurate Brimstone missiles and Paveway guided bombs', which, he claimed, minimise the risk of civilian casualties; which is another way of saying that civilian casualties (deaths) are inevitable. Should missile strikes cause civilian casualties, Fallon says ISIL are to blame, as "they take shelter amongst the civilian population." Now, where have we heard that before? And he didn't, of course, say that each Brimstone missile fired cost around £150,000. Nor did he say that each Paveway IV guided bomb cost about £30,000. If, as David Cameron told the House of Commons, the fight against ISIL will take years rather than months, then the cost will far exceed that of the UK's involvement in air strikes in Libya in 2011. That seven month activity cost around £244 million,

including missiles and flight hours.

Michael Fallon:

On 26 September 2014, the House voted in favour of military operations in support of the Government of Iraq's fight against ISIL, including the use of air strikes. Military action is part of the Government's comprehensive strategy, working in consultation with our allies in the wider coalition, to tackle ISIL. As set out in statements on 2 September, *Official Report*, column 15WS, and 9 September, *Official Report*, column 33WS, our Armed Forces had already been involved in Iraq supporting humanitarian efforts, delivering equipment, weapons and ammunition to the Kurdistan Regional Government and contributing to coalition surveillance of ISIL. We are now undertaking military action in support of the coalition campaign.

The RAF began flying Tornado GR4 strike missions on 27 September. As of 10 October they have conducted 20 missions over Iraq. The Tornado provides strike capability with its highly accurate Brimstone missiles and Paveway guided bombs, allowing strikes against ISIL while minimising the risk of civilian casualties, and supports the coalition's need for greater intelligence and surveillance with its

reconnaissance pods. The first UK strike took place on 30 September, and six Tornado missions have resulted in weapons being released, hitting eight separate targets. The presence of armed jets in the skies has also curtailed ISIL's ability to move freely and given Kurdish and Iraqi defenders time to organise and space to attack. The ISIL fighters have been observed changing their tactics and trying to draw the coalition into inflicting civilian casualties as they take shelter amongst the civilian population.

We announced the short term deployment of two additional Tornado GR4s to RAF Akrotiri to provide resilience to our operation and allow us to maintain our tempo of missions. The new Voyager air-to-air refuelling capability and the Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft which began operation on 9 August continue to provide vital support to both British and coalition aircraft. We are continuing to deliver support to the Kurdistan Regional Government forces at the request of the Government of Iraq. C-17 and C-130 aircraft in co-ordination with Canadian and Danish transport planes have so far delivered over 300 tonnes of supplies to Erbil for Kurdish Peshmerga units. This includes over 100 tonnes of UK-gifted

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in a telling interview on television. She attacked Susanna Camusso, Cgil's General Secretary saying that the Circo Massimo demonstration had been filled with bus loads of paid attendees. Her performance was awkward and she seemed uncomfortable, with her hands held together as in prayer. Her outburst was not well received. The TV host looked absolutely horrified and the audience shouted critically. La Repubblica's Gianluca Luzzi said that her accusations were "so bloody as to be on the limits of permissible insults". One background snippet to this incident is that

Camusso had questioned Renzi's place as premier in the past. She said that he had been put there, presumably by Europe, to provide "strong power". And now this phrase is currently being bandied about.

So, Renzi is playing tough. He said that there are no more jobs for life, because the world has changed. Of the Cgil demonstration he said that, "if they are political demos, I respect them. It will be nice to know if it is more leftish to cling to nostalgia or to look to the future. Then it will be for the people to decide". Angela Merkel supports him, while Cgil plan a general strike in December. And so it goes on.

weapons and equipment and over 200 tonnes of weapons and ammunition from supportive countries.

A training team has begun instructing Peshmerga soldiers on the operation of 40 UK-gifted heavy machine guns. Other training teams addressing soldiering skills, medical and counter-explosive device knowledge are planned. Our network of liaison officers in Iraq and the region has expanded to better understand the situation, work with our partners and help sustain the coalition which critically includes regional partners involved in operations. The Ministry of Defence is working closely with the Foreign Office to ensure our activity is co-ordinated to support the Iraqi authorities in providing a more inclusive government in Sunni areas liberated from ISIL control. Throughout the campaign C-130 transport aircraft remain ready to deliver more humanitarian aid provided by the Department for International Development (DFID) and pre-positioned in Cyprus.

A further short update was provided on 16 October.

Michael Fallon:

Further to the update I provided to the House on 13 October on military activities to counter ISIL, *Official Report*, column 9WS, we are redeploying Reaper remotely piloted aircraft from Afghanistan to be based in the middle east for use against ISIL. This deployment will complement our existing capabilities which provide highly valued surveillance support and situational awareness to the Iraqi authorities and our coalition partners. As the UK's only armed remotely piloted aircraft, Reaper will add to the strike capability we are already providing with our Tornado GR4 aircraft. The policy for their use is the same as that for manned aircraft, with the pilots operating under strict UK rules of engagement. We expect to begin Reaper operations in Iraq shortly.

The deployment is the first operational use of UK Reaper outside of support to our operations in Afghanistan, where we are beginning to withdraw the aircraft. As Reaper numbers in Afghanistan reduce, we intend to move

more of them to the middle east, adding to our coverage.

Palestine And Israel

On 13 October MPs debated a Back Bench motion on the recognition of the state of Palestine introduced by Labour's Grahame Morris (Easington). The motion was carried overwhelmingly by 274 votes to 12. Labour MPs had notice that they could decide to attend the debate, or not. However, should they attend they were expected to support the motion. 18 of the 28 Members of the Shadow Cabinet (3 are Members of the Lords) voted in favour of the motion. The bulk of Morris's speech is set out below. Plus that of Jack Straw who moved the amendment to the motion. Straw refers to the lack of action against the illegal activities of Israel, but other than offering an amendment to the motion he fails to set out what action the UK should take. Illegal activities were carried out when Straw was Foreign Secretary and he and the Labour Government did nothing. Therefore, Israel has nothing to fear from Jack Straw and Labour in opposition. The motion is purely symbolic. Israel will simply ignore it.

Grahame M. Morris:

I beg to move, *That this House believes that the Government should recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.*

I wish to place on record my thanks to the Backbench Business Committee for allocating time in the main Chamber for what is obviously, given the number of Members from all parts of the House who have indicated support, a very popular and timely debate. May I say at the outset that I am happy to support the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw) and various other Members? It has always been my position that recognition of Palestinian statehood should form the basis of any future peace negotiations, and the amendment clarifies that.

Ian Paisley:

As the hon. Gentleman knows, his party played a phenomenally important role in the peace process in Northern

Ireland, one of the world's most successful peace processes. Why not learn from that experience, and instead of setting the conclusion at the beginning of the debate, wait for the debate and the negotiation to take place in order to reach the conclusion?

Grahame M. Morris:

I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention but---if he will bear with me---I hope to be able to destroy that argument comprehensively. I am firmly of the opinion that the day will come when the two-state solution, which I believe is supported by all parties on both sides of the House, will collapse and Israel will face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights. As soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished. Hon. Members might think that that is controversial, but they are not really my words but those of the then Israeli Prime Minister in 2007. The two-state solution has been Britain's stated policy aim for decades, but in politics talk often comes cheap. I have participated in numerous debates in Westminster Hall and in the main Chamber where I have heard speeches delivered by Back Benchers from both sides of the House and from Ministers at the Dispatch Box stating our commitment to a two-state solution---

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):

May I say that many people support the two-state solution? Will he also confirm that more than 300 Israeli figures signed a letter on Sunday urging this Parliament to vote in favour of the motion, and they included former Ministers, ex-diplomats and activists in Israel?

Grahame M. Morris:

As a friend of Palestine, I earnestly believe that recognition of the state of Palestine is the only way forward, and that it should be the choice of all true friends of Israel. All parties should come together on that basis. Given our commitment to a two-state solution and the fact that an overwhelming majority of 134 nations voted in favour of Palestinian statehood, I was hugely disappointed by our decision to abstain on the issue at the UN General Assembly. We should regret

that decision. The decision that was taken at the UN General Assembly placed Britain not only at odds with the international consensus, but on the wrong side of history....I have to say that, as a Labour MP, I was proud when my party opposed the Government's decision and said that the British Government should be willing to support the recognition of Palestinian statehood.

As the originator of the Balfour declaration and holder of the mandate for Palestine, Britain has a unique historical connection and, arguably, a moral responsibility to the people of both Israel and Palestine. In 1920, we undertook a sacred trust---a commitment to guide Palestinians to statehood and independence. That was nearly a century ago, and the Palestinian people are still to have their national rights recognised. This sacred truth has been neglected for far too long.... It is now more than 20 years since the Oslo accords, and we are further away from peace than ever before. An entire generation of young Palestinians---the Oslo generation---has grown up to witness a worsening situation on the ground. WE have seen a significant expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, heightened security threats to both sides, punitive restrictions on Palestinian movement, economic decline, a humanitarian crisis in Gaza of catastrophic proportions and the construction of an illegal annexation wall through Palestinian land.

It is clear that both Israel-Palestine relations and our foreign policy are at an impasse, which must be broken. We hear a great deal of talk about the two-state solution. Today, through validating both states, Members will have the opportunity to translate all that principled talk into action, but we should be under no illusions---today might be a symbolically important step, but it will not change the facts on the ground. The continuous blockade of the Gaza strip will not relent and the day-to-day reality of life under occupation will not change for the ordinary Palestinians. Opponents of the motion will use the well-worn argument that statehood should come

through negotiations and not unilateral action. Let us make no mistake about this: to make our recognition dependent on Israel's agreement would be to grant Israel a veto over Palestinian self-determination.

Mr Jack Straw:

I beg to move amendment (b), at the end of the Question to add, ‘*as a contribution to securing a negotiated solution.*’

As the House will note, the amendment has wide, cross-party support. Its purpose is very simple. It is based on the belief that the recognition of the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel will add to the pressure for a negotiated solution, and may help to bring that prospect a little closer to fruition. The “Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israel-Palestinian Conflict” was promulgated at the end of April 2003 under the auspices of the Quartet---the UN, EU, US and Russia. Though, palpably, much of the progress presaged by the road map has been confounded by events, crucially, by the road map, the Government of Israel were signed up to there being a separate and independent state of Palestine. One part of the road map anticipated that Quartet members, which include the UK, could

“promote international recognition of a Palestinian state, including possible UN membership”

as a transitional measure, well before any final status agreement. The Government of Israel disagree. They claim that recognition of Palestine as a state should be at the conclusion of any successful peace negotiations. But such an approach would give the Government of Israel a veto, even over whether such a state should exist.

Sir Alan Beith:

I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is trying to achieve by his amendment, but how does he think the passing of the motion would encourage either Hamas or the Israelis to change their approach to negotiation, which has been unfruitful so far?

Mr Straw:

It is the Palestinian Authority that is part of the negotiations not Hamas. I believe that the fact of the Israeli's

intemperate reaction to the very prospect of the House passing this resolution is proof that it will make a difference. The only thing that the Israeli Government understand, under the present demeanour of Benjamin Netanyahu, is pressure. What the House will be doing this evening will be to add to the pressure on the Government of Israel. That is why they are so worried about this resolution passing. Were it just a gesture, as the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) implied, they would not be bothered at all. They are very worried because they know it will have an effect.

Dr Matthew Offord:

I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his contribution, but does he not agree that this is a Back-Bench motion? This has no effect on Government policy, and it is just futile?

Mr Straw:

We represent the electorate of the United Kingdom. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, having spent 13 years sitting on the Treasury Bench, that resolutions passed in the House, whether they emanate from Back Benches or Front Benches, make a difference, and this resolution will, if it is passed, make a difference.

A moment's thought will allow us to appreciate just how ill-founded the Government of Israel's assertion is. Israel has been occupying Palestinian land for nearly 50 years. It fails to meet its clear international legal obligations as an occupying power. In the last 20 years, as we have heard, it has compounded that failure by a deliberate decision to annex Palestinian land and to build Israeli settlements on that land. There are now 600,000 such Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Israelis are seeking to strangle East Jerusalem by expropriating land all around it, and two months ago, they announced the illegal annexation of a further nearly 1,000 acres of land near Bethlehem. The Israeli Government will go on doing this as long as they pay no price for their obduracy. Their illegal occupation of land is condemned by this Government in

strong terms, but no action follows. The Israelis sell produce from these illegal settlements in Palestine as if they were made or grown in Israel, but no action follows.

Israel itself was established and recognised by unilateral act. The Palestinians had no say whatever over the recognition of the state of Israel, still less a veto. I support the state of Israel. I would have supported it at the end of the 1940s. But it cannot lie in the mouth of the Israeli Government, of all Governments, to say that they should have a veto over a state of Palestine, when for absolutely certain, the Palestinians had no say whatever over the establishment of the state of Israel. Today's debate will, I hope, send a strong signal that the British Parliament stands full square behind the two-state solution set out in the road map. The current impasse can be broken, in my view, only by actions, not simply by words, and the recognition of Palestine by the international community would further, not hinder, these aims.

Three years ago on 9 November 2011, the right hon. Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), then Foreign Secretary, told the House: "The United Kingdom judges that the Palestinian Authority largely fulfils criteria for UN membership, including statehood". He added that we, the United Kingdom, "reserve the right to recognise a Palestinian state bilaterally at a moment of our choosing and when it can best help to bring about peace."--(*Official Report*, 9 November 2011; Vol. 535, c. 290.)

That moment is now. I urge hon. Members on both sides to support the amendment.

Members of the Shadow Cabinet who voted for the motion were: Douglas Alexander, Hilary Benn, Andy Burnham, Vernon Coaker, Yvette Cooper, Margaret Curran, Gloria del Piero, Angela Eagle, Maria Eagle, Caroline Flint, Harriet Harman, Sadiq Kahn, Chris Leslie, Ed Miliband, Owen Smith, John Trickett, Chuka Umunna, Rosie Winterton.

Labour Friends of Israel has 30 MPs in the House of Commons. Five

of the 30 are officers of LFI. All five officers abstained or were absent from Parliament. Of the remaining 25, eight supported the motion. These were: Liam Byrne, Rosie Cooper, Jim Fitzpatrick, Caroline Flint, Mary Glendon, Sharon Hodgson, Chuka Umunna, David Watts. No LFI member voted against the motion.

The 12 MPs who voted against the motion were: Sir Alan Beith (Lib. Dem.), Bob Blackman (Con.), Jonathan Djanogly (Con.), Nigel Dodds (DUP.), Mike Freer (Con.), William McCrea (DUP.), Nigel Mills (Con.), Matthew Offord (Con.), Ian Paisley (DUP.), Jim Shannon (DUP.), David Simpson (DUP.), Robert Syms (Con.).

Devolution (Scotland Referendum)

On 14 October The House of Commons received a statement from William Hague, the Leader of the House, on the Government's post-referendum policy. Hague's articulation of this was constantly referred to by Gordon Brown. Brown challenged Hague to answer a number of pertinent questions about the potential effect of the policy on the constitution of the UK. His long, thoughtful speech is published below.

Gordon Brown:

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to congratulate all those who had contributed to the historic and clear decision of the Scottish people to stay part of the United Kingdom. As someone who has had time to reflect--four years, courtesy of the decision of the British people--- may I say that I believe there is also common ground on not just the timetable for the delivery of further devolution to Scotland, but the powers themselves? I believe that when the Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties get together to look at the possibility of delivering a stronger Scottish Parliament, they will find that, in addition to moves on powers over housing benefit, attendance allowance and other matters that they have talked about already, it is possible for the Conservatives to accept some of the Liberal proposals and some of the

Labour proposals that would strengthen the Scottish Parliament as part of the United Kingdom, without breaking the United Kingdom but while being in line with the wishes of the Scottish people, and without giving an unfair advantage to the Scottish people.

I have to tell the House that the fundamental question is not the one the Leader of the House was trying to raise; the fundamental question affecting the British constitution is not the West Lothian question. That is a symptom of a more fundamental problem. The fundamental question in the British constitution arises because England is 84% of the Union, Scotland is 8%, Wales is 5% and Northern Ireland is 3%, and the reality is that at any point the votes of England could outvote Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, individually or collectively. So the real issue is about getting a fair distribution of power that respects not only majority rule---I am sensitive to the needs of England and English votes---but the rights of the minorities, so that we have stability and harmony in the British constitution.

Every generation has had to come to terms with how we get that balance right between majority rule and protecting the needs of the minorities that are part of the United Kingdom. Although on 19 September there was contentment and satisfaction, including, I am told, right up to the centre of Buckingham Palace and Balmoral--- we have that on the highest authority, or perhaps I should say the second highest---the problem then arose with the Prime Minister's announcement at 7am on the Friday after the vote. Without telling people beforehand, on a matter that was absolutely material to the vote that people were casting in the Scottish referendum, a new plan was imposed on Scotland. A vow written on the Tuesday was being rewritten on the Friday morning, because although he said the proposed change was in the English constitution, the practical effect of it was in Scottish constitutional affairs: to restrict the voting rights of Scottish Members of Parliament in this House of Commons on an issue, as he said on that morning, as fundamental

as taxation.

Clearly that was a change in Scotland's constitutional status in the United Kingdom. Clearly it was highly material to the vote people had just had. Should not the people of Scotland have been told prior to the referendum, which was on Scotland's status in the United Kingdom, that the downgrading of Scottish representation in Westminster was one of the proposals that he now wishes to make to the people of the country?

What makes for a lethal cocktail---the Leader of the House did not even appear to recognise this---is that the Conservative party, as confirmed by the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr Redwood), wants to devolve 100% of income tax to the Scottish Parliament. This is not the Nationalist policy or the Labour policy; it is the Conservative policy to devolve all of income tax to the Scottish Parliament and then immediately end the right of Scottish Members of Parliament to vote on income tax, on a matter as substantial as the Budget, in this Parliament of the United Kingdom. Until now, any income tax rise has been based on the principle that all contribute and all benefit. Now, under the Conservative proposal, all, including Scotland, would benefit from such a tax rise, if it were ever to happen, but only some, excluding Scotland, would contribute. (*Interruption*)

This is the Conservative party proposal. It is a radical proposal to devolve all income tax in Scotland and then preclude Members of Parliament in this House from voting on the Budget. (*Interruption.*) Before I give way, I want to say that no state in the world, federal or otherwise, devolves all income tax from the national Exchequer to regional, local or national assemblies, and no Parliament in the world would impose a national income tax on only some of the country but not on all of it. There are very good reasons why that is. We have to understand that this is the Conservative party proposal that has been put forward subsequent to the referendum.

Mr Redwood *rose---*

Mr Brown:

I will give way to the man who is the author of English votes for English laws.

Mr Redwood:

I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for endowing me with that honour, but he should remember that the idea of English votes for English issues was in the Conservative manifesto in 2010 and that I expressly raised it before the referendum in Prime Minister's questions, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) was standing in for the Prime Minister who was in Scotland. Everybody knew that this was the will of the Conservative party. More importantly, it is the settled will of about three-quarters of the English people.

Mr Brown:

Why then, when the McKay committee reported, did the Government say that it needed only a thorough and rigorous investigation and did not support that view? The Prime Minister did not tell the Scottish people before the referendum that that proposal would come on the morning after the referendum. It is the combination of the two proposals to devolve 100% of income tax and then to remove the right of Scottish MPs to vote on the matter in Westminster that is absolutely lethal to the constitution. Let us be clear about the impact of this plan. The Leader of the House is free to intervene and to confirm whether this is indeed his plan. Scottish representatives would be able to vote on some of the business of Westminster, but not all of it. They would not be able to vote on some Budget decisions on income tax and thus would undoubtedly become second-class citizens at Westminster.

I believe---I am happy for the Leader of the House to confirm this---that there is a basic truth that this restriction on one group of MPs from voting on central issues such as Budget tax decisions ignores, and that is that we cannot have one United Kingdom if we have two separate classes of Members of Parliament. We cannot have representatives elected by the people who are half-in

and half-out of the law-making process. The gospel according to Mark in the New Testament, which was quoted by Abraham Lincoln, says: "A house divided against itself cannot stand... and a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" That is the truth of what the Conservative party is now doing.

This diminished status for Scotland would also have to apply to Wales, which also wants income tax powers. It would possibly apply to Northern Ireland and then---the Leader of the House did not rule this out when asked about it---it would have to apply to London. It would then have to apply to the House of Lords to create two classes of representation. A Government who one day owed their authority to all Members of the House would the next day owe their authority to just some Members of the House. They cannot be servants to two masters, owing their authority and legitimacy to one set of votes one day by one group of people and another set of votes another day by another group of people.

Mr MacNeil:

Is the hon. Gentleman telling this House that he signed up to a vow without knowing the details of it?

Mr Brown:

I signed up to a vow I will keep. It was the Prime Minister, on the day after the referendum, who qualified the promise. We would be better off in this House if we had some humility from Members of the Scottish National party, who in their own constituencies found that 55% to 60% voted no and not yes.

Iain Stewart:

I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. May I thank him for the impassioned defence of the Union that he made in the last few days of the campaign? In that spirit, may I say to him, as someone who was christened by his father and who grew up in the central belt of Scotland during the devolution arguments of the 1980s, that there is a similar growth of demand in England for a say in her own affairs. If that is not addressed quickly, we may endanger the very Union that he and I

both want to preserve.

Mr Brown:

I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. I am coming to that and the proposals that might solve that problem without creating two classes of representation in the House of Commons. The answer has to be that when one part of the Union is 84% and the others are 8%, 5% and 3% respectively, we cannot secure the status of each nation through a blanket uniformity of provision. Indeed the rules needed to protect the minority—I would hope that the Leader of the House who used to be Secretary of State for Wales understands this—are bound to be different from the rules to protect a majority who can always outvote the minority in this House.

If that is not recognised by this Government today in this House, it is recognised in America where the rules of the Senate mean that Wyoming—a minority part of the country—with half a million people has two Members of the Senate, as does California with 38 million people. It is also recognised in Australia where Tasmania with 700,000 people and New South Wales with 7 million people have 12 Members each in the Senate. It is recognised in the constitutions of Spain, Switzerland, South Africa, Brazil, Nigeria and Mexico.

When we start from a profound imbalance in the numbers of people in a population and from a huge inequality of size, fairness of treatment is not secured by a crude blanket uniformity that requires exactly the same provision for the minorities as the majority. We need to accord some respect to minorities, because the majority can invariably, and always if they want, outvote at any opportunity. The answer is not to say, “no representation without taxation.” The answer is certainly not to say no to Scots paying income tax at a UK level and then no to Scottish representation in this House.

The answer must be to say yes to Scottish representation on equal terms here and not to devolve all forms of income tax to the Scottish Parliament. Scots should continue to pay income tax to the UK and to be

represented in the UK. We will achieve the same level of accountability and local responsibility for decisions by devolving some but not all of income tax—perhaps 75% of it—and then assigning half of VAT, with the Scottish Parliament then raising the majority of its spending by its taxing decisions.

I do not underestimate, and I have reason not to underestimate, the concerns of the English people. I also understand the sensitivities that have been mentioned. There are ways in which they can be dealt with in the Union, without disrupting the status of Members of Parliament in this House and by, at the same time, meeting the sensitivities of the English. The McKay committee offers one way forward, but I agree with the Government that there should be a rigorous examination of what it is proposing as a new element has been introduced, which is the decision on income tax. There are other ways that we can meet the needs of English Members of Parliament in this House without creating two classes of representation, because if we do that, the Union is all but over.

The Leader of the House has put forward a crude argument that needs to be answered. I say to him again that English votes for English laws will not solve the problem that he has raised. It will not bring stability and harmony to the United Kingdom or create the sense of fairness that he wants to see. That will be true even for the English representatives whom he wishes to support. As the McKay committee found, it is difficult to isolate a part of the constitution and say that it is exclusively, uniquely and forever English. There can be few laws passed in this place that do not have implications for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. It will also not deal with the fundamental problem of fairness.

Let us say that the UK Parliament votes a tax rise to pay for improved pensions and a better national health service or even to cover the national debt, does this House think that English, Welsh and Northern Irish voters will accept for long—even if the Scots have no voting rights—that they, the English, Welsh and Northern Irish,

will contribute their income tax rises to UK-wide services, including funding the Barnett formula, if Scotland is exempt while continuing to benefit from the money raised? That is the Conservative policy. If the Leader of the House will not speak, let someone from the Back Benches defend the Conservative party policy, which will split the United Kingdom apart. Who will speak up?

Sir Oliver Heald:

My constituents in Letchworth want to know why it is that the right hon. Gentleman should be able to vote in this place about education in Letchworth when I have absolutely no say on those matters in Kirkcaldy in his constituency. It is not right—(Interruption.) I have not finished my intervention. When he was Prime Minister, he consistently ignored this issue. He ignored the voice of England and it must be addressed. It is time he came forward with a positive proposal.

Mr Brown:

The hon. and learned Member for North East Hertfordshire (Sir Oliver Heald) has not been listening to what I have said. I have been talking about the need to balance recognition of majority rule with sensitivity towards the minorities. What he is saying would apply to the United States of America, Australia and all the countries I have mentioned, where he would deprive the minorities of the power to influence decisions in their Parliaments. A minute’s consideration of the Conservative party’s proposition, on which the Leader of the House has refused to answer, will show that the only sensible way forward is to devolve some but not all income tax and not to exclude Scots, or any representatives of minority nations in the United Kingdom, from voting at Westminster on issues such as taxation.

It has long been said that the British constitution does not work in theory but works in practice. Make the change proposed by the Conservative party—to devolve income tax to the Scottish Parliament in full and then deprive Scottish MPs of the right to vote on the Budget—and the constitution will

not work in practice either. Nations can collapse by accident, even when a majority wants them to survive, and unions can disintegrate because of mistakes that are made.

I am more encouraged than Government Members and Ministers are by the reaction of people in England and the rest of the United Kingdom to the Scottish referendum. While the myth is perpetuated that Scotland and England are on completely different planets, that one is communitarian and egalitarian and the other is individualistic and libertarian, I find that no four nations in the world have managed what we in the United Kingdom have managed to do: to pool and share our resources together. That is the essence of the modern Union: to guarantee everyone in these islands, irrespective of nationality, the same equal rights to help when they are sick, disabled, elderly, vulnerable or unemployed.

A United Kingdom that was united in name only could not survive for long. What I see is reinforced by what we have seen and what we have studied in our history books: the United Kingdom in two world wars, coming together in a shared sacrifice, suffering together; that we Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish are prepared to help each other and come to each other's aid, to recognise the differences in each other and to be tolerant of what at times might seem like excesses or

eccentricities in others. If we can avoid making the kind of mistakes that the Leader of the House is now making, if we can rise above narrow partisan interests and put country before party, and if we can remain statesmanlike in seeking unity, as the siren voices from the SNP try to wreak discord, then Britain can still be the Great Britain that we want it to be.

Russia: Preparing For War

Oral questions on 20 October focused on defence. One of the questions related to the Strategic Defence and Security Review. **Secretary of State for Defence**, surely a misnomer, **Michael Fallon**, told MPs, 'The next strategic and defence security review will be conducted next year by my Department, the Cabinet Office, the Foreign Office, the Home Office and others. Until then, our priority remains delivery on the 2010 review, which gave us a balanced and affordable budget and maintained our armed forces' reputation while modernising force structure and capabilities.'

Labour's **Steve Rotheram** mischievously asked, 'Is the Defence Secretary as concerned as Labour Members about the possibility that by 2020 there will be more seats in Wembley stadium than British soldiers in the Regular Army?'

Michael Fallon:

'No. The 2010 review rightly

identified the need for agile and flexible forces, and set out the numbers. It is too early to prejudge the review that will be conducted next year, but I am sure that the House will want to salute the achievement of our armed forces in so many difficult parts of the world.'

Conservative Back Bencher **Rory Stewart** must have access to classified information relating to the intentions of Russia over the next five years. His question to **Michael Fallon** included an alarming accusation.

Rory Stewart:

'Will the Secretary of State ensure that the new SDSR acknowledges that Russia has radically changed the situation, first by creating a war in Europe and secondly by ensuring that NATO is undermined, and will it plan for what appear to be Russian planning assumptions for a major war in 2018-19?'

Michael Fallon:

'My hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee is right. The 2010 review did not predict the scale of Russian aggression in Ukraine, and the recent NATO summit at Newport reinforced the need for NATO members to maintain the level of their spending and to ensure a properly rapid reaction force that can be an effective deterrent to Russian aggression in future.'

There can be no equality or opportunity if men and women and children be not shielded in their lives from the consequences of great industrial and social processes which they cannot alter, control, or singly cope with.
Woodrow Wilson

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.
William Morris

POPPICIDE

When Butcher Haig sent them
over the top,
that throbbing meat,
cold steel against machine-gun heat,
sandwiched between earth and sky
to rot.
Then the Earl Haig Fund
and that red blotch pinned to
the chest
like a bullet-wound target request
from World War One.
As branded cattle they appear on the TV,
each dumb beast ready
to appease
that battlefield horror with ease.
The nation grins - suicide pleases?

Wilson John Haire.