

# Labour Affairs

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## The PLP: Labour's Timid Tendency

In the 1980s, Militant, a disciplined, hard left, Trotskyist organisation, embedded itself in the Labour party. It achieved partial electoral success, with Militant members standing as Labour candidates. It controlled Liverpool City Council and had two members of parliament in Bradford North and Liverpool Broadgreen. In addition, it held the key position of National Youth Officer, with a stranglehold over the Labour party young socialists.

All this was loosely tolerated under Michael Foot's leadership of the party. But Neil Kinnock, Foot's successor as party leader, following Labour's defeat at the 1983 general election, set out to remove Militant from the party. His well-publicised speech at Labour's 1985 annual conference, where he accused the Militant-controlled Liverpool City Council of hiring taxis to deliver redundancy notices to its employees, was the catalyst for a series of expulsions of key Militant figures. These included Derek Hatton, leader of Liverpool City Council, Ted Grant, Militant guru, as well as their two MPs.

There is no doubt that this period in the 1980s had a negative effect on Labour's electoral prospects, as shown by heavy defeats in the 1983 and 1987 general elections. (There was also the formation of the Social Democrat Party in 1981 which presented a political alternative to Labour until it vanished into an almost unchanged Liberal Party in 1988). And comparisons are now being made between Militant's effect on Labour in the 1980s and Momentum's effect today. A hard left label has been attached to Momentum and accusations made of plotting to take over the Labour party. The comparisons are ludicrous.

Jon Lansman, a founder member and key figure in Momentum is no Ted Grant. And Momentum is not Militant. Militant had a clear Marxist agenda: to turn Labour into a Leninist party. Momentum's agenda, as far as it has one, is to ensure that the left is well represented in the party. To ensure that Labour has a clear socialist programme for the transformation of the British economy. It has no desire to turn Labour into a Leninist party: most members are not Leninist or even Marxist. It recognises that the demography of Britain has changed substantially over the past 30 years.

The accusations of a Momentum plot to take over the party arise from comments made by Jon Lansman concerning the prospect of the trade union UNITE affiliating to Momentum should Len McCluskey be successful in the forthcoming election for general secretary of UNITE. This prompted Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson, for the second time in recent memory, to tar Momentum with a hard left brush and accuse it of surreptitious political manoeuvring. In doing so, Watson attempted to kill two birds with one stone: to undermine Momentum and thus Jeremy Corbyn, and to reduce Len McCluskey's chances of victory in the UNITE election.

Momentum is not affiliated to Labour, although most of its members belong to the party. It is therefore seen in a different light to affiliated groups such as the Coop party, the Fabian Society, Progress and Tribune. These groups have some influence over the development of policy and the general direction of the party. But unlike Momentum they are not mass membership movements. It is Momentum as a mass membership movement of the left that concerns Tom Watson and the parliamentary party. It is feared that power has shifted from the PLP to the membership. The battle with Momentum is a long-term attempt to return power to the PLP and overturn Corbyn's leadership election victory.

Momentum is aware of this and is seeking a change in the rules for leadership elections. Its aim is to reduce the proportion of nominations required in order to appear on the ballot paper from 15% to 5% of PLP members. In doing so it hopes to ensure that a candidate of the left will be in the running once Jeremy Corbyn stands down. In the meantime his opponents will cast an eagle eye over his performance as leader.

Corbyn's major problem as leader derives from his desire to unite the party as much as possible. This is unachievable and he should therefore concentrate on setting out his own views, and also be more firm with shadow cabinet members who step out of line. A point made later with regard to Article 50.

More seriously, not only are the majority of Labour MPs opposed to the new Left direction desired by the membership, so far they have been able to obstruct it by in some cases

controlling party Branch machinery. Members are not informed of forthcoming elections, little or no opportunity is provided to familiarise themselves with the different candidates, and they have not been absorbed into the Branch in any real sense. And some members receive no communications at all from their Branch. Door knocking is the only activity they are asked to take part in.

This is where Labour's National Organiser should step in, establishing direct contact with members through email, informing them of important Branch activity such as elections, where the Branch has failed to do so. In extreme cases, where new members are obstructed from any involvement in Branch life, the National Organiser should hold an emergency meeting to determine the cause and take appropriate steps to rectify the problem.

The latest Guardian/ICM opinion poll shows Labour trailing the Tories by 19 points. Corbyn's critics suggest this is due entirely to his poor performance in parliament and voters' perception of him as a future prime minister. A common voter opinion of Corbyn is that he is not a leader. A similar view is held by many of his parliamentary colleagues and the right-wing press.

Although his performance at prime ministers' questions has improved in recent weeks—how many of his voter critics actually watch PMQs?—he has shown signs of an inability, or unwillingness, to act decisively and ruthlessly when required. The most recent example of this being the rebellion against a 3-line whip by 52 Labour MPs on the invoking of Article 50 to exit the European Union. Corbyn's unwillingness to act decisively against the rebels allowed the shadow ministers among them to resign, when the proper response would have been to sack them.

Furthermore, Labour failed to call the Tories to account for the budget shambles. It was a handful of Tory MPs who opposed the increase in national insurance contributions of Class 4 self-employed workers. Consequently, the government performed a U-turn, reversing the decision. From which Labour can take no credit. The increase was expected to raise £2 billion, coincidentally matching the £2 billion announced for social care over the next 3 years. A welcome sum but not enough to cover the cut of £4.7 billion since 2010.

The growth in self-employment in

recent years is a major factor in the overall growth in employment. About 1 in 6 workers are now self-employed, but many work in the gig economy where pay and conditions compare badly with workers elsewhere. There are numerous examples of employers fining their workers for failing to reach targets, often set at an unreasonable level, and for missing a day's work.

A review of the UK's employment market is being carried out for the government by Matthew Taylor, former general secretary of the Labour party. This is the government's standard reply to Corbyn's questions on the iniquitous methods of work in the gig economy. In which case, he should have called for all related measures, including the NIC increase, to be shelved until Taylor's review was published.

Corbyn also faces a stern test over Labour's attitude to the UK's future outside the European Union. The triggering of Article 50 on 29 March was a momentous political event. While the Tories hide their difficulties under a veneer of unity, appearing relatively at ease with the decision to leave the EU, the opposition of a significant number of Labour MPs portray a disunited party.

Labour has set out six tests to influence the direction and end result of the negotiations over exiting the EU. Should the negotiations fail to meet any one or all of these tests, it is unclear whether Labour will vote against the final deal, having said all along that it will not block the decision to leave. However, following the triggering of Article 50 the ball moves firmly to the court of Brussels and the other EU countries. Their attitude to the UK's exit from the EU will determine to a considerable extent, the future of the UK. This is the obstacle the government and opposition now face.

For Corbyn there is the little matter of the 50 or so Labour members who are likely to vote against any deal. If the final deal satisfies most of the parliamentary party, Corbyn should again impose a 3-line whip and deal firmly with any transgressors. It's time to come out from behind your barricade Jeremy, and act like a leader.

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# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## **BATTLE OF GAZA. BRITISH LOSSES—OFFICIAL REPORT. 2 April 1917.**

**Sir ARCHIBALD WILLIAMSON** (by Private Notice) asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in view of conflicting reports concerning the battle on the frontier of Palestine, near to Gaza, he can now give to the House fuller information than he was able to give last week regarding the results of the operations and the number of British casualties?

**Mr. BONAR LAW** Further report has been received from the Commander-in-Chief, Egypt, describing the action south of Gaza on the 26th and 27th March. The report is dated 1st April.

The primary object of the operation was to seize the Wadi Guzzee, so as to cover the advance of our railway. The Wadi was occupied without a fight, under cover of advanced troops pushed forward in the direction of Gaza. It appeared to Lieut.-General Sir Charles Dobell, who was in command, that the enemy might retire without fighting, and, in order to force them to stand, he decided to attempt to capture Gaza by a coup de main.

On the morning of the 26th a dense fog delayed operations, and it was not possible to attack the Gaza position until the later afternoon, when the enemy first line trenches were captured, and more than 700 prisoners were taken. The German Commander, Von Kress, meanwhile moved up three columns towards Gaza to support his troops there. These columns were admirably delayed by our mounted troops and armoured cars, and heavy losses were inflicted upon the enemy, at slight cost to ourselves. The Commander and staff of the 53rd Division were captured during this fighting.

The time during which the operation could be carried out was limited by the supply of water available for the troops, the Infantry being dependent upon what they could carry with

them. Owing to the delay caused by the morning fog, the supply of water with the troops proved insufficient to allow the attack to be continued, and our troops took up a defensive position from a point just south of Gaza towards the Wadi Guzzee. This position was attacked on the 27th by the Turks, who were everywhere repulsed, with heavy losses, our Camel Corps completely defeating the Turkish Cavalry Division. On the 28th our Infantry were withdrawn to the Wadi Guzzee, our Cavalry remaining in contact with the enemy's main position, the enemy showing no desire to resume the offensive. Our troops remain in occupation of the Wadi Guzzee. The enemy's total casualties are estimated by the General Officer Commanding in Chief to be 8,000, and, as already reported, we captured 950 prisoners and two Austrian howitzers. Our total killed amounted to less than 400. Some small parties of our men, numbering less than 200 in all, who are believed to have fought their way into Gaza and been cut off, are missing.

Finally, Sir Archibald Murray reports: The operation was most successful, and owing to the fog and waterless nature of the country round Gaza just fell short of a complete disaster to the enemy. Our troops are in the highest possible spirits, and I am delighted with their enterprise, endurance, skill and leading. None of our troops were at any time harassed or hard pressed. In the account of the operations given by the enemy, it is stated that over 3,000 British dead were found on the field, and from the report which I have just read it will be seen how much reliance is to be placed on their accounts. I may add that the communication which I

gave to the House last week was the only report received until that which I have just read. No doubt the difficulty of communicating in such a position is very great.

## **GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND 26 April 1917**

**Sir H. DALZIEL** I am glad to see the Leader of the House in his place, because I desire to refer for a single moment only to a matter which was raised at Question Time this afternoon. I refer to the question which stood in my name to-day, and which asked the Prime Minister whether he was yet in a position to inform the House when it is proposed to make a statement on the result of the Government's efforts to effect an Irish settlement. When that question was called, I asked leave to postpone it till Tuesday. Since that time I have ascertained from Members in different parts of the House that they interpreted my postponement of the question as meaning that there was something indefinite about the time at which the Government contemplated being able to make the statement, and that the matter was likely to be indefinitely delayed. Let me say that that was certainly not my view of the proceedings. The facts are that I had an opportunity of discussing this question with the Prime Minister previous to the meeting of the House to-day, and it was at his request that I refrained from addressing the question to the Leader of the House, as I intended to do this afternoon; but I understood the reason for the suggested postponement, was that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House were reluctant to commit themselves to a definite day until they were quite certain that it would not be

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necessary to have another postponement; and, as far as I was concerned, I postponed it till Tuesday, in the hope and expectation that they would be able then to fix a definite day for a statement to be made on Irish policy on behalf of the Government.

I take this opportunity, therefore, in view of the misapprehension which obviously has arisen in different parts of the House, of asking the Leader of the House to say whether he can in any way be more definite than was the case early to-day. The question I desire to ask him is whether he can hold out hope, or whether he can even go further than that, and say that the policy of the Government may be given to the House, if possible, not later than next week. Let me say that, so far as I am concerned, I have no desire unnecessarily to harass him at this very difficult time, but I am sure my right hon. Friend will give due credit to the fact that this question now has been in possession of the House, so to speak, for some considerable time. I know the Government are very fully occupied with other and very important matters, and I certainly know that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House have been giving their constant attention to the difficult matter which I am now bringing to my right hon. Friend's attention. These are critical days both for Ireland and for the Empire. I am sure my right hon. Friend would be the first to admit that the representatives of Nationalist Ireland have, at all events, been very patient in regard to this matter, and not only the Irish representatives but the Irish people. They have been patient almost to the point of despair. Therefore, I think, it is in the interests of the good government of Ireland, as well as in the interests of the Government itself, that a statement should be made, and I feel sure it is the intention of the Government to make such a statement at the earliest possible moment.

Every hour brings fresh reasons why the Government should not only make an early settlement, but, if I may say so, a hopeful and satisfactory settlement with regard to this all-important question. Anyone who has paid the slightest attention to the latest phase of the matter cannot be too optimistic about the result. It is difficult in every way in which the Government may have to turn, but I think this House is determined that there shall not be failure to do everything it can in order, if possible, to rescue the negotiations from such a calamity. Further, within the last few

days, we have had the declaration of America in regard to the War. That is an epoch-making event. My right hon. Friend will, I am sure, agree with me that that makes an additional reason why we should endeavour to settle the Irish question with the least possible delay. It is better to have the enthusiasm of the Irish in America than to have their aloofness in this great struggle in which the American Government is now taking part. We have had also this afternoon a declaration from the Leader of the House on behalf of the Government, which was received with enthusiasm. It was to the effect that Poland at last is going to get a free government, and that the opinion of the British Government was that that would add happiness to the people and prosperity to the country. If Poland and Finland are going to get self-government, and Russia is now going to be free, these things should operate for a determined effort to be made on our part to settle the Irish question. I therefore hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give us some assurance: first that there is not going to be an indefinite delay and, secondly, if he can, that a statement may be made, if possible, during next week.

**The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law)** My right hon. Friend has accurately described the motive which induced the Prime Minister to ask him not to put his question to-day. As my right hon. Friend has said, both the Irish Members and the other Members of this House have been very patient, and for that reason we desire, if possible, to avoid making another statement until we can say definitely when the policy of the Government will be announced upon the subject. I can assure my right hon. Friend and the House that there has been no delay which we could have avoided. The delay has been partly due, as I am sure the House will understand, to the very exacting nature of the day-to-day duties in connection with the War in which the Government have been engaged. But it has been also due to the inherent difficulties of the subject with which we are dealing. The House will remember that after a great deal of deliberation the Government definitely decided that they would make an attempt to deal with this question. I appealed to the House at that time not to press us unduly, but at all events to allow us as much time as we thought necessary. Well, Sir, it has not got easier as we go on, but I can say this much: Had

we abandoned all hope, there would not have been any delay in making a statement. We still have hopes that, with the good will which is felt, certainly both in the Government and in the House, to make solution possible. As regards the request for a definite statement which has just been made, I can only say this: I discussed the subject with the Prime Minister this morning—as, indeed, I have been doing every day—and he authorised me to say that he had every expectation that next week it will be possible to make a statement on the subject. Of course, I need not point out that this must to some extent depend upon the nature of the calls which day by day arise upon the Prime Minister in connection with the War.

**Mr. DILLON** This is no occasion on which the House should desire to raise the Irish question in Debate. I do, however, desire, and I want to press upon the Leader of the House, that I think we who represent the Irish people at a time of terrible crisis are entitled to know, and that without further delay, where we stand? The Leader of the House, in the speech just now, told us that all sections of the House, including the Irish Members, had treated the Government with great patience. What has been the history of this question? We had a Debate inaugurated by Irish Members, and the Government took up an attitude such as obliged us to go into open opposition to them. We concluded that at that time they had shut and barred the door in our face. We then knew where we stood and where our people stood. Subsequently, however, not upon our Motion or our initiative in any respect, directly or indirectly, an English Member on the Back Benches raised this question.

**An HON MEMBER** A Scottish Member!

**Mr. DILLON** And the hon. Member who raised the question was joined in that Debate from the Back Benches by Members of all parties in this House except the Irish Nationalist party. A most remarkable and historical Debate took place in the House, with the result that the Government, on their own initiative, and without any pressure from us, announced that they intended again to approach this question, and on their own responsibility to attempt a solution. Subsequent to that, two or three days after, a Debate took place, in which I took the opportunity of warning the Government, with all the solemnity I could command, that now they had taken that responsibility upon their own

initiative, without any pressure from us, that delay was dangerous. I said that the Irish people had been exasperated by what they conceived to be a series of breaches of faith, of postponements, of playing with them, and of dallying with them. The results were visible! Those results were the exasperation of the Irish people, and—a very much minor consideration—in making our own position as representatives of the Irish people almost impossible. I said all this to the Leader of the House and asked him to convey to the Prime Minister that while we were willing, under the circumstances of extraordinary strain and pressure, to exercise the greatest possible amount of patience, and that we were entitled to demand that at the earliest possible moment the Government should let us know their policy. We were prepared on the one hand to meet them if they were prepared to act in a generous spirit, and on the other hand we were prepared to fight them if we had to fight them.

I said then, as I say now, that a more deplorable and disastrous result, both for our people and for the Empire, could not be conceived than that we should be driven into such a position—perhaps I should rather say, forced to maintain such a position. We were led to believe, and we were under the impression—we put no pressure on the Government, we left it in the hands of the English Members, who had taken it out of our hands—we were led to believe—it will be in the recollection of every Member of the House when I say this—that before the Easter Recess we would be put in possession of the decision of the Government. We waited patiently. We were told at the last moment that this thing should stand over until after the Easter Vacation. We said nothing, but we fully expected when we came back after the Easter Recess, and the Government had the opportunity afforded them by the cessation of the sittings of the House, that we should then immediately receive the decision of the Government; but still we put no pressure on them, and then we were given to understand that the statement would be made to-day. When we saw the question of the right hon. Gentleman on the Paper to-day we concluded that, knowing his position, it was put on the Paper in privacy with the Prime Minister and Leaders of the Government and that a definite date would be mentioned on which a statement would be made. But I deeply regret to say the statement to

which we have listened from the Leader of the House to-night leaves us wholly in doubt whether even next week a statement will be made.

**Mr. BONAR LAW** It is in doubt to this extent, that it may be impossible to make it. But I did say clearly that it is our intention to make it next week unless something entirely unforeseen happens.

**Mr. DILLON** That is better. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will convey to the Prime Minister the desirability of making a definite statement next week. I do not propose to say any more except that, so far as the situation in America is concerned, as the Leader of the House probably knows better than anyone in the House knows, it is extremely exasperated by the action of the Government, and, so far as the position of Ireland is concerned, these delays are dangerous. Therefore, I do hope that next week the representatives of the Irish people will be put in a position in which I think they are entitled to demand that we should know where we stand, whether we are to be friends of this country and this Government or whether we are to be driven back to another long fight for Irish rights.

*Note: The House of Commons rose on 27 April and returned on 5 June. No statement was therefore issued on the future of Ireland until 11 June when it was announced that a Convention of all interested parties would be held. The debate on this will appear in the next (May) Labour Affairs.*

## RUSSIA AND POLAND.

26 April 1917

**Mr. ASQUITH** asked the Prime Minister whether His Majesty's Government is now in a position to make any statement in regard to Poland?

**The CHANCELLOR of the EX-CHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law)** As the House is aware, one of the first acts of the Provisional Russian Government was to issue a Proclamation to the Poles, recognising their right to decide their own destiny, and stating that the creation of an independent Polish State would be a sure guarantee of durable peace in Europe. I am confident that I rightly interpret the feeling of this House when I say that we welcome that declaration and look forward to the time when, thanks to the liberal and statesman-like action of the Provisional Russian Government, Poland will appear again in international life and take her share with other nations, in working together

for the common good of civilisation. Our efforts in the War will be directed towards helping Poland to realise her unity on the lines described in the Russian Proclamation, that is to say, under conditions which will make her strong and independent. We hope that after the War Great Britain will remain united to Poland in bonds of close friendship. [See OFFICIAL REPORT, 2nd May, 1917, col. 342, Vol. XCIII.]

**Mr. DILLON** May I ask whether the Provisional Government in Russia, in issuing that Proclamation, and the British Government, in giving their assent to it, have inserted in that Proclamation any provision giving a veto on the independence of Poland to the large number of German residents in that country?

**Mr. BONAR LAW** I do not know that there is any such condition, but there is certainly no part of Poland where the conditions are the same as in the district of Ireland to which the hon. Member refers.

**Mr. KILBRIDE** How far is Poland from London?

**Commander WEDGWOOD** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he has any information from Russia as to the wishes or intentions of the Provisional Government as to including in the conditions of peace the reuniting of Poland, including the territories of Posen and Cracow, in the free Poland of the future?

**Lord R. CECIL** I have no information beyond the Proclamation issued by the Provisional Russian Government to the Poles.

**Commander WEDGWOOD** Has the Noble Lord no information as to the attitude of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Union on this point?

**Lord R. CECIL** I have no reason whatever to think that there is any difference of opinion among those in power in Russia on the subject.

**Commander WEDGWOOD** Or the question of reuniting Poland?

**Lord R. CECIL** I have no reason to suppose so.

**Mr. MacCALLUMSCOTT** Has the Foreign Office entered into communication with any organisation in Russia besides the Provisional Government?

**Lord R. CECIL** No, of course not; but a question is to be answered later in the day by the Leader of the House.

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Elections

There is a left/right division among the candidates, and the left vote is split between three candidates: Mélanchon, Hamon and Macron. It is not immediately obvious that Macron is a left candidate, but several of Hollande's ministers have come out in support of him (to the dismay of Hamon, the official Socialist candidate). The right is united, or rather, it has only one candidate, François Fillon. There is an intense media barrage against him.

The population is aware that politicians are now of secondary importance: what really decides the standard of living and the way of life of the French is the actions of the big corporations in the world market, and a liberal Europe. The declarations of successive presidents in front of steel works and other plants: 'I will not allow this plant to close', followed by the closure of said plant very shortly after, have proved this to voters beyond doubt. The practice of 'primaries', which end up nominating eccentric candidates more or less at random, has increased the sense of unreality. The National Front is no more convincing than the rest as regards the power of international finance and trade; Marine Le Pen doesn't say how she will cope with them.

### The Catholic vote?

It is more usual, when speaking about France, to talk about secularism. Catholics are rarely mentioned. Which is why people were startled when

François Fillon, the right wing candidate, member of Sarkozy's party *Les Républicains*, claimed he was 'a Christian and a Gaullist'. Left wing Catholics were quick to protest against this imposture, since Fillon had given

no public demonstration of piety previously, and he is certainly not a supporter of Pope Francis and his social doctrine. Then a poll announced that a majority of Catholics were going to vote for Fillon.

France has a Catholic tradition. In the deep countryside the stone crosses that stand at the side of the main roads entering the village are looked after, with cut grass and flowers; the cemeteries are well maintained. In suburbs round Paris, gentrification and immigration, sometimes in the same places, fill the churches again.

The number of practising Catholics in France is nevertheless small and shrinking further year by year. The statistics established by the Conference of Bishops of France show that clearly: figures for baptism, confirmation and marriage decrease markedly each year.

The largest figure to support the survival of Catholic practice is that for baptism: in 2012 there were 290,282 baptisms out of 819,191 births that year.

But this start in life is not followed up by going to catechism classes (6,229 that same year), or confirmation (44,011), although there are a number of church weddings: 74,636 out of 251,654 marriages in total in the year 2010.

Many churches are closed practically all year round; this is due to the small number of priests: 13,331 priests in 2012 served the 32,000 towns and villages in France, all but the small villages having more than one church.

The readership of the Catholic daily newspaper *La Croix* (a well respected paper which won national prizes for quality) is relatively large: 92,280 paid for sales, as against 267,897 for the

better known *le Monde*, in 2015.

The number of people who say they are Catholics is falling year by year; 64% of French people said they were Catholics, in 2010. The main French polling organisation, IFOP, found that same year that 4.5% of Catholics attended mass regularly.

The situation as regard church attendance is not so different in England. The number of people calling themselves Christian believers is also small and shrinking, while the proportion of church weddings is almost the same as in France. The differences are the near absence of anticlericalism in England, as against a lively one in France, and the contrast between Catholics and Protestants, which is strong in England and non-existent in France, due to the small number and low profile of Protestants. (French Catholics are apt to call themselves 'Christians'. A person was once heard on French radio talking about 'Christians and Protestants'.) The strength of anticlericalism and the influence of secularism has led to many people agreeing that faith is a private matter.

Official government statistics do not include data regarding religion. A Catholic association however asked the most famous polling organisation IFOP to collect statistics on the voting intentions of Catholics in the forthcoming presidential elections. IFOP did not look for 'Catholics' as such to interview. They interviewed 1,860 people, 'representative of the French population', and asked them to fill in a questionnaire online. This was in early January this year, before the Fillon scandal broke. The questionnaire asked the respondents if they were 'without religion, Catholics (non practising) or Catholics (practising)'.



No other alternatives were provided (statistics are a mysterious science).

The results for the second round, presumed at the time to be Marine Le Pen versus Francois Fillon, showed very little difference between Catholics and those declaring themselves without religion. 63% of Catholics declared for Fillon (61% of 'without religion'), 37% for Le Pen (39% of those without religion).

The first round, with its multiplicity of candidates, showed more differences: 30% of Catholics for Fillon (12% of those without religion). Figures of support for Le Pen were less different: 29% compared to 24%.

Several elements in Catholicism might influence voting intentions: a general belief in solidarity, in good works and public service; this is expressed strongly in Catholic social doctrine, forcefully expressed by Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si*. Then there are what the French call '*questions sociétales*', values to do with life in society. We should also mention the attachment of parts of the traditional bourgeoisie to the church. This last is what Fillon appealed to when he called himself a Christian and a Gaullist, and is what is meant by 'A majority of Catholics support Fillon'. The Catholic social doctrine is not well known, and not represented in any of the parties. As for the *questions sociétales*, Catholics have long been used to disregard Papal directives in that field, as regards contraception for example. 90% of French people are said to support assisted suicide at the end of life. This means that many Catholics support it, contrary to church doctrine (and contrary to simple humanity). Mélançon and Hamon, the so-called left candidates, both support abortion and 'active euthanasia' in an emphatic manner in their programmes. This would not necessarily put off all Catholics.

Many Catholic on the other hand opposed the law for same sex marriage.

Strangely, this is a topic where Macron listened to Catholic feeling. He said during his present campaign that at the time of the vote in 2013 the opponents of the same sex marriage law had been treated in a humiliating manner. This is true. The law and the campaign for it were both extreme; removing the words 'father' and 'mother' from the Civil Code—as discriminatory—were extreme measures designed to show a total absence of sympathy for those who stand for traditional marriage. Macron's gesture was greeted with indignation in the media.

The National Front is definitely not Catholic; Marine Le Pen is strongly for secularism; her high profile niece calls herself a Catholic and is against abortion, but that goes against party policy. Needless to say, both are strongly rejected by left wing Catholics.

### The 'Macron Law'

Whether the Catholic influence of solidarity and public service is at play or not, France is still clinging to State policies that defend all workers, such as the 35 hour week and the ban on Sunday working, as well as good social services; this entails relatively high taxation. France is

being punished for this on the world market: Apple and other multinationals set up shop in London rather than Paris and poach the French workforce.

The solution for Macron is to make France more like England; his big idea is that relations between worker and employer should be negotiated on an ad hoc basis. And if people want to work on Sunday, they should be able to. The 'Macron Law' of 2015, voted when he was minister for the economy, allowed for Sunday working some weeks in some areas. That was a start; as president, he will try to do more, which is why he is probably a worse candidate than Fillon. He has made a gesture towards Catholic opinion, on a topic that is important but not vital; but his fundamental philosophy is individualist: 'get the best deal you can'. Be like the Anglo-Saxons. Fillon distanced himself to some extent from the Anglo-Saxon and EU model, by refusing their anti-Russian position. Fillon wants normal relations with Russia and an end to sanctions. In that he is not completely following the standard liberal position, and is therefore the best of a bad bunch. (The left candidates are not seriously in the running.)

### NIMBY

It may seem insensitive at this time  
 but then it's always insensitive at  
 this time  
 to mention  
 when  
 everywhere around you  
 there is tension  
 where  
 anywhere on earth death  
 mimes  
 a vehicle hitting people  
 a knife  
 near Churchill's own dreary steeple  
 or where high-tech bombs  
 are rife  
 on mud homes and shanty towns  
 indiscriminate  
 and indiscriminate  
 where  
 the self-righteous  
 frown  
 and show-off their ladies  
 in expensive gowns  
 you gulp in wonder  
 at the self-delusion  
 the peeping blood-stained teeth  
 the claws in their sheath  
 the pious word straining through  
 gut and entrails  
 the barbarous wail

Wilson John Haire

# Labour Industrial Strategy Consultation Document

Earlier this year the Labour Party initiated a consultation into Industrial Policy as a preliminary to developing policy in the area. If this is a genuine consultative exercise as it seems to be, then it is very welcome and the quality of Labour's policy will be increased by taking into account many different perspectives. *Labour Affairs* discussed the consultation and decided to submit answers to a limited number of the very extensive set of questions that were posed in the consultation document. We reprint the questions and our responses here.

## (A) Productivity and Skills

### ***Question 1: What are the causes of Britain's poor productivity performance and how can they be overcome?***

There are many causes, but the dominant British low value-added product strategy is a major one. Such a product strategy leads to a demand for low-skill, low-wage labour, leading to a prevalent low-skill equilibrium across wide swathes of the British economy. This tendency was exacerbated by the Blair-Brown strategy of subsidising the least productive and innovative sectors of the economy through wage and welfare payments as a substitute for wages, by the opening up of the economy to large-scale immigration thus giving firms a 'training holiday' and by the promotion of vocational qualifications of little or no value. Ultra-low interest rates since 2009 have allowed such businesses to continue as before, even when they are of marginal viability and an unregulated labour market has contributed to the phenomenon of increasing zero hours, short-term and bogus self-employment contracts (*see question 5*).

This trajectory will continue in

the absence of incentives to move the UK economy to a different product strategy which relies on highly skilled workers making high specification products. Such a shift will allow for changes in job design, allowing more discretion and autonomy to better prepared workers, as well as contributing to a delivering of management. A Labour government will need to work with local organisations such as trade unions and local councils to identify firms with the potential to grow (50% of GDP is generated within the SME sector). Such firms can be assisted through the government (through the Bank of England) buying their bonds to promote investment and training. Such a policy can be piloted regionally and modified as experience shows how it can be improved, before being adopted more widely. It would be wise to make a start in areas that have particular problems of economic decline – quite often these are highly localised, for instance even within the Greater London area.

### ***Question 6: How can we improve skills and training across school, university, on the job training, adult education and reskilling? What should be the relative balance between these institutions in skills and training provision?***

The fundamental problem with skill formation is lack of employer demand, for reasons mentioned in the response to question 1 above. We would recommend keeping the apprenticeship levy in place but administering it so as to favour certain product strategies for those firms that apply to use it. Government will need to provide enhanced advice and guidance to SMEs to help them to make the best use of the levy and to reduce bureaucratic

costs for firms. Thus some of the levy should be reserved centrally to provide an Apprenticeship Advisory Service with a particular focus on the SME sector. There should be a clear legal definition of an apprenticeship as a minimum three-year level three qualification offered to 16-25 year olds. Not only will such apprenticeships be of higher quality than most that are now on offer, but a three year period of apprenticeship will allow employers to recoup their costs as apprentices increase their productivity. This will go a long way towards ensuring that employers find apprenticeship a self-financing proposition. There should also be a significant element of personal and civic education in all apprenticeships, which should be assessed along with the technical element. This should be paid for by government.

There should be decreasing reliance on private training providers, whose provision taken as a whole is of doubtful quality and the FE sector should be prioritised to provide the academic side of apprenticeship provision. A lot of VET will continue to be provided by the FE sector and the government should take more control of financing to ensure that national economic priorities are reflected in the activities of the sector. Control of financing of FE by local firms that are too often quite unambitious about skill development should be avoided in future and reduced in practice. Support should continue for reskilling and professional development, but it should not be erroneously badged as 'apprenticeship' as is now the case. Government should take a more active role in determining reskilling priorities and should work with the FE sector, LEPs and trade unions in developing regional



centres for the development of skills needed by local economies. While 25+ VET should not be called ‘apprenticeship’ the government, through Ofqual, should make sure that retraining is, wherever possible, tied to the achievement of good qualifications which will allow workers to move between firms when they wish to do so. (NB: this also partly answers q.7 concerning the balance between state and employer-provided training, as well as q.8 concerning the quality and quantity of apprenticeships).

**Question 9: How do we ensure parity of esteem between skilled apprenticeships and academic qualifications?**

The priority will be to establish apprenticeships which are esteemed by young people and employers. It is not appropriate to aim for level 6 apprenticeships when we are currently struggling to provide even a minimum number of good quality level 3 apprenticeships. While there may be good reasons to cautiously expand the Higher Apprenticeship programme to provide a good alternative to university courses which may have limited employment potential, it is important to get our level 3 technical qualifications right. Minimum standards should be rigorously defined (see above) and all apprenticeship routes should be capable of providing progression to level 4 qualifications and above. It is however a mistake to turn apprenticeships into a form of quasi degree in order to chase the will-o-the-wisp of parity of esteem.

**Question 10: How can we improve careers advice in schools and colleges?**

Over the last 40 years, culminating in the disaster of 2011 when careers advice was all but completely abolished, successive governments have chipped away at the careers service at a time when youth unemployment was steadily increasing. Germany and Austria, two countries with low rates of youth unemployment, have well-developed compulsory careers education from 14 years of age. A careers service should

consist of two inter-related components: a) a labour market intelligence and brokerage service that works with schools, colleges and local employers b) careers education in colleges and schools. Careers education should be a recognised and compulsory subject at Key Stage 4 and a PGCE careers route should be opened up for intending teachers. The careers brokerage service should gather labour market intelligence and work closely with the government and economic development agencies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to identify existing and projected skills and occupational needs. Careers teachers need to work closely with the local careers brokerage service (which can be called a Youth Careers and Employment Service) to develop detailed and accurate careers advice in conjunction with students and their parents. School funding will need to be revisited in order to ensure that schools do not have a vested interest in retaining pupils at KS5, when this is against their interests.

(Q)\_Regulation\_&\_Workers\_Rights

**Question 1: What is the role of broad labour market regulation and workers’ empowerment in delivering our objectives, particularly with respect to jobs and productivity?**

Theresa May announced at the 2016 Tory party conference that she would seek more worker representation on company boards. Her announcement was met with muted interest by most trade unions - apart from the TUC which has actively attempted to promote the issue of worker representation within the trade union movement. This lack of interest by trade unions in worker representation on boards will act against the interests of British workers. The involvement of British workers in the management of their work will have a dramatic effect on jobs and productivity. Worker participation on company boards should be an essential component of any industrial strategy. An industrial strategy that does not have worker representation as a fundamental pillar will be much less effective. However we should

be clear that it will take time for the benefits to arrive. We are looking at a 5-10 year lag before the benefits of worker representation on company boards on productivity and equality will become clearly visible.

**Question 2: How can we improve cooperation and collaboration between workers and employers? What examples of good practice exist in the UK and elsewhere and how can they be replicated?**

It is important that British workers increase their understanding of how capitalism in general and their own particular company work if they are to seriously advance their position in society and reduce inequality. Worker representation on company boards is standard practice in most European states and the workers are better off by virtue of that fact. Labour must insist on worker representation on company boards and confront the lack of interest on the part of the trade unions.

(R)\_Macroeconomics

**Question 1: What is the role of macroeconomic policy in delivering an industrial strategy? What should be the balance between macroeconomic objectives such as aggregate demand, inflation, debt etc.?**

Macroeconomic policy will be crucial in delivering an industrial strategy so it is essential that Labour dominates the Macroeconomic policy debate. In 2008-2010 Labour adopted a macroeconomic policy that involved a huge expansion of the national debt and of fiscal deficits. This was a correct economic policy that prevented a complete collapse of the UK economy. However the Tories turned this on its head and claimed it was the fiscal deficits that had created the economic problem. Throughout the 2010-2015 period in opposition Labour failed to challenge this dishonest account and generally came over as embarrassed at the size of the fiscal debt. The point is that it is important to win the macroeconomic argument if you are to be successful in implementing economic policy in

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# Workplace relations

## – a new agenda for progressive change?

Gregor Gall, Professor of Industrial Relations, University of Bradford

### Editorial Note:

*The talk below by Greg Gall is a good account of the main parties' policies concerning workers' rights to have a significant say in the running of their companies. He also provides some useful historical background. Since it was written, it has become evident either that Theresa May was insincere in stating her wish to see workers on the board, or that she felt that she could not go any further because of lack of political backup. As Greg Gall's talk points out, the Labour Party's position is feeble and equivocal. The TUC's proposals in 'All Aboard', on the other hand, would go some way towards addressing the problem of large companies reconstituting themselves into smaller ones. Unfortunately there do not seem to be any leaders in the large trade unions who are in the least interested in pursuing worker representation on company boards. It is not surprising that May's proposals now seem to be dead in the water.*

### Summary

We are in the midst of unprecedented political turmoil. Fortunately, this has allowed the bringing forward onto the mainstream political agenda of proposals concerning ideas for workers' rights in the workplace that have long been marginalised and ridiculed. Amongst these are proposals for worker directors, sectoral collective bargaining and extended union recognition. They have come from Theresa May, Owen Smith and Jeremy Corbyn. This 'Quick Note' examines the main proposals that have emerged over the summer on these areas. Using historical experience, it concludes that considerable fleshing out of the proposals is needed in order to avoid any potential pitfalls.

### Introduction

Politics is not in its normal habitus at the moment. This is especially true in regard of proposals for major

reforms to workplace relations in Britain. From the Conservatives, Theresa May promised on 11 July in her first and only campaign speech – just two days before she was crowned as new Tory leader and PM – that she would introduce worker representation onto the boards of companies. This was part of her pitch to create an economy and society that 'works for everyone'. Then, following the announcement of a formal challenge to Jeremy Corbyn for the leadership of the Labour Party, Owen Smith laid out his 'Workplace Manifesto' on 2 August. Given that Smith's claim to be genuinely on the political left is open to considerable doubt because of his background and voting record since becoming an MP in 2010, his manifesto can be read as an attempt to out-Corbyn Corbyn – especially where it has become abundantly clear that the political terrain in Labour has moved profoundly to the left. In other words, there would be no point standing against Corbyn on a centre or right-wing position. Indeed, some have accused Smith (and John McDonnell) in this area (as well as others). Corbyn, of course, had outlined a programme of proposals that won him the Labour leadership in the summer of 2015. He has for this contest laid out a new manifesto based on ten pledges. One of this concerns workers' rights. Looking at the proposals from Smith and Corbyn, it is nonetheless the case that both sets are a vast advance on from the timid proposals put forward by Ed Miliband for the Labour manifesto for the 2015 general election.

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general. Labour should boldly state that, where private capital is failing to do so, the government will step in and do what needs to be done to maintain full employment and good living standards and that they will incur whatever level of fiscal deficit that implies. The main task will be to ensure that the fiscal deficit is incurred in a way that is of long term value to the economy rather than in short term consumption. Properly managed any such increased fiscal deficit will increase aggregate demand but not inflation. The writings of Professor Simon Wren-Lewis are particularly relevant for this area of policy.

### **Question 2: How should fiscal, monetary and regulatory tools be utilised to deliver these goals?**

Use monetary policy as far as possible but where that fails don't hesitate to use fiscal policy. By virtue of the design of the Eurozone national states in the Eurozone area have been unable to use fiscal policy. The result is there for all to see in an extremely slow recovery from the 2008 crisis.

In this 'Quick Note', the proposals from May, Corbyn and Smith are critically examined. Varying degrees of scepticism emerge about them even accepting that these tend to be fairly bald campaign pledges rather than fully worked out policies. But it is incumbent upon those making them to at least present something more than just the 'headline' or 'slogan' for each proposal. This is because for the proposals to have sufficient credibility and durability, they must be developed to some extent in order to show a sense of genuine commitment to them and that some prior thought has gone into formulating them (rather than being plucked out of the air or off the shelf of ideas of others). Notable in amongst all this political maelstrom is that the third largest political party (by membership and MPs), the SNP has made no recent announcement on the subject. Recalling that its initiative of the Fair Work Framework was launched in March 2016, this is not surprising. Yet, and notwithstanding that employment matters remain a reserved issue to Westminster, it was still the case that the SNP Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework did not bring forward concrete proposals to operationalise its aspirations.

### **Theresa May**

On the morning of Monday 11 July 2016, May outlined her political perspective (and attendant proposals) on a number of issues, including the reform of corporate governance, in her bid to become the new leader of the Tories, and, thus Prime Minister of Britain. They formed part of her pitch for a new form of 'one nation' Toryism. A key part of this pitch was, to quote her, 'Putting people back in control'. Having 'have not just consumers represented on company

boards, but employees as well' was central to this pitch.

By later that afternoon, she had become leader and PM in waiting after fellow contender, Andrea Leadsom, pulled out. There is no evidence to show the two events were related in a cause and effect manner. But it became clear that a May Tory government would – in words at least and for the time being – be neither a continuation of the Cameron Tory government nor a bonfire of labour market regulations that Leadsom favoured. May's proposals on workplace democracy were but just one indication of this.

Any right-minded trade unionist or socialist should welcome the proposal that May made to put workers on the boards of public limited companies. This puts front and centre the issue of workplace democracy on the top of the political agenda, opening up the space for a wide-ranging public debate that even the dispute between Ineos and the Unite union of late 2013 did not manage to create. But trade unionist or socialist will also want to suspend judgement on how far to welcome May's proposal until they see exactly what she is putting forward because, as ever, the devil will be in the detail. Indeed, they will remember that the proposal was made as part of the beginning of what was expected to be a three month leadership campaign, and they will note that the reaction from business and corporate leaders to her proposal has been lukewarm to say the least.

They will recall that the last time they were given what seemed like a simple, unambiguous commitment from a PM in waiting was from Tony Blair in 1996. Then, he promised to legislate to create a law that allowed union members to gain statutory union recognition

from a recalcitrant employer where they constituted a simple majority. The *Employment Relations Act 1999* was the result but it was also the product of allowing employers, principally through the CBI, to influence the nature and implementation of the scheme for statutory union recognition. What resulted was a weak form of statutory union recognition and not the one that the TUC and its union affiliates had hoped for or expected.

There is no reason to think a similar process of watering down and tinkering around will not happen with May's proposal – assuming that it is not a campaign proposal that gets quietly dropped when the so-called 'serious business' of being PM – and negotiating Brexit – begins.

But the longer historical record has a more illuminating light to shed on May's proposal. Back in 1975, the then Labour government commissioned a *Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy*. Its terms were:

*Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors, and accepting the essential role of trade union organizations in this process, to consider how such an extension can best be achieved, taking into account in particular the proposals of Trades Union Congress report on industrial democracy as well as experience in Britain, the EEC and other countries. Having regard to the interests of the national economy, employees, investors and consumers, to analyse the implications of such representation for the efficient management of companies and for company law.*

Led by Oxford academic, Alan Bullock, the Committee of Inquiry published in 1977 majority



and minority reports. The majority report recommended that in companies with more than 2,000 employees, worker directors be established on the basis of a '2x + y' formula where one 'x' was the representatives of capital (the employers and their management) and the other 'x' was the representatives of labour (the workers and their unions). Both were to be equal in number while 'y' was the independent, third party representatives like lawyers or academics, present to cast the deciding vote or break any deadlock.

The proposals were never implemented so the experiment of industrial democracy in the form of worker directors never broke out of its tiny bridgehead at the Post Office and British Steel. This was on account of the then Labour government imploding, opposition from unions who feared interference in their much valued 'free collective bargaining', and because new PM, Margaret Thatcher, was determined to reduce worker and union rights upon entering Downing Street in May 1979.

But the majority report did at least – for our purposes now – flag up that if workers are to be genuinely influential on a company board, they at least need more than token representatives. Equal representation with capital must, therefore, be a foundation stone as must be sitting on the main board of the company and not auxiliary or secondary ones. This vital issue is flagged up by the current practice of the First Group of bus and train operators. Since 1989, each of its companies (currently 12 bus operators and two rail franchise holders) has had its own 'employee director' and there is one 'employee director' that sits on the main board of the overall group. Yet this level of representation has not been enough to prevent a multitude

of recent disputes and strikes in the companies. It is clear that having just one 'employee director' per company is not sufficient to allow much influence to be exercised.

Other foundation stones for the operation of worker directors must also be i) the uninhibited freedom for workers to choose their own representatives as workers directors; ii) worker directors not being subject to 'Chatham House' rules which prevent them from sharing information from the company board with their own members; iii) worker directors being given full and unfettered access to company information so that they can engage properly in the decision making process (with the rationale of 'commercial sensitivity' not giving the usual blanket immunity); iv) worker directors being under no other obligation other than to serve their members' interests, and lastly v) collective bargaining not being restricted by the operation of company boards with worker directors on them. These are especially important because there is a 'business case' for worker directors whereby capital seeks to incorporate labour into its structures and inculcate it with its own ideology. This is known as a strategy of incorporation.

There are also a host of other stipulations that are necessary to ensure effective representation. These concern how the creation of worker directors on company boards is to be triggered and the process by which this is managed. For example, will the law require all public limited companies to have worker directors without exception or what level of support amongst the workforce is needed to create them, i.e., a simple collective (2+ workers) or a simple majority or 40% of all those entitled to vote voting to do so (where non-

voters are counted as 'no' votes)? Another instance is, if there are to be referenda on creating worker directors, will employers be able to use their resources (financial, ideological, and organisational) to campaign against their creation? And so on and so on.

So right-minded trade unionists and socialists will want to see much meat put on the sparse bone of May's proposal before making a more definite judgment. They will be able to use the historical record to guide that evaluation. That is only right and proper.

In Scotland, the veracity of the argument made here about the need for equal representation in particular could be examined by way of assessing the experience of employee directors on NHS boards and for NHS Scotland. (There is also an employee interest director on Scottish Water's board.) Such employee directors have existed since the early 2000s, and the Fair Work Framework has encouraged their adoption elsewhere of the NHS model to all public bodies. The first opportunity was Food Standards Scotland but it chose not to take up the recommendation given it had no statutory obligation to do so.

### Owen Smith

Smith's 'Workplace Manifesto' (<http://www.owen2016.com/workplace-manifesto>), in his own words, promises a 'revolution in workers' rights ... [making] Britain the envy of the world for employment rights'. Amongst these are strengthening union recognition rights, providing mandatory access arrangements to workplaces for unions, removing unfair obstacles to industrial action, modernising balloting with e-balloting to increase participation, creating worker representation on all remuneration committees, and

repealing the *Trade Union Act 2016* immediately on taking office. The strength of his manifesto is that it seems to cover almost all areas of concern with something said about each. In that sense, it is more joined up. Yet it also reads like a rather overly long and quickly drawn up shopping list and there is considerable inexactitude in a number of his key proposals. For example, in calling for the strengthening of union recognition rights to provide for recognition where majority support exists, it is not clear how this is an advance on the current arrangements embodied in the *Employment Relations Act 1999*. What needs to be offered instead are means to prevent employers working to stop union members becoming a majority. Another case is that in providing mandatory access arrangements to workplaces for unions 'where requested by workers' this could allow employers to influence workers so that they are convinced not to request it. It would be far simpler and better to have a universal right to access. Two further examples are that in a) suggesting worker representation on remuneration committee, just like with Theresa May's proposal on worker directors, the critical issue of the balance of numbers and power between workers and managers is not spelt out; and b) providing 'a legal framework for voluntary sectoral collective bargaining' shows the ineptitude of not understanding the distinction between statutory and voluntary mechanisms to the effect that this undermines the potency of the former by the latter.

### Jeremy Corbyn

Corbyn's proposals on workplace rights are to be found as one of the ten pledges of his manifesto (<http://www.jeremyforlabour.com/>) and in his article in *The Observer* (1

August 2016). The pledge in full reads:

*We will give people stronger employment rights from day one in a job, end exploitative zero hours contracts and create new sectoral collective bargaining rights, including mandatory collective bargaining for companies with 250 or more employees. We will create new employment and trade union rights to bring security to the workplace and win better pay and conditions for everyone. We will strengthen working people's representation at work and the ability of trade unions to organise so that working people have a real voice at work. And we will put the defence of social and employment rights, as well as action against undercutting of pay and conditions through the exploitation of migrant labour, at the centre of the Brexit negotiations agenda for a new relationship with Europe.*

In addition to this, he has previously promised to bring about a return to centralised collective bargaining in the civil service after its abolition by the Conservatives in their 'Next Steps' initiative of 1994 (when nearly one hundred agencies were created with the ability to determine their own terms and conditions). Later, he added, echoing Miliband's 2015 general election manifesto, that 'the election of staff representatives to executive remuneration committees'.

His commitment to utilise the law to create new rights rather than suggest voluntary codes is to be welcomed, especially on the issue of the legal right to sectoral collective bargaining for if bargaining rights only exist at the enterprise or company level, the terms and conditions of workers in different companies in the same sector would still be the subject of downward pressure in a 'race to the bottom' as companies compete against each

other on the basis of labour costs. But the absence of any further detail is still noticeable and of concern. In particular the statement that: 'We will strengthen working people's representation at work and the ability of trade unions to organise so that working people have a real voice at work' is woefully inadequate. Another example of the lack of thought out proposals concerns Corbyn's pledge of mandatory union recognition in companies of over 250 employees (which is the standard definition of a SME (Small and Medium Enterprise)). This pledge ignores that:

Companies will reorganise themselves into units of less than 250 employees to avoid such a new law if they so wish;

The majority of employees (in 2015, 15.6m or 60% of those in the private sector) work in companies of less than 250 employees;

Guaranteeing the right of the process of collective bargaining does not mean the outcomes of collective bargaining are any good – cuts to jobs as well as terms and conditions (pay, pensions etc) happen in unionised workplaces as well as non-unionised ones.

The Prime Minister has very many virtues, and when the time comes I hope to pay my tribute to them, but I am bound to say that political honesty and sagacity have never been among them

*Aneurin Bevan  
On Winston Churchill*

The Prime Minister has an absolute genius for putting flamboyant labels on empty luggage

*Aneurin Bevan  
On Harold Macmillan*

The press lives on disaster  
*Clement Atlee*

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## **Terrorism:**

### **Discards Won't be Discarded**

Al-Qaeda and Daesh are Islamic, in the same way the Klu Klux Klan was Christian. They draw strength from an extreme interpretation of Islam, just as the Klu Klux Klan stemmed from several White Racist versions of Evangelical Protestantism.

Al-Qaeda and Daesh (Islamic State) are part of Wahhabism, an eighteenth-century movement with a doubtful claim to restore the purity of early Islam. Ibn Saud used it to conquer the huge chunk of Arabia that is now Saudi Arabia, the personal possession of his heirs. Other Arabians, often believers in another version of Islam, are subjects bound to obey.

Saudi Arabia claims to be the real restored and pure Islam. So do the heirs of Ayatollah Khomeini within Shia Islam, with very different beliefs and practices.

Wahhabism is a disputed offshoot of the smallest of four schools of jurisprudence within Sunni Islam. But the enormous wealth generated by oil under sandy wastelands that the Saudi dynasty control has let them push it all over the world.

The Western media *should* be emphasising the shaky grounds for seeing Al-Qaeda or Daesh as genuinely Islamic. But that would get in the way of two other major policies of the New Right, who own or control most of the media:

Selling enormous quantities of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Keeping immigrants and poor whites antagonistic to each other, while letting immigration continue to the maximum the society can swallow.

The New Right's grand purpose is to restore 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism, with rights of money overriding human rights. They dreamt of low taxes and a tiny state – but it *was* only a dream.

Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century averaged a growth rate of 1%, while the USA surged towards 2%. This amazed a world where most economies were static. By modern standards they would be disastrous.

The New Right reality is a large and intrusive state and high taxes. Also 'Feed the Rich' policies: corporations legally avoid most taxes and are fed by tax-funded franchises that replaced state enterprises. They also covered the gambling debts of multi-millionaires under the gibberish name 'Quantitative Easing'.

If the state spends more on the rich, it has to spend less on the rest of us. Hence austerity. Far too many leftists have accepted it, including Corbyn's foes within the Labour Party. Ed Miliband lost the last election, because he lacked the courage to denounce Osborne as a silly fantasist for blaming the economic crisis on excessive government spending. Osborne is now marginalised, but Labour's 'Timid Tendency' never dared attack him while the mainstream media defended him. And the society gets damaged.

Why did Adrian Russell Elms become an Islamic extremist called Khalid Masood? Why did he attack a happy crowd who were mostly short-stay tourists? Maybe because they *were* happy, and he was not.

"He was an outsider as the black child born out of marriage in the 1960s to a teenage white mother in Kent. He seemed to simmer with resentment and anger, which exploded repeatedly throughout his life in violent episodes involving knives. It was a toxic combination that found its most deadly outlet when he embraced Islamic extremism in its most violent form.

"Born in Hainault maternity hospital in Erith, his mother Janet Elms was 17 when she gave birth and brought him up alone, until she met and married

Philip Ajao two years later and moved to Tunbridge Wells. His two younger brothers were born in the genteel town, and the family lived in St James Park among big Victorian villas. His mother attended the local church."<sup>1</sup>

Not exactly Inner-City Ghetto – he might have been less dangerous if it had been. I called the 1987 Brixton Riots 'Reformist Riots' by Black Britons who wanted a bigger slice of the cake.<sup>2</sup> It proved so. But the future terrorist was isolated in mostly-white Sussex, his status uncertain.

The centre-right have continuously implied that non-whites do not belong, even if born here. And the man smoked cannabis, less predictable than alcohol. Most users are peaceful: some get violent and paranoid. That man got violent after a minor argument and went to prison. Then married a Muslim woman, converted and changed his name.

The New Right's bright idea of keeping immigrants and poor whites antagonistic does enormous damage to society. Of course they follow Thatcher in believing that society does not exist. Society failing to integrate people who were once quite hopeful is not their fault: it is an inexplicable outbreak of evil.

### **Why Won't Scotland Obey England?**

The last General Election saw the Scottish Tories get less than 15%. They were once a major party there, getting 50% in 1955, 31.4% in 1979. But once Scots saw what Thatcherism meant, it was downhill all the way. (*How 'Upper London' Lost Scotland*.<sup>3</sup>)

Keeping the proud nation of Scotland in a union dominated by its former enemy England was always tricky. But before Thatcher, the Tories managed it.

Before Ed Miliband decided to fight



the 2015 General Election as a milder version of post-Thatcher Toryism, Scottish Labour was still strong. Now the Union seems doomed.

Theresa May can't see what's wrong:

"The Prime Minister did not rule out granting a second referendum to Scotland but derided the idea...

"The tunnel vision that the SNP has shown today is deeply regrettable. It sets Scotland on a course for more uncertainty and division, creating huge uncertainty," the PM said.

"This is at a time when the Scottish people, the majority of the Scottish people, do not want a second independence referendum.

"Instead of playing politics with the future of our country the Scottish government should focus on delivering good government and public services for the people of Scotland. Politics is not a game'...

"Under Section 30 of the Scotland Act the UK Parliament would also have to vote to grant Scotland the powers to hold a second independence referendum."<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish Nationalists are being un-English. But Scotland is not English. Close enough for the gap to be bridged, but only by people modest enough to see the need.

Having watched Mrs May as Prime Minister, I've decided that her calmness and confidence comes from simple lack of imagination. The same ruling-class blind spot that lost first British North America, then Ireland and finally the Indian Subcontinent. Inconvenient views are simply wrong, and need not be taken seriously.

Widespread views must always be taken seriously, even when factually wrong. When it is just an unfamiliar opinion, you need to study it closely.

### **0.1% of Muscovites Can't Be Wrong!**

"Russia's main opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, has been arrested at an anti-corruption protest he organised in the capital, Moscow.

"Thousands of people joined rallies nationwide, calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev

over corruption allegations.

"At least 500 other protesters were detained in the capital and across the country.

"Most of the marches were organised without official permission.

"TV pictures showed demonstrators chanting 'Down with Putin!', 'Russia without Putin!' and 'Putin is a thief!'...

"In Moscow, protesters filled Pushkin square and some climbed the monument to poet Alexander Pushkin shouting 'impeachment'. Turnout was estimated to be between 7,000 and 8,000, according to police." (BBC News<sup>5</sup>)

Moscow is a city of 15 million. If there were twice as many as the police said, that would be just one in a thousand Muscovites.

Back in 2013, Navalny got an unexpected 27% in the Moscow mayoral election.<sup>6</sup> But capital cities are mostly much more Globalist than the rest of the country. And whatever support he had then, he has not kept it.

The man also hasn't got a serious political party. He was once in Yabloko, the main pro-Western party, which got all of 1.99% in the last national elections. Like many others, he then set up on his own, but couldn't get his party registered. Maybe it had no substance outside of Moscow.

Contrary to what the BBC say, the Russian Communists have always been the main opposition, though sinking with now less than 14%. Putin's party got more than 50%, and less than half the voters bothered to vote. A large majority are happy to let him carry on as a successful autocrat with a repeated popular mandate to be so.

Russia would be Ukraine without Putin, or someone like him. Had he not consolidated power, Russia might face a similar downward spiral, where each new government is no more honest than the last. Just as useless as the government that sprung from the First Orange Revolution.

(For those who forget, the First Orange Revolution was against Viktor Yanukovich for allegedly rigging the 2004 Presidential Election. But the 'revolting oranges' made such

a mess of ruling that Yanukovich indisputably got elected president in 2010. Continuing Ukraine's unhappy pattern of violently rejecting whatever it chose last time, he was removed illegally after riots in Kiev in 2014. This Second Orange Revolution broke the fragile Ukrainian constitution by letting an intimidated parliament ignore the carefully-specified impeachment procedures.<sup>7</sup> It included outright fascists; heirs of men who fought for the Nazis whenever the Nazis would allow it.<sup>8</sup>)

### **Dutch 'Soft Left' Slump Disastrously**

"Rightwing, anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders is this election's real winner. We seem to be forgetting that his party gained five additional seats in the Dutch parliament. And more importantly: over the past 10 years, Wilders has wrenched most of the other parties toward his position on the fringes – particularly the fiscally conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the culturally conservative Christian Democratic party (CDA), both mainstream parties with widespread support...

"So-called progressive and moderate politicians are currently making pronouncements that would have put them behind bars for inciting hate 30 years ago."<sup>9</sup>

That was the spin put in the *Guardian* on the March 2017 Dutch general election. A protest against immigrants who don't fit in. Against people that the centre-right in Europe and the USA manage both to let in and to drive to extremist views. As one blogger put it:

"Nowhere across Europe was any population asked if they wanted mass immigration, it has always been an unpopular policy, yet every single government has increased it whilst lying in their manifestos that they won't. We have a situation where the indigenous population are now a minority in many of our capitol and largest cities, and the culture of those cities has changed in accordance."<sup>10</sup>

As I said last month, the New Right

do for Western civilisation what Al Capone did for Valentine's Day.

Muslims in Europe get hit by a 'double whammy'. The Centre-Right encourage prejudice against them, to keep the votes of silly white bigots. And assaulted the Arab world in a foolish doomed effort to create docile pro-Western regimes. Predictably, many young Muslims became militant and intolerant:

"How safe is an open, free society that, every year, absorbs hundreds of thousands of immigrants from countries without any tradition of openness or freedom?"

"In the Netherlands of the 1980s and 1990s those questions were dismissed as racist or alarmist. But by the 2000s gay men had stopped walking hand in hand in Amsterdam, out of fear of homophobic violence by men of Moroccan descent. Jews took off their yarmulkes. Swimming pools hired guards to protect girls from harassment."<sup>11</sup>

More accurate to say Moroccans have *different* standards of what's acceptable. Telling them they don't understand openness or freedom is both false and foolish. Saying that they must conform in public to majority standards is much simpler and more reasonable. But liberalism goes through a great pretence of saying that everything is allowed, while trying to crush anything it does not like. This worked when they were stronger, more successful, and more ruthless. Now it falls apart.

Tolerance gets strained. Extreme solutions become popular. The main news for the British media was defeat for a man hostile to the European Union. No one mentioned that the Dutch Labour Party crashed disastrously. They got between a third and a fifth of the vote since 1946: they now have less than a fifteenth. 5.7%, to be exact.<sup>12</sup>

Dutch Labour (*Partij van de Arbeid*) followed the Blair / Brown / Ed Miliband path of treating Austerity as a grim necessity, not a conscious 'Feed the Rich' choice. And as in Britain, voters who believed them preferred centre-right parties that were wholehearted about it.

Not all voters. Dutch Labour are now a poor third on the left. They have been replaced by two rival parties with Leninist roots. The Socialist Party transmuted itself into Social Democracy from being the Maoist Communist Party of the Netherlands/Marxist-Leninist, and has been doing well for some years. They got 9.1%, below their best but still respectable. Level with them are Green Left, formed in 1989 by a merger of the Communist Party of the Netherlands, the Pacifist Socialist Party, the Political Party of Radicals and the Evangelical People's Party.

Between them, the left have 24%, almost twice the 13.1% vote of the Populist Right. Two parties whose members would be quite at home in Corbyn's Labour Party got 18.2%. Those closest to the anti-Corby Labour got 5.7%. Who now is unelectable?

#### **Martin McGuinness - a Man of Unauthorised Violence**

UK citizens rely on the Authorised Violence of the police and military, whether or not they know it or wish it. Irish in Britain accept this. Some join the British military, and even the police.

In Northern Ireland, Roman Catholics were outsiders in what was a Protestant state. Elections were irrelevant: the policies of the government elected by Mainland Britain were almost always followed by the all-Protestant devolved government. Irish Catholics were not in practice citizens of the state that ruled them.

There was no *authorised* system of violence that would bring normal politics to Northern Ireland. Unionists ran a system that simply excluded the Roman Catholic minority, as far as they could. That's why the IRA was organised, built around the tiny residuum left over from the equally unauthorised violence that created an independent Southern Ireland in the 1920s.

Labour and Tories organising in Northern Ireland might have normalised it. We called for it, but it didn't happen. A small late effort by the Tories got nowhere.

McGuinness made peace because Irish Catholics would henceforth be actual citizens, with no devolved government allowed without them. Got most Republicans to accept that the Authorised Violence of the UK police and military must be tolerated for now.

Thanks to Thatcher's wanton destruction of huge chunks of British industry, including Belfast's famous shipyards, the Ulster Protestants identity is fading. The next generation is likely to see a Nationalist majority who could vote themselves into the Irish Republic.

#### **Snippets New Deal survived US Republicans**

"Since 1980, [US] Republican leadership has embraced the draconian goal of dismantling the New Deal state..."

"But the stark ideology of the Republicans calling for a return to the pro-business government of the 1920s never reflected political reality. The policies Republicans loathed were actually quite popular. So, to garner support for their attack on an activist government, they turned to a mythological narrative that drew on America's long history of racism and sexism. They won voters not by convincing them of the merits of returning to a world in which businessmen ran the country, but rather by insisting that taxes redistributed wealth from hardworking white people to lazy minorities and feminists who wanted abortions on demand.

"Their narrative was simple. Hardworking white Christian men were under attack by a behemoth government, designed by Democrats, that sucked them dry with high taxes funnelled to poor minorities and grasping women, who, in turn, supported Democrats for the government goodies they provided. This narrative of the individual under attack by an empire – the same storyline that drove the 1977 hit film *Star Wars* – worked. Voters rallied to Reagan's attacks on an apocryphal Welfare Queen, a black woman who had become rich by collecting welfare cheques under 80 different names, and

thrilled to his promise to protect regular Americans from the taxes that supported such parasites.”<sup>13</sup>

And as in Britain, centre-right governments squeezed the incomes of those ‘hardworking white Christian men’. Talked as if they were against immigration, but allowed as much of it as the society could take without immediate disaster.

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#### My Carers Don’t Care

“Care firms have cancelled contracts with 95 UK councils, saying they cannot deliver services for the amount they are being paid, a *BBC Panorama* investigation has found.

“Some firms said they could not recruit or retain the staff they needed.

“The Local Government Association said it was the result of ‘historic under-funding’ and an ageing population.”<sup>14</sup>

Actions speak louder than words. Demands for less taxes from the rich speak loudest of all.

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#### Obamacare, Republican Snare?

Recently the US Congress, controlled by the Republicans, tried to replace ‘Obamacare’. Too many Republicans rejected the proposed alternative, and it failed.

An accident? People said that any possible cost-cutting reform would take away medical cover from many people. Including some who voted for Trump, but might think again if their medical cover suddenly vanished or was unaffordable.

So it didn’t happen. May never happen.

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#### Happiness is Broad Capitalist?

I said last month that the West won the Cold War by creating a system of ‘Broad Capitalism’ that had a large role for the state. Once called Mixed Economy or Keynesianism. The left in the 1960s and 1970s unwisely convinced everyone that it was capitalism of a sort. And got muddled as to *what* sort.

A modern system need not be the Narrow Capitalism favoured by the New Right, and accepted by New Labour

In most of Continental Europe, Broad Capitalism carries on. And makes Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland and Finland the top five in the World Happiness Report.<sup>15</sup>

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#### Right-Wing Populism Without Putin

In India, hard-line Hindu populism won decisively in India’s largest state, Uttar Pradesh.<sup>16</sup> I’ve not yet heard anyone blame that on Mr Putin.

But you never know what the disintegrating Globalisers will think of next, to explain a run of failures that they cannot account for.

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#### Websites

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

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#### **A STEPPE TOO FAR**

The clique is in place  
the tapes are ready to run  
vitriol sets the pace  
the tanks are ready  
the quivering missiles  
steady  
now for the enemy  
the graves without a name  
the ruinous end without a  
remedy  
defeat  
the yapping blame game  
the uncontrolled  
conceit

Wilson John Haire.



# Prime Minister's letter to Donald Tusk triggering Article 50

Published 29 March 2017

On 23 June last year, the people of the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. As I have said before, that decision was no rejection of the values we share as fellow Europeans. Nor was it an attempt to do harm to the European Union or any of the remaining member states. On the contrary, the United Kingdom wants the European Union to succeed and prosper. Instead, the referendum was a vote to restore, as we see it, our national self-determination. We are leaving the European Union, but we are not leaving Europe – and we want to remain committed partners and allies to our friends across the continent.

Earlier this month, the United Kingdom Parliament confirmed the result of the referendum by voting with clear and convincing majorities in both of its Houses for the European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill. The Bill was passed by Parliament on 13 March and it received Royal Assent from Her Majesty The Queen and became an Act of Parliament on 16 March.

Today, therefore, I am writing to give effect to the democratic decision of the people of the United Kingdom. I hereby notify the European Council in accordance with Article 50(2) of the Treaty on European Union of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Union. In addition, in accordance with the same Article 50(2) as applied by Article 106a of the Treaty Establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, I hereby notify the European Council of the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the European Atomic Energy Community. References in this letter to the European Union should therefore be taken to include a reference to the European Atomic Energy Community.

This letter sets out the approach of Her Majesty's Government to the discussions we will have about the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and about the deep and special partnership we hope to enjoy – as your closest friend and neighbour – with the European Union once we leave. We believe that these objectives are in the interests not only of the United Kingdom but of the European Union and the wider world too.

It is in the best interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that we should use the forthcoming process to deliver these objectives in a

fair and orderly manner, and with as little disruption as possible on each side. We want to make sure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and is capable of projecting its values, leading in the world, and defending itself from security threats. We want the United Kingdom, through a new deep and special partnership with a strong European Union, to play its full part in achieving these goals. We therefore believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the European Union.

The Government wants to approach our discussions with ambition, giving citizens and businesses in the United Kingdom and the European Union – and indeed from third countries around the world – as much certainty as possible, as early as possible.

I would like to propose some principles that may help to shape our coming discussions, but before I do so, I should update you on the process we will be undertaking at home, in the United Kingdom.

## **The process in the United Kingdom**

As I have announced already, the Government will bring forward legislation that will repeal the Act of Parliament – the European Communities Act 1972 – that gives effect to EU law in our country. This legislation will, wherever practical and appropriate, in effect convert the body of existing European Union law (the “acquis”) into UK law. This means there will be certainty for UK citizens and for anybody from the European Union who does business in the United Kingdom. The Government will consult on how we design and implement this legislation, and we will publish a White Paper tomorrow. We also intend to bring forward several other pieces of legislation that address specific issues relating to our departure from the European Union, also with a view to ensuring continuity and certainty, in particular for businesses. We will of course continue to fulfil our responsibilities as a member state while we remain a member of the European Union, and the legislation we propose will not come into effect until we leave.

From the start and throughout the discussions, we will negotiate as one United Kingdom, taking due account of the specific interests of every nation and

region of the UK as we do so. When it comes to the return of powers back to the United Kingdom, we will consult fully on which powers should reside in Westminster and which should be devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. But it is the expectation of the Government that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration.

## **Negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union**

The United Kingdom wants to agree with the European Union a deep and special partnership that takes in both economic and security cooperation. To achieve this, we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU.

If, however, we leave the European Union without an agreement the default position is that we would have to trade on World Trade Organisation terms. In security terms a failure to reach agreement would mean our cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism would be weakened. In this kind of scenario, both the United Kingdom and the European Union would of course cope with the change, but it is not the outcome that either side should seek. We must therefore work hard to avoid that outcome.

It is for these reasons that we want to be able to agree a deep and special partnership, taking in both economic and security cooperation, but it is also because we want to play our part in making sure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and able to lead in the world, projecting its values and defending itself from security threats. And we want the United Kingdom to play its full part in realising that vision for our continent.

## **Proposed principles for our discussions**

Looking ahead to the discussions which we will soon begin, I would like to suggest some principles that we might agree to help make sure that the process is as smooth and successful as possible.

### **i. We should engage with one another constructively and respectfully, in a spirit of sincere cooperation**

Since I became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom I have listened

carefully to you, to my fellow EU Heads of Government and the Presidents of the European Commission and Parliament. That is why the United Kingdom does not seek membership of the single market: we understand and respect your position that the four freedoms of the single market are indivisible and there can be no “cherry picking”. We also understand that there will be consequences for the UK of leaving the EU: we know that we will lose influence over the rules that affect the European economy. We also know that UK companies will, as they trade within the EU, have to align with rules agreed by institutions of which we are no longer a part – just as UK companies do in other overseas markets.

**ii. We should always put our citizens first**

There is obvious complexity in the discussions we are about to undertake, but we should remember that at the heart of our talks are the interests of all our citizens. There are, for example, many citizens of the remaining member states living in the United Kingdom, and UK citizens living elsewhere in the European Union, and we should aim to strike an early agreement about their rights.

**iii. We should work towards securing a comprehensive agreement**

We want to agree a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation. We will need to discuss how we determine a fair settlement of the UK’s rights and obligations as a departing member state, in accordance with the law and in the spirit of the United Kingdom’s continuing partnership with the EU. But we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU.

**iv. We should work together to minimise disruption and give as much certainty as possible**

Investors, businesses and citizens in both the UK and across the remaining 27 member states – and those from third countries around the world – want to be able to plan. In order to avoid any cliff-edge as we move from our current relationship to our future partnership, people and businesses in both the UK and the EU would benefit from implementation periods to adjust in a smooth and orderly way to new arrangements. It would help both sides to minimise unnecessary disruption if we agree this principle early in the process.

**v. In particular, we must pay attention to the UK’s unique relationship**

**with the Republic of Ireland and the importance of the peace process in Northern Ireland**

The Republic of Ireland is the only EU member state with a land border with the United Kingdom. We want to avoid a return to a hard border between our two countries, to be able to maintain the Common Travel Area between us, and to make sure that the UK’s withdrawal from the EU does not harm the Republic of Ireland. We also have an important responsibility to make sure that nothing is done to jeopardise the peace process in Northern Ireland, and to continue to uphold the Belfast Agreement.

**vi. We should begin technical talks on detailed policy areas as soon as possible, but we should prioritise the biggest challenges**

Agreeing a high-level approach to the issues arising from our withdrawal will of course be an early priority. But we also propose a bold and ambitious Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom and the European Union. This should be of greater scope and ambition than any such agreement before it so that it covers sectors crucial to our linked economies such as financial services and network industries. This will require detailed technical talks, but as the UK is an existing EU member state, both sides have regulatory frameworks and standards that already match. We should therefore prioritise how we manage the evolution of our regulatory frameworks to maintain a fair and open trading environment, and how we resolve disputes. On the scope of the partnership between us – on both economic and security matters – my officials will put forward detailed proposals for deep, broad and dynamic cooperation.

**vii. We should continue to work together to advance and protect our shared European values**

Perhaps now more than ever, the world needs the liberal, democratic values of Europe. We want to play our part to ensure that Europe remains strong and prosperous and able to lead in the world, projecting its values and defending itself from security threats.

**The task before us**

As I have said, the Government of the United Kingdom wants to agree a deep and special partnership between the UK and the EU, taking in both economic and security cooperation. At a time when the growth of global trade is slowing and there are signs that protectionist instincts are on the rise in

many parts of the world, Europe has a responsibility to stand up for free trade in the interest of all our citizens. Likewise, Europe’s security is more fragile today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Weakening our cooperation for the prosperity and protection of our citizens would be a costly mistake. The United Kingdom’s objectives for our future partnership remain those set out in my Lancaster House speech of 17 January and the subsequent White Paper published on 2 February.

We recognise that it will be a challenge to reach such a comprehensive agreement within the two-year period set out for withdrawal discussions in the Treaty. But we believe it is necessary to agree the terms of our future partnership alongside those of our withdrawal from the EU. We start from a unique position in these discussions – close regulatory alignment, trust in one another’s institutions, and a spirit of cooperation stretching back decades. It is for these reasons, and because the future partnership between the UK and the EU is of such importance to both sides, that I am sure it can be agreed in the time period set out by the Treaty.

The task before us is momentous but it should not be beyond us. After all, the institutions and the leaders of the European Union have succeeded in bringing together a continent blighted by war into a union of peaceful nations, and supported the transition of dictatorships to democracy. Together, I know we are capable of reaching an agreement about the UK’s rights and obligations as a departing member state, while establishing a deep and special partnership that contributes towards the prosperity, security and global power of our continent.

The people of the United States have but one instrument which they can efficiently use against the colossal combinations of business—and that instrument is the government of the United States (and of course in the several States the governments of the States where they can be utilized)...

It is absolutely impossible to limit the power of these great corporations whose enormous power constitutes so serious a problem in modern industrial life except by extending the power of the government.

*Theodore Roosevelt*

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## Article 50

29 March 2017

**The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May)** Today, the Government act on the democratic will of the British people, and they act, too, on the clear and convincing position of this House. A few minutes ago in Brussels, the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the EU handed a letter to the President of the European Council on my behalf confirming the Government's decision to invoke article 50 of the treaty on European Union. The article 50 process is now under way and, in accordance with the wishes of the British people, the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union. This is an historic moment from which there can be no turning back. Britain is leaving the European Union. We will make our own decisions and our own laws, take control of the things that matter most to us, and take the opportunity to build a stronger, fairer Britain — a country that our children and grandchildren are proud to call home. That is our ambition and our opportunity, and it is what this Government are determined to do.

At moments such as these — great turning points in our national story — the choices that we make define the character of our nation. We can choose to say that the task ahead is too great. We can choose to turn our face to the past and believe that it cannot be done. Or we can look forward with optimism and hope, and believe in the enduring power of the British spirit. I choose to believe in Britain and that our best days lie ahead. I do so because I am confident that we have the vision and the plan to use this moment to build a better

Britain.

Leaving the European Union presents us with a unique opportunity. It is this generation's chance to shape a brighter future for our country — a chance to step back and ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be. My answer is clear: I want the United Kingdom to emerge from this period of change stronger, fairer, more united and more outward-looking than ever before. I want us to be a secure, prosperous, tolerant country, a magnet for international talent and a home to the pioneers and innovators who will shape the world ahead. I want us to be a truly global Britain: the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe, too — [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker** Order. I apologise for having to interrupt the Prime Minister. Mr Boswell, calm yourself. You must try to learn to behave in a statesmanlike fashion. That is your long-term goal — it may be very long-term, but it should be a goal. I say this to the House: you can study the record; I will want all colleagues to have the chance to question the Prime Minister. This is a very important statement, but it is reasonable to expect that she gets a courteous hearing, and that every other colleague then gets a courteous hearing.

**The Prime Minister** I want us to be a truly global Britain: the best friend and neighbour to our European partners, but a country that reaches beyond the borders of Europe, too — a country that goes out into the world to build relationships with old friends and new allies alike. That is why I have set out a clear and ambitious plan for the negotiations ahead. It

is a plan for a new deep and special partnership between Britain and the European Union — a partnership of values; a partnership of interests; a partnership based on co-operation in areas such as security and economic affairs; and a partnership that works in the best interests of the United Kingdom, the European Union and the wider world. Perhaps now, more than ever, the world needs the liberal, democratic values of Europe — [Laughter.]

Perhaps now, more than ever, the world needs the liberal, democratic values of Europe — values that the United Kingdom shares. That is why, although we are leaving the institutions of the European Union, we are not leaving Europe. We will remain a close friend and ally. We will be a committed partner. We will play our part to ensure that Europe is able to project its values and defend itself from security threats, and we will do all that we can to help the European Union to prosper and succeed.

In the letter that has been delivered to President Tusk today, copies of which I have placed in the Library of the House, I have been clear that the deep and special partnership that we seek is in the best interests of the United Kingdom and of the European Union, too. I have been clear that we will work constructively in a spirit of sincere co-operation to bring this partnership into being, and I have been clear that we should seek to agree the terms of this future partnership, alongside those of our withdrawal, within the next two years.

I am ambitious for Britain, and the objectives I have set out for these negotiations remain. We will



deliver certainty wherever possible so that business, the public sector and everybody else has as much clarity as we can provide as we move through the process. That is why tomorrow we will publish a White Paper confirming our plans to convert the acquis into British law so that everyone will know where they stand, and it is why I have been clear that the Government will put the final deal agreed between the UK and the EU to a vote in both Houses of Parliament before it comes into force.

We will take control of our own laws and bring an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Britain. Leaving the European Union will mean that our laws will be made in Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and those laws will be interpreted not by judges in Luxembourg, but in courts across this country.

We will strengthen the Union of the four nations that comprise our United Kingdom. We will negotiate as one United Kingdom, taking account of the specific interests of every nation and region of the UK. When it comes to the powers that we will take back from Europe, we will consult fully on which powers should reside in Westminster and which should be passed on to the devolved Administrations. But no decisions currently taken by the devolved Administrations will be removed from them. It is the expectation of the Government that the devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will see a significant increase in their decision-making power as a result of this process.

We want to maintain the common travel area with the Republic of Ireland. There should be no return to the borders of the past. We will control immigration so that we continue to attract the brightest and the best to work or study in Britain, but manage the process properly so that our immigration system serves the national interest. We will seek to guarantee the rights of EU citizens who are already living in Britain, and the rights of British nationals in other member states, as early as we can. This is set out very

clearly in the letter as an early priority for the talks ahead.

We will ensure that workers' rights are fully protected and maintained. Indeed, under my leadership, the Government will not only protect the rights of workers but build on them. We will pursue a bold and ambitious free trade agreement with the European Union that allows for the freest possible trade in goods and services between Britain and the EU's member states, that gives British companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets, and that lets European businesses do the same in Britain. European leaders have said many times that we cannot cherry-pick and remain members of the single market without accepting the four freedoms that are indivisible. We respect that position and, as accepting those freedoms is incompatible with the democratically expressed will of the British people, we will no longer be members of the single market.

We are going to make sure that we can strike trade agreements with countries from outside the European Union, too, because important though our trade with the EU is and will remain, it is clear that the UK needs to increase significantly its trade with the fastest growing export markets in the world. We hope to continue to collaborate with our European partners in the areas of science, education, research and technology so that the UK is one of the best places for science and innovation. We seek continued co-operation with our European partners in important areas such as crime, terrorism and foreign affairs. And it is our aim to deliver a smooth and orderly Brexit, reaching an agreement about our future partnership by the time the two-year article 50 process has concluded, and then moving into a phased process of implementation in which Britain, the EU institutions and member states prepare for the new arrangements that will exist between us.

We understand that there will be consequences for the UK of leaving the EU. We know that we will lose influence over the rules that affect the European economy. We know that

UK companies that trade with the EU will have to align with rules agreed by institutions of which we are no longer a part, just as we do in other overseas markets—we accept that. However, we approach these talks constructively, respectfully and in a spirit of sincere co-operation, for it is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that we should use this process to deliver our objectives in a fair and orderly manner. It is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that there should be as little disruption as possible. And it is in the interests of both the United Kingdom and the European Union that Europe should remain strong, prosperous and capable of projecting its values in the world.

At a time when the growth of global trade is slowing and there are signs that protectionist instincts are on the rise in many parts of the world, Europe has a responsibility to stand up for free trade in the interests of all our citizens. With Europe's security more fragile today than at any time since the end of the cold war, weakening our co-operation and failing to stand up for European values would be a costly mistake. Our vote to leave the EU was no rejection of the values that we share as fellow Europeans. As a European country, we will continue to play our part in promoting and supporting those values during the negotiations and once they are done.

We will continue to be reliable partners, willing allies and close friends. We want to continue to buy goods and services from the EU, and sell it ours. We want to trade with the EU as freely as possible, and work with one another to make sure we are all safer, more secure and more prosperous through continued friendship. Indeed, in an increasingly unstable world, we must continue to forge the closest possible security co-operation to keep our people safe. We face the same global threats from terrorism and extremism. That message was only reinforced by the abhorrent attack on Westminster bridge and this place last week, so there should be no reason why we should not agree a new deep and

special partnership between the UK and the EU that works for us all.

I know that this is a day of celebration for some and disappointment for others. The referendum last June was divisive at times. Not everyone shared the same point of view or voted the same way. The arguments on both sides were passionate. But when I sit around the negotiating table in the months ahead, I will represent every person in the United Kingdom: young and old; rich and poor; city, town, country, and all the villages and hamlets in between; and, yes, those EU nationals who have made this country their home. It is my fierce determination to get the right deal for every single person in this country for, as we face the opportunities ahead of us on this momentous journey, our shared values, interests and ambitions can—and must—bring us together.

We all want to see a Britain that is stronger than it is today. We all want a country that is fairer so that everyone has the chance to succeed. We all want a nation that is safe and secure for our children and grandchildren. We all want to live in a truly global Britain that gets out and builds relationships with old friends and new allies around the world. These are the ambitions of this Government's plan for Britain—ambitions that unite us, so that we are no longer defined by the vote we cast, but by our determination to make a success of the result.

We are one great Union of people and nations with a proud history and a bright future. Now that the decision to leave has been made and the process is under way, it is time to come together, for this great national moment needs a great national effort—an effort to shape a stronger future for Britain. So let us do so together. Let us come together and work together. Let us together choose to believe in Britain with optimism and hope, for if we do, we can make the most of the opportunities ahead. We can together make a success of this moment, and we can together build a stronger, fairer, better Britain—a Britain our children and grandchildren are proud to call home. I commend this statement to

the House.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)** I would like to thank the Prime Minister for an advance copy of her statement. Today, we embark on the country's most important negotiations in modern times. The British people made the decision to leave the European Union and Labour respects that decision. The next steps along this journey are the most crucial. If the Prime Minister is to unite the country, as she says she aims to do, the Government need to listen, consult and represent the whole country, not just the hard-line Tory ideologues on her own Benches.

Britain is going to change as a result of leaving the European Union; the question is how. There are Conservatives who want to use Brexit to turn this country into a low-wage tax haven. Labour is determined to invest in a high-skill, high-tech, high-wage future, and to rebuild and transform Britain so that no one and no community is left behind. The direction the Prime Minister is threatening to take this country in is both reckless and damaging, and Labour will not give this Government a free hand to use Brexit to attack rights and protections and to cut services, or to create a tax dodger's paradise.

Let me be clear: the Prime Minister says that no deal is better than a bad deal, but the reality is that no deal is a bad deal. Less than a year ago, the Treasury estimated that leaving the European Union on World Trade Organisation terms would lead to a 7.5% fall in our GDP and a £45 billion loss in tax receipts. Has the Treasury updated those figures or do they still stand? If they have been updated, can they be published? If not, what deal could be worse than those consequences of no deal? It would be a national failure of historic proportions if the Prime Minister came back from Brussels without having secured protection for jobs and living standards, so we will use every parliamentary opportunity to ensure the Government are held to account at every stage of the negotiations.

We all have an interest in ensuring the Prime Minister gets the best deal

for this country. To safeguard jobs and living standards, we do need full access to the single market. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union seems to agree on this. He stated in this House on 24 January that the Government's plan is:

“a comprehensive free trade agreement and a comprehensive customs agreement that will deliver the exact same benefits as we have”.—[Official Report, 24 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 169.]

That was what was pledged, so will the Prime Minister confirm today that she intends to deliver a trade and customs agreement with “the exact same benefits”? The same goes for protecting workers' rights and environmental standards, protecting Britain's nations and regions, protecting Britain's financial sector and services, and making sure there is no return to a hard border in Northern Ireland.

When does the Prime Minister expect to be able to guarantee the rights of all those EU nationals who live and work in this country, and make such a massive and welcome contribution to it, and of those British nationals who live in all parts of the European Union, including by guaranteeing that their UK pensions will not be frozen post-Brexit?

Brexit would be a huge task for any Government, yet so far this Government seem utterly complacent about the scale of the task ahead. Government Ministers cannot make up their minds about the real objective. The Foreign Secretary—he is in the Chamber today—said in October: “Our policy is having our cake and eating it. How apposite from the Foreign Secretary. Today, on BBC Radio 4, the Chancellor said: “we can't have our cake and eat it”. Maybe they should get together and talk about that.

At one level, those might seem like flippant exchanges from Ministers, but they do reflect serious differences about Britain's negotiating aims. The Government must speak with a united voice. However, the Foreign Secretary is the same man who promised our national health service £350 million pounds a week once we left the EU.

Now he believes that leaving the EU without a deal would be “perfectly okay”. It would not be perfectly okay—it would damage our economy and people’s living standards. Will the Prime Minister confirm that she rejects such complacency?

Labour has set out our tests for the Government’s Brexit negotiations, and we will use all means possible to make sure we hold them to their word on full access to the single market, on protecting Britain from being dragged into a race to the bottom, and on ensuring that our future relationship with the European Union is strong and co-operative—a relationship in which we can work together to bring prosperity and peace to our continent. If the Prime Minister can deliver a deal that meets our tests, that will be fine—we will back her. More than ever, Britain needs a Government that will deliver for the whole country, not just the few, and that is the ultimate test of the Brexit deal that the Prime Minister must now secure.

**The Prime Minister** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for saying that the Labour party respects the outcome of the referendum and the process that is now under way. He said that the next steps are the most crucial—the most important—and, of course, we now enter that formal process of negotiation.

It does seem, however, that the message that the right hon. Gentleman has sent today has not got through to all his Front Benchers. I understand that as the Cabinet met this morning to approve our course, his shadow International Trade Secretary tweeted a photo of me signing the A50 letter, claiming I was “signing away” our country’s future. I am afraid that that is what we see all too often from Labour: talking down Britain; desperate for the negotiations to fail; and out of touch with ordinary working people.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the tests—I will come on to those—and asked me specifically about EU nationals. I expressly referred to that in the letter to President Tusk and made it clear that I would hope that we could deal with this issue of EU nationals

here and UK nationals in other member states at as early a stage as possible in the negotiations. As I have said in this House before, I believe that there is good will on both sides to do that.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the tests that the Labour party has set out for the negotiations. I have been looking at those tests because, actually, there are principles that the Government have, time and time again, said we are determined to meet. He asks if the final deal will ensure a strong and collaborative future relationship with the EU. Yes, and in my letter to President Tusk, that is exactly what I set out our intentions to be. Will the deal deliver the same benefits we currently have as a member of the single market and the customs union? We have been clear that we want to get the best possible deal, and free and frictionless trade. Will the deal protect national security and our capacity to tackle cross-border crime? Yes. Will the deal deliver for all regions and nations of the UK? We have been very clear that we are taking all nations and regions into account, as I say in the letter to President Tusk. As I said during Prime Minister’s questions, we expect that, as powers are repatriated, the devolved Administrations will see a significant increase in their decision making.

The right hon. Gentleman’s fifth test is: will the deal defend rights and protections and prevent a race to the bottom? We have been very clear that workers’ rights will be protected—they are not up for negotiation under this Government. Perhaps he should listen to his own Mayor of London, who has said:

“to give credit to the government, I don’t think they want to weaken workers’ rights...there’s been some anxiety...I’ve seen no evidence from the conversations I’ve had with senior members of the government that that’s their aspiration or their intention or something they want to do.”

But the Labour party has set out a sixth test that I do not think the right hon. Gentleman mentioned specifically, and perhaps that is because of the confusion in the Labour party. The

sixth test is, “Will the deal ensure fair management of migration?” What we see on that is a confused picture from the Labour party. The shadow Home Secretary says that freedom of movement is a worker’s right, and the right hon. Gentleman himself said:

“Labour is not wedded to freedom of movement for EU citizens as a point of principle, but I don’t want that to be misinterpreted, nor do we rule it out.”

Little wonder that nobody has any idea of the Labour party’s position on that issue.

As I said earlier, on today of all days we should be coming together. We should be accepting the ambition for our country for the future. We should not be talking down the negotiations as the right hon. Gentleman does. We should set our ambition, our optimism and our determination to get the best possible deal for everybody in the United Kingdom.

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*struggle that electrifies and frightens London*”. However, *wallstreetitalia* ran a long article examining the possible financial consequences of the UK exit with greater objectivity. Although their visual header, of a series of stars and a Euro in pieces, appeared to have been infected by Trumpish anti Euro-ism. They stated that the EU won’t concede free-trade “with London”. They do believe that a *hard-Brexit* (a new euro-phrase) will not be to the benefit of the UK’s finance and fintech industries. There were also two articles about Milan positioning itself as The finance City of Europe – a building has been identified already.

Who knows where we go from here? Particularly as in Nicola Sturgeon’s words, in *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, “We are not a United Kingdom”. Finally, from the *SUN* headline: “DOVER AND OUT”.



# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## LA BREXIT

Orecchiette read the web versions of all the serious Italian press on 29 March 2017: “*La Brexit*” day.

There were other pressing domestic issues but *La Brexit* received extensive coverage; the Italian media is less parochial than in the UK. *La Repubblica* streamed the 29 March Commons debate live, and the sparse attendance was a shameful response to their interest. The website runs a daily selection of videos and their first four covered Brexit. One illustrated the 2 year exit timetable with some predictable visuals. However, there were frequent juxtapositions of the chambers of The House of Commons and The EU, making the point that the UK’s looked antediluvian while the other appeared purposeful and organised. The next video didn’t help this impression; as it was Lord Fowler’s speech from the grand and robed House of Lords.

The fourth video was even more pointed. A clip of Theresa May laughing during one of the Wednesday PM’s Questions in the Commons had been edited to make her look as if she was shaking manically with hysterical laughter. It was interspersed with laughing cartoon characters, ending with a cadaverous skull in a big sinister black cape and headlined: “*The diabolical laugh of Theresa May*”.

*La Repubblica* also showed the front pages of eleven UK papers for 29 March. The *Guardian*’s leader (also reprinted by *huffingtonpost.it*) showed a jigsaw map of Europe. The UK, including Northern Ireland’s pieces had been removed and in the white space was “*Today Britain steps into the unknown*”. The second front page was *The Sun* and superimposed on Dover’s white cliffs was “*SEE EU LATER*”. *The Express*, front page number 10, was also shown being waved by Farage in the lead article in *huffingtonpost.it*. That was headed: “*Nigel Farage enjoys and toasts Brexit*”.

*La Stampa* illustrated an article about worried resident Italians in London with a display of plastic Big Bens being sold off cheaply: SPECIAL OFFER: WAS £25 – NOW £12.99. There were two articles (*Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*) about Sarah Vine’s *Mail* article on May and Sturgeon’s legs - in the words of *Corriere* the “*sexist gaffe*”. It was pointed out that the Italian press dealt effectively with backward sexism like this and there was disbelief that it had been written by another woman. *La Repubblica* ran as a reprise the Twitter post showing Cameron, Corbyn and Gove in shorts plus a grossly overweight, pink flowered bottom half of buffoon Boris Johnson.

There was also some well aimed verbal irony. *Corriere della Sera*’s headline ran “*The letter was delivered, Brexit was initiated. May: ‘it is the moment to stand united’*”. Guido Petrangelli and Roberto Adriani, Senior Partner at Heritage House wrote about the 26 March Treaty of Rome London march in *Huffingtonpost.it*. They made the remarkable and significant point that no other European country had made such a strong demonstration in Europe’s support. That piece was illustrated with an image of Theresa May in front of a banner saying “*A Country that works for Everyone*”. It was amusing to see another headline mentioning the curvature of bananas – one of the myths trumpeted by the anti-EU tabloid press.

The images all speak forcibly, making points that couldn’t be expressed in words. The UK was being shown as confident, arrogant, even naive, and certainly insensitively unaware of its image within Europe. The reporting on 29 March was peppered with May’s phrases such as: “*We won’t look back, it is an opportunity for us*”, “*We leave the Union, not European Values*”. Invariably they were followed up by phrases such as: “*Merkel and Holland:*

*‘It will be sad for the British’* (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*), “*The EU won’t be generous with London: no free market and a quick transition*” (*Corriere della Sera*) and from the financial pages of *La Repubblica*: “*The bill for Brexit - the exit from the EU will be worse for London than the EU*”. This quote was illustrated by an unfortunate photo of the top half of Theresa May’s head that looked as if she was sinking under a sheet of water.

Obviously the Italian press wants to focus on itself in a positive light. However there will be many uncertainties and, as the phrase goes, many unknown unknowns. *Il Fatto Quotidiano* also ran a timetable for Brexit entitled: “*Stages of the Divorce*” noting the two looming political uncertainties that will impact on the final settlement. These are the French elections on 23 April (and the likely second vote on 7 May), then the German elections on 24 September. On a personal level the Italians in London that *La Stampa* interviewed were saying that there was a climate of uncertainty and they don’t know what will happen. They were trying to keep calm. The feeling is general.

The financial press has a sharper focus. There were two references to Ryan Air who are threatening not to fly to the UK if the current Open Skies agreement doesn’t continue. *La Stampa* ran an article on the 28 March that itemised the current contributions of 9 EU countries to the EU and how the exit of the UK and its E20,522 billion would decrease available funds. Italy would be expected to have to increase its payments by 1.3 billion euros. It was a short piece, with limited qualification, but it would have been able to act as a frightener for budget-limited Italy and its citizens.

*La Stampa* headed a video with “*BREXIT: today is the start of the*

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