

Labour Affairs

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Brexit Blues

As each day passes, Theresa May's gamble on a landside majority in June's general election looks more and more like a Titanic disaster. She failed to get the mandate she wanted to strengthen her hand in the Brexit negotiations. She even lost the pre-election majority she had. Consequently, May and her Brexit ministers, shocked by the election result, are floundering like fish out of water. It is fourteen months since the June 2016 referendum resulted in an unexpected vote to leave the EU. Yet no progress has been made with the EU's three pre-trade negotiations demands.

The divorce bill of some £36bn, the reciprocal rights of EU citizens in the UK and Britons living in other EU countries, and the question of a hard or soft border between the north and south of Ireland, have still to be resolved. Without a resolution on these no progress can be made on the UK's stance on the customs union and the single market. Thus trade deals between the UK and the EU and between the UK and the rest of the world would be dangerously delayed.

Boris Johnson's riposte to the EU that it can "go whistle" for its money may have gelled with leave voters, but he knows that the bill will have to be paid. And May's dithering over citizens' rights has needlessly delayed an acceptable mutual agreement. The question of the border between the north and south of Ireland could have been settled quickly, but May and her government are in a dilemma over a hard or soft border. May is inclined towards a soft border. But once the UK leaves the EU a soft or open border would present a number of problems for the Irish and UK governments. There would be a real risk of

undocumented EU migrants entering the UK and tariff-free goods crossing the border from north to south and exported to other EU countries.

With no progress on these matters it is difficult to see how everything can be wrapped up by the March 2019 deadline. Government ministers have admitted as much. Hence the calls for a transitional deal covering a period of up to four years once the UK leaves the EU. But there is incoherence and a lack of clarity in the government's position on this, as on other matters. It is acting as if it wants the negotiations to collapse. Playing a political game with the EU, which the government can then blame for its failure to get the "best possible deal" for the UK. Theresa May's "no deal is better than a bad deal" is an indication that the government is prepared to walk away from the talks. If this happens UK business will be hit badly and a huge hole will appear in May's plans for "an economy that works for all."

This can be avoided, but only if the government relents on its hard Brexit stance. There are signs that this is happening. Brexit ministers have acknowledged that EU migration, for example, will continue for a further four years once the UK leaves. And Theresa May, in spite of her determination to free the UK from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, has indicated that it will still have a role to play for an interim period post-March 2019. Compromises such as these are the result of the UK's ill-preparedness and consequent weak position vis-a-vis its EU counterparts.

If it presents a united front, Labour can benefit from the government's indecisiveness. In a clear

break from its previous position of facing both ways, Labour is now committed to the UK remaining a member of the customs union and the single market during the transitional period. Under a Labour government beyond March 2019 the UK would continue to accept free movement of Labour, remain under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, and pay into the EU budget. This shift in policy is clearly designed to diminish the negative impact on the economy. At the same time it will allow business to adjust to the inevitable changes that will follow the UK's final departure from the EU.

The government have published a number of position papers on a range of EU related issues. The papers attempt to deal with some of the thorny questions arising from the UK's exit from the EU. They are for internal Tory party and UK consumption only and have been heavily criticised for their shallowness and wishful thinking. Consequently, doubt must be cast on whether the government is really softening its stance or simply attempting to wrongfoot Brussels with half-baked suggestions.

One of the position papers outlining the government's stance on a range of issues proposes a (temporary) customs union allowing the transit of goods across borders during the transitional period. But cracks in the government's position quickly appeared. In a joint statement Chancellor Philip Hammond and Environment Secretary Liam Fox ruled this out. They argued that the UK will not remain in

the customs union or the single market after March 2019.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell says the Tories cannot blame Brexit for the state of the economy. He is right. But nor can they blame the EU. Seven years of austerity with low investment and poor productivity have resulted in the UK being at the bottom of the 28-nation EU growth league. Unemployment may have fallen but wages have failed to keep pace with prices. Families are worse off now than they were before the 2008 financial crash. The economy is in a precarious state. If the Brexit talks collapse without a deal, the UK could fall off the proverbial cliff edge.

This dire prospect has led to a chorus of voices for a second referendum. Although some, including the Liberal democrats simply refuse to accept the vote to leave. Now Vernon Bogdanor, professor of government at King's College, London, and former Labour minister David Miliband have added their support to the second referendum lobby. And there are those within the Labour party who also support a second vote. Corbyn and Labour must stand firm against this. The decision to leave the EU, rightly or wrongly, has been made. A second referendum would be seen as parliament accusing the people of making the wrong decision in June 2016 and asking them to think again. Labour's support for this would deeply damage its reputation as the party of working people.

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Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

STATEMENT BY MR.

BALFOUR. 10 January 1918

Mr. R. MACDONALD asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the Government has any official diplomatic means of communication with the Council of People's Commissioners which is the Government of Russia; whether any diplomatic official has been sent to the British Embassy at Petrograd; whether he is exercising the usual privileges of an Ambassador as regards couriers and other means of communication; and whether he is yet in a position to make any statement regarding the recognition of the Government at Petrograd?

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1) whether Constantine Nabokoff is still in communication with the Foreign Office as in October, 1917; whether he will state the exact diplomatic relations existing with Russia; (2) whether M. Litvinoff, Russian Plenipotentiary in London, is recognised in any official capacity by the Government; if not, whether the Government has any channel of official communication with the Russian Government; what is that channel; (3) whether it is due to any decision of the War Cabinet that M. Litvinoff, Russian Plenipotentiary in London, is not allowed to receive telegrams from Russia; that his cables to Russia are held up; and that he is not allowed the usual courtesies given to other international representatives; and whether M. Litvinoff will now be allowed the facilities needed by his accredited mission to the British nation?

Mr. BALFOUR The question of the hon. Member for Leicester is the first of a series of four questions on the subject of our diplomatic relations with the Administration at Petrograd, and a single answer

will perhaps suffice. We have not recognised that Administration as being de facto or de jure the Government of the Russian people, but we carry on necessary business in an unofficial manner through an agent acting under the direction of our Embassy at Petrograd. The Bolshevik Administration have appointed M. Litvinoff as their representative in London, and we are about to establish similar unofficial relations with him. M. Nabokoff, who was the Chargé d'Affaires under the late Republican Russian Government, will presumably remain in London until he is either confirmed or superseded in his post by a Government recognised as representing the Russian people. The present arrangement is obviously both irregular and transitory. Though it cannot be fitted into any customary diplomatic framework, it is, in our opinion, the best that can be devised to meet the necessities of the moment.

Mr. KING Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us exactly the position of M. Nabokoff; whether he will be able to tender communications, or even advice, to His Majesty's Government, although he has been officially superseded by the authorities now in power?

Mr. BALFOUR I cannot say that he has been officially superseded, but I do not think I can really add anything to the statement in the answer, which I attempted to make clear, and which I think was clear.

Mr. KING In view of the attempt being made by the party to which M. Nabokoff belongs to foster revolt against the present authorities in

Petrograd, can the right hon. Gentleman not make it clear that we have no part with persons who are plotting against the existing power in Russia?

Mr. BALFOUR I cannot add anything.

Mr. LYNCH Will the right hon. Gentleman endeavour to follow the lead given by President Wilson, and the Government cultivate good relations with this Government, which, whether we wish it or not, is, de facto, ruling Russia? May I ask —

Mr. SPEAKER The right hon. Gentleman has said that he can add nothing to his answer.

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the statement that Mr. George Tchitcherine was sent back to Russia at the personal request of Mr. Trotsky was made on the authority of the Foreign Office; if so, by what channel was this personal request of Mr. Trotsky communicated; whether any subsequent communications have been received from him; and whether such communications have been returned to him simply acknowledged or diplomatically considered?

Mr. BALFOUR The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative. The release of Mr. Tchitcherine was decided on the recommendation of His Majesty's Ambassador at Petrograd, who had been informed by an official attached to the Embassy of the attitude adopted by Mr. Trotsky in the matter. As far as I am aware, Mr. Trotsky has not, since the early days of his assumption of office, endeavoured to open diplomatic intercourse with His

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

Majesty's Embassy in Petrograd.

Mr. KING Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the first part of the answer, denying that Mr. Tchitcherine was sent back at the personal request of Mr. Trotsky, is in direct opposition to the information given to Mr. Tchitcherine himself by the Home Office?

Mr. BALFOUR I have said that the statement was not made on the authority of the Foreign Office.

Mr. KING asked the Prime Minister on what date and on what grounds the decision was taken to return to Russia Mr. George Tchitcherine, Mr. Peter Petroff, and Mrs. Petroff?

Mr. BALFOUR I have no further statement to make on the subject.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE asked the Secretary for Scotland what arrangements have now been made to reimburse parishes in Scotland for the cost of maintaining the dependants of Russian subjects who have returned to Russia under the recent convention?

The SECRETARY for SCOTLAND (Mr. Munro) I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for West Fife on the 20th December. The whole cost of maintaining the dependants of Russian subjects is reimbursed to parish councils from public funds.

RUSSIA. 17 January 1918

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether Sir George Buchanan and the British Embassy in Petrograd were subject to any threats, insults, dangers, or other indignities during the last two months of his stay in Petrograd; and whether he can make a reassuring statement on the subject?

Mr. BALFOUR If the hon. Member desires information on this subject perhaps he will be good enough to postpone his question until Sir G. Buchanan has returned to this country and I have had an opportunity of

consulting him.

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he is aware that, after Mr. Trotsky's release from a German prisoners' camp at Halifax, Sir George Buchanan in Petrograd repeated the accusation against Mr. Trotsky of being a German agent; and whether, in order to remove any ground for recrimination, he will now instruct Sir George Buchanan to apologise to Mr. Trotsky for this affront?

Mr. BALFOUR The answer to both parts of the question is in the negative.

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he is aware that after the Russian revolution Mr. Trotsky was arrested by British authorities and placed in a camp with German prisoners at Halifax; that he was charged with being a German agent; and whether, in order to remove any ground for suspicion will he now instruct our Ambassador or Chargé d' Affaires in Petrograd to convey to Mr. Trotsky the British Government's regret for this incident?

Mr. BALFOUR Mr. Trotsky was detained at Halifax on suspicion of being a German agent. The answer to the last part of the question is in the negative.

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he is aware that Sir George Buchanan on his way home gave an interview at Petrograd stating that the British Government would not recognise the present Russian government; and whether this statement of policy was made at the direction of the War Cabinet on Instructions from the Foreign Office or upon Sir George Buchanan's own initiative?

Mr. BALFOUR I am not aware that Sir G. Buchanan made any such statement.

Mr. KING asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, before Sir George Buchanan left

Petrograd, he made arrangements that the diplomatic representatives of any other Power should look after the interests of British subjects in Russia?

Mr. BALFOUR No, Sir. The Counsellor and other members of the staff of the Embassy are still in Petrograd, and Mr. Lindley is in charge of British interests.

Mr. TREVELYAN asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether consignments of food for the population of Russia, which had already reached Archangel, have recently been shipped back by orders of the British Government, and what the reasons are for this step?

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the MINISTRY of BLOCKADE (Commander Leverton Harris) The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative; the second part, therefore, does not arise.

RUSSIA. 23 January 1918

Mr. KING asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he is aware that when M. Trotsky, the present Foreign Minister of Russia, was returning to Russia after the Revolution of March, 1916, his ship was stopped by a British war vessel and M. Trotsky was taken prisoner and charged with being a German agent; on whose instruction was this action taken; and whether he will arrange to remove any possibility of ill-will by requesting the officer in command of this British war vessel to offer his regrets to M. Trotsky?

The PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY to the ADMIRALTY (Dr. Macnamara) The vessel in which M. Trotsky left the United States called at Halifax, where M. Trotsky and others were detained, pending inquiries as to wishes of the Russian Government, which were immediately met. The remainder of the question does not arise.

Mr. OUTHWAITE Is it not a fact

that M. Trotsky was sentenced by a Russian Court to six months' imprisonment for revolutionary action, and had to leave Russia on that account? Is he likely to have any sympathy with Germany?

Mr. LYNCH By having M. Trotsky arrested, were you not merely making yourself the cat's-paw of the Czar?

Dr. MACNAMARA No!

Mr. LYNCH Yes, you were!

Mr. KING Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the last part of my question, that it is very desirable to be agreeable and polite to those who have high authority and great power in the world?

Mr. LYNCH asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in order to dispel suspicions created by various acts of the Government that it is less favourable to the Republican regime now established in Russia than to the old autocratic government of the Czar, he will take steps to cultivate sympathetic relations with the de facto rulers representing the Republic from stage to stage, and discourage attempts on the part of British institutions to afford help or to honour by distinctions the enemies of the Russian Republic?

The SECRETARY of STATE for FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Mr. Balfour) There is not, and never has been, any ground whatever for the suspicions which the hon. Gentleman supposes to exist. I have not the slightest idea to what the suggestion contained in the last clause refers.

Mr. OUTHWAITE Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the report issued yesterday that the Government are making representations to the Revolutionary Government on behalf of British mining syndicates whose land has been confiscated, and would they do that in respect to any other Government than a revolutionary one?

Mr. BALFOUR Certainly ! I do not know the facts, and I have not

seen the report; but if British property is confiscated in any country it would be within the sphere of the Foreign Office to make representations.

Mr. OUTHWAITE Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is only carrying out the policy of the conscription of capital, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has advocated, in the form of the land policy of the Prime Minister?

Mr. BALFOUR I do not see the relevancy of that suggestion.

Mr. OUTHWAITE asked the Prime Minister whether his attention has been called to the attacks made upon the Russian revolutionary government at the meetings of Anglo-Russian syndicates as a result of the abolition of private property in land; and will he take steps to assure the Russian people that these attacks do not reflect public opinion in this country?

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law) I have no knowledge of these attacks, but in any case, I do not see why at the present moment I should express an opinion on any of the Russian schemes of land legislation.

Mr. OUTHWAITE Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it was reported Yesterday in the Press that the British Government has made representations in Petrograd as regards the expropriation of land and capital? If the Government has taken action, cannot the right hon. Gentleman make a statement?

Mr. BONAR LAW I did not see the statement referred to.

Mr. KING asked whether Colonel Poole and the members of the Russian military mission are still in Russia; and, if so, whether they will be recalled?

Mr. BONAR LAW There is no present intention of removing the Mission.

Mr. KING Can the right hon. Gentleman say what service they can now perform in view of the military

position in Russia and our attitude in not supplying them with any more munitions?

Mr. BONAR LAW I hardly think it would be useful to make a statement.

Mr. KING Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether they are doing useful work at present?

RUSSIA. 28 January 1918

Mr. LYNCH asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in view of the possibility that Russia may still play an important military part in the war, and considering also the danger that a policy of ill-will may turn that fighting force against one or other of the Allies, and in face of the fact also that in the visit of Ambassadors and Ministers to M. Lenin the absence of a British representative was conspicuous, he will now arrange for a special Embassy to Petrograd composed of distinguished men in sympathy with Republican ideals, and make all arrangements for the appointment of an Ambassador to succeed Sir George Buchanan?

The SECRETARY of STATE for FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Mr. Balfour) The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is in the negative. Let me add that he is utterly mistaken in supposing that there is any policy of "ill-will" to Russia or Russians.

Mr. LYNCH May I ask the right hon. Gentleman if in this question he will assert his own personality more, and rise out of the grooves of a hopeless Foreign Office?

Mr. OUTHWAITE Does the right hon. Gentleman disagree with the action of the French Government, whose Foreign Minister has stigmatised the Russian Government as a set of usurpers with whom he has nothing to do?

Mr. BALFOUR I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should put that question to the French Minister.

Mr. OUTHWAITE

I wish I could.

Mr. LYNCH asked the Home Secretary whether he exercises any powers of censorship over the telegrams arriving from foreign parts or over other communications concerning the actions of the present Russian Government?

The SECRETARY of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT (Sir George Cave) All telegrams from abroad have been since the beginning of the War, and still are, subject to censorship.

Mr. LYNCH Is it correct to say that whereas his Department keeps back telegrams from M. Trotsky, yet it allows currency to be given to the wildest rumours detrimental to the present rulers of Russia?

Sir G. CAVE I do not know anything about that.

BRITISH SOCIALIST PARTY.
22 January 1918

Mr. TREVELYAN (by Private Notice) asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the premises of the British Socialist party were raided by agents of Scotland Yard on Thursday night, and a supply of leaflets taken away which were intended for distribution to the delegates at the Labour Conference in Nottingham, containing the views of the British Socialist party as to the policy which Labour ought to pursue at this juncture, and also a message from M. Litvinoff, representative of the Russian Government, to the workers of Great Britain; whether he will promptly return these leaflets, in order that a section of British Labour may not be deprived of its ordinary right of putting its views before colleagues in print, and in order that the Russian representative may be allowed to address the British working class in what words he pleases without the interference of the Government?

The SECRETARY of STATE for the HOME DEPARTMENT (Sir G. Cave) It is a fact that the premises of the British Socialist party were entered by the police on the date named, and a number of copies of a leaflet

of the nature described were seized. I am advised that the publication of this leaflet, which contains gross misrepresentations of the attitude of the British Government towards the Russian people, and incitements calculated to lead to civil strife and the defeat of our arms, is a clear breach of the Regulations for the Defence of the Realm, and the question of prosecution is being considered. In the meanwhile I cannot direct the return of the documents seized. I may add that I do not accept the suggestion of the hon. Member that a person who claims to be the representative of a foreign Government is at liberty to engage in propaganda in this country as he pleases without the interference of His Majesty's Government. No such liberty is allowed either to the authorised representative of a foreign Government or to an alien resident here and not occupying that position.

Mr. CHANCELLOR Will the Home Secretary reconsider his decision, and will he place the British Labour party on the same footing as the smaller body? The right hon. Gentleman said yesterday that he had decided not to take any action against the Labour party for having broken Regulation 27 c. Will he put these two parties on one footing in regard to this matter, or does he differentiate between them because he is afraid of one and he is not afraid of the other?

Sir G. CAVE No. The hon. Gentleman does not represent me fairly. I said that the manifesto of the British Labour party was a technical breach of Regulation 27 c, but not of substantial Regulations like 37 and 42. The leaflet

in question is a serious breach of a substantial Regulation.

Mr. CHANCELLOR Has not there been a definite breach of the law, and is the law to be broken by some people without a prosecution, while other people are to be prosecuted?

Sir G. CAVE I said very carefully yesterday that I thought there had been a breach of 27 c. There was the same breach in this case, and if there had been nothing more I would not have taken the serious steps which I have taken.

Mr. D. MASON Will the right hon. Gentleman inform the House of the contents?

REFERENDUM,
IRELAND. 23 January 1918

Mr. BYRNE asked the Prime Minister whether he is aware that a referendum is at present being taken in Ireland for the purpose of ascertaining the views of the Irish people as to the future government of that country, and with a view to having these views represented at the Peace Conference; and whether Civil servants are free to record their opinions on the questions involved through this referendum?

The CHIEF SECRETARY FOR IRELAND (Mr. Duke) I understand that a memorial is being circulated of which the text is in these words: We appeal to the Peace Congress to secure the establishment of Ireland as an independent State. It is obvious that such a document could not be signed by any loyal servant of the Crown

DID YOU PACK THIS BOMBER YOURSELF

He restricts Muslims from half a dozen
nations
from entering the USA
but it's damnation
to passports
for his aerial bombers
sent to flay
those whom he purports
will slay

Wilson John Haire.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



Tax cuts

The Macron government is continuing with its announced policy to make France attractive to business, reduce unemployment as a result, and 'balance the books' as required by the EU.

This 'balancing the books' involves reducing costs by reducing public expenditure on the one hand, but also on the other hand reducing public and business tax contributions. You get less public service, but you have more money in your bank account with which to buy what you need, goes the theory. Business pays less tax and smaller social security contributions, so that they can employ more people. A softening of unemployment protection helps that process too.

How people will react to this is not clear. The tax reforms for households are complex, gradually introduced and means tested, so any reduction won't be felt immediately. On the other hand, the ending of the wealth tax on capital seems a clear hand out to the best off.

Plans to cut 10 billion euros in tax in 2018.

The government is gradually abolishing one local government tax, as well as gradually lowering unemployment and sickness contributions and also changing the way tax is paid on wealth.

The Tax on wealth up to now taxed both landed property and financial property (your yacht/private jet/art collection were and are left out). At the moment 343,000 households pay the Wealth Tax.

Now only land property will be taxed, the idea being to encourage the wealthy to use their bonds and shares for investments. The tax was

called 'Solidarity Wealth Tax' (*Impôt Solidarité sur la Fortune*, 'ISF'). It would now be known as a Land Tax.

Income from capital (other than shares and bonds) will be taxed on a flat rate basis, the so-called 'flat tax' of 30%, which is another reduction for the best off, again with the trade-off that they will invest their increased income in job creating activities. The local government tax to be cut is called the '*taxe d'habitation*' and it will be abolished except for the 20% richest gradually over three years.

The question is, naturally, since social security and local authorities still need financing, how will the shortfall be made up? This is another reason why tax cuts for households won't necessarily create a feeling of improved income: the government will increase another tax, the so-called CSG or Generalised Social Contribution. The idea presumably is that on your pay slip, when you look at the list of deductions, there will be one line less, or the amount will be lower, hurray, but the next line will show an increase. Local authorities will receive funds directly from the government, i.e. from central taxes.

Continued attack on local authorities

The lowest level of local authorities, the '*commune*' that is, town or village, used to raise 3 taxes, roughly from business, land and households. This ensured its autonomy and its links with the population. All this has been eroded over the years. *Communes* lost the business tax in 2010, and they are now losing the tax on 'households'. The shortfall will be made up by the state, up to a point. It is a way of reducing the spending capacity of

the commune. It also weakens the link between the authority and its population. The war against local authorities as political entities that both represent the state and represent the local population is continually being waged. As Simon Jenkins said in 2008 on that subject: "I am not starry eyed about the vigour of local democracy abroad. It is messy, bureaucratic and often corrupt. But it appears to yield communities more able to discipline themselves and their young, and more satisfied at the delivery of their public services." Without local government, "There is nothing between the individual or family unit on the one hand and the central state on the other." De Tocqueville describes this atomised society, where "every man is a stranger to the destiny of others. He is beside his fellow citizens but does not see them." (Guardian 27.2.08)

But individualism is the goal and the aim of a modern government. There must be nothing between the individual and the state, and anything that supported the individual, be it union or local council, must be reduced and weakened. This policy is pursued relentlessly, even though the social advantages of having an elected mayor and municipal council are obvious. Let us take two examples.

Role of the Mayor

In July 2016 a priest was assassinated while conducting mass in his parish church, by two young followers of IS. This caused huge distress in France and in the little town directly affected. Both then and this year during ceremonies of commemoration, an important person representing the local population was interviewed in the media as a matter of course, and spoke

movingly as leader and representative of the population: it was the Mayor. He happens to be a Communist, but that is mentioned in passing. What is important is his presence in the circumstances.

Macron is continuing the fight to create politicians who have no local power base by insisting on the end of the 'double mandate' i.e., you cannot be elected to both a national and regional seat. However until that great impoverishment and weakening of the political personnel (and of local authorities) has been achieved, he has to make do with politicians from the old system, people who learnt politics in real life, at local level, not just as aides to parliamentarians.

When he was elected, Macron chose various ministers from all parties and none, and chose as Prime Minister someone who was known as capable and experienced because he was Mayor of a large town: Edouard Philippe, mayor of Le Havre.

Children, the media tell the truth!

That was the theme of a series of programmes on State radio station *France Inter* this summer. Its journalists had gone into schools over the year and in collaboration with teachers initiated 13 and 14-year-olds from deprived areas to the difficulties of report making on the radio.

One group made a programme about Le Havre, and went there to interview fishermen and workers from the container port. The journalists listened to the reports the pupils had completed, and challenged every bit of waffle, which created an unusual experience for the listening public used to vague use of words on the part of interviewers and interviewees on *France Inter*. Then the journalists asked: 'What have you learnt this year about the job of journalist?' One pupil answering 'They tell the truth, if they can' was challenged: 'What do you mean, 'If they can??!!'' and had to rephrase: "Journalists tell the truth".

Part of the programme concerned the mayor of Le Havre, the now Prime Minister. He had said: "Jobs are more important than the environment." Pupils were asked about this in the programme. 'NO! the environment is more important.' 'Are you not worried about getting a job?' 'Yes I am, perhaps the Prime Minister is right.' It was rare to have that realistic level of debate on radio on that subject.

The forthcoming election to the Senate.

The Senate represents local authorities, communes, départements and regions. It is elected not by universal suffrage but by '*grands électeurs*' who are taken from local authorities by a complicated system; to give just one example, in a *commune* of less than 500 inhabitants the local council meets and elects one delegate, who will be their *grand électeur*. The Senate is renewed by half every three years. Macron is slightly handicapped here in not having '*grands électeurs*' from his own party (*La République en Marche*, LRM) since that party didn't exist last year. He needs a 3/5 majority of the Congress (both houses together) to make constitutional changes, this is what hangs on these

elections, in September.

The French are not totally unconvinced there is a need to 'balance the books' and make France attractive to business by making it easier to sack people and by giving the wealthy more money supposedly to spend on job creation. On the other hand, they are not totally convinced either. There will be demonstrations in September by those who are convinced Macron's way is the wrong way.

GAZA CITY

Be reminded of Israeli atrocities
 don't let the years ease the pain
 through your liberal generosity
 though you watched it
 through glass
 without the putrid smell
 via the box of the mass
 the nostrils not blocked
 from dust berserk
 from enemy incoming
 shells
 nor do you feel the heat
 from the burning rubble
 but from under it
 you heard the cries
 didn't see six blackened bodies
 a mother and baby welded together
 a father smothered by his three young sons
 in panic
 lies
 on tin stretchers
 one alive
 a nine year old girl legs flailing
 unconscious trying to
 run
 then silence
 she thinks she dies
 they who did it
 plead anti-Semitism
 plead Holocaust
 take out writs
 plead military hardware
 from the land
 of burger and fries

Wilson John Haire

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

It's the Mixed Economy, Stupid

"The long-term structural defects that brought us the Great Recession and lackluster recovery haven't gone anywhere... Our economy's structural problems have plagued the post-2008 recovery...

"America still hasn't recovered the output it was on pace to produce before the last recession — a failure without precedent in the postwar era.

"Between 1947 and 2007, the American economy fell into recession ten times. During each of these downturns, America's GDP — the total value of goods and services produced by the economy — dipped far below the level it had been on pace to reach before the hard times set in.

"But none of those recessions permanently reduced our economy's productive capacity. And so, when the recovery arrived, America always enjoyed a period of accelerated growth that allowed it to reach — and exceed — its pre-recession potential.

"Eight years after the Great Recession ended, we've yet to catch up. In fact, growth rates in the recovery's first years were actually below the pre-crisis average... We've yet to enjoy a genuine boom. As a result, the gap between our GDP and the level that we were on pace to achieve before the crisis is larger today than it was in 2010."¹

What matters more is that government intervention after the 2008 crisis has been fine-tuned to keep the wealth

wealthy. To dump suffering on the middle class, as well as the poor. Or you can think it an amazing coincidence that it benefited the people who have dominated the USA since the 1980s. Who helped create New Labour and the Clinton Democrats, to give us more of the same when the public wanted a change. The rich have been well looked after.² They have used privately-owned media and political donations to get governments elected that look after the rich at the expense of the general public.

But how was this possible?

From the 1940s to the 1970s, the dominant view was that the West was no longer capitalist. That it had become something quite different, a Mixed Economy. Foolishly, the left mostly rejected this. Put vast efforts into convincing people that what they had was still Wicked Old Capitalism. Thatcher and Reagan agreed that it was 'Wicked Old Capitalism'. Or rather, Virtuous Old Capitalism that socialist foolishness had burdened and damaged. The Mixed Economy never in fact ended. But in the West it became a kind of 'Secret Vice': the squalid reality behind the rhetoric of Imaginary Capitalism.

This was never the case in the Asian Tigers, nor in People's China when it opened up after Mao. But rather than being noted as proof of the merits of a Mixed Economy, it gets sneered at as Crony Capitalism.³ Crony

capitalism looks after the general public, so that they will tolerate its corruption. The New Right persuaded the public that pure market forces would be honest, decent and good.

Less and less people now believe this. But too many Britons still see Big Government as the problem. In the USA, this is the dominant view.⁴ The USA is a rich country that makes itself unhappy by believing in greedy freedoms. 'Substance abuse' including alcoholism is widespread among people who once were content with much less.⁵ If their Christianity were more serious, they would know better. Time to tell people that they have been fooled by sophisticated propaganda. Conned by a conservative pose by those who just looked after the rich.

And in China...

Economic experts on China:

China is succeeding, because it abandoned socialism for capitalism.

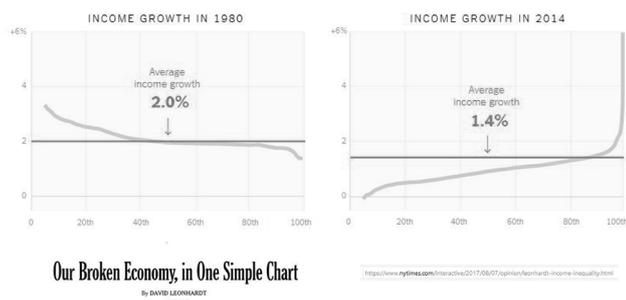
China faces looming disaster, because it has *not* abandoned socialism.

How they can believe both of these things is unclear. If indeed they believe.

The rich make sure that economists are nicely looked after if they stay 'on message'. A Swedish bank got Swedish academics to create a new Nobel Prize for Economics. Academics need funding, but only the rich have been smart enough to take advantage. Invent a nice-sounding prize for people whose dogmas put money in the pockets of the rich.

Mostly they believe their own stuff. It was otherwise careless for *The Economist* to say: "The president of PetroChina, the country's biggest oil company, earned 774,000 yuan (\$112,000) in 2016; the CEO of Chevron, a firm of roughly the same market value, pulled in a handsome \$24.7m."⁶

The average US worker gets slightly more than 7 times the pay of their Chinese equivalents. The Big Bosses gets 221 times as much.⁷ A Chinese boss



gets 7.3 times their country's average. Their US equivalent gets 430 times as much. And that's ignoring the cheaper price of most Chinese goods.

China's not ideal. But is utopian compared to the post-1980s USA. Of course Chinese expect their government to look after them. While it does so, almost all of them are content to have limits on their choice of candidates and their right to criticise. In Western Democracies, we have the cherished liberal formula of Free Press – mostly owned by the rich. A free choice of candidates who need massive funding, with the rich as the simplest source.

Of course competitive multi-party democracies can work well. The USA moved from Classical Capitalism to the Mixed Economy in the 1930s, and grew much faster than ever before. The system worked. Elections can also play on fears and get people voting against their own best interests. Accepting false promises of liberation though greedy freedoms. The New Right did not in fact end the Mixed Economy. They wanted to, but bumped up against the reality of Classical Capitalism being unable to deliver acceptable results. But with US citizens terrified of Big Government, they can still rig the system to give most of the benefits to the rich.

Deadly Weather

2017 is shaping up as another record-breaking year. Climate Denialists pin their hopes on small imperfections and uncertainties in the broad forecasts of Climate Change. *Small parts of the data are imperfect - therefore it is*

entirely safe to proceed as if nothing much will happen. The chances of the doom-sayers being broadly wrong are absurdly small.

To date, actual events have been worse than most gloomy warnings from qualified climate scientists. And since 1980, the decade-by-decade trend has been amazingly clear.

Worse, much of the Indian Subcontinent could end up *uninhabitable* if the trend continues:

“While the normal temperature inside our bodies is 37C, our skin is usually at 35C. This temperature difference allows us to dissipate our own metabolic heat by sweating. “However, if wet bulb temperatures in our environment are at 35C or greater, our ability to lose heat declines rapidly and even the fittest of people would die in around six hours.

“While a wet bulb 35C is considered the upper limit of human survivability, even a humid temperature of 31C is considered an extremely dangerous level for most people...

“Wet bulb temperature would approach the 35C threshold ‘over most of South Asia, including the Ganges river valley, north eastern India, Bangladesh, the eastern coast of China, northern Sri Lanka and the Indus valley of Pakistan’.

“According to the scientists, around 30% of the population is projected to live in a climate characterised by a median of the maximum annual wet bulb temperature of 31C or more. At present, the number of people facing this level of threat is essentially zero.”⁸

Land inhabited by 30% of the human

race may become uninhabitable within three generations. So where would they go? Too many people are gambling on the very remote chance that at least 90% of qualified experts will turn out to be massively wrong. A very poor bet.

Our Weather, Their Weather

The hurricane and floods in Texas are indeed tragic. But why do the BBC and most other global news services treat its suffering as special? As at 29th August, Hurricane Harvey has caused flooding in Texas and killed eight – ENORMOUS NEWS FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

The same hurricane killed one person in the Guyana. Barely counts as news.⁹ 12 people were killed in China by Typhoon Hato: barely news. The BBC relegated it to its on-line China section.¹⁰ Treating Britain as a dependency of the USA, they report the tragic plight of the poor Texans, and ignore much needier people elsewhere.

Only the Chinese global news services gave equal weight to the two disasters. Note that ‘hurricanes’ and ‘typhoons’ are two names for the same thing.

Hail to Robert E. Lee, Who Got the South Broken and Slaughtered

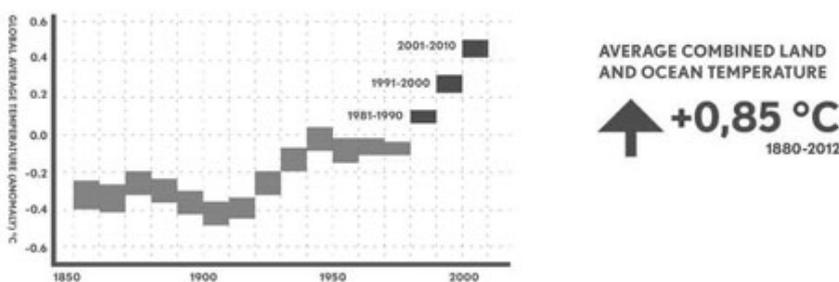
The US Civil War began in 1861 – Lincoln was elected in 1860, but did not take office for several months. Secession in the Deep South happened before he was in office, spoiling his hopes that he could reassure them by mild use of the limited powers he had as President.

The war might have ended in 1862 if the Confederate capital Richmond had been captured. Might have happened had Lee accepted Lincoln's offer to give him command of the Union forces. Likewise if he had done nothing – he was 54, too old for ordinary service.

What actually happened was that Lee took over when the general in charge of defending Richmond was killed by a stray shell. He reversed the Union advantage. He kept the war going till 1865, causing enormous suffering.

Lee by 1864 should have seen that the war was lost. Gettysburg had ended

EACH OF THE LAST 3 DECADES HAS BEEN WARMER THAN ALL PRECEDING DECADES SINCE 1850.



Global average temperature has increased. Anomalies are relative to the mean temperature of 1980-1990. Based on IPCC Assessment Report 5, Working Group I, Image Source: Finnish Meteorological Institute, the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, and Climatecentralia. CC BY-SA

indecisively. The Confederacy was losing its men of military age. Their best hope was Lincoln being voted out in the election of 1864. This failing, Lee *should* have said the war was lost. He kept it going until Richmond fell and his own army disintegrated.

In the abstract, Lee was against slavery. But actions speak louder than words. This was shown when he ran the Arlington Estate, which his wife inherited: “In 1857, his father-in-law George Washington Parke Custis died, creating a serious crisis when Lee took on the burden of executing the will. Custis’s will encompassed vast landholdings and hundreds of slaves balanced against massive debts, and required Custis’s former slaves ‘*to be emancipated by my executors in such manner as to my executors may seem most expedient and proper, the said emancipation to be accomplished in not exceeding five years from the time of my decease.*’”¹¹

The inheritance was in disarray. Poorly managed and losing money. Lee chose to keep the slaves as slaves for the full five years – the most he could manage without actually breaking the law. And he worked them as hard as he could. It was a scandal at the time. The *New York Tribune* in 1859 printed a letter on it:

“They have been deprived of all means of making a little now and then for themselves, as they were allowed to do during Mr. Custis’s life, have been kept harder at work than ever, and part of the time have been cut down to half a peck of unsifted meal a week for each person, without even their fish allowance. Three old women, who have seen nearly their century each, are kept sewing, making clothes for the field hands, from daylight till dark, with nothing but the half-peck of meal to eat; no tea or coffee — nothing that old people crave — and no time given them to earn these little rarities, as formerly. One old man, eighty years old, bent with age, and whom Mr. Custis had long since told ‘had done enough,’ and might go home and ‘smoke his pipe in peace,’ is now turned out as a regular field hand. A year ago, for some trifling offense, three were sent to hail,

and a few months later three more, for simply going down to the river to get themselves some fish, when they were literally starved.

“Some three or four weeks ago, three, more courageous than the rest, thinking their five years would never come to an end, came to the conclusion to leave for the North. They were most valuable servants, but they were never advertised, and there was no effort made to regain them which looks exceedingly as though Mr. Lee, the present proprietor, knew he had no lawful claim to them. They had not proceeded far before their progress was intercepted... They were lodged in jail, and frightened into telling where they had started from... Transported back, taken into a barn, stripped, and the men received thirty and nine lashes each, from the hands of the slave-whipper, when he refused to whip the girl, and Mr. Lee himself administered the thirty and nine lashes to her. They were then sent to Richmond jail, where they are now lodged.”¹²

Oppressing the old, whipping a woman when even a regular slave-driver would not – a noble character? And Lee had other options. His family had inherited a lot of land. He could have sold some, freed the slaves and bought others who had not been promised freedom.

It wasn’t exactly racism: he was even more ruthless with the lives of his own soldiers. But after the war he kept a deafening silence about the Klu Klux Klan.

Lee and the Klan both accepted that secession had failed, but keeping down the negroes could still work. The Klan used mass intimidation. Lee said nothing and prepared young Southern gentlemen to work within the system they had failed to escape from.

Arlington was seized by the Federal Government, by the legal trickery of refusing to accept taxes demanded unless Confederate General Lee came and paid them in person: his wife was not allowed to. Correctly doubting that this would hold, they buried black soldiers there to lower its desirability. By an historic curio, it gradually evolved into the highest-status cemetery in

the USA.

Don’t be confused about the reasons for the war. The immediate issue was secession. But Lincoln provoked it by promising he would keep slavery out of the Territories, the lightly settled land run directly by the Federal Government. He claimed no right to forbid states within the Union to keep slaves. The USA began with slavery legal. The ‘glorious’ Constitution had rules for returning fugitive slaves.

For Lincoln, seceding states had forfeited their rights. But he waited till 1863 before liberating slaves there. Sought a deal with non-seceding slave states that would have seen slavery lasting till 1900. I agree it might have been better if the USA had broken up. But very few governments allow secession unless they find a territory ungovernable. Yeltsin broke up the Soviet Union because Gorbachev was still its boss. Nice democratic India will not allow self-determination to Kashmir, nor Spain to Catalonia. Britain fought viciously to retain Ireland.

Removing Lee’s statues was an intolerant act. But for all their loud talk about Freedom, **intolerance is normal for the USA**. The real belief is ‘**Anything I Don’t Like, Isn’t Freedom**’.

US culture is slow to change. Removing Confederate statues repudiates the racist and slave-owning past. It is intolerance for a good cause. Helps uproot the covert racism that the Republicans have catered to ever since Nixon.

Snippets

Blair Almost A Trotskyist

“Tony Blair has said that he ‘toyed with Marxism’ as a young man after being inspired by a biography of Leon Trotsky that detailed ‘extraordinary causes and injustices’.

“The former prime minister, who rebranded his party ‘New Labour’ in the belief it would be most electable as a centre-ground party, said yes when asked in a BBC interview if he was ‘briefly a Trot’.”¹³

It was Toy Marxism that he toyed with. No serious politics has ever

resulted from seeing Stalin as much different from Lenin. Or Lenin as much different from Marx.

The Rights of Mutilators

“Tory ministers boasted of ‘cutting red tape’ as they relaxed regulations on selling dangerous acids - a change campaigners say could have made recent attacks more likely.”¹⁴

Human civilisation depends on rules that fools will call ‘red tape’. Some regulation are bad. Many more are wise or necessary.

The only other way for real humans to live is tribalism. Few tribalists act as free individuals. Most cannot even think of going outside of tribal customs. The few who dare are often murdered or driven out.

A Right to Die, a Right to Live

“In 1990, before it was legal [in the Netherlands], 1.7 percent of deaths were from euthanasia or assisted suicide. That rose to 4.5 percent by 2015. The vast majority — 92 percent — had a serious illness and the rest had health problems from old age, early-stage dementia or psychiatric problems... More than a third of those who died were over 80.”¹⁵

If I were in pain, demented or could not live a meaningful life, I would like legal access to an easy exit. But I also take the point that unwanted old people could be pushed into being cheaply and conveniently dead.

Why not create a separate bureaucracy: an *Office of Defenders of Life*. Give it the right and obligation to check each case. See that no one gets pressured or bullied. Give it funding to help some of them resume enjoyment of life.

More Tax-and-Spend and Big Government, out of fashion since the 1980s.

Dunkirk and the White Persons of Dover

Dunkirk is the best war film I’ve ever seen. But has its flaws:

“It erases the Royal Indian Army Services Corp companies, which were not only on the beach, but tasked with transporting supplies over terrain that was inaccessible for the British Expeditionary Force’s motorised transport companies. It also ignores the fact that by 1938, lascars – mostly from South Asia and East Africa – counted for one of four crewmen on British merchant vessels, and thus participated in large numbers in the evacuation.

“But Nolan’s erasures are not limited to the British. The French army deployed at Dunkirk included soldiers from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and other colonies, and in substantial numbers. Some non-white faces are visible in one crowd scene, but that’s it.”¹⁶

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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BARCELONA

In the restaurant gardens the sparrows
 revolve
 above the vacated table
 how to get the crumbs is
 solved
 by the most able
 the cat stalks
 springs
 and walks
 its mouth full
 of twitching feathers
 they scatter
 a minute
 re-gather
 revolve
 over the vacated table
 twittering
 reassured
 the tourists
 babel

Wilson John Haire

Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier

By Michael Murray

murraymicha@gmail.com. Facebook: Michael Murray London - a commentary/digest of political news for busy people. A dictionary definition of "foot soldier" "...a dedicated low level follower."

In this issue: "The silly season comes to a halt"

Traditionally, August is known as the "silly season" because people and organizations wind down and take holidays, deserved or not. And, thus, news is comprised of silly, or sillier, stories than usual. The news item that left me scratching my head was the one that reported a huge increase in head lice – due the practice of mobile phone "selfies."

For this Corbyn foot soldier August has been a welcome break from electioneering and, dare I admit, meetings bloody meetings. But not for Jeremy Corbyn. Early August he announced a round-Britain tour of marginal constituencies – in anticipation of another general election in the near future.

I followed his progress, scantily reported in the main stream media, from the comfort of my armchair. Frankly, I had thought Jeremy was pushing his luck after, admittedly, a phenomenal reversal of political fortunes occasioned by the June election results. But there on the laptop screen was evidence to the contrary. Huge crowds of supporters turned out for him, often despite inclement weather, along the south coast, from Hastings as far as Cornwall; up the country through the big cities – and the little towns with names new to me.

All occasioned, not only by Jeremy's tremendous energy, but by all the local party machines and activists up and down the country getting involved, as well appearances at the rallies of party shadow ministers, MPs and other elder Labour "statesmen," notably John Prescott. Not bad - for the silly season. And still up on YouTube: google Corbyn's Summer Campaign, or Corbyn in Cornwall, or Stockport or Milton Keynes to

mention three out of dozens.

None of those meetings could be put down to just novelty value or mere curiosity – though those were no doubt a factor, especially in the seaside holiday towns. Something significant was working its way through the body politic. "Corbyn mobbed on visit to Wales," wrote Wales OnLine 19 Aug. Corbyn's marginal constituencies has "raked in the coverage and crowds," according to the Guardian, 28 August. And this time in Wales there was no repeat of reported Welsh Labour Party shunning of Corbyn in the run-up to the last General Election.

Corbyn got a similar response in Scotland. A Guardian headline (23 August), of an article by Ewen McAskill, read: "Labour is coming back in Scotland." In Stornaway the venue had to be changed to a larger one to facilitate the huge turnout. Labour ex Minister, now Chair of Harris Tweed, Brian Wilson, a heavyweight critic of Corbyn in the past, expressed his support for Corbyn's political leadership of the party, acknowledging "that you can harness support for a radical political agenda" (Daily Record, 24 August). If, as seems to be widely acknowledged, Scotland holds the key to a Labour Government then Corbyn seems to be now accepted as the leader to return a Labour victory in Scotland.

The timing of Scottish Labour Party Leader Kazia Dugdale's resignation, can only be interpreted as another sign of a shift towards a Corbynist Labour Party in Scotland, though the internal democratic process alone will decide that. But there was a time, not long ago, when any such resignation would have been, or depicted as being, an

anti-Corbyn act. How times have changed.

In the aftermath of the General Election swing to Labour, a total of 95 seats had been targeted as being marginal. Of these Labour would have to gain at least 64 to have a majority. And of these Labour needs to take 18 in Scotland, where, according to LabourList, 22 August, to take up to seven of those seats (mostly held by the SNP) would only require a 1% swing to Labour.

On reflection: to make the big, decisive breakthrough, perhaps it is necessary for Labour to look again at the tactics of dealing with the political landscape in Scotland impacted, as it was in recent years, by the independence issue. "Sceal (sgeul) eile!" you could say in Irish/ Scots Gaelic. But, in support of that, according to an article in "The Scotsman," 29 August, Labour's new position on a soft Brexit gives the SNP – even reduced as it was by the last General Election - a key role in any soft Brexit Labour-led alliance in the House of Commons.

Incidentally, the final August YouGov poll results show Labour at 42% and Conservatives at 41% while the Guardian/ICM poll conducted within the same week found Labour and Conservatives at level pegging: on 42%. This has been interpreted by some sections of the press as evidence that Corbyn's August travails have been in vain. But poll results during the run-up to the General Election had me doubting the evidence of my own eyes – and ears – on the doorsteps canvassing. Once bitten, twice shy. And I don't mean head lice.

Labour in Northern Ireland

David Morrison

The Northern Ireland Constituency Labour Party (CLP) has been suspended by the Labour Party in London, while an investigation takes place into complaints received from a number of party members in Northern Ireland.

Claire-Frances Fuller, the Labour Party's Head of Internal Governance, informed party members of this in an email sent on 14 August, which said that a series of complaints had been received alleging breaches to Labour Party rules and improper behaviour in the running of the Executive Committee of the CLP. As a result, the Labour Party has initiated an investigation into the complaints and, according to the email sent to members "for the period that the investigation is taking place, no meeting of the CLP will take place". Furthermore, the email ordered that "no all-member communications will therefore be sent without prior signoff by myself, as the Head of Internal Governance, or another national officer of the Party".

Many readers of this magazine will be surprised to learn of the existence of the Northern Ireland CLP let alone its suspension. Labour didn't figure prominently in NI in the recent General Election and didn't merit a visit from Jeremy Corbyn. That was because, although the Labour Party accepts members from Northern Ireland and has permitted them to organise in a CLP (only one CLP even though there are 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland), it refuses to allow them to contest elections and, as we will see, members have recently been expelled for contesting elections, even though they didn't do so under the Labour Party name.

The Labour Party accepts members from NI today only because it was forced to do so by a legal action taken in 2003 by a NI member of the GMB called Andy McGivern, who was supported by his union in taking this action. Prior to that, people living in NI were banned from membership of the Labour Party. In fact, prior to that, NI people enjoyed the extraordinary distinction of being the only people

in the world who were barred from Labour Party membership.

A few hundred people joined the Labour Party in the next few years, but they were not allowed to form Constituency Labour Parties, let alone contest elections, like members in England, Scotland and Wales. However, in settlement of a further legal action by Andy McGivern in 2008, the Labour Party agreed that a single Northern Ireland CLP could be formed but contesting elections was forbidden.

True, as part of the settlement, the Labour Party agreed to review this ban at least once every parliamentary term, which it did in 2013 when Ed Miliband was leader. Then, the review team met the Irish Labour Party and SDLP (as well as party members in Northern Ireland) and then issued a statement simply saying that it would not be changing its policy on contesting elections. A review scheduled for the last (2015/2017) parliament was postponed because of the leadership election in the summer of 2016 and then due to the 2017 General Election (so technically the Labour Party has broken its legal obligations in this regard).

Another review is now due, but it's unlikely to happen while the CLP is suspended – which is a good reason for the Labour Party leadership to make haste very slowly in carrying out its investigation. The email to Northern Ireland members from Claire-Frances Fuller solicits further complaints about "individual members' misconduct, a breach of Labour Party rules and/or code of conducts", so there is likely to be plenty of scope for spinning the investigation out indefinitely.

The ongoing turmoil within the Northern Ireland CLP, which has given rise to these recent complaints, can be laid firmly at Jeremy Corbyn's door. As a result of his leadership campaigns, Labour Party membership in Northern Ireland rocketed to around 2,500 full members and 500 paid up supporters. At a general meeting in 2016, 70% voted to endorse Corbyn in the leadership contest. The Labour

Party has now got a substantial body of members in Northern Ireland who want to engage in political activity but are forbidden by their party from contesting elections. That has led to increasing frustration and internal bickering and this flurry of complaints to Labour HQ. A few have stood for election under other guises, for instance, in the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly Election and in this year's General Election (the latter were expelled).

This absurd situation is a relic of the undemocratic system of government that was imposed on Northern Ireland in 1920, when Ireland was partitioned. Nominally, Northern Ireland remained part of the UK but in practice it was excluded from the UK political system – the parties that formed the government of the UK didn't operate there and a devolved system of government was imposed, which nobody in Northern Ireland wanted. This inevitably led to 50 years of one-party unionist rule in Northern Ireland in which the British parties did not participate.

This system of government broke down in 1968. After 30 years of war, a settlement was reached in the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which drew a line under the 1920 settlement: there was still to be a devolved government in Northern Ireland, but henceforth it had to be a joint unionist/nationalist government. This is the system in existence today.

In 1977, a campaign was established with the objective of persuading the Labour Party to operate in Northern Ireland. This Campaign for Labour Representation in Northern Ireland envisaged a settlement within the democratic system of the British state. After fifteen years of effort, the Campaign came to the conclusion that the forces arrayed against it – in the British and Irish states and ironically amongst unionists – made its mission impossible. The Northern Ireland CLP has yet to recognise this.

Blame It On the Boomers?

by Gwydion M. Williams

Boom, Baby, Boom!

Statisticians joke about a nice 1940s match between the number of nesting storks and the birth of babies. Caused by World War Two, obviously. Baby Boomers were the 'stork generation'. Born to peace: more babies than average till maybe 1964. And overturned a world in which stories about babies being brought by a stork were told to children and partly believed. Where sex might be a surprising discovery.

Baby Boomers get the blame or credit for 1960s radicalism. A half-truth – leading spirits like John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger were slightly older; War Babies.¹ Blame or credit? I'd answer 'Yes'. Many things could have been done better. But the radical movement might also have failed.

Who would prefer a world in which the massive 'Cultural Metamorphosis' from 1963 to the early 1970s never happened?² If you could get in a time-travelling DeLorean sports car and erase it by running over Andy Warhol, would you do so? Or if you could change history without harming anyone? Nothing was inevitable. But the victors from numerous struggles in the 1970s and 1980s like to boost their power by pretending it was.

In the Soviet Bloc, changes began earlier but were crushed with the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In China, Mao started his Cultural Revolution in 1965. He maybe began with a minor fight on cultural matters. Went much further when he found young people militantly convinced that all elders except Mao's favourites were lukewarm and dishonest. The Cultural Revolution burnt out and was rejected after Mao died. The Soviet Bloc declined and fell after its fatal blunder in 1968. But the values the West takes to be normal as of the

Twenty-Tens were certain to win out, because...

Because of what? I've yet to see a serious argument that tries giving a reason. Just a bland assumption that our norm is *The Normal*. This is a natural way to think, but misleading. In grammar, if your mother-tongue is English you'd speak of a *large blue truck*. Never a *blue large truck*, which transmits the same data. But could you formalise the rule you are applying?

You boldly split infinitives. You don't expect the *Star Trek* opening to say '*to go boldly*'. Which in the '*Next Generation*' became '*where no one has gone before*', rather than the '*no man*' of the 1960s original. Where the only prominent woman was also the only visible non-white: a talented lady on the lighter end of Afro-Americans. They added a Russian after complaints, but made him comic. No regular East Asians until '*Voyager*'. No regular South Asians or West Asians until the promised new '*Discovery*' series.

Anglos also say 'mum' in Britain and 'mom' in the USA – did you ever wonder why? The grammar of social interactions is much more complex than the grammar of language. (And included much more class-based language in the 1960s.) Why should the 'social grammar' of 1960s radicals win out as it did? Or evolve as it did?

The 1920s 'Bright Young Things' were swept aside by Fascism. 'Beatniks' were once marginal cranks. The success of 1960s radicals made them routine; even old-fashioned. Younger readers may need to look them up. A mix of good luck and the ever-present Soviet challenge helped the West's vast 'Cultural Metamorphosis'. Radicalism became a new normal.

Not *The Normal* but just *Our New Normal*.

From Yuppie to Coolheart

The new generation soon went from protest to power. Their elders retired or died, or were shoved aside. Some Hippies became Yuppies in the 1980s, and faded after the half-forgotten economic crisis of 1987. But toned-down Yuppie values became the New Normal. A new elite used clever propaganda to stop most people from thinking that other values were possible.

Call them Coolheart Millionaires, since a name is needed. Ordinary 'Coolhearts' have been convinced that 1960s radicalism meant nothing. That 'Our New Normal' was always going to happen. For Coolhearts outside a more-than-millionaire elite, this has cost them plenty. While they 'stayed cool' and thought they were clever, the ruthless and greedy took back for their more-than-millionaire class the economic privileges that they had before the 1950s.

Coolheart Millionaires are also an Overclass. They live on top of the society, but won't take responsibility. They'd never get the *social* privileges of the old ruling class, and might not even want them. They use a rehash of Adam Smith – rich people just looking after themselves is miraculously the best for everyone. An economist who claimed that the Archangel Gabriel would ensure economic fairness would not be accepted even by the religious. But an 'invisible hand' sounds scientific and rational.

The disasters of the 1930s told most in the West that this was a damn fool idea. A cluster of interventionist policies labelled Keynesianism dominated till the 1970s crises. The West had its best economic performance from the 1950 to 1970s. Fast mostly-smooth growth that was good for everyone. The poor and middling gained most, with less for the very rich.

Reagan and Thatcher promised to deregulate. To shrink the state, and it never happened. But as ‘needless’ regulations were removed, the rich got the lion’s share of the growth.³ In the USA, with its fear of ‘big government’, the rich grabbed most of the new wealth in the name of Freedom.

The media, owned by the rich and full of 1960s radicals grown cynical, ‘stayed cool’ in a wave of 1960s remembrances early in the 2010s. Mostly they said that nothing much happened. Only Gays were an exception – they could not discount that the shift from criminal through acceptable to ‘virtually normal’. As of 2017, gays have their own celebration, at least in Britain. From the little bits I have seen, it is OK to say that everything changed *for gay males and lesbians*. Don’t mention the rest. ‘*Almost no longer ashamed to be gay*’ is what I suspect most of them feel. Maybe for the young it really is just a normal personal choice. But only because 1960s radicalism won out.

What actually happened was an unexpected part of a far vaster wave of changes for heterosexuals. First the Permissive Society. Then much more power and status for women. It’s also true the radical women botched a campaign that they basically won. Stopped saying ‘Women’s Liberation’. But women who assuredly would not let themselves be treated as most women were treated in the 1950s West also don’t like the Feminist label.

Still, it mattered a lot that cultural radicalism including *The Beatles* became dominant among my generation. Have kept that dominance.

So are we supposed to be ashamed of ourselves?

For the Benefit of Mr Rich

I’ve heard a lot of propaganda trying to get young people to blame their plight on the Baby Boomer generation. Many of them now comfortably retired with the type of pensions that younger generations allowed to be taken away from them with minimal protest

The most coherent example I could find is ‘*A Generation of Sociopaths: How the Baby Boomers Betrayed*

America’ by Bruce Cannon Gibney.⁴

I also found an interesting review:

“The Greatest Generation survived the Great Depression, won the Second World War, brought about the enormous postwar economic boom, outlasted the Soviet Union in the Cold War and established the United States as the sole superpower. Since then, the boomers — the Worst Generation, if you will — have squandered most of that...

“Given my own Gen X grievances against the boomers, I was delighted to learn that another Xer, venture capitalist Bruce Cannon Gibney, shares my generational hostility... Gibney delivers an unrelenting critique of the Worst Generation. Perhaps too unrelenting...

“Surely we can give the boomers the blame they deserve for trashing the country while acknowledging that they have also been responsible for major advances in medicine and science, in arts and culture, in civil rights and the rights of women, disabled people and gay people. Can we at least give them some credit for rock-and-roll?...

“Boomers are more properly labelled a generation of narcissists than a generation of sociopaths. (Our own cynical generation has trended more toward the sociopathic.)”⁵

That’s a spat between two ‘post-Boomers’, both ignorant of the vastness of the Cultural Metamorphosis that made them possible. Or chose to ignore it: but when I read them I find them ignorant or muddled about anything outside their own narrow circles of thought. And on the 1960s, the Left has not fed them many insights that they can twist in service to the rich.

The Cultural Metamorphosis that shaped them in their childhood seems literally unthinkable to those people. That’s why I started out explaining it in detail. That their familiar world might plausibly not have happened

Who fears to speak of the Richest 1%? Everyone who aspires to media success, obviously. Gibney does mention the Richest 1% in his last chapters, but evasively. His Wiki entry shows someone either in the Overclass or close to it

We also learn that he had a Chinese mother. Did anyone call her a ‘Chink’? Does he know the phrase ‘Yellow Peril’ – used by racist socialist Jack London, among others. London also wrote a short story in which the ‘peril’ is defeated by the extermination of all Chinese.⁶

The Overclass is Broad Anglo – you can have any origin if you swallow the values and deny that anything else is possible. But most of them have no idea who they are or what they are doing, beyond the small areas of knowledge necessary for their personal success.

Please Tell Lies About Vietnam

No government has a right to send young men overseas to kill or to die on a doubtful theory that the safety of the nation required this. Particularly when the claim rested on a mix of lies and fantasy.

Gibney goes on at length about Boomer protests against the Vietnam War. Is either seriously ignorant, or chooses to omit key facts. Vietnam’s American War was sold by claims of a ‘Domino Effect’: a Communist victory in South Vietnam would cause a run of Communist victories elsewhere. None of it happened, except in Laos

And in Cambodia, where the previously insignificant Khmer Rouge became an incompetent national leadership after a US-sponsored coup smashed the framework of traditional Cambodian politics. Where the USA got a corrupt parliament to depose Prince Sihanouk and abolish the ancient monarchy

Cambodia was trashed without the normal democratic process of a popular vote about the monarchy. Probably the vast majority were royalists back then. With all norms smashed, the Khmer Rouge were incompetent, but everyone else was even less competent. The USA callously abandoned its allies and hindered humanitarian aid. Helped cause an immense tragedy.

In Vietnam, almost all nationalists were also Communists. The USA organised a coup that killed a small autocratic group of genuine anti-Communist nationalists led by President Diem. Thereafter it was the

USA's war. A doomed war, since Saigon's soldiers mostly thought they had nothing worth dying for.

Young US citizens also knew that there was nothing worth dying for. But the government claimed the right to make them fight it anyway. Meantime Hanoi, a lot cleverer than the Palestinians, never attacked targets outside of Indochina. This was very different from World War Two, in which Japan had attacked first. In which Hitler also declared war and sank US shipping.

Gibney totally misses the point, saying that Vietnam death rates were less than one-seventh of those in World War II. People dying young expect to be dying for something decent. Most of them also need a good reason to kill anyone, even 'gooks'.

Gibney says "By no means were most draft dodgers hypocrites judged on their war attitudes, since many did oppose the war. But many were – and almost all dodging, regardless of ideological consistency, had sociopathic overtones, as we will see."⁷

There's a story that professional-murderer 'Lepke' Buchalter was amused to meet a fellow inmate who was a conscientious objector. That he said "they locked you up for not killing people?" He must have known the difficulty of killing for most people: he became rich because of it.

'Sociopath' is the term used by sociologists for a small minority who lack the normal human quality of sympathy. (Psychologists say 'Psychopath', without clear differences.) A sociopathic deficiency lets them kill without conscience, and also means that they have no genuine friends. Successful gangsters need to form genuine friendships, or else fool colleagues who are mostly skilled at not being fooled. Mostly they persuade themselves that their killings are right and necessary. Exactly what was missing in Vietnam.

Gibney asks why draft dodgers did not claim to be Conscientious Objectors.⁸ This again misses the point. A Conscientious Objector would believe that the war against Hitler was also wrong. Most draft dodgers felt that the Vietnam War was nothing to kill or die for. I am surprised Gibney misses this. I can't help wondering how he'd test for sociopathy.

Tell Me Lies About Economics

Sociopaths smart enough to avoid crime can have good careers. A concentration is found among surgeons, though the rest of the medical profession typically has above-average sympathy. It is also useful for hedge fund managers and barristers.⁹ And they do well in modern management, with its belief in profit and ruthlessness. Some of them "climb the career ladder quickly despite being poor managers".¹⁰

As a radical British student in the early 1970s, I found my fellow Boomers mostly generous and sympathetic if it didn't cost them anything much. A lot of them went on to vote Tory. Some became active Thatcherites. It wasn't that they didn't care. But 1960s mistrust of government led them to doubt the need to pay taxes to get a decent world. And herded by a range of clever lies in media mostly owned by the rich, they blamed everyone but themselves when the

world in some ways got worse.

In the British election of 2017, Corbyn would have won by a landslide if people over 60 had lacked a vote.¹¹ People in my own 60-69 age-band split 58 / 27 for Tory or Labour. Very few were sociopaths, but they had a false vision of how the world worked.

As did *The Beatles*. Liberating for their time, but they refused to do any charity work, unlike most stars. Were not keen to pay tax, like most of the newly rich in the prosperous world created by tax-and-spend economics.

Long before Thatcher said that society did not exist, *The Beatles* acted as if they believed this to be so. So did many others of that generation. I was part of the minority that knew better. Are disappointed but certainly not baffled that some types of social progress got reversed.

John Lennon dreamed splendidly in "*Imagine*", but that cost him nothing. Boosted his already gigantic wealth; 800 million dollars when he was murdered by a Baby-Boomer. A man who fantasised about being part of the Beatles success and murderously resented the gap between this and reality. Who was judged insane but not a sociopath.

Lennon did some good, but could have done a lot more. I'd like to rewrite his famous song:

"Imagine paying taxes

"It isn't hard for you"

I've got no further. It is there for anyone else to expand.

(Endnotes)

1 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/6099597/World-War-2-history-memories-from-the-day-war-broke-out-told-to-Melvyn-Bragg.html>. It can also be used more narrowly, for a child fathered by foreign military force (occupying or stationed).

2 1963 was when *The Beatles* confirmed their status. *Love Me Do* was a hit in 1962; but pop is full of what are callously called 'one-hit wonders'.

3 <http://gabriel-zucman.eu/russia/>

4 Hachette Book Group, 2017.

5 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/if-americas-messed-up-blame-it-on-the-boomers/2017/03/09/a6ccce16-eef8-11e6-b4ff-ac2cf509efe5_story.html?utm_term=.d7f6d449d53e

6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unparalleled_Invasion

7 A Generation of Sociopaths, page 36

8 Ibid., page 42

9 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/10788449/Why-psychopaths-are-more-successful.html>

10 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/8735926/One-in-25-business-leaders-could-be-a-psychopath.html>

11 <https://gwydionmw.quora.com/British-Tories-rely-on-the-Old-and-the-Uneducated>

The Taylor Report on Employment Practices

a comment by Eamon Dyas

The report from one of Tony Blair's ex-policy advisors [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-40561807>].

At least three types of work arrangements seem to be confused here. The Gig Economy, the Small Trader and the Cash Economy.

This is a good introduction to what I understand by the term "gig economy". <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2016/jun/15/he-truth-about-working-for-deliveroo-uber-and-the-on-demand-economy>

The Gig Economy is dominated by large companies who can afford the technical and infrastructure requirements of work practices that rely on highly sophisticated modern electronic communication devices. The same electronic devices ensure that transactions at the point of "sale" are cash free. But given the scale of their operations these kind of companies can also afford to employ high-end accountants who can help them minimise their tax obligations. As far as protecting the rights of employees in these enterprises is concerned the obvious means of doing that is to provide a higher level of legal protection for trade union activity on the part of those employees. What can be achieved through this kind of thing was illustrated a while back when the employees of Deliveroo combined in joint action. It can be done but needs more encouragement not only from the State but from the wider trade union movement. See: <http://theconversation.com/deliveroo-strike-win-shows-gig-workers-can-subvert-the-rules-too-64049>

The small trader can extend from a person who usually works alone or with members of his/her family or who might employ a small number of people. However, these businesses, unlike those who operate in the gig economy, operate in an already disadvantageous relationship with the State. The tax and insurance obligations placed on them continue to hinder their operations with the result that many of them depend on the part non-declaration of income as the only means of staying in business. In London they also operate under the disadvantage of a property market that has made it virtually impossible to find and maintain affordable workshops. Instead of heaping more bureaucratic obligations on them what the Government should be doing in these instances is to provide some alleviation and incentive to enable them to survive and if possible flourish. The provision of government subsidised affordable work spaces could be made conditional on them acting as responsible employers in those instances where they might employ small numbers of people.

The scare about the cash economy is completely misleading as it is becoming a diminishing aspect of the modern way of doing business. In the past you could ask a tradesman doing a job around the house "how much for cash?" but, having asked this question of someone recently I notice there is a marked reluctance to engage in that kind of transaction any more. Because everything has to go through banks these days it is extremely difficult to hide income and consequently this aspect of the cash economy is no longer as an attractive an option as it once was.

HALLELUJAH!

Once it was the lone image of the man
nailed to the cross
a sacrifice for the benefit of humanity
for that Garden of Eden loss
the saints in alabaster
or if you prefer
the tin church of the pastor
but yesterday
a new god was born
in Trafalgar Square
to convey
forlorn
the mud and sand soldier
a statue of his kind
in public glare
his moulder
sells WW1
sells the khaki cross
and invites you to try it on
for size
for there are future battles
to be won
now comes the rain
the melt
but it's not for you
he dies
as his outer coat washes away
to his pelt
just emulate
this bloody puddle
you survey
it's your sacrifice
your fate
lying on your back
it's fear and hate
will one leg suffice
two thousand miles away
in some sun-seared rubble
Hallelujah!

Wilson John Haire

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

49 Labour MPs defy Labour's policy on the Single Market and Customs Union

Debate on the Address.

29 June 2017.

Mr Speaker We come next to amendment (g).

Amendment proposed: at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech does not rule out withdrawal from the EU without a deal, guarantee a Parliamentary vote on any final outcome to negotiations, set out transitional arrangements to maintain jobs, trade and certainty for business, set out proposals to remain within the Customs Union and Single Market, set out clear measures to respect the competencies of the devolved administrations, and include clear protections for EU nationals living in the UK now, including retaining their right to remain in the UK, and reciprocal rights for UK citizens.”—(Mr Umunna.)

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 33), That the amendment be made.

The amendment was lost by 101 votes to 322.

Labour's official position was to abstain on the amendment in the name of Chuka Umunna.

The manifesto on which all Labour candidates fought the election said “Labour accepts the referendum result...” It goes on to say “We will scrap the Conservative's Brexit White Paper and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single Market and Customs Union.” The manifesto does **not** say that the UK should remain within the Single Market and Customs Union.

Of the 101 MPS who voted for the amendment, 49 were Labour, 34 SNP, 12 Liberal Democrat, 4 Plaid Cymru,

1 Green and 1 Independent Unionist.

The 49 Labour MPs were: Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green & Bow), Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West), Luciana Berger (Liverpool Wavertree), Ben Bradshaw (Exeter), Chris Bryant (Rhondda), Karen Buck (Westminster North), Ruth Cadbury (Brentford & Isleworth) (sacked from shadow cabinet), Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley), Ann Coffey (Stockport), Neil Coyle (Bermondsey & Old Southwark), Stella Creasy (Walthamstow), Emma Dent Coad (Kensington), Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South & Penarth), Maria Eagle (Liverpool Garston & Halewood), Louise Ellman (Liverpool Riverside), Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Mike Gapes (Ilford South), Kate Green (Stretford & Urmston), John Grogan (Keighley), Helen Hayes (Dulwich & West Norwood), Meg Hillier (Hackney South & Shoreditch), Margaret Hodge (Barking), Rupa Huq (Ealing Central & Acton), Darren Jones (Bristol North West), Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South), Peter Kyle (Hove), David Lammy (Tottenham), Chris Leslie (Nottingham East), Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East), Alison McGovern (Wirral South), Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North), Madeleine Moon (Bridgend), Ian Murray (Edinburgh South), Albert Owen (Ynys Mon), Jess Phillips (Birmingham Yardley), Virendra Sharma (Ealing & Southall), Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield), Gavin Chuker (Luton South), Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead & Kilburn), Andy Slaughter, (Hammersmith) (sacked from shadow cabinet), Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central), Wes Streeton (Ilford North), Gareth Thomas (Harrow West), Stephen Timms (East Ham), Chuka Umunna (Streatham), Keith Val (Leicester East), Catherine West

(Hornsey & Wood Green) (sacked from shadow cabinet), John Woodcock (Barrow & Furness), Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (resigned from shadow cabinet).

Taylor Review:

Working Practices 11 July 2017

The statement below was followed by Labour's response and a large number of MPs questions. Many of these, mostly from Tories, have been omitted for reasons of space.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Margot James) With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the independent review of modern working practices which was led by Matthew Taylor and published earlier today.

The review sets out that British business is successful at creating jobs, enhancing earning power, and improving life chances across the UK. Employment rates are the highest since records began. Unemployment and economic inactivity are at record lows. More people are in work than ever before, and minimum wage rates have never been higher. This is a story of success that this Government will seek to sustain.

The UK economy's continued success is built on the flexibility of our labour market, which benefits both workers and business. Businesses can create jobs and individuals can find work because our labour market regulation balances the demands of both. Minimum standards set a baseline beyond which there is flexibility to set arrangements to suit all parties. Our dynamic approach responds well to fluctuations in the economic cycle, without the structural weaknesses present in some other countries. It is

important that we preserve this success but also enhance it further. While the majority of people employed in the UK are in full-time, permanent employment, globalisation, demographics and especially technology are changing the way in which we work. We need to make sure the British labour market stays strong and everyone in the UK benefits from it.

That is why last year the Prime Minister asked Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts, to lead an independent review into employment practices in the modern economy. That review has now been published, and I am delighted to lay a copy in the House Library today. It is a thorough and detailed piece of work for which I am very grateful, not only to Matthew and his panel members but to the numerous businesses, trade unions, organisations and individuals who have provided their views on this very important topic.

The review has a strong, overarching ambition that all work in the UK should be fair and decent, with realistic scope for fulfilment and progression. Matthew has outlined seven principles to meeting that ambition. I urge hon. Members to examine those principles and the rest of the report in detail, since it is an important contribution to a crucial subject.

In summary, those principles are that our national strategy for work should be explicitly directed towards the goal of good work for all; that platform-based working offers welcome opportunities for genuine flexibility, but there should be greater distinction between workers—or, as the review suggests renaming them, “dependent contractors”—and those who are fully self-employed; that there should be additional protections for that group and stronger incentives for firms to treat them fairly; that the best way to achieve better work is through good corporate governance, good management and strong employment relations; that it is vital that individuals have realistically attainable ways to strengthen their future work prospects; that there should be a more proactive approach to workplace health; and that

the national living wage is a powerful tool to raise the financial baseline of low-paid workers, but it needs to be accompanied by sectoral strategies, engaging employers, employees and stakeholders to raise prospects further.

This is an independent review addressed to Government. Although we may not ultimately accept every recommendation in full, I am determined that we consider the report very carefully and we will respond fully by the end of the year.

Matthew Taylor has been clear: the UK labour market is a success—the “British way” works. He has also said, however, that there are instances where it is not working fairly for everyone. For example, he highlights where our legislation needs updating or where flexibility seems to work only one way, to the benefit of the employer. We recognise the points made. We accept that as a country we now need to focus as much on the quality of the working experience, especially for those in lower-paid roles, as on the number of jobs we create, vital though that is.

This Government have made a commitment to upholding workers’ rights. The Prime Minister has said repeatedly, in this House and elsewhere, that as we leave the EU there will be no roll-back of employment protections. The Queen’s Speech also set out that this Government will go further than that and seek to enhance rights and protections in the modern workplace. Today’s publication of the “Good Work” review, and the public consideration of Matthew’s recommendations that will follow, will help to inform the development of our industrial strategy this autumn. I commend this statement to the House.

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab) When the Prime Minister took office last year, she stood on the steps of Downing Street stating that she was on the side of working people. Despite that rhetoric, the Conservatives have been in government for seven years and in that time have done very little for working people. They have presided over a lost decade

of productivity growth. They have implemented the pernicious Trade Union Act 2016, which is, frankly, an ideological attack on the trade union movement, curbing its ability to fight for and represent workers’ interests. They have inflicted hardship on public sector workers with a pay cap that was confirmed for yet another year by the Department for Education yesterday. They promised workers on boards, but rowed back scared when powerful interests said that they were not particularly keen on the idea. And they have introduced employment tribunal fees, which have made it much harder for workers to enforce their rights.

Today’s publication of the Taylor review was a real opportunity to overhaul the existing employment system in a way that would protect workers in a rapidly changing world of work. But, in the words of the general secretary of Unite, the biggest union in the UK: “Instead of the serious programme the country urgently needs to ensure that once again work pays in this country... we got a depressing sense that insecurity is the inevitable new norm.”

Indeed, the Minister confirmed that she might not even accept all the proposals in the Taylor report, in any event. Although the report is positive in sentiment in many areas, it misses many opportunities to clamp down on exploitation in the workplace. I do not have time to cover them all today, but I have specific concerns that the report may allow the Government to interpret references to the so-called dependent contractor in such a way as to allow them to row back on recent court victories for workers such as Uber drivers and those who work for Pimlico Plumbers.

Recent case law has suggested that a worker on a platform should be entitled to the minimum wage as long as the app is switched on and they are ready and willing to accept trips. However, the review suggests that the platform may insist on payment by piece rate, such that only an average driver, working averagely hard, will earn 1.2 times the minimum wage. That raises issues of enforcement and regulation—what constitutes a reasonable piece rate

across platforms?—and it is something of a retreat from the common law position. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will not undermine workers' rights on the minimum wage in that way? Founder of Pimlico Plumbers and Conservative donor Charlie Mullins said this morning that the report holds Pimlico Plumbers up as an example of “best practice in the gig economy.” This is a company that our judicial system has found to be an example of worst practice.

The report does very little to strengthen the enforcement of workers' existing rights. Although Taylor agrees with Labour's position on shifting the burden of proof to employers in determining self-employed status, the report does little else in that area, and it needs much more work. There is, for example, no movement at all on employment tribunal fees, which are a barrier to justice for many workers.

If the Prime Minister wanted ideas on strengthening workers' rights, she could just have come to us. Just four of our manifesto commitments would go a long way to ending the scourge of exploitation in the gig economy: giving all workers equal rights from day one; strengthening the enforcement of those rights by beefing up and better resourcing Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, rather than imposing pernicious cuts, and by allowing trade unions access to every workplace; abolishing employment tribunal fees; and fining employers who breach labour market rights and regulations.

In the spirit of the so-called collaboration that the Prime Minister is so desperately seeking, will the Minister commit today to implementing those four simple measures, as a start? If not, will she accept that the Conservative party is not, and never will be, on the side of working people?

Margot James I am glad that the hon. Lady found some positive aspects in the report on which to compliment Matthew Taylor. I appreciate that she will not have had time to read it all yet, but I urge her to do so. It contains many recommendations that will be of benefit to workers and are worthy

of the greater consideration that the Government will give them.

I will not comment on each of the recommendations that the hon. Lady raised, because they are Matthew Taylor's suggestions and, as I have said, they will be given due consideration. She criticised the Government's record, so I would like to remind her that this Government have introduced the national living wage and presided over the minimum wage reaching its highest rate, in real terms, since its introduction. The wage increases in the last year have been highest among the lowest paid, thanks to the national living wage. We have nearly doubled the budget for the enforcement of the national living wage. We have doubled fines for companies that underpay their employees. We have banned the use of exclusivity clauses in zero-hours contracts. We have done all that against the backdrop of protecting the growth in employment, which is, at almost 75%, at its highest level since records began.

Our record is one of achievement. The hon. Lady criticises us for enacting the Trade Union Act 2016, but most reasonable people would not criticise the idea that workers who are members of trade unions should have a proper say when their union decides to take strike action. That is the primary purpose of the legislation.

It is not all a garden of roses, otherwise the Prime Minister would not have requested Matthew Taylor to undertake the report. The Prime Minister said, when she announced Matthew Taylor's investigation, that flexibility and innovation are vital parts of what make our economy strong, but it is essential that those virtues are combined with the right support and protections for workers. The Taylor review came to understand that flexibility does work for many people, and it is clear that an agile labour market is good for protecting employment.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con) Does my hon. Friend agree that productivity is at the heart of boosting wages for lower-paid workers? There are some really good examples of employers, working with

the Living Wage Foundation and others, who have managed to boost the pay of lower-skilled workers by focusing on productivity, and that should be at the heart of this issue.

Margot James I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. Productivity is central to our industrial strategy. We have established a £23 billion fund to promote quality jobs, better skills and the higher pay that is, as he says, so important.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP) I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and my trade union activity over the 20 years before my election.

Today's response to the Taylor review from the Government tells us everything we need to know about their frailty and approach to workers' rights—a weak set of proposals that probably will not be implemented and a set of talking points that leaves the balance of power with employers and big business. It was interesting that neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister mentioned or commended the role of the trade unions in securing fair rights at work. Does the Minister agree that a “right to request” is different to a fundamental right enshrined in law? If a request is refused, what enforcement action will the Government take to force employers to do better?

Does the Minister accept that the report makes no distinction between a flexible workforce and the exploitation of that workforce? Does she also agree that while the Taylor report tries to propose new rights, some of those rights have been secured by trade unions taking employers to court, as the shadow Minister suggested? Can the Minister tell us what action the Government will take to enforce minimum wage payments when 200,000 workers in the UK are not paid the minimum wage? Will the Government advertise rights at work services, such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and does the Minister agree that it is time for a fair rights at work Act to guarantee fundamental rights at work?

Margot James

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his critique. The “right to request” has

been useful and valuable when it comes to requesting flexible employment. In any case, it is a recommendation that Matthew made, but it certainly warrants careful consideration. The hon. Gentleman mentions enforcement, and we are committed to making sure that workers on zero-hours contracts or the minimum wage get paid what they are legally entitled to be paid. That is why we have doubled the resources available to HMRC in the last two years to ensure enforcement of those important laws.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab) As someone who lobbied the Prime Minister with reports on the gig economy to establish such an inquiry, may I thank the Minister for her statement today? May I tease from her a little more about the Government's position on the trade-off between minimum standards at the vulnerable end of the labour market and flexibility? If the news reports are right, Matthew Taylor goes for flexibility rather than always implementing the national minimum wage. May we have an undertaking from the Government that they will always abide by the national minimum wage, even if that means a loss in flexibility?

Margot James I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on all the work he did on these matters in chairing the Work and Pensions Committee in the last Parliament. I can assure him that minimum wages rates are sacrosanct. There will be no trade-off when it comes to ensuring that everybody is paid at least the minimum wage. When he reads the report, he will be more encouraged. Many of the people who attended the Taylor review's evidence sessions said that they liked the flexibility of working atypically and that we should not lose that, but that flexibility should not be a one-way street with individuals absorbing all the risk. Although we will consider the recommendations further, I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I very much agree with those sentiments.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD)

I declare an interest having done some work with the Chartered Institute

of Personnel and Development during my time outwith the House.

I welcome the Prime Minister saying that there will be no roll-back of workers' rights, but let me just say that those words are rather a departure from my experience of the Conservative position when I was Liberal Democrat Minister for employment relations in the coalition. I know that the Minister is genuine on this important issue, and it is a thoughtful report of more than 150 pages. As she prepares the Government's response to the report, will she commit to consulting widely across the House through debates and speaking to the Select Committees on Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on Work and Pensions, and on Women and Equalities, to get the right response?

Margot James I thank the hon. Lady for her comments and commend her on her role in the coalition Government. I am glad that she acknowledges that the Government have moved forward in their appreciation of the difficulties faced by certain workers in the areas on which Matthew Taylor has focused. I can give her every assurance that we will indeed consult widely not only with industry, trade unions and members of the public, but across the House.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab) Matthew Taylor said today that he wants employers to pay national insurance for people with whom they have a controlling and supervisory relationship. Do the Government plan to implement that aspect of the Taylor review, and can the Minister reassure workers that the Government do not plan to U-turn on their U-turn and increase national insurance for the genuinely self-employed?

Margot James I can assure the hon. Lady that, as the First Secretary of State said earlier this week, Parliament has spoken on the issue of national insurance class 4 contributions. That matter is now settled, and will not be revisited. I agree with her that we should pay close attention to ensure that people who are genuinely contracted to provide an ongoing service are given the protections that workers

enjoy, and are not falsely labelled as self-employed.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op) It is not just my constituents who are part of the gig economy who do not have security. Many of my constituents have jobs in which they work 15 hours a week. They are pleased and proud to be working, but when they want full-time employment, they instead see more people in the same organisations being given part-time hours. When will the Government get to grips with that element of the economy, and ensure that all those workers have a fair deal and the chance to work the full-time hours that they want so much?

Margot James The whole basis of the report is good work and the aspiration of good work for all, including, I believe, the constituents to whom the hon. Lady refers, but let me reassure her. Two years ago, the Office for National Statistics labour force survey found that nearly 70% of people on zero-hours contracts were content with the hours that they were working. However, that does mean that a third want more hours, which is a finding that we must embrace in the context of some of the changes that Matthew Taylor is recommending to help to achieve the good work and the working hours that the hon. Lady's constituents want.

Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab) I welcome the Minister's commitment to the Government's upholding of workers' rights, but I wonder whether, as part of the Government's response to the report, she will consider enabling workers to uphold their own rights. Will she look again at the fees for employment tribunals, which have led to a 70% reduction in cases brought by single claimants, such as those working in the gig economy, against their employers?

Margot James The hon. Lady makes an important point, but it is really a matter for the Ministry of Justice. Matthew Taylor has not actually recommended that we get rid of fees for employment tribunals, and I think we should recognise the positive aspect: the upsurge in the number of

employment disputes that have been settled through mediation. However, I will continue to look at the issue that the hon. Lady has raised.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab) The gig economy brings insecure work. Insecure work demands new rights, but those rights will be worthless unless the Government are prepared to put more resources into enforcement, regulation and inspection. Will the Minister commit herself to providing those additional resources when implementing the Taylor review?

Margot James I very much agree with the right hon. Gentleman that enforcement is crucial. As I said, we have doubled the resources available to HMRC for enforcing the minimum wage and they will continue to rise throughout this Parliament. We have also strengthened the powers of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, and the recently appointed director of labour market enforcement has been tasked with bringing the work of the three major enforcement bodies together to understand the extent of the abuse and to recommend ways of giving those agencies the resources that will enable them to deal with it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be pleased with the outcome, in due course.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab) Vital protection for all workers is provided by trade union membership and also by trade union recognition. Since my time at the TUC more than 40 years ago, trade union membership in Britain has halved, while workers' and trade union rights have been undermined by Tory legislation. When will the Government reverse that legislation?

Margot James The Government cannot mandate people to join trade unions. Trade unions are still an important force for the protection of workers' rights among the sectors of the economy in which they are still dominant, and I commend them for their work.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab) Over 1 million workers are being exploited by sham umbrella

companies and bogus self-employment. Changes to tax policy are what is needed to tackle that, but the Government prohibited Matthew Taylor from making any firm recommendations on changing tax policy, so how seriously can we take the Minister's comments today, and when on earth are the Government going to eventually address these tax anomalies?

Margot James I assure the hon. Lady that no bar was put in front of Matthew Taylor; he was able to investigate as freely and as fairly as he saw fit. It is up to the Treasury to assess the tax situation and any potential loss of revenue, which of course arises due to bogus self-employment.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) I am pleased to hear the Minister promoting this Marxist revolution that we are now living through, as the means of production are increasingly in the hands of the workers. Further to what she has just

said, does she agree that the answer to some of the challenges is not just better regulations, but helping people to organise? If so, will she meet me, the Community trade union, the co-op movement and Indycube to discuss our work helping the self-employed to organise and unionise?

Margot James I am aware of the independent union of self-employed workers; it has been a force and has contributed to the inquiry. However, I will be only too pleased to meet the hon. Lady and her Community organisers as part of my consultation.

Note: Parliament rose on 20 July and, except for a few days in September, will not meet again until 9 October.

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immediately that "*there is no link between the destruction at Ischia and abusivismo*" (illegal building works). The Mayor of Ischia also said: "*We are not a community of law-breakers*". Italian press articles after the quake disagreed unanimously and emphatically. Another *La Repubblica* report on the same day quoted a local hotel owner and businessman, Bruno Basentini, saying that there is a lack of planning and no political vision on the island.

At this point, while all other politicians were on holiday, *M5S's* Luigi De Maio saw that he could capitalise on the disaster. It is relevant to say that he is a fiercely ambitious young man but also one who is oddly and schoolboyishly naive. He has wriggled his way out of what are widely perceived as lies, in spite of *M5S's* anti-corruption manifesto. This time, his highly inflammatory speech blamed the Ischian devastation on the laxness of Renzi's *Pd* and Berlusconi's *Fi* (*Forza Italia*) parties. Predictably he was heavily slated in the press.

Luigi De Maio also had recently been unwisely critical of Vincenzo De Luca. De Luca is a formidable adversary and he responded predictably with a patronising elegance, like a cat toying with a mouse. *il Giornale.it* (29 July 2017) reported him listing some of De Maio's obvious weak points that he called his "*fictitious moralism*". He then concluded with a killer squash of the paw: "*Luigino* (little Luigi)".

La Stampa's 30 August website headline showed Renzi, Berlusconi and De Maio planning their September strategies. *M5S* aspire to give the electorate immediate voting access on national issues, and they have just been computer-hacked. Migration and the final structure of constitutional reform fuel much debate. The three main parties, *Pd*, *Fi* and *M5S* are almost level in opinion polls and the general election has to be held by Spring 2018. One hopes that politicians have been suitably refreshed and invigorated by their August holiday.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

QUAKES OF AUGUST

August is most people's holiday month. But the *M5S's* Luigi De Maio (Beppe Grillo's *Five Star Movement*) was on the road campaigning; as was Jeremy Corbyn. De Maio is their preferred candidate for Premier in the not unlikely chance that they win the Spring 2018 general election. Grillo is barred from standing for office because of a criminal conviction.

On 21 August a magnitude 3.6 earthquake struck the holiday island of Ischia, at a time when many people were outside taking their evening promenade. Two adults were killed and three small boys made international headlines when they were pulled alive from the rubble many hours later. On 24 August last year a magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck the Central Italian area around Amatrice, killing over 200 people and devastating several small towns. This was 1000 times stronger than the Ischia quake.

Ischia, in the Bay of Naples, is a volcanic island famous for its beauty and its thermal springs centred on the northern town of Casamicciola. In 1883 around 2,400 died there in a very severe quake. The area is vulnerable to seismic activity and is, of course, not far from Vesuvius and Pompei. August's quake hit the same town again.

The Italian press of 23 August not only reported the desperate coincidence of that day's Amatrice anniversary but were also full of headlines screaming about "*abusivismo*". The headline of *La Stampa* ran: *Ischia, the island capital of unregulated building (i.e. abusivismo), and homes built with substandard materials.*

La Repubblica and *La Stampa* ran long articles about the quake. Paolo Gallori's *La Repubblica* piece led with the serious question that has to be asked of a G8 member (i.e. Italy), accustomed to earthquakes, which doesn't prevent deaths and extensive damage after such a low-level shock. *La Stampa*

ran a headline that also pointed to the irony and "*paradox: Our engineers have helped the Japanese to make their houses earthquake-proof*".

The Government of the newly united Italy (1860) issued codes for antiseismic prevention after the Casamicciola 1883 quake. Good practice has obviously still not been put into effect over 100 years later. In April 2009 the L'Aquila earthquake killed 300 and made 60,000 homeless. There was evidence that lax building standards had contributed to the destruction there. Added to this was the hushing up of clear predictions of an impending quake. Subsequently six people were charged with giving "*inexact, incomplete and contradictory*" information about the dangers of a tremor.

L'Espresso of 23 August interviewed six people from the Amatrice area to see what had happened to them in the last year. Obviously the majority of buildings had not previously been made antiseismic. One school had collapsed even though it had supposedly been quake-proofed. Renzi's Government announced at the time that reconstruction would be "*swift and orderly*". But only about 8% of rubble has been removed and 2.4 million tons remain to be cleared. Someone said that it looks like Aleppo. There have been reports of reconstruction contracts being granted without proper tendering processes, so good practice is not being followed.

The *L'Espresso* subheading: *Bureaucratic blindness* introduced the story of Festine Dinushi, who used to be a carer. She still lives, one year on, in one of the civil protection's blue tents. Apparently she hasn't stopped crying since the quake. The family managed to find some possessions in the rubble and they stored them in their somewhat accessible basement. There have been two lesser quakes since the catastrophic one in August last year and their ruin was declared unsafe after the second quake in October.

However, with no warning to the family, their house was bulldozed and their stored possessions completely destroyed. "*I didn't even have time to take the white chandelier with the blue border, she whispered quietly*" to the interviewer.

Back to Ischia in the Province of Campania, and Vincenzo De Luca its *Partito Democratico (Pd)* Governor. Described as "colourful", he is a tough and cunning politician who has played a highly significant role in the management of the province, holding political power in different roles since 1993. He served as Mayor of Salerno (in Campania), was an MP and has been Governor since 2015. His Wikipedia entry lists 14 oddly insignificant awards. But they could have been included to balance 13 convictions for fraud, bribery, defamation, abuse of office and similar infringements. Many have been quashed subsequently for, the record says, lack of evidence. Unlike Beppe Grillo he has also managed to appeal successfully against being barred from political office.

An example: It was said that his request to small city Campania mayors to encourage a "yes" vote in the national constitutional reform referendum was no more than any leader would do. De Luca's rationale was that Campania badly needed continued Government financial support. It was said that De Luca had asked the mayors to send him a fax listing the numbers of estimated "yes" votes before the actual poll was held. No evidence can now be found for this. And in any event the vote in Campania went against De Luca's alleged vote buying and against Renzi's reforms.

In the last couple of years central Government have been very critical of De Luca's Campania for granting retrospective amnesties to unauthorised building works. *La Repubblica* of 23 August reported De Luca saying

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