

Labour Affairs

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The Leaving Of Livingstone

Ken Livingstone resigned from the Labour Party on 21 May after 50 years membership. At the time of his resignation he was suspended and under investigation by the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) for remarks he made about Hitler and Zionism (see LA editorial May 2018). His resignation was welcomed by Labour's Ruth Smeeth who tweeted "good riddance" and suggested he should have been expelled years ago for what she called "his despicable and hurtful attitude." The fact that Livingstone had been a leading opponent of racism in all of its forms for his entire political life cut no ice with her or any of her political friends in the party.

Livingstone was defiant to the end. In his short resignation statement he said, "I do not accept the allegation that I have brought the Labour Party into disrepute-nor that I am in any way guilty of antisemitism. I abhor antisemitism, I have fought it all my life and will continue to do so." On his remarks on Hitler and Zionism he said, "I also recognise that the way I made a historical argument has caused offence and upset in the Jewish community. I am truly sorry for that. Under Labour's new General Secretary I am sure there will be rapid action to expel anyone who genuinely has antisemitic views."

Pressure on Livingstone had been building up in the weeks before his resignation. Shadow Attorney General Sami Chakrabarti was reported as saying (Guardian 14 May) that she would consider leaving Labour's frontbench if Livingstone was not expelled from the party. This followed similar comments from other leading Labour critics in the parliamentary party. Had he not resigned it would have been difficult for the NEC to come to any other decision but expulsion. A fair hearing for Livingstone was sabotaged by a torrent of vitriol from his opponents. Rather than debate the issues raised by his comments they preferred to indulge in what can only be described as a witch hunt.

Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) played their part in demonising Livingstone as an antisemite. Labour MP Rupa Huq, a supporter of LFI, appeared on the BBC's Daily Politics on 22 May to comment on the resignation. Her support for LFI was not stated before she said that Livingstone "blotted his copy book with his bizarre obsession with Hitler." This was allowed to stand, leaving viewers no wiser about her opinion of the historical accuracy or otherwise of his remarks on Hitler and Zionism. It was a bizarre obsession with Hitler and that was that. There was nothing more to be said. But the LFI's Huq

and Smeeth were not alone in calling for Livingstone's expulsion. Many of his critics and those of Corbyn are listed as supporters of LFI.

Jewish leaders weighed in to the controversy claiming that Livingstone's resignation left the door open for his return to the party in the future. But Labour's NEC said the case for his suspension and possible expulsion would be reopened if he were to reapply for membership. No doubt satisfied that the pressure they had applied on Jeremy Corbyn to expel Livingstone had borne fruit, albeit through resignation, they nevertheless criticised Corbyn for his response that he was "sad to see him go." We get the feeling that Corbyn's critics within and without the party do not see Livingstone's resignation as the end of the matter.

While individual parliamentary supporters of LFI attacked Livingstone for his alleged antisemitic remarks and called for his expulsion from the party, the LFI's website adopted a less condemnatory attitude to Israel's military. In a tweet of 14 May, commenting on the killing by Israeli snipers of dozens of Palestinians and more than 1,000 injured, LFI heaped the blame entirely on Hamas. The tweet, which was removed the next day following widespread criticism and replaced by a

more circumspect version, read:

"Tragic events on the Gazan border; all civilian lives regrettable. Hamas must accept responsibility for these events. Their successful attempt to hijack peaceful protest as cover to attack Israeli border communities must be condemned by all who seek peace in the Middle East."

Just two parliamentary supporters, Catherine West and Tulip Siddiq, resigned from LFI on reading the tweet.

For all their high-mindedness, claiming the moral high ground, none of Livingstone's Labour critics can match his record as a politician. Over more than 35 years he was largely successful in changing the political climate within Labour and improving the lives of millions of Londoners. From his leadership of the Greater London Council (GLC) from 1981 to 1986, his tenure as Member of Parliament for Brent East from 1987 to 2001, to his two four-year terms as London Mayor from 2000 to 2008, his achievements were largely unparalleled in local and national politics.

Although it was ultimately unsuccessful, as GLC leader he introduced the popular Fares Fair Policy intended to cut transport costs for travellers within London and encourage greater use

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Contents

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| | |
|---|----|
| The Leaving Of Livingstone Editorial | 1 |
| Letter From New Zealand: the new Labour government by Feargus O'Raghallaigh | 17 |

Regular Features

| | |
|--|----|
| Parliament and World War One by Dick Barry | 4 |
| Views from across the Channel by Froggy | 9 |
| Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier by Michael Murray | 11 |
| Notes on the News by Gwydion M. Williams | 13 |
| Parliament Notes by Dick Barry | 19 |
| Orecchiette | 24 |

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of public transport, which would hopefully relieve road congestion in the capital. It was challenged by the Tory-run Bromley Borough Council, on the south east fringe of London. With the support of the Court of Appeal the policy was reversed. Livingstone was also a vocal critic of Prime Minister Thatcher's deeply unpopular Poll Tax, which he personally refused to pay, and her government's indifference to increasing unemployment. Constantly irritated by his criticism she abolished London's top tier of government in 1986.

The attempt to improve London transport as GLC leader was the prelude to Livingstone's work as Mayor of London. Among his achievements in his first four-year term were the congestion charge, initially unpopular but now regarded as a great success, the Oyster card, making travel easier and quicker, and free fares for under 11-year-olds. His ultimate ambition was to provide free travel for residents of London. He appointed the American Bob Kiley as Transport Commissioner to work out an alternative to the Labour government's introduction of the public-private partnership (PPP) to upgrade the London underground. Livingstone and Kiley argued that the upgrade should be done by public hands through a

public bond issue. With the odds stacked heavily against them the PPP went ahead, but it collapsed as a practical solution within a few years of its introduction in 2003. A vindication of Livingstone's opposition.

The late Tessa Jowell is credited with the successful bid to stage the Olympic Games in London in 2012. But it was Livingstone in 2002 who first came out in support, suggesting that they be located in the East End of London as a means of regenerating the run-down area. In his second four-year term as Mayor, working with Jowell, he continued to support London's bid to host the Olympics.

As London Mayor following Livingstone, Boris Johnson claimed the credit for the introduction of Boris Bikes, but it was Livingstone who first created the concept of cycle hire in the capital. The now successful congestion charge was extended westward to Kensington & Chelsea, against opposition from residents. Livingstone was not afraid to criticise foreign embassies who refused to pay the congestion charge, increasing his unpopularity with his Labour government

critics.

As London Mayor Livingstone was also successful in establishing and supporting cultural festivals, involving black and ethnic minorities, Irish, Gays, Lesbians and Transgenders. These celebrations by disparate groups helped to put London on the global map as a tolerant, vibrant city. He was initially mocked in some quarters for his support for these events but they are now widely seen as an important part of London life.

It is self-evident that Ken Livingstone made a massive contribution to the development of socialist policies within the Labour Party. In his resignation statement he said, "We desperately need an end to Tory rule, and a Corbyn-led government to transform Britain and end austerity." A view not shared by his Parliamentary Labour critics who are using antisemitism as a weapon to replace Corbyn with a leader more in tune with their support for the failed policies of the past. They must not be allowed to succeed.

Editorials and older articles at our website,

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

“WESTMEATH INDEPENDENT” (SEIZURE). 09 April 1918

Alfie Byrne (17/3/1882-13/3/1956). Irish Parliamentary Party member for Dublin Harbour 1915. Lost seat to Sinn Fein at 1918 general election.

Arthur Lynch (16/10/1861-25/3/1934). Irish Parliamentary Party member for Galway Borough 1901-1902. Clare West 1909-1918. Stood as Labour candidate in Battersea South at 1918 general election. Second in poll to the Unionist.

Henry Edward Duke, 1st Baron Merrivale (5/11/1855-20/5/1939). Unionist member for Plymouth 1900-1906. Exeter 1910-1918. Appointed Chief Secretary to Ireland 1916. resigned May 1918.

Mr. BYRNE I regret very much that the Chief Secretary is not here, as I desire to read a telegram I have just received from Ireland:

“On behalf of the workers, skilled and unskilled, the members of the Typographical Association, bookbinders, lithographers, etc., of the Athlone Printing Works Company, Limited, we ask you to enter a strong public protest against the shockingly cruel action of the Military Governor of Ireland, who last Friday morning seized with soldiers and police the company’s plant and flung out of employment in this starving Irish town over 100 workers, many of whom had dependent upon them large families of young children. The reason assigned was that one of the many publications printed by that firm contained a paragraph or report, unspecified, to which the authorities took exception. Eighty-five per cent, of the hands victimised were not employed directly or indirectly on the paper in respect of which the seizure was made, and the entire business closed down. The brutal

and callous conduct displayed in thus depriving a large body of workpeople of their means of subsistence should be made to ring throughout the labour world of the Kingdom. Is this the liberty for which men are laying down their lives?

(Signed)

*MICHAEL J. SMULLEN,
Secretary, Athlone Branch,
Typographical Association.”*

I would ask the Home Secretary if he would kindly see into this matter, and at the earliest possible moment, allow this printing establishment to resume its ordinary duties.

Mr. LYNCH I wish to add a few words—to what my hon. Friend has said because of what has taken place in county Clare where a paper called the “*Clare Champion*” was suppressed, and although that paper advocated the Sinn Fein policy—and I may say, in parenthesis, was always opposed to myself—yet looking at the part issues of that paper, and especially those immediately preceding the seizure of the plant, I was unable to find anything in the paper which could be reasonably held to justify such a measure. In the last issue I saw of the paper, the “*Clare Champion*” distinctly and formally repudiated pro-Germanism. In the same number, I believe, it argued against rebellion. Therefore, taking these two elements, which are not necessarily associated with Sinn Feinism, at all, and, according to the “*Clare Champion*,” are very seldom associated with Sinn Feinism, there is nothing left which could not form part of a perfectly constitutional movement. Therefore, as one who has been often attacked in this

paper, and who is consequently not naturally in sympathy with its aims, I beg to make a formal protest in this House to the Chief Secretary against their arbitrary proceeding, which tends to influence and embitter public feeling in county Clare, and to make the work of any kind of reasonable Government more and more difficult.

There is only one other small matter, which I will refer to again and again if something satisfactory is not done. That is in respect of an answer which was given to me in this House over a matter which is in itself relatively unimportant, but which therefore, for that very reason, perhaps, shows the want of wisdom with which Ireland is being administered. I asked in this House if school girls usually resident in county Clare require passports in going to and from school if they leave the county? I was assured not. Since that time I have had several letters from Clare, from the parents of these girls, who tell me that passports are required for a schoolgirl with her hair down her back—I mention this detail to give an indication of age—who leaves Clare to go to the neighbouring place of Limerick, and that not only are these passports required, but that the police and military officers, in their supposed duty of ascertaining whether the girls have been provided with passports, are rude and often insulting in their manner. I would like to know how it came about that an answer from the Government Bench was given entirely denying that such a state of things existed? Are the authorities really informed, or, if they are not informed, do the military exercise their great

and almost unlimited powers in Ireland with an utter disregard not merely of public opinion in Ireland, not merely in violation of elementary right and justice, but with an absolute disregard even of common-sense? That is all I will say at this moment because, perhaps, the Chief Secretary has been a little taken by surprise, but I shall return again and again to this question unless this particular cause of unrest is dealt with.

Mr. PRINGLE I desire to ask the Noble Lord the Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury a question. Stories have been going round among Members of the House that tomorrow a time-table for the discussion of the new Military Service Bill is to be the first Order of the day, and there is some doubt whether it is to be taken tomorrow or the following day. It will be for the convenience of some hon. Members to know tonight, before they leave the House, whether the Second Reading is to be the first Order tomorrow; whether the Government contemplate getting the Second Reading without suspending the Eleven o'clock Rule or by suspending the Eleven o'clock Rule; and whether a time-table is to be proposed?

Lord EDMUND TALBOT (Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury) The Government have decided, in response to the appeal made to them today by the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, that they should give a longer time for the discussion of this Bill, and that time will now be extended until Tuesday next week. Tomorrow the Government hope to take the Second Reading of this Bill and to get it by eleven o'clock without suspending the Eleven o'clock Rule. On Thursday the Government will bring in a guillotine Motion, of which the details will be put down later.

Mr. PRINGLE Will that be on the Paper to-morrow?

Lord E. TALBOT No, on the following day. The Committee stage will be proceeded with on Thursday, as soon as the guillotine Motion has been disposed of.

The CHIEF SECRETARY for IRELAND (Mr. Duke) I was not in the House at the time the questions were raised with regard to the newspapers in Ireland, but the hon. Member (Mr. Byrne) has handed me the telegram relating to the newspaper at Athlone and the plant of the printing business. I can only say that any suppressions of newspapers at Athlone or in county Clare which have taken place are in respect of the publication in the newspapers of seditious matter—not an individual incidental publication of seditious matter, but a systematic publication of matter tending to incite disaffection. I have not the details in respect of the “Clare Champion” and the “Westmeath Independent.” The matter the hon. and learned Gentleman raised in regard to the printing establishments of Athlone is, of course, entirely separate. I am quite sure there is no intention on the part of the military authorities by the seizure of a newspaper to put unoffending printers out of work. Having been brought to my notice, I will have inquiries made. The hon. Member (Mr. Lynch) made a complaint in respect of what he called the requirement of permits and the attendance of children at school. He said some answer had been given from this bench which was contrary to the facts. I was not aware that any question had ever been asked in regard to the issue of permits for going in and out of county Clare. Certainly it was not asked of me.

Mr. LYNCH A question was put down, but it was not reached. I afterwards found it answered

among the Written Answers.

Mr. DUKE Probably it was asked shortly before the House rose, when the duties of my office required my presence in Dublin. I was not aware that it had been asked. I really do not precisely know how the issue and the points raised would affect the transit of children from, for instance, Clare into Limerick. One of the irksome inconveniences of the system of the creation of a special military area such as Clare has been declared is that permits may be required for passage in and out of the county; but I cannot imagine that there is any desire that children who are going to and from school should be made the subject of a requisition for a permit, but if the hon. Member desires I will inquire about it. He has called public attention to it, and I have no doubt it will receive the attention of the officers. From the criticisms I have heard coming from the county itself, the conclusion I draw is that Clare is distinguished generally for remarkable urbanity and mildness, and the officers are on uncommonly good terms with the local population.

Mr. LYNCH With regard to the seizure of the “Clare Champion,” the right hon. Gentleman says that has been done on account of some seditious publication. Who decides whether any publication is seditious, and is it ever referred either to him or to his own office?

Mr. DUKE Certainly; in many cases the seditious publications are referred to my office, and in some they come under my particular notice. There is no general scheme of interference with newspapers because they are newspapers. Where certain newspapers are published regularly and distinctly with the object of spreading sedition and provoking disaffection, and as part of a revolutionary propaganda, I

cannot shut my eyes to the facts. I do not say the "Clare Champion" has come within that category. I do not profess to have details with regard to the suspension of the "Clare Champion."

Mr. BYRNE The right hon. Gentleman says 85 per cent. of the work which the machinery used to do has now been seized. If the machinery is taken away altogether it deprives the employees of all their other work which they used to do outside the newspaper work. They have taken the machinery with the intention of suppressing the newspaper, but the newspaper only represented 15 per cent. of the work done by these men.

Mr. DUKE The effective mode of suppression of the edition of a seditious newspaper is to withdraw the material and operative parts of the plant. That has been done in London. It is very often the case that the publisher of a seditious paper is a prosperous jobbing printer. If you are to stop the publication of this seditious paper by withdrawing the operative parts of his printing plant, and unhappily there are people who are not affected by the sedition, but who suffer by the suppression, I am sorry, but they must bring the inconvenience of it home to the person who is really at fault. I am afraid that, in the absence of other or more effective means of preventing the publication of a seditious newspaper, the loss and inconvenience which innocent persons may suffer must be attributed to those who devote their machinery and their time to mischievous purposes.

Mr. T. M. HEALY Surely there is sufficient intelligence on the part of the military authorities to know the difference between a printing press and a newspaper press! Mr. Chapman contracts for the printing of the jurors' lists, and the printing press for

job printing is a wholly different article from the printing press for a newspaper. Surely the military authorities ought to have sufficient intelligence to know that the producing of newspapers has to be done on one kind of press and that you prepare jurors' lists, bills, etc., on a machine of a wholly different character! To make your objection to what appears in his newspaper an excuse for ruining an individual without notice is wholly wrong. Even under the Coercion Act of Hicks-Beach, in 1875, notice was given, and under the Defence of the Realm Act the Preamble recites that as little interference as possible with property should be made. It is intolerable that under the Defence of the Realm Act these gentlemen, on the pretence of stopping a newspaper which represents only one-tenth, apparently only one-hundredth, part of this man's business, should sweep away the whole of his business without notice. I do not think the English newspaper illustration given by the right hon. Gentleman is a true comparison.

I do not know that there was attached to the "Globe" newspaper or to the "Morning Post" a huge, well-known printing business or job printing works. I do not think it would be tolerated by people in this country that without notice you reach this state of things, that you destroy the whole of a man's business, and act punitively as regards his business because you take offence at a particular branch of it. You expect people to give their lives and blood, and you act in this way. The right course would have been to give notice to the editor: "The course you are taking is a perilous one, and if we have to act we shall not be able to distinguish between your job printing works and your other works. Be on your guard." I do not think that a gentleman whom I know to be a Conservative

and a Protestant should have his business ruined because he may have a fiery editor. Many newspaper proprietors, I agree, do not exercise sufficient supervision over the whole of their business. It is useless for the right hon. Gentleman to compare London and Athlone. A London printer who loses his job can walk into some other employment, but that is not the case in Athlone, and there is no comparison between the two cases. I say respectfully that the right hon. Gentleman has not been criticised severely at all in connection with newspapers. I have not read these newspapers. As regards some of them, I did not even know that they were in existence, but what the right hon. Gentleman says is, "Because you have a corn on your foot I will cut off the whole leg."

"WESTMEATH INDEPENDENT" (SEIZURE). 11 April 1918

Mr. HEALY Can the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House give us any information concerning the Athlone printers who have ceased work? I may mention that the gentleman whose property has been seized has two sons out of three at the front,

Mr. DUKE I have had no notice of a question about Athlone today.

Mr. HEALY We raised this matter twice on Tuesday, and also on the Adjournment of the House. There are 100 men whose families are almost without bread. Surely it is not too much to ask, in the case of a gentleman whose property was seized without notice, whose two sons are serving at the front, and who is a law-abiding citizen, why the jobbing business portion of his premises should not be allowed to be continued?

Mr. DUKE As I understand it, this paper was seized because of the publication of incitement to

sedition and disaffection, which is a very unfortunate course for a law-abiding citizen to take. As far as innocent persons are suffering from that action, I have been in communication with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in Ireland, and I have every reason to believe that, as soon as it can be done in the interests of public security, some means will be found, subject to proper regulation, under which the jobbing part of the business will be resumed.

Mr. HEALY I have not said a word about the newspaper, but I would remind the right hon. Gentleman that the London "Globe," which was seized, was allowed to reappear within three days. I have asked him upon what grounds he has discontinued the business premises of a man who has two sons out of three at the front, seeing that the business premises had no connection whatever with the publication of the newspaper?

Mr. DUKE I have answered that. It must be understood that it does not follow because a man who publishes sedition in a newspaper has also a job printing press that you can separate the job printing press from the newspaper press.

An HON. MEMBER Why not?

Mr. DUKE Why not! There are some parts of Ireland which are habitually flooded with numerous leaflets inciting to sedition.

CONSCRIPTION (IRELAND). 15 April 1918

Mr. DEVLIN At Question Time to-day I raised the question of the tremendously intense feeling that exists in Ireland with regard to the Conscription proposals of His Majesty's Government. I ventured not to refer to the blaze of indignation that exists all over the greater part of Ireland, but to the terrific uprising of violent feeling

that exists in the city of Belfast. I am delighted that we are privileged to-night to have amongst us the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Trinity College. The right hon. Gentleman the Member for Trinity College regards the city of Belfast as the political Ark of the Covenant, and he regards its citizens as absolutely sacrosanct. I regret that the right hon. Gentleman, who is the leader of the Unionists of that great city, does not feel called upon to discharge, as he could much more effectively do, the function which I am compelled to carry out, namely, to bring to the attention of the Chief Secretary for Ireland the bitter and intense feeling that exists with regard to Conscription. I asked the Chief Secretary, at Question Time, whether he was aware that a great meeting of citizens was held yesterday to protest against the application of this Bill to Ireland, and that this meeting was held on the Custom House Steps. I ought to explain to the House of Commons that the Custom House Steps is a platform from which great Imperial and Orange orations are delivered every Sunday afternoon. I may say for myself that I have always found it not only more healthy but more convenient to be a considerable distance away on Sunday afternoon; therefore when you hear of a meeting at the Customs House Steps you may take it for granted that at that meeting there will be nothing but professions of Protestantism and declarations of loyalty to the Constitution. If, in these circumstances, this vast body of loyalists, 10,000 or 20,000 strong, gathered in this hallowed spot, sacred to the memory of William of Orange, there is no one who will admit more than the right hon. and learned Gentleman opposite that that is a very significant circumstance.

Sir E. CARSON I have never

been at a meeting there myself.

Mr. DEVLIN Yes; but the right hon. Gentleman is not an Ulsterman, and I am. The right hon. Gentleman is not a Belfast man, and I am. The right hon. Gentleman has never found himself among the *oi polloi* of the Tory party in Belfast. He was always leading the hierarchy there, because I have always held that the right hon. Gentleman's Unionist following largely sprang from the rich and the wealthy classes there. It is the poor and democratic classes who generally gather at the Custom House Steps, and the right hon. Gentleman has never once gone there. I am inclined to make a sporting offer to the right hon. Gentleman. For the first time in our lives we were agreed this afternoon upon the atrocity of His Majesty's Government. We were agreed that they were tricksters, dodgers, and could not keep their promises. Nobody could trust them. We were agreed, we Irish, the Irish represented by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Trinity College, the superior Irish, and the inferior Irish, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for East Mayo, that the Government were engaged in a conspiracy to trick both his followers and ours. I venture to suggest that, as the right hon. Gentleman has never spoken at the Custom House Steps, and neither have I, and as the citizens of Belfast gathered there, nearly 20,000 strong, last Sunday—[**An HON. MEMBER:** "Oh!"]—the hon. Gentleman is an Englishman or a Scotsman. If the right hon. Gentleman, who is not an Ulsterman, but is an Irishman, does not know anything about the Custom House Steps, how does the hon. Gentleman know? Since the right hon. Gentleman and myself are agreed that there was a great outpouring of national protest from the citizens of Belfast against this Bill that has been imposed upon the people of

Ulster, who are as violently against it as the people of any other part of Ireland, his position is only equal to mine in this respect, that we are both representatives of Irish constituencies, we ought to take the views of our Constituencies, and we both ought to go down to the Custom House Steps next Sunday, repeat the speeches we have delivered here, and get an Ireland united.

I pass from the right hon. Gentleman and I come to the Chief Secretary. The right hon. Gentleman has never once stated in the House that he was in favour of the application of this measure of Conscription to Ireland. We have had many Amendments discussed here affecting Ireland. Many interrogations have been put to members of the Treasury Bench for information as to the method by which this Bill is to be applied to Ireland and the administrative machinery by which it is to be carried into operation. There was nobody to answer. The Chief Secretary, I do not believe, ever was consulted about this. This Bill has been imposed upon us by Lord Milner and by the Foreign Secretary. Lord Milner is not here. Lord Curzon is not here. The Foreign Secretary does not want to be here. The Chief Secretary was not here. The reason he is here now is because he has only four minutes in which to answer the questions I put. I want to ask the right hon. Gentleman, who is the only man in this House outside the representation of Ireland who knows anything about the matter: does the Government intend to apply Conscription to Ireland in face of the growing volume of public opinion, and in view of the positive protests of the people of all sections, creeds, and opinions in every part of Ireland and in every province; is he prepared to advise the Government for once in its existence to do the right thing and withdraw this Clause? I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman (Sir E. Carson) in what

he said that the Government never intend to put it into operation. It has been put there for the benefit of the battalions of grandfathers who are to be dragged in under the new age proposals which are indicated in this scheme. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to state here whether, in view of the information from Southern, Western, Central, and now Northern Ireland—which will make its voice much more bitterly felt as matters develop—whether he proposes now to advise his Friends in the Cabinet to withdraw this proposal, and restore peace to the country, and let us settle down to our ordinary business and to a true realisation of the situation?

The CHIEF SECRETARY for IRELAND (Mr. Duke) I had notice from the hon. Member that he desired to learn from me what information I had in respect of a meeting which was described in very picturesque terms, and said to have taken place in Dublin. I took such steps as I could to obtain information about the meeting, which took place on the Custom House Steps. I have had

no experience of Sunday afternoon meetings on the Custom House Steps. Although I am credited with a greater knowledge of Ireland than some hon Members, I confess that I have not been present at any meetings on the Custom House Steps, and the only information I have is a speech by the hon. Member opposite, reported in the Irish papers, and which was the preliminary to a meeting to be held on a future day. That is the only information I have. I have very varied information as to the opinions of various sections of the populace in Ireland, but they are certainly not of the united character which enables me to say to the House that I could make any definite recommendations to my colleagues in the Government on the subject of this Bill. The hon. Member will bear in mind that one of the functions of a member of the Privy Council is not to disclose outside the advice which is given inside.

Problems 30

Jews as 'Collateral Damage' in the Fall of the British Empire.

Part Two: The 13th Chancellor

The British government could have contained Hitler without a World War, but acted mainly from selfish power-political calculations.

The British ruling class were indifferent to the fate of German Jews

Karl Lueger – Moderate Antisemitism as the root of Christian Democracy

Why many Italian Jews supported Mussolini's Fascism

The '*Protocols of Zion*' were boosted by Henry Ford and by the London *Times*.

On-line, <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/hitler-the-13th-chancellor/>

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



Macron's success

In the media Macron enjoys favourable reports, flattering photos, and an absence of criticism. His visits abroad, his reception of foreign heads of state at Versailles (Putin) or the Champs Elysée's Bastille Day parade (Trump in 2017) are all occasions for pageantry almost à la British.

He is the first head of state in the world accorded a state visit to Washington, where he was called 'His Excellency Emmanuel Macron'. He puts France on the stage internationally. He is there militarily in Syria and in Africa. At the end of May he was in St Petersburg, talking man to man with Putin once again.

He is active in Europe; Angela Merkel has awarded him the Charlemagne Prize for his work; in his acceptance speech in the city of Aachen (Aix la Chapelle) he lectured the Germans on their economic and financial behaviour.

He is dynamic at home with a vigorous programme of reforms, which he can push through Parliament with his large majority. The opponents to the reform are hopelessly divided. The four railway unions engaged in a 3-month strike disagree on strategy. The CFDT does not want the opening of the railways to competition, but thinks that it is inevitable, and that in consequence it is vital to negotiate guarantees for the railway workers who will find themselves out of a job if they do not transfer over to new companies that will take over certain routes.

Since the SNCF will compete for these routes, probably in the guise of one of its many subsidiaries, it is essential that it is prevented from engaging in social dumping by paying the employees less than those directly employed by the SNCF. Some CGT members call the CFDT

a bunch of traitors for holding this position; this is the usual jibe of the old Communist Party (CP) left: 'the CFDT spend their time negotiating the weight of the chains' (instead of refusing to be slaves in chains in the first place).

On 9th May the percentage of strikers had gone down to 17% of the workforce; this figure is an average over office and rolling stock employees, the latter being more involved and with a greater impact. At the beginning (3rd April) the average was 22%, with 66% among drivers. The unions decided mid-May to have a referendum of railway employees: "do you agree with the reform, yes or no?". Parliament voted the reform, by 454 votes to 80 and 29 abstentions. The 80 who voted against were the CP, the 'New Left' (*la Nouvelle Gauche* is a parliamentary group) and Melenchon's outfit (*France Insoumise*).

In the event 60% of railway workers took part in the ballot, and over 94% opposed the reform. This was an answer to Macron saying that the majority of railway workers approved the reform.

The leader of CGT *cheminots* (the railways workers) has been in place for just over a year. Son and grandson of railway workers, he is a full-time union official since 2005; he worked in the railways from 2000 to 2005.

Looking at the websites of the four main railway unions, the CGT one is not immediately useful for information for the general public. It is the biggest union in terms of numbers (it gathered 37% of votes in the last professional elections, as opposed to 21% for Unsa and 17% for Sud and 14% for CFDT); however its dossier on the reform concerns the 2014 reform, not the most recent one.

The CFDT website is the most useful to the general public. Several

leaders of the railway employees explain clearly on video the main points of the strike: and the clearest is, that the famous debt of the SNCF, the supposed origin of the reform, is due to government policy since the 80s of favouring High-Speed lines at the expense of ordinary lines. The TGVs necessitated the building of a whole new network of tracks and installations, since high speed trains need new special tracks to reach maximum speed. All this was financed by borrowing, and entailed a lack of investment on the maintenance of most traffic, and in particular regional and commuter traffic. In comparison to the costs involved, the wages and pensions bills are small beer and the end of the railway status not the solution.

The CFDT website also mentioned one actual example of what happens with the opening to competition.

A new tramway/train links two suburbs of Paris, allowing passengers to commute from one to the other without going via the centre of Paris. It is line 11, a tramway able to travel as fast as a train. It is not run by the SNCF but by subsidiary of the SNCF, called Transkeo. Its employees do not have railway worker status. There are no collective agreements, and they are paid less than their SNCF colleagues. They cost 40% less than employees on other lines, also because they have more responsibilities, that is, the driver is also 'station master'. This is, as the CFDT points out, an example of what happens with 'opening to competition'. It may be that with the strike and negotiations this sort of social dumping will no longer happen.

Government concessions

The government has made some concessions; the Prime Minister has agreed to meet the unions;

following the leaking of minutes of a meeting of railway bosses discussing privatisation, the minister of transport has vowed to legislate against any privatisation. There are guarantees that workers finding themselves employed by competitors of the SNCF will keep their status. Finally the government has agreed to take over part of the SNCF debt, so that it's now on the government's book. All the unions including the CFDT are calling for a continuation of the movement, and a demonstration outside the Senate for its debate of the reform law on 29th May.

25% of railway employees belong to a union, as opposed to the national average of 7% unionisation. Still, however strong the railway workers' case, the balance of power is with the government; the weakness of street demonstrations indicates that the government is entitled to feel that they, the government, will win in the end.

Students

The government is acting with extreme but discrete firmness against student occupation of universities.

Like the railway workers, they are protesting against a measure that will affect not them personally, but those who will come after them. (The reform of the statute of employment in the railways will only apply to new entrants.)

In the same way the students are protesting against a reform that will affect present day school students. They will no longer be able to enter university on the strength of their passing the baccalaureate; they will make a list of choices and be offered places, or not. Students have occupied universities since March. These occupations have been cleared one by one by riot police, operating in the early hours of the morning. The government is making sure this movement is not coordinating or gathering momentum. And nowhere do you see headlines about 'police state' or 'police brutality'. Macron has the media on his side, as we said.

So far the actions against Macron have come from the last remnant of an organised workforce, who know what union power means, but who are isolated and divided. A little bribing of the population also helps: Macron

has abolished one local tax; initially only the less well-off were to be exempted, now it's everybody. The consequence is that local authorities will have to cut services, but still, it's money in your pocket in the short term.

What to make of the publicity around his long weekend with his wife in the fort of Brégançon (the official retreat of presidents since 1968) on the South coast? On Europe 1 radio the news followed a piece on the Cannes festival, where the red carpet was women only. Macron and his wife were in Brégançon incognito, but the local population had forwarded gifts to their address, and had been assured that the couple would receive them. Ten minutes later on a different radio station, the news was that 'crowds normally assemble round the fort when the president is at home, but not on this occasion. Times change.'

Demonstrations

A series of demonstrations have taken place in April and May; the Northern '*France Insoumise*' deputy François Ruffin on 5 May organised a 'Fête à Macron' (it's a pun: a *fête* is a party, but '*faire la fête à X*' means to beat him up.) After marches on 19th and 22nd, various political groups and associations organised what they forecast as 'a human tidal wave' on 26 May; 280,000 people marched spread over 80 towns, with 80,000 in Paris. These are very small numbers; the prime minister made fun of the 'low tide' and the tape of Mélenchon calling on 5th May for this tidal wave is played over and over on the radio.

People are worried about employment and security; they see big changes taking place; whole areas of activity shut down altogether years ago, and now many factories are delocalised, leaving millions with no prospect of work, unless it's low paid, part-time and unqualified. But people also know this is happening in other European countries and in America; it's not Macron's fault. They also know that this 'opening of the SNCF to competition' is demanded by the EU, and again that's not directly Macron's fault. Macron can appear as the man to steer France through this uncharted territory.

News in brief

England is the model in all things across the Channel: their latest good deed is that they ban plastic straws! They also permit abortion, including in Northern Ireland, according to a map in *Le Monde*. If you had any doubts, and why would you, you could hover your mouse over Britain on the map and you would find out that's not the case.

https://abonnes.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2016/10/06/en-europe-six-pays-interdisent-l-avortement_5009296_4355770.html

If you click on all European countries one after the other you find that most allow abortion up to 12 weeks, some up to 14 weeks, and only Britain and the Netherlands allow it up to 24 weeks.

The *banlieues* have not figured prominently in the headlines recently in term of riots for example. Macron commissioned a report on the *banlieues* from ex minister Jean-Louis Borloo; launching it at the Elysée Palace on 22nd May, Macron said 'What do two white males who don't live in these places know about them anyway?' This was a flippant remark which might come back to haunt him.

Maryam Pougetoux, Muslim president of the student union UNEF at the university Paris-IV (Sorbonne university), goes about her duties wearing a headscarf. Is prejudice diminishing in France, at least in some places? Interior Minister Gérard Collomb said Ms Pougetoux's appearance in a hijab was a "provocation" that he found "shocking". But the student union itself apparently is fine with it. Students are perhaps not so daft after all.

For number of railway union members:

<https://f-origin.hypotheses.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/2536/files/2015/03/andosyndiquessncf2013-atelier-g.pdf>

Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier

by Michael Murray

murraymicha@gmail.com

Facebook: Michael Murray London- a commentary/digest of political and general interest news for busy people.

Dictionary definition of foot soldier: "...a dedicated low-level follower."

In this issue:

A word on the May Local Elections and Labour's future electoral prospects

"If asked to predict the result I'd say, the relentless attacks on the Labour leaderships will take its toll on the turnout, in the Tory marginals - and in the hitherto Labour strongholds. And on the morale of the foot soldiers. If my own state of mind about what is happening in the Labour Party reflects the thinking - and action - of the wider party then we could be in for a disappointing result. I hope I'm proven wrong." (*Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier.*" May 2018)

The results of the May Local Elections were the subject of contradictory verdicts - in the nature of the old teleological conundrum: is the glass half full or half empty? To summarise the result: Labour came out of the contest with 2,350 councillors from the 150 local authorities (an increase of 77 over last time out) the Tories finished with 1,332 (a decrease of 33). On the crucial issue of councils won, Labour came out with the same overall number, while the Tories lost 3. While

Labour didn't win their much-publicized targeted majority in Wandsworth they nevertheless gained 7 seats while the Conservatives lost 8. With regard to gaining overall control: Labour came within a few hundred votes of winning a majority there. Labour's performance was noticeably poor in wards with large Jewish "populations, which was particularly costly for the party in Barnet, a marginal the party hoped to gain." "The recent anti-Semitism scandal thus looks to have damaged Labour at the polls, and to have played a significant role in the failure to gain control of London's most marginal council." *Guardian*, 5-May-2018.

Overall, it's probably true to say that what the psephologists call the "anti-incumbent" swing to the Opposition, while not absent, as some wanted to claim, it was muted. The BBC projected, from the local election results, that Labour would have gained 283 seats to the Conservatives' 280. A win, certainly. But not a sufficient majority on which to launch a ground-breaking political programme. And, again, as a Corbyn foot soldier, I ask: what would

the result have been if the Party was united - or at least not publicly disunited - on Salisbury, Russia, Syria - and anti-Semitism?

One of the most interesting observations made during the month, on the Local Election results, was made by Robert Ford, Professor of Politics, Manchester University. "The Tories are on the wrong side of democratic trends," he wrote. The steep age gradient seen in 2017 General Election patterns were represented in the Local Election results: "The Conservatives advanced by up to 10 points in areas with the most pensioners, but there was a swing to Labour in areas with the most voters under 35.... they solidified their grip on Leave-voting rural and small-town parts of England with large numbers of older white voters with low education levels. Class politics was once again turned upside down: the Tory vote share increased by over 10 points in the wards with the highest share of people doing routine manual work, or who left school with no qualifications, but flat-lined in places with the most middle-class professionals and fell in places with the

most graduates.” Guardian, 5-May-2018

Looking at the results another way: Labour are on the right side of the demographic trend and the Labour leadership is least damaged by what can be seen in the Brexit debacle as an existential “identity” crisis centred on the “left behind” in England. This crisis is more a product of neo-liberal driven social and economic change than a psychological “stasis,” as media commentators such as James O’Brien of LBC like to explain it. An obvious lesson from the election results is that Labour needs to focus even more on organizing rural and small-town England and addressing the age and educational divides. It has made a great start with the 2017 Election Manifesto. The Party has put enough distance between itself and the austerity-lite political economics of Blairism to be in a position to offer real solutions to Britain’s post-industrial, under resourced economy and society. However, the continuance of the Remain-Leave dichotomy of Brexit Britain remains the principal stumbling block to any significant breakthrough in Labour’s electoral prospects. This is underlined by the following key statistic. Conservatives advanced by an average of 13 percentage points in authorities which recorded a 60%+ vote for

Leave and all of the four Tory council gains came in strong leave areas. (Richard Ford, op cit).

A year ago, in the run-up to the Labour Party Annual Conference, the New Statesman carried the headline: “Labour’s Decision Not To Debate Brexit Shows Momentum’s Power.” Now we are seeing “sections” of the Momentum leadership, while stating their support for the Labour leadership on Brexit, calling for it to be discussed at the 2018 Annual

Conference, in September. In this they are echoing right wing and centrist organizations which have been demanding the same thing. While the Cabinet - at this dangerously late stage in the Brexit process - remain at sixes and sevens, the end-game is still as clear as mud, the public mind as polarised as ever, the media ready to exploit to the Nth degree the differences within Labour on Brexit - what, as George Galloway is wont to say - can possibly go wrong?

Brendan Clifford on the Russian Revolution

"Two interconnected events that happened 100 years ago this Fall have been affecting the course of world affairs profoundly ever since. The Russian Revolution set out to destroy Capitalism, and Britain, the main force of Capitalism in the world, awarded Palestine, which it had just conquered, to the Jews as the site of a Jewish state under British Imperial hegemony if they colonised it.

"The Russian Revolution, which threatened the survival of Capitalism, was widely regarded amongst leaders of the capitalist world as being the work of an international Jewish conspiracy. That is how Winston Churchill saw it...

" Jews were deeply embedded in German life, both economically and culturally in 1914, so much so that in the British (and Home Rule Irish) war mania they were treated as Germans. The immediate purpose of the Balfour Declaration was to alienate Jews from Germany and establish a German/Jewish antagonism. In that project it was all too successful."

On-line at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/brendan-clifford-on-the-russian-revolution-1/>

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

USA – Land of the Freely Self-Harming

“The average American has a relatively high income, that of a person in a nominally rich country. Only his income does not go very far. Most of it is eaten up by attempting to afford the basics of life... The average American is constantly living right at the edge of ruin—one paycheck away from penury, one emergency away from losing it all.

“But this isn’t true for America’s peers. In Europe, Canada, and even Australia, society invests in all these things—and the costs of basic necessities societies don’t provide are regulated. For example, I pay \$50 dollars for broadband and TV in London—but \$200 for the same thing in New York—yet in London, I get vastly more and better media for my money... That’s regulation at work. And when basic goods like healthcare or elderly care or education are provided and managed at a social scale, that is when they are cheapest, and often of the best quality, too. Hence, healthcare costs far less in London, Paris, or Geneva—and life expectancy is longer, too.

“So if you are earning \$50k in America, it is a very different thing than earning \$50k in France, Germany, or Sweden—in America, you must pay steeply for the basics of life, for basic necessities. Thus, incomes stretch much further in other countries, which enjoy a vastly higher quality of life, even though people there earn roughly the same amount, because they pay vastly less for basic necessities. Americans are rich, but only nominally—their money doesn’t buy nearly as

much as their peers does, where it matters and counts most, for the basics of life.

“What happens when societies don’t understand all the above? Well, a strange thing has happened to the American economy. While it’s true that things like TVs and Playstations have gotten cheaper, the costs of the basics of life have skyrocketed. All the things that really elevate people’s quality of life—healthcare, finance, education, transport, housing, and so on—have come to consume such a large share of the average household’s income that they have little left to save, invest, or spend on anything else. And what’s worse, while the basics of life have seen massive inflation, wages and incomes (not to mention savings and benefits and safety nets and opportunities) for most have stagnated. The result is an economy—and a society—that’s collapsing.”¹

The faults are now widely admitted, though not by Tories intent on inflicting the same social evils on Britain. Fixing them is another matter.

The New Right were ‘economic quietists’. Beginning with Reagan and Thatcher, they claimed that it was impossible for the state to do anything useful, except in a small number of cases. By an amazing coincidence, these are just those where intervention serves the selfish interest of the Overclass. Such as bailing out speculative finance during the crisis of 2008.

But 1960s radicalism gave many people a deep suspicion of *all* state power. Radicals were at odds with existing state power on many issues – sex, hierarchy, drugs, war and in the USA military

conscription. They foolishly defined this as the state opposing ‘Freedom’, seen as a metaphysical entity whose meaning was obvious. So talk of lower taxes and a smaller state won many ex-radicals over to right-wing causes. Has kept them there, despite a failure of the economic promises. And ex-radical demands for social liberalism have largely been delivered. Authentic conservatives have let the New Right herd them like cattle.

Thankfully, the younger generation are learning better.

In Iceland, the State Does Its Job

“From Neoliberal Ruins To Recovery: Iceland Is Real Poster-Boy...”

“The neoliberal critique of the welfare state has turned out to be mere propaganda, without much substance in reality.

“As a matter of fact, the Nordic model is the only type of society, forged in the ideological conflicts of the 20th century, which has withstood the test of globalised competition in the 21st century with flying colours.

“Communism has been relegated to the dustbin of history. And unbridled capitalism of the neoliberal variety is lurching from one crisis to another; and only survives for the time being after the biggest rescue operation in history by the state, where it remains in intensive care, awaiting its fate.

“The facts speak for themselves. No matter which criteria we apply, the Nordic countries, without exception, are to be found in the top rank...”

“A well known Finnish social

democrat asked the audience if they knew which countries topped the international list for lowest taxes? The answer was the failed states of the world. Haiti came top. It has next to no taxes. It has also next to no education, no healthcare, no infrastructure and – conspicuously – no economic growth. And no hope. This explains why taxes are the price we all have to pay for living in a civilized society...

“Why did Iceland recover sooner and more decisively than most others? Here are some of the major reasons:

“Since this was a systemic bankruptcy, major creditors (e.g. Deutsche Bank) simply had to write off their loans, and sold their claims on the after-market at fire-sale prices...

“The left-wing government rejected the proscribed austerity package and adopted instead some fiscal stimulus (e.g. through a more progressive tax system).”²

In Iceland, the rich were made to pay. The economy did OK.

But Moderate Socialists should not repeat the New Right lie that Communism failed. They should say that in Europe, it failed to move on when a lot of its original demands were met. And the total state control of Stalin’s Soviet Union and Mao’s China was superior to the Classical Capitalism that existed up until the 1920s and fell apart in the 1930s. It did better than many Western countries in the 1950s and 1960s.

The overall success of the West’s Mixed Economy was impressive.³ There were naturally calls for reform. But what actually happened in the Soviet Bloc was a sad botch.

Soviet thinkers claiming to be Marxists revived the Adam Smith notion that ‘markets know best’. But wanted a state-rigged market where selfish desires competed for government-defined rewards.⁴ They also undermined the morality

of the system by declaring Stalin criminal, but ignoring the obvious continuity between Lenin and Stalin. It was Lenin who by stages criminalised all forms of opposition. Everyone including Trotsky helped massacre the Kronstadt Rebels in 1921.

Serious Leninist reform movements existed, but failed in Europe. The mostly-Slovak leaders of the Prague Spring might have made the Mixed Economy a world norm. They were crushed by the Soviet invasion of 1968, and that was the start of the decline of the Soviet system. The ideology wilted first, and the economy followed.

After Mao’s death, China went from total state control to a Mixed Economy where the state is much more powerful and arbitrary than in the West. Authoritarian both on social and economic matters. And not repudiating Mao, whose successes were much larger and more decisive than his mistakes.

(Western critics carefully avoid mentioning overall economic growth under Mao. The best available data says he tripled the economy. Matched global growth-rates, in the face of US trade embargos and Soviet hostility from the 1960s.⁵ They also never mention that Chinese life expectancy under Mao was much better than for most poor countries, and no worse than average during the crisis following the Great Leap Forward.)

China’s successful economy forces capitalists to obey rules and serve the public welfare.

Few of us would want China’s authoritarian social and economic controls, any more than we’d want China’s frequently-applied death penalty, including for rape and drug smuggling. But history suggests that Moderate Socialists do best when they concede that harsh measures work, and just suggest they can offer a softer and more tolerant alternative. When they recognise, maybe,

that moderation does not work until you have raised up several new generations convinced that your own particular values are ‘the normal’ that they should be keeping without coercion. And that trying to Westernise Iraq at the point of a gun was certain to push people just the opposite way.

Guns Before Royals

The day before Britain’s much-hyped Royal Wedding, there were two separate school shootings in the USA.

Seven more dead and six wounded in a further eight incidents since the well-reported massacre of 17 school students on 14th February.⁶ Barely reported in Britain.

Easy gun ownership matters. A knifeman can be tackled and defeated by ordinary people: a gunman mostly cannot. Britain tightened its already-tight gun laws after the 1996 Dunblane Massacre. Only five British massacres since then, four of them Islamic suicide attackers.⁷

Similar in Australia:

“Between 1991 and 2001, the number of firearm-related deaths in Australia declined by 47%. Suicides committed with firearms accounted for 77% of these deaths, followed by firearms homicide (15%)... The number of firearms suicides was in decline consistently from 1991 to 1998, two years after the introduction of firearm regulation in 1996.

“Suicide deaths using firearms more than halved in ten years, from 389 deaths in 1995, to 147 deaths in 2005. This is equal to 7% of all suicides in 2005. Over the same period, suicides by hanging increased by over 52% from 699 in 1995 to 1068 in 2005.”⁸

But culture also plays a role. Countries that do not glorify individual violence stay peaceful with widespread gun ownership. What you can’t have is guns and glorification.

Glorification is part of a bad

cultural pattern within Anglo culture. A few people get an excess of wealth and attention. Ordinary people are encouraged to identify with these few and not with people like themselves. The media plays up to it.

“Experts say the recent uptick in mass shootings is likely due to the amount of attention the attacks receive and the fixation on the people behind them.”⁹

“This is an enormous and under-appreciated part of this story—and it’s inextricable from the copycat nature of these attacks, and the extent to which shooters are almost always obsessed with other shooters, particularly the two behind Columbine.”¹⁰

“So when are we going to be completely honest and acknowledge the awkward, bullied, sexually frustrated, psychotropic drug-laced, suicidal, mass shooters in the room for what they are...a creation of our so-called progressive culture and media...”

“Y’all Keep posting the shooters face like he’s a rockstar and then keep asking why this keeps happening in a country obsessed with celebrity culture with a generation of kids with an inability to cope w/ anything.”¹¹

Black in the Union Jack

The 1981 wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer was part of the New Right package. And typical of the utter failure when those people tried to be genuine social conservatives. I’d suppose they mostly wanted the traditional ruling-class privilege of traditional morality for the masses while themselves doing as they pleased. But the unexpected popularity of Princess Dianna was one of many useful assets that they wasted by being greedy and small-minded. By not realising the deeply unnatural and socially-defined nature of their preferred social order.

Thirty-seven years on, we have Diana’s younger son doing something useful, for once. I feel no gratitude at all for his military

service plaguing the lives of Afghans and Iraqis, though I’d accept that he was personally brave and honest. The whole operation set back the cause of secularism among Muslims. It has probably ended the chance of them ever accepting most of the West’s cultural package. But he can’t be blamed for that.

He has married for love, but done unexpected good. Poor Princess Margaret had her life ruined, because in the early 1950s it was unacceptable for her to marry Peter Townsend, who’d had a divorce. That Megan had one is nowadays barely worth a mention. What counted is that she has some Afro-American ancestry, even though she could easily pass for South European. And many people who define themselves as Black or Mixed-Race find this a big step forward.¹²

‘*There ain’t no black in the Union Jack*’, the racists used to say. There is now.

Alarmist talk of a Far-Right resurgence ignores just how much has changed. In many ways they are the last defenders of what were standard British views in the 1950s. Values the Establishment junked by stages from the 1980s, under Tories as well as Labour.

Sadly, a lot of social concern was junked at the same time. Yes, it is fair enough that women and non-whites have equal access to the top grades of privilege. But those grades are also vastly more privileged than any merit those people might have.¹³ We need ‘Fair Inequality’, and have been moving away from it since the 1980s.

How Dare Anyone Know

I am Related to my Relatives!

“In 1987, Jay Cook, 20, and Tanya Van Cuylenborg, 18, a couple from Canada, were brutally killed while they were vacationing in Washington State...”

“‘Jay was our son and at the time he died he was 20 years old and Tanya was 18. He would be 51 now,’ said Lee Cook, his mother, during the news conference. ‘He probably would have married and had kids.

I would have more grandchildren. I miss all that could have been.’...”

“The DNA of second cousins helped lead detectives to William Earl Talbott II, who was arrested Thursday in Washington State in connection with the 1987 murders.”¹⁴

Good news? Not everyone sees it so. 1960s radicalism led on to an unreasonable panic over state power. Even though the police were using data freely made public, there were doubts:

“This is really tough,’ said Malia Fullerton, an ethicist at the University of Washington who studies DNA forensics. ‘He was a horrible man and it is good that he was identified, but does the end justify the means?’”¹⁵

As I understand it, the police used public data to find a suspect who roughly matched the DNA evidence from the original crime. A suspect whose *exact* DNA would not match if they were innocent.

My own DNA data is public.¹⁶ I’d be shocked and surprised if any of my relatives were rapists or murderers. But if they were and were caught using my DNA data, I’d say ‘fair enough’.

For ordinary people, crime and fear of crime are the biggest threats to living their own lives as they wish. Panicking over use of public DNA data is absurd.

How Dare They Recognise My Face!

Being recognised, or being spotted as odd by nosy neighbours, has always been a problem for anyone wanted by the police. Now it is going electronic.

“Fans of the technology see a powerful new tool for catching criminals, but detractors see an instrument of mass surveillance.

“On Tuesday, the American Civil Liberties Union led a group of more than two dozen civil rights organizations that asked Amazon to stop selling its image recognition system, called Rekognition, to law enforcement. The group says that the police could use it to track protesters or others whom

authorities deem suspicious, rather than limiting it to people committing crimes.”¹⁷

China has similar technology, and caught a wanted man in a crowd of 60,000.¹⁸

A cause for panic? I can't see it. A more efficient version of what has always been around.

Thou Shalt Have No Eternal Truth, Other Than What We Invented Last Week

“The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has barred one of China's most popular TV channels from airing the Eurovision song contest after it censored LGBT elements of the competition.

“Mango TV was criticised on social media for apparently blurring rainbow flags and censoring tattoos during Tuesday's first semi-final.

“It also decided not to air performances by the Irish and Albanian entries.

“The EBU said the censorship was not in line with its values of diversity.”¹⁹

They were punished for daring to apply Chinese standards – homosexuality is legal but must be kept discrete. Values that the West kept for a long time after the 1960s decriminalisation, until the balance

of public opinion shifted.

It's not a free-for-all even now. Only in 2017 did *Star Trek* boldly venture to have explicitly gay males. *Star Wars* has yet to do so. Likewise the various live-action films based on comic books. Recently it is being slightly implied, but only slightly.²⁰

But the big Eurovision story is the win by the Israeli singer. The next contest may take place in Israeli-occupied Jerusalem. A place where Arab and Muslim rights are neglected, so there are calls for a boycott.²¹

Or someone might stage an alternative to be held at the same time, to see how big an audience could be drawn off.

Snippets Global Votes

“The Alliance of Revolutionaries for Reform, also known by its Arabic short form Sairoon ... literally ‘On the Move’, is an Iraqi electoral coalition formed to contest the 2018 general election. The main components are the Sadrist movement and the Iraqi Communist Party.”²²

It has 55 seats out of 329 after the recent elections.

A defeat for US plans? That's

uncertain. Sadr visited the Saudis, and also called for Assad to stand down in Syria

Reports I've seen omit the charge made back in 2004 that Sadr was involved in the murder of a pro-Western cleric. This is to be found in the man's Wiki entry²³, but not that for Sadr. I said at the time that it was probably a bit of shysterism by the USA.²⁴

Meantime Hezbollah and its allies have done well in Lebanon.²⁵

Most Flesh Is Grass

Humans are just 0.01% of all life. That's by mass of living tissues: by numbers we would count for much less.²⁶

But we dominate the planet. Of all the mammals on Earth, 96% are livestock and humans. Only 4% are wild animals

Even more remarkably, 82% of everything is land plants. All life in the oceans comes to just 1% of the planet's biomass.

Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. Also <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

I blog occasionally at <https://gwydionmw.quora.com/>.

Endnotes

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A Letter From Our New Zealand Correspondent

Feargus O'Raghallaigh

Every day, every hour ... and then maybe?

It's only a matter of months since we got a Labour-led government and yet the change is noticeable. New Zealand Labour is not the CPSU and the present NZ Labour is but a very, very milky pink. Yet it has made a difference.

Even meetings of the New Zealand Fabians, surviving '60s footsoldiers in the main, are suddenly well-attended and there is a distinct interest more generally in politics.

Business is, when polled, considerably less chipper than it was about the future despite continued growth, negligible inflation, including of wages, and record low interest rates.

Business utterly loathes Labour even though the new government keeps bending the knee to fiscal orthodoxy.

On the other hand one can sense changes in small things – and not so small.

For years bosses in NZ have kept the lid on wages – and could depend on National-led governments to help through continuing to undermine already weak unions. Now there is a Workplace Relations Minister, Iain Lees-Galloway MP (Lab., Palmerston North), who has baldly told businesses to stop complaining about alleged labour shortages. If they are

having difficulties hiring, he says, think the unthinkable: offer and pay higher wages. Those employers who can't hack this he has also said, should fold their tents.

He's gone further. He wants to see increased unionisation, *sacre bleu!* He's going to roll back (a little bit) anti-union legislation. The right to fixed meal breaks will be restored, the labour inspectorate numbers increased and so on. Little things? Well seen in the round, meal break and other restrictions collectively amount to the sorts of things, a general balance in the workplace, all in the name of 'flexibility', aimed at keeping workers cowed. Even chipping away as this government is doing, is significant.

Public transport workers are actually, increasingly regularly, going on strike in Auckland and likely to do so in Wellington. Here in NZ, local authorities 'procure' public transport provision through periodic re-tendering with bidders always focusing on wage cuts as a key element in their bids. Unlike the EU there are no transfer of undertakings laws here. Procuring public agencies (local and municipal authorities in the main) don't give a toss about collective bargaining.

It's nothing to do with the change in government but

the Employment Court has handed down a decision in the case of one employer (Smith's City, a big white goods retailer) on the definition of hours of work. Workers must be paid for (currently unpaid) time taken to bang up tills after closing and also for attendance at (so-called) voluntary pre-opening pep talks.

It turns out large numbers of companies were engaged in such not-paid-for sweating and now it is all spilling out. The practices are rampant throughout the retail trade – and probably further afield. Being paid from clock-in to clock-out is the law – and it is going to be enforced according to Lees-Galloway. I doubt that a year ago companies would be responding as they now are: hands up and (back) paying up.

Statutory meal breaks must also be respected (i.e. part of paid-for hours). Paid parental leave has been upped from modest levels (and the Prime Minister is pregnant, so motherhood is good). There is more to come on this front. Factory and employment inspectorates are to be beefed up and inspections intensified.

In the great scheme of history none of this amounts to a revolution. In New Zealand terms though it is for workers a big roll-back

after decades of drudge, increasing exploitation at the margins.

The push now also is on for a 'living wage' as opposed to the statutory minimum wage. The living wage movement is particularly active in local government.

In other spheres too things seem to be changing, if again in small ways. There is in government a new emphasis on public transport – if yet though it really has to be seen in action. The role of public housing is being restored, though again we have to see the scale of the commitment. This is in the context of severe housing problems in the bigger towns and cities.

Unemployment remains a chronic problem – despite very low and falling national headline rates. Maori rates and young Maori rates especially, spectacularly spike above the national averages. These are deep intergenerational clusters with all kinds of surrounding issues and problems, the land of We Were Warriors, truly awful and depressing. And utterly incapable of being even managed under current policies, including policing, the policies pursued for decades.

The economy also remains a primary commodity producer – milk, meat, fruit and logs – and now all to China as opposed to the old country. There is also a depressing belief – amounting to a national, cross-political

(and party) religion – in markets and competition and competitive markets as the solution to everything.

Against that one might point to the change in the remit of the Reserve Bank: to include employment and unemployment in its mandate as well as inflation. Well yes, except that like every other government in the world it utterly misunderstands the nature of modern money and further, continues to abide by 'household' concepts of public finance.

Which brings us to the bigger picture – the macro economy and the public sector – as opposed to the micro scene of the workplace. Here after the government's first budget, we can begin to see where the problems will emerge. The dilemma for the government is the self-imposed tight fiscal orthodoxy, the so-called Budget Responsibility Rules (BRR). This effectively amounts to a continuation of the deficit elimination and debt reduction programme of the previous National-led government.

This is in the face of an election campaign and promises to reverse years of impossibly tight limits on for example health spending and education imposed by National government.

Nurses are queuing up for a big hike in their wages – and rightly so. District Health Boards (DHBs), their employers, need big increases

in their central funding actually, the DHB model is busted. Local authorities are everywhere grappling with homelessness on the verge of another winter (it's the southern hemisphere!).

Current public spending, in government departments, local agencies and public bodies, is everywhere impossibly straitjacketed after a decade of pursuit of budget 'surplus'. Frankly it is impossible to square the circle, an impossible chimaera and a political stupidity.

Then there is the refocusing and expansion of the public capital programme – the shift away from big highways and toward environmental spending, a big public housing programme and increased spending on schools and hospitals.

Again frankly, the cap doesn't fit. Same old 'responsible' Labour parties trying to be nice to capitalism and being 'responsible'. And business and capitalism will never say 'yes' to Labour. Time 'nice' Labour gave up the ghost on that.

She [Madame Chiang Kai-shek] can talk beautifully about democracy but doesn't know how to live democracy.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Religion is a great force: the only real motive force in the world; but what you fellows don't understand is that you must get at a man through his own religion and not through yours.

George Bernard Shaw

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

Leaving the EU: Customs 16 May 2018

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab) I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, that she will be graciously pleased to give directions that the following papers be laid before the House: all papers, presentations and economic analyses from 1 January 2018 up to and including 16 May 2018 prepared for the European Union Exit and Trade (Strategy and Negotiations) Cabinet sub-committee, and its sub-committees, on the Government's preferred post-Brexit customs arrangements including a Customs Partnership and Maximum Facilitation.

This is, frankly, a desperate state of affairs. We are two years on from the referendum and five months away from the deadline for the withdrawal deal, but the Government still cannot agree on the most basic of Brexit issues: our future customs arrangements. Each week we see a new attempt, and each week we see it fail, with a Cabinet—a war Cabinet—and two Sub-Committees of warring factions. Yesterday we at least saw some agreement: the agreement to kick the ball down the road for another month as the Government agreed to publish a White Paper on their negotiating position, but without any agreement on what will be in it.

The Prime Minister is clearly in a difficult position. Every time she tries to make progress, a Cabinet Minister is waiting to trip her up. As an Opposition,

it is tempting for us to dwell on the Government's misfortune but, frankly, this is too important. The lives of millions of people across the country depend on us getting Brexit right, and if the Government cannot, Parliament needs to take responsibility, because there is a majority in this House that believes in a sensible approach to delivering the decision of the referendum. That starts with our customs arrangements, which is why we have tabled this Humble Address motion to seek the publication of the papers and analysis on the Government's two post-Brexit customs options: the Prime Minister's favoured proposal of a customs partnership, which has of course been dismissed by the Foreign Secretary as "crazy"; and the so-called "maximum facilitation" option, which the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy rightly warned would put jobs at risk. Both have faced serious criticisms of their technical detail and may be illegal, according to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office.

The Brexit Secretary, who is unfortunately not in the Chamber, has dismissed the customs partnership as "blue sky thinking", but when looking at the maximum facilitation option, I was struck by his words. I want to quote him precisely: "Faced with intractable problems with political pressure for a solution, the government reaches for a headline grabbing high-tech 'solution'. Rather than spend the resources, time and thought

necessary to get a real answer, they naively grasp solutions that to the technologically illiterate ministers look like magic."

Those were the words of the Brexit Secretary. As it happens, he was speaking in 2008 about ID cards, but was he not prophetic in anticipating today's "intractable" problem? However, it is not intractable; there is a solution.

It is clear to everyone that the Government are in a total mess, locked in a fight over two options, neither of which is practical or acceptable to the EU, but this House has an opportunity to sort out the mess. There is a majority that respects both the result of the referendum and our duty to protect the livelihoods of the people we represent. The right hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb) rightly described the conflict in the Cabinet as an "ideological cage fight", adding that Parliament may soon be "making the decisions". Frankly, it would make a better job of it. There is a majority for a new and comprehensive customs union, both here and beyond the House, among all those who recognise the importance of protecting our manufacturing sector, of securing frictionless trade with the EU, and of honouring our obligations on the Good Friday agreement and the border in Ireland. The director-general of the CBI, Carolyn Fairbairn, has described it as a non-ideological and practical solution. Crucially, she pointed out: "If we don't break the impasse on this customs decision, everybody will be affected—manufacturers, services companies, retailers. An awful lot hangs on this now." Her

view is shared across business and the trade unions.

Those who seek the deepest possible rupture with the EU, no matter the cost, have been developing their arguments against a customs union, so let me address them. Some have warned that being in a customs union raises prices for food and clothing through the common external tariff. I hope that they will also reflect on the response of British farmers and clothes producers to their idea of unilaterally cutting our tariffs, presumably to zero.

I have also heard the absurd argument that developing countries would be disadvantaged by a customs union with the EU. Current customs arrangements serve developing countries well, as 49 of the poorest countries have tariff-free access to the EU market through the “Everything but Arms” policy. If the approach would be so damaging, perhaps the Government will explain why they propose to replicate the entire EU regime on market access for developing countries—the general system of preferences—after Brexit.

The most frequent objection, of course, is that a customs union would prevent us from signing trade deals with other countries—it would. That sounds significant, but the significance is largely symbolic. We can and do trade with non-EU countries without trade deals. The EU is our biggest trading partner, but the US is our biggest national trading partner, and that is without our having a trade deal. Some people talk about increasing trade with China once we are free of a customs union, but Germany trades four times as much with China as we do.

Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales) (Con) How helpful does the hon. Gentleman think that the publication of all these documents would be to the people we are trying to negotiate

with?

Paul Blomfield The right hon. Gentleman misses the point. He should listen to his own International Trade Secretary, who has talked clearly about a customs union not preventing us from increasing trade. The Government’s own analysis shows that none of their ambitious proposed new trade deals will go anywhere near compensating for the loss of a customs union with the EU. Free trade agreements with the United States, China, India, Australia, the Gulf and south-east Asia would add just 0.3% to 0.6% to our GDP, but moving to a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU would hit our growth by 5% over the next 15 years. Despite the number of air miles that the International Trade Secretary has clocked up, India has said that it is in no rush to strike a trade deal with us, while Japan has said that it is prioritising the EU for a trade deal.

Working with the EU in the future and seeking deals for a market of 650 million, we can build on the full or partial free trade agreements that we already enjoy with 68 other countries through the EU, as well as the EU deals just concluded with Japan, Singapore and Mexico. If we are confident about our country, and if we are ambitious for its future, we should recognise that we have nothing to fear from a new, comprehensive customs union and everything to gain. It is the best way to support jobs, particularly those 2.1 million in manufacturing, and it is an essential step towards avoiding a hard border in Northern Ireland.

When we previously heard the argument about playing into the hands of those with whom we are negotiating in the EU27, it was as bogus in relation to the other papers that have been released as it is to these papers. Members who

insist on a customs partnership or the maximum facilitation model should be confident that the Cabinet papers will stand up to parliamentary scrutiny, and the constraints that were laid down previously provide for the confidentiality that is right for this place. Others who share concerns about those models should also want them to be subjected to proper scrutiny.

This is one of the most important decisions faced by the country since the second world war, but the Cabinet is unable to agree. Parliament therefore has a deep responsibility to stand up for the people whom we represent, and we need access to the information in order to do so. I hope that the House will approve the motion.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Mr David Lidington) I felt that the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield), while setting out as best he could the Opposition’s approach to various aspects of European policy, rather neglected to address the key significance of the motion that the Opposition have tabled, which is about the requirement for the public disclosure of current Cabinet Committee papers and which raises important matters of constitutional principle.

The House should not mistake me: I believe passionately in the accountability of Ministers to Parliament. No Minister who possesses a grain of sense approaches questions in the Chamber, let alone a Select Committee evidence session, without a strong sense of trepidation. I still remember what I learned, many years ago in my first Parliament, from watching that magnificent parliamentarian the late Gwyneth Dunwoody using questions and interventions during Committee sessions to spear Ministers who

had not bothered to master their brief before appearing in front of her. So I believe in Parliament, but I also believe strongly in Cabinet government, and in the proper constitutional relationship between Government and Parliament. Of course, as Ministers we have a duty to keep Parliament informed about Government policy, but effective Cabinet government also relies upon certain principles.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) I fully support the position the Minister is taking. Does he recall that when Labour Governments were giving away powers of self-government right, left and centre at Nice, Amsterdam and Lisbon, they never shared their reasons or the negotiations they had beforehand, even though the issues were deeply contentious among Conservative Members and led directly to the vote to leave the European Union?

Mr Lidington Wishes are always expressed by Members, usually those in the Opposition parties at any given time, for Governments to divulge more about internal discussions between Ministers, but I think the right constitutional principle is that the roles of both the Executive and Parliament need to be respected. Three key principles are at issue in this debate. First, there is the need for confidential and frank discussion between Ministers in Cabinet and Cabinet Committees, and after eight years in Government one general truth that I have learned is that a policy proposal almost always benefits from discussion among colleagues, who bring different perspectives and interests to bear.

Discussions between Ministers need to be frank. That was very well set out by a former very senior Labour Secretary of State, Jack Straw, in a statement that was quoted with approval by the Chilcot committee in its report. Mr Straw said in 2009, in explaining a Cabinet decision to veto the release of minutes of one of its meetings, that dialogue in Cabinet and Cabinet Committee “must be fearless. Ministers must have the confidence to challenge each other in private. They must ensure that decisions have been properly thought through, sounding out all possibilities

before committing themselves to a course of action...They must not be deflected from expressing dissent by the fear that they may be held personally to account for views that are later cast aside.”

Those were principles that previous Labour Governments upheld in fulfilling the responsibilities of government, and it is a measure of how far today’s Labour leadership has fallen that it should be abandoning those principles today. We cannot have that kind of honest, open discussion in Cabinet or Cabinet Committee if people know that at any time their views could be made public by means of a resolution of the House.

The second principle is that officials must be able to give frank advice to Ministers in confidence. That includes memorandums and other papers provided to Cabinet Committees by some of the most senior officials in the civil service. There are Labour Members present who have themselves served in government; they know that those in the professional civil service used every ounce of their professional skill to help them, as Labour Ministers, deliver the objectives of the elected Governments in which they served. I have to ask: what would those Members say to those officials about a motion that might result in the making public of the advice of professional civil servants—people who of course can never answer back themselves—which they had thought was being given to Ministers in confidence?

Sir Patrick McLoughlin Does my right hon. Friend agree that if such a motion were to be passed, less would be said in Cabinet papers and they would no longer contain the same candour? That is something that we should try to get away from. We had quite a bit of it between 1997 and 2010, when decisions were not taken through collective Cabinet responsibility.

Mr Lidington My right hon. Friend speaks from experience, and he is completely accurate in what he says. The third principle was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover when he talked about international relations. All

Governments have to negotiate with other sovereign Governments and with international organisations, and it is a cardinal principle of our system of government that Ministers and officials need to be able to prepare the British negotiating position in private. Indeed, as recently as December 2016, that was also the view of the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), who said: “I fully accept that the Government will enter into confidential negotiations...I do...accept that there is a level of detail and of confidential issues and tactics that should not be disclosed, and I have never said otherwise.”— [Official Report, 7 December 2016; Vol. 618, c. 223.]

It is a source of sadness to me that he appears to have departed from that position in lending his name to the motion on the Order Paper today. I would be happy to take an intervention from him if he wishes to explain to the House why he has abandoned the view that he championed two years ago.

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab) The position I set out was in relation to a motion with pretty much the same terms as this. It was accepted that there was a degree of confidentiality. The argument that is being made now is the very argument that was made then about not disclosing papers that are all in the public domain now.

Mr Lidington I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman was indulging in a bit of mediaeval scholasticism there. That was not persuasive. I do not know whether he is now fearful of the Trots in his constituency who are working to deselect him. I do not know what has caused him to abandon the principles that he once stood by. The principles that he stood by in 2016 are the ones that Labour Governments of the past have followed, and I just wish that the Labour party would live up to those principles today.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con) On that point, is there not an issue of consistency involved? Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which was passed by a Labour Government, there is a deliberate and necessary exemption for confidential

information. It would create complete confusion and inconsistency if that principle were to be breached now.

Mr Lidington My hon. Friend is right. The Freedom of Information Act 2000—brought in, let us not forget, by Labour Government—specifically provides exceptions from the freedom of information rules for Cabinet and Cabinet Committee papers, for advice from officials to Ministers and for information that might harm our diplomatic relationships and negotiations. The wording of the ministerial code expresses the balance between the different duties of Government of accountability to Parliament and of confidentiality in developing Government policy. That is why the code explicitly provides that Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, notes that we should refuse to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest, and says that that judgment should be made in accordance with the relevant statutes and the Freedom of Information Act 2000—so including the exceptions I mentioned.

Turning to the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin), the candour of everybody involved, whether Ministers or officials, would be affected if they thought that the content of their discussions would be disclosed prematurely. Frankly, if details of discussions were routinely made public—

If such details were made public, Ministers would feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result, the quality of the debate that underlies collective decision making would decline significantly. That is not in the interests of any Government of any political party, and it is not in the interests of our constitutional democracy. Such discussions also need to be underpinned by full and frank advice on policy options and their implications. No Government of the past have tried to operate in an environment where papers can be finalised and distributed to members of a Cabinet Committee one week

and then made public the next. It is simply not possible to do so and not responsible to pursue that as an objective.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire Dales, I invite the House to consider the situation were we to accept the Opposition motion and adopt the practices that the motion embodies. If the motion were carried and the situation that the hon. Member for Sheffield Central advocated became the standard practice governing relations between the Executive and Parliament, we would soon see a deterioration in the quality of policy making within Government, and not greater but significantly less transparency. Indeed, that point was made Mr Jack Straw, a former Labour Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary, Leader of the House and Foreign Secretary, when he said about regimes that did not have the kind of exceptions to disclosure that are in the Freedom of Information Act:

“The paradox of their situation is that, far from that leading to an increase in the accountability of Ministers and decision makers, it has reduced accountability because it has cut the audit trail. Officials and Ministers have gone in for Post-it notes and oral decisions which should have been properly recorded, or for devices for ordaining all sorts of documents which have nothing to do with the Cabinet or Cabinet Committees as Cabinet documents.”—[Official Report, 24 May 1999; Vol. 332, c. 31.]

It was precisely those practices of avoiding the formality of Cabinet and Cabinet Committee agendas, papers and minutes that were severely criticised by both the Butler commission in 2004 and the Chilcot inquiry in 2016. I regret the fact that the Opposition’s motion appears to be moving towards backing a situation in which all those flaws identified by Chilcot and Butler would be reproduced in the future, and I hope that we do not go in that direction.

The justification that we have heard for the motion is that there are special circumstances, but I simply reject the idea that the Government have

been insufficiently transparent on the issues in question. On the conduct of the negotiations, the Prime Minister has made important speeches at every stage to set out our approach. We published two White Papers and a series of papers last summer and autumn to set out further details. In December, the Government and the European Commission published a joint report to set out the progress made in the negotiations. The text of the draft withdrawal agreement is in the public domain. We announced only yesterday that we shall publish a new White Paper next month on our proposed future relationship with the European Union. There are six Brexit-related Bills before Parliament, all of which, as usual, are accompanied by impact assessments.

Select Committees have been able to scrutinise our plans for exit, as the more than 100 Select Committee inquiries into such matters testify, and the Government have engaged with all those inquiries. We have provided written evidence, and Ministers and officials have appeared for questioning. The Prime Minister has come to this House on numerous occasions to give statements on EU summits. Department for Exiting the European Union Ministers alone have given evidence to Committees on 35 occasions and have made no fewer than 85 written statements during the lifetime of their Department. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union has given 10 oral statements to the full House of Commons during the time he has held office.

It would not be in the national interest to release information that will form part of our negotiating position. In order to ensure good governance, it is in the interest of all of us, including those who might have the ambition of serving at some very distant date in a Labour Government, to preserve the system of Cabinet government that allows for good and well thought through decisions.

For those reasons, I have no hesitation in asking my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the motion before the House today.

Labour’s motion was lost by 32 votes – 301 noes to 269 ayes.

Continued From Page 24

now clearly be seen to lack judgement. Immediately after Mattarella's veto of Savona, Di Maio called for the President to be impeached. He then flopped and changed his mind. He said that the 81-year-old Savona could have another ministry if it helped to bring the new government plans to fruition.

As the Italian crisis developed, the cunning Salvini bided his time, carefully calculating what to say. "Those who insult and threaten Mattarella are not part of the future of my Country. He was wrong but I do not ask for impeachment". Mr 17% Salvini is the person given credibility now.

The Post International (TPI NEWS) poll of 30 May showed *M5S* falling to 29.5% and *Lega* rising to 27.5%. Another election is likely now and it could backfire on any one of Mattarella, Di Maio or Salvini. All the options for Italy are fraught with problems.

Main Characters in the current Italian Government Crisis

Sergio Mattarella - The 12th President of Italy

Mattarella, 76, comes from a prominent Sicilian family. His father Bernardo was an anti-fascist politician who helped found the Christian Democratic Party. His brother Piersanti, also a politician, was murdered by the mafia in 1980. Although obviously affected by this and also a supporter of an anti-mafia Mayor of Palermo, there were whisperings that Sergio had been involved in a scandal. This involved the suspicion that he may have taken a large bribe from a mafia-convicted businessman. Although he was cleared of this, he did accept a very large amount of fuel vouchers from the man.

Mattarella graduated in Law from Rome's Sapienza University and taught before going into politics in 1983. He held ministerial posts in education, defence and parliamentary affairs and is known for an election law called the *Mattarellum*. He also resigned his post in protest at the *Mammi Act*, passed by Silvio Berlusconi's government allowing him the freedom to expand his television network nationally.

Mattarella was one of the founders of the *Partito Democratico (Pd)* in 2007. He became a constitutional court judge until he was nominated by the *Pd's* Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, as President of Italy. Unsurprisingly

the *Pd* have been strong supporters of Mattarella's stance in the current political crisis.

Luigi Di Maio – Leader of the *Five Star Movement (M5S)*

Di Maio, 31, is the eldest of three sons of a real estate entrepreneur. His father served as a local councillor for the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano (Msi)*.

Di Maio was one of three senior members of *M5S*, before he was elected as leader. Alessandro Di Battista, has now left active politics but he also had a father who represented *Msi* in local politics. The third, Roberto Fico is now the President of the Chamber of Deputies. He seems to be respected by Mattarella, who has used the Presidents of the two houses to negotiate on his behalf and has spent time discussing issues with Fico.

Di Maio studied engineering at University, then Jurisprudence but didn't graduate in either. He worked as an apprentice journalist, briefly as a webmaster and then as a steward at the Stadio San Paolo in Naples.

He had been one of the founders of students' unions in both of his University faculties and he was one of the founders of "*Friends of Beppe Grillo*", the precursor of the *M5S* in 2007. Di Maio was elected to a parliamentary seat in 2013 and almost immediately became the youngest Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies.

Di Maio is a suit and tie-wearing young man with the air of a gullible schoolboy. A make-over might help his credibility? One older politician nicknamed him "little Luigi". Not without controversy, he has twice been accused of defamation. He was also involved in some foot-shuffling over the vetoed appointment of a mafia-connected cabinet member of the Mayor of Rome, the *M5S's* Virginia Raggi. She maintains that she discussed the problems with Di Maio, while he denies ever having heard about them from her.

Beppe Grillo supported him as his successor and for this reason it is likely that Di Battista and Fico didn't stand against him but left the field to a selection of unknowns who seemed like paper candidates.

Matteo Salvini – Federal Secretary of *La Lega*, formerly, *Lega Nord*

Salvini, 45, is the son of a business executive. He studied Historical Science at Milan University but didn't graduate and he has worked in politics since he

was 19. His political activity started on the left and he was a candidate for the *Lega Nord's Comunisti Padani*. He was a member of Milan City Council and was elected to the European Parliament in 2004. In 2015 he was part of the new group, *The Europe of Nations and Freedom* along with Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders.

His membership of the *Lega Nord* has often been uneasy and he was and is openly antagonistic to those he doesn't agree with. The disgraced ex-leader Umberto Bossi (for embezzling party funds) reminded him contemptuously of his left-leaning roots. Salvini was voted as leader after Bossi. Since then he has moved the party from being a separatist northern-only party. The region is called Padania, to one that organised nationally in the last national election. For the Euro election of 2014 he changed the party's logo, removing the word *Padania* and replacing it with *Basta Euro* – enough of the Euro. He calls the Euro "*a crime against humanity*".

Unlike Di Maio, Salvini has clear policies, which must have resonated nationally to give him his 17.4% vote share. *La Lega* had significant success in areas previous unknown to *Lega Nord*. Umbria gave him 20.2% of the vote share, there was 13.8% in Abruzzo and 10.8% in Sardinia.

Salvini is opposed to illegal immigration and has pledged to close the reception camps and repatriate all of these migrants. He supports flat tax, tax cuts, fiscal federalism and protectionism. He opposes same-sex marriage, supports family values and legalised brothels. He opposes the sanctions on Russia and is a supporter of Trump, who he met in 2016. His logo for the 2018 election resembles Trump's logo.

It is relevant to note, with reference to his support for family values, that he has been married, had two children and was divorced. He then had a child with a live-in partner, who he left for someone else.

This was written before the 1st June agreement, which has the same partners but a different Economy minister. One described by the BBC as not hostile to the Euro. Editor.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

Certain uncertainties

Attempting to write about Italy's political scene with topical relevance is increasingly difficult. It is just as unresolved and unstable for the third month running; everything could change as the article goes to press. But, as the Roman, Pliny the Elder said: *In these matters the only certainty is that there is nothing certain.*

The General Election of 4 March was inconclusive, as predicted. The populist, *Five Star Movement (M5S)* and their new leader Luigi Di Maio received the largest vote share of a single party, but insufficient to form a government at 225 out of a total of 618 seats. The Centre Right coalition headed by Silvio Berlusconi came second as a group. The significance of the Centre Right's success is that Matteo Salvini, leader of *La Lega* (previously *Lega Nord*) polled more votes than Berlusconi with a total of 122 seats. It took Berlusconi more than a month to shut-up and accept that Salvini had won the right to speak independently of him.

Votes for the increasingly unpopular, internally-warring, Centre Left *Partito Democratico (Pd)* collapsed as expected.

Di Maio and Salvini worked to form a coalition. They nominated a politically-inexperienced lawyer, Giuseppe Conte to act as their Prime Minister. Paolo Savona, an 81-year-old prominent, euro-hating economist was then nominated as Finance Minister. The national President, Sergio Mattarella, vetoed the appointment of Savona - who calls the Euro: "*Italy's noose*". Conte then withdrew his nomination. There are fully constitutional Presidential precedents here; both Matteo Renzi and Silvio Berlusconi accepted similar vetoes and nominated another candidate.

Mattarella swiftly appointed a Euro-supporting economist, Carlo Cottarelli, to head a fresh interim technocratic government. Ignoring Di Maio and Salvini's lengthy attempts to work together. *Il Fatto Quotidiano's* 29 May headline summarised the lack of parliamentary support for Cottarelli's impending confidence vote as: "*Cottarelli is born dead*". Social media then burst forth with a "*tsunami*"

of vilification and death threats for Mattarella. - it was suggested that this was orchestrated. He justified his reasoning by stating very calmly and seriously that he must take responsibility for minimising the financial panic that was rapidly developing at home and abroad.

It was widely seen in Italy as a move by Brussels to actively control the country once again. (Mario Monte had been appointed by The EU to lead a technocratic government after the Berlusconi debt crisis in 2011.) There was censure but also support for Mattarella. The EU-supporting *Pd's (Partito Democratico)* website immediately gave their support. A *tweet* from Marine Le Pen was reported in the Italian press for saying what many people felt: "*Coup in Italy, EU and the (financial) markets confiscate democracy*".

The crisis brings such very clear threats to the economies of Italy and Europe that the UK press are now reporting it widely. Meanwhile several interesting threads can be picked out of the Italian press.

Italians are disenchanted with the political class that they see as a self-serving elite. Many also see the press as complicit in the reluctance to listen to the voters. On 25 May Antonio Padellaro contrasted a tiny paragraph in *Corriere della Sera* about how 3000 nurses had applied for 5 posts in Turin with the multiple pages that chewed over the nomination of Carlo Conte. He maintained that the press are only interested in selecting their own reality to write about. The rest of us, he says, are like the 2995 nurses who didn't get those jobs. They are losers and he is just another of the 17 million losers who voted for *M5S* and *Lega* because they needed to have their voices heard.

Europe may be seen by Mattarella as ensuring financial stability but Lorenzo Rocchi blogging in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* expressed a disenchantment that many agree with. Rocchi said: "*There are feelings shared in the country, not just among M5S and Lega voters, that people have been ignored for too long. There is annoyance for the impositions of Europe, for the management of immigration (i.e: to close the borders to those who arrive in Italy), ...the*

concerns of new generations of semi-poor". Hence the antagonism to Mattarella's move, to the nomination of Carlo Cottarelli - an expenditure cutter - "Mr Scissors", at Europe's behest.

Two interesting elements lay behind Economist Carlo Savona's controversial nomination and they amount to a second coup or unusual political interference.

The first analyses the relative positions of Luigi Di Maio and Matteo Salvini in their coalition. They polled 32% and 17% respectively in the March election. Di Maio with almost double the number of votes could have, in fact should have, asserted his position. He didn't. The same Lorenzo Rocchi as above accuses him of committing political suicide. In trusting Salvini, in taking 80 days not to resolve matters, and not trying to push for a more widely acceptable Finance Minister all show him to be: a "*chicken*", translated as a dope. "*The leader of the M5S had the opportunity...*". The experienced senior *Lega* politician and economist Giancarlo Giorgetti would have been a suitable nominee instead of Savona as Finance Minister. Why wasn't he suggested?

The reason behind this, and the second point, is that there are now multiple references in the press to Salvini using Savona's nomination, shockingly and shamelessly, as a lever to precipitate a political crisis. First to discredit and remove Luigi Di Maio from interfering with his climb to the top. Of the two, Salvini clearly has the more assertive voice and developed strategic direction, whatever the merits of his programme. The second is that he knew President Mattarella, appointed by Renzi's Euro-friendly government, would have no option but to veto Savona because he could try to pull Italy out of the Euro. Particularly as Salvini has frequently and stridently expressed his antipathy in the press to the Euro and the controlling power of Germany.

On 30 May there was a last attempt by Di Maio to revive the alliance with Salvini and form a government. Mattarella put Cottarelli on standby and allowed more time. Di Maio can

Continued On Page 23