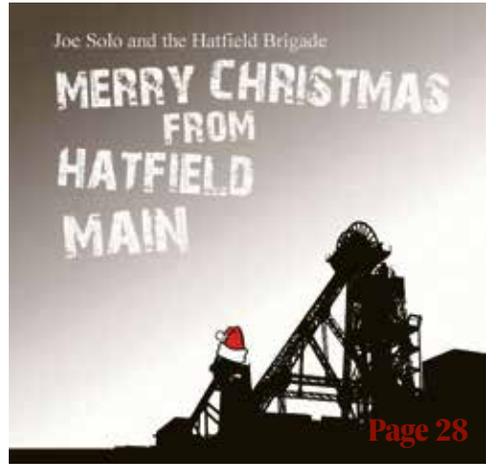


THE WORD

Christmas Edition, Issue #11, December 2016.

£1.50



Equality Democracy Truth Courage **THE PEOPLE'S PAPER** www.thewordmedia.org.uk



THE PETERLOO PROJECT

Starting in September of 2015 the project was put together on the Peter Loo Facebook page and then in the "Together against the Tories" Facebook group. The idea is to create a popular and entertaining socialist hub with the involvement of as many people as possible from the left of the socialist movement in Britain.

As the project has proceeded it has become increasingly clear that the media in the UK is run for and by big business and as such will always need to oppose socialist values to keep such a position. The project was then crowdfunded to raise the money to be able to print and distribute this newspaper as a prelude to a whole cross-platform media fight-back.

THE WORD

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THERENEZER

Maggie was dead. A woman whose long shadow cast a darkness over Britain. A darkness you couldn't see but was always tangible. Twenty six years after she was finally deposed and still the gloom had not been lifted. Even after death, her shadow lingered darker than ever.

Did May know she was dead? Of course she did. How could it be otherwise? Despite the intervening Prime Ministers, Therenezzer May was cast as the natural successor to Maggie May Thatcher. Many in the nation celebrated her passing - but not Therenezzer. She was her sole mourner. And even then Therenezzer was not so dreadfully cut up by the event. She merely acknowledged that she was a strong leader.

On taking up office, Therenezzer never removed Maggie's name from no.10. And Maggie's piercing eyes stared at her from the lifelike painting hung behind her desk.

Oh! Therenezzer, like her natural predecessor, was a tight-fisted hand to the grindstone, Therenezzer! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old Tory! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, self-contained, solitary as an oyster. The cold within her froze her old features, nipped her pointed nose, shrivelled her cheek, stiffened her gait; made her eyes red, her thin lips blue; Such a cold, cold woman wouldn't thaw one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Therenezzer. No warmth could warm her. No wind that blew was bitterer than she.

Nobody ever stopped her in the street to say hello. No beggar pleaded for a cup of tea. No children ever asked her for the time. No lost stranger asked her for direction. Even the blind man's dog would pull its owner away to a safe doorway as she walked by.

But what the devil Therenezzer cared! It was the very thing she loved, to be feared, to be respected. She was the Prime Minister, and she had a job to do.

It was Christmas Eve. Old Therenezzer sat busy in her office. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, and foggy too. She could hear people outside go wheezing and coughing up and down, beating their hands and stamping their feet to keep them warm. The fog had descended, pouring into every corner, obscuring all beyond.

The door of Therenezzer's office was open so that she might keep a beady eye upon her permanent secretary, who in a small adjacent room collated documents.

"A merry Christmas, Therenezza!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Therenezzer's adversary - Jeremy, who came upon her office so quickly she hadn't noticed his approach. She had forgotten the appointment.

"Bah!" said Therenezzer "Humbug!"

Jeremy, from his rapid walking in the fog, was all in a glow; his face was ruddy, full of character and his eyes sparkled.

"Christmas is a humbug, PM?" said Jeremy. "You don't mean that I'm sure."

"I do", said Therenezzer. "What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come then," returned Jeremy. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be miserable? You are rich enough."

Therenezzer was stumped and had no better answer than, "Bah!" and followed it with a simple "Humbug!"

Jeremy said, "Don't be sad."

"What else can I be?" returned Therenezzer, "when I live in a world of fools as this Merry Christmas! What is Christmas to you but a time of spending while not earning. We are £1.6 trillion in debt and people are borrowing to buy each other presents. Councils up and down the country are lining the streets with frivolous decorations and lights."

"Therenezza!" pleaded Jeremy. "The poor are feeling the effects of austerity. They are cold, they are

hungry and they are sad. Can you not spend a little to bring cheer to them this Christmas?"

"That I cannot," replied Therenezzer unmoved.

Jeremy's kind words continued "A £50 heating bonus this Christmas for the homeless children living in poverty, for the elderly and the disabled and sick will lift the spirits of our underprivileged. They will thank you with gratitude. It will unite our nation. Will you not do it for Christmas, Prime Minister?"

The permanent secretary applauded Jeremy's speech. Aware of Therenezzer's stern disapproval, he coughed, got up and walked to a filing cabinet and buried himself in the files.

"Don't be angry, Therenezza." Come meet the homeless tomorrow at Whitechapel mission. Gifts and a roasted dinner will be served to anyone who turns up. Come see how a little kindness brings a great deal of joy!"

"That is not becoming of a Prime Minister." Therenezzer replied solemnly.

"Then come to my house and have Christmas dinner with my family," replied Jeremy with generosity.

"Good Afternoon!", Therenezzer declared an end to the conversation.

"You are welcome. Christmas is a day to put aside political differences. Good will to all men!" Jeremy implored.

"Good Afternoon!", Therenezzer confirmed her resoluteness.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have our political differences, and yet I set these aside in the spirit of Christmas. I will keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, Prime Minister!"

"Good Afternoon!" Therenezzer fended off Jeremy's pleas.

"And a Happy New Year!" was Jeremy's final words as he stood up to leave.

"Good Afternoon!" Theren-

ezer repeated, in a slightly relieved tone.

As Jeremy left, Therenezzer was visited by 2 representatives from the Salvations Army, two stout, kind-hearted men.

"At this festive time of the year, Prime Minister," said the first man raising his pen and cheque book, "it is customary to make some slight provision for the Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in need, Ma'am."

"Are there no hostels?" asked Therenezza.

"Plenty of hostels," said the man, laying down the pen again.

"And the food banks?" demanded Mrs Therenezzer. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still . . .," returned the man, "I wish I could say they were not."

"Welfare Reform and Work Act is in full force, then?" said Mrs Therenezzer.

"Yes, ma'am, it is," he replied.

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Mrs Therenezzer. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"A few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some food and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?" insisted the man.

"Nothing!" Therenezza replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?" queried the man.

"I wish to be left alone," said Therenezzer. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry."

I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."

THERENEZER MAY

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Therenezer, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the man.

"It's not my business," Therenezer said perusing some document. "It's enough for a woman to understand her own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew.

At home that night, Scrooge is visited by Maggie's ghost, who is forever cursed to wander the earth dragging a network of heavy chains, forged during her time in office of greed and selfishness. Maggie tells Therenezer that she has one chance to avoid the same fate and that she will be visited by three spirits, one on each successive evening and that she must listen to them or be cursed to carry chains of her own that are much longer than Maggie's.

The first of the spirits, the Ghost of Christmas Past, takes Therenezer to Christmas scenes of Therenezer's childhood, which stir Therenezer's forgotten gentle and tender side by reminding her of a time when she was kinder and more innocent. These scenes portray Therenezer's lonely childhood, her relationship with her beloved friend Rosalind and a Christmas party hosted by her first supervisor Mr. Fezziwig, who treated Therenezer like a daughter. The ghost also portrays Therenezer's neglected husband, who ends their intimacy after he realises that Therenezer will never love him as much as she loves the tears of other people's children.

The second spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Present, takes Therenezer to several different scenes— a joy-filled supermarket of people buying the makings of Christmas dinner, celebrations of Christmas in a steelworker's council home, and in a homeless hostel. Therenezer and the ghost also visit Jeremy's Christmas party. The ghost takes Therenezer to see Tiny Tim, who is happy despite being seriously ill with leukaemia. The spirit informs Therenezer that Tiny Tim will soon die unless her radical NHS privatisation scheme is averted. Before disappearing, the spirit shows Therenezer a young homeless man frozen to death in a car park. He tells Therenezer to beware of her ignorance of the plight of the poor above all, and mocks Therenezer's concern for their welfare.

The third spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shows Therenezer a Christmas Day in the future. The ghost shows her scenes involving the death of a disliked woman. The woman's funeral will only be attended by political dignitaries if lunch is provided. To Therenezer it reminded her of Thatcher's funeral but not quite. Her servants and the local funeral director steal some of the deceased's possessions. When Therenezer asks the ghost to show anyone who feels any emotion over the woman's death, the ghost can only show him the pleasure of homeless and sanctioned people, rejoicing that her death gives them some brief time to sort out their lives and hope for the future. After Therenezer asks to see some tenderness connected with any death, the ghost shows her the parents of Tiny Tim, mourning the passing of their beloved, innocent child, Tiny Tim. The ghost then shows Therenezer the woman's neglected grave: the tombstone bears the name Thereneza May. Therenezer. Sobbing, she pledges to the ghost that she will change her ways, to avoid this possible outcome.

Therenezer awakens on Christmas morning with joy and love in her heart. She spends the day with Jeremy's family and anonymously sends £5000 of groceries to the Whitechapel Mission for Christmas dinner. The following day, she gives her permanent secretary a raise and financially adopts Tiny Tim, helping him with his medical needs. A changed woman, Therenezer decides to end austerity, reverses the sweeping destruction of our NHS, undoes all the austere welfare cuts of the past six years, and embarks on an ambitious program of infrastructure spending and council house building. With the new Home Secretary Corbyn at her side she sets up a unity government to help rebuild a prosperous and happy nation.

Christmas Headline - Galilee, Israel - Two Palestinian refugees fled Israeli government forces intent on the forced abortion of their unborn child. The Israeli President has decreed the execution of all Palestinian boys under the age of two, and the couple seek asylum abroad. A petition to accept the refugees in the UK has been met with heavy criticism, as the young mother prepares to give birth in a stable, with no medical facilities or even running water. Doctors without Borders have sent a medical team to assist the refugees on the main migration route.
[Nativity, Friday 23rd, 6.50pm, CBBC].

MOSCOW, RUSSIA - A junior doctor is caught in the middle of a struggle between right-wing fascists and hard-left socialists for control of the country. Cold and hungry, he was forced to join the army to feed his small family, struggling to make ends meet during this time of harsh austerity.
[Doctor Zhivago, Christmas Eve, 9.05am, Channel 5].

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND - A man seeking 'the perfect photograph' skateboards down Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull, during an eruption that forces him to flee. Video footage of Mr Mitty's epic descent has gone viral on Youtube, as debris and ash from the eruption grounds flights across Europe and the Atlantic.
[The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, Boxing Day, 6.50pm, Channel 4].

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA - A high-profile terror attack is foiled by an off-duty New York cop. During the two hour siege of the high-rise Nakatomi Plaza building, LAPD and FBI negotiators were fired upon by terrorist hostage takers armed with rocket launchers. Detective John McClane, inside the building to attend a Christmas party, single-handedly took down a dozen of the terrorists before saving the hostages from a rooftop rigged with C4 explosives.
[Die Hard, Friday 16th, 9.30pm, RTE2].

BEDFORD FALLS, NEW YORK - The Financial Crisis reached a beleaguered New York State building society as its managing director starts a pub brawl. George Bailey, under stress as he fights to keep the building society open, attacked a local while drunk and disorderly. Under investigation for financial impropriety, and a missing 8,000 USD, Bailey narrowly avoided arrest before being saved from collapse by a bailout.
[It's a Wonderful Life, Christmas Day, 2.20pm, C4].

KINGSTON FALLS, CALIFORNIA - Riots and looting result in huge damage to the small town, with 'wanton violence', several fatalities and destruction of property well over a million dollars in value, according to Police. Locals deny any riots or protests took place, with dozens of independent



Christmas News

eye witness accounts blaming the damage on 'little green monsters', and one resident so traumatised they keep repeating the phrase 'Don't get them wet'. In an effort to establish events, forensic investigators have been drafted in by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, putting the town on quarantine and curfew, and searching CCTV footage for perpetrators.
[Gremlins, Wednesday 21st, 10.05pm, Sky Christmas].

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN - Cops shoot unarmed Santa as he tries to give a gift to bullied child. Mall Santa Willie T. Soke was shot multiple times while delivering a pink elephant to a child after leaving the mall around the time of a shoot-out between cops and thieves believed known to Soke. Santa is now recovering from surgery and receiving treatment at a local hospital, under police guard.
[Bad Santa, Saturday 17th, 9.10pm, Sky Comedy].

CARDIFF, WALES - Numerous reports of an alien encounter in a quarry outside Cardiff have prompted debate in the Welsh Assembly, as several AM's claim to have witnessed 'big silver men and a spaceship' that 'disappeared, leaving only a big blue phone box' in the quarry beside an A-road used by Ministers to commute to the Welsh Assembly.
[Dr Who, Christmas Day, 5.45pm, BBC1].

PAPA'ETE, TAHITI - Officials from Tahiti claim 'a giant dragon' has wrecked villages, ships and fisheries, leaving gigantic eggs and hundreds of enormous dragon scales strewn across Polynesian beaches. Unusual seismic activity detected by the US Geological Survey has led to the US Navy deploying ships in the region.
[Godzilla, Thursday 15th, 12.55am, Sky Cinema].

WIGAN, UK - A local man has been arrested and charged with criminal negligence and animal cruelty after a crime spree including launching a homemade ICBM,

cat-burgling Wigan museum, and forcing a sheep into 'a home-made shearing machine', before dressing it in a jumper made from its own wool. In the much-awaited trial, Mr Wallace will appear at Preston Crown Court in the New Year.
[Wallace and Grommit in Curse of the Were-Rabbit, Wed 28th, 10.30am, BBC1].

LONDON, UK - PM's secret affair with aide comes to light at primary school Nativity play, where the pair are caught kissing on stage in front of a packed audience of children and parents.
[Love Actually, Christmas Day, 11pm, ITV].

DUBLIN, IRELAND - Eight priests indulge in erotic scandal in Ireland's largest lingerie store. The priests, faking messages to get the floor to themselves, are seen on CCTV clearly obsessing over bras, knickers and stockings in scenes set to rock the Vatican. Ringleader Father Crilly was set to receive the coveted Golden Cleric Award, further embarrassing the Holy See.
[Father Ted, Sunday 11th, 9pm, More4].

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS - A couple are charged with child negligence and reckless endangerment after leaving a child unattended for three days. The McCallister family flew to Paris for Christmas without their son Kevin, and failed to even call child care, babysitters or even friends or neighbours to ask for help. Peter and Kate McCallister face custodial sentences. Their son Kevin had to fend for himself, coming under siege from burglars, and only being saved by the fortunate intervention of an attentive neighbour, Mr Marley.
[Home Alone, Christmas Day, 6pm, C4].

NORWICH, UK - During a company party, a disgruntled former employee burst into the North Norfolk radio station armed with a shotgun, holding staff hostage and demanding his job back. The police enlist fellow DJ Alan to negotiate, as several lives hang in the balance.

Along with Alan's Sidekick Simon, they host a live show with the hostage taker.

[Alan Partridge Alpha Papa Thursday 22nd, 11.05pm, BBC2]

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK - A cobbler 'who loves kids' is run out of town for loitering around the school and disrupting classes. Moving to the city to find work, he was quickly in trouble with the law for desecrating memorials, but showed a real skill for spinning tall tales, becoming a celebrated journalist and children's writer.
[Hans Christian Anderson, Christmas Eve, 8.10am, BBC2].

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND - A group of travellers journey to a mountain to stage a coup and take over a small kingdom, fuelled by desire for its reserves of gold and energy. In the process they start a war, unleash a firestorm, and leave a city in ruins. It is unclear if they will face prosecution, being hailed as liberators by the mainstream media and holding close ties to the judiciary.
[The Hobbit; the Desolation of Smaug, Friday 23rd, 8pm, ITV].

HIGHLANDS, UK - An abused orphan boy is invited to attend a secretive and remote private school in the Scottish Highlands. Finding the unorthodox school a walk in the park compared to his everyday life as the child under the stairs, he quickly makes friends and excels at lessons and sports, with just one problem - someone wants him dead...
[Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Friday 23rd, 1.30pm, ITV].

TUNIS, TUNISIA - A university professor was drafted by US intelligence to locate and secure a priceless ancient artefact. The globetrotting archaeologist was pursued by German alt-right extremists, hell bent on dominating Europe with 'the secrets of the ancients'.
[Raiders of the Lost Ark, Bank Holiday Tuesday 27th, 1.35pm, BBC1].

ROME, ITALY - A successful Roman general became a prize fighter, in a political saga that gripped the nation. Maximus Meridius battled his way through several rounds of combat to win the public vote and be pitted against the ultimate opponent - the Emperor himself; both perished on the battlefield before thousands of witnesses in the much anticipated season finale.
[Gladiator, Friday 30th, 9pm, Film4].

DARKEST PERU - A talking bear dressed in a duffel coat and hat was found by a hapless London family at Paddington train station. Hailing from Darkest Peru, the talking bear boarded a cargo ship at Lima and stowed away. The bear was soon adopted by the Brown family, and lives with them as an

eloquent lodger.
[Paddington, Saturday 17th December, 4pm, 4Seven].

MADHYA PRADESH, INDIA - A feral young boy wandered into a small village on the edge of the jungle, hungry, filthy and scarred. The boy is now happy and thriving under the care of the village priests, where he is learning to speak, telling fanciful tales of growing up with wolves and his 'best friends', a bear and a big cat. The priests are hoping to learn more about the boy's history, as there is no sign of his family.
[The Jungle Book, Sunday 18th 7.40am, Disney].

HENAN, CHINA - A noodle chef was named the reincarnation of a martial arts master, and forced to begin training in Shaolin dragon style kung fu. Before completing basic training, he was pitted against a savage hardened criminal, a full master of tiger style kung fu, and forced to fight for his life as the village looked on. The Chinese government strenuously denies any human rights violations, citing 'tradition' and 'cultural values'.
[Kung Fu Panda, Wed 21 Dec, 7:00pm, CBBC].

NORTH POLE, ARCTIC CIRCLE - A Repo Man almost ruined Christmas. The repossession agent ran amok in Saint Nick's Workshop, threatening the very existence of Christmas. Reclassifying every child as 'nice' and sewing discord among the workforce and even fighting Father Christmas to defend an employee, Chicago based Fred was branded 'a hard-left trot', and vilified by the global media.
[Fred Claus, Sunday 18th, 8.00pm, Sky Christmas].

NUUK, GREENLAND - A private Canadian train has been found to be a seasonal people trafficking racket. The train conductor lured a number of US children aboard with candy and hot chocolate, before transporting them across international borders, through the Canadian wilds and on to Greenland. The route has been shut down while Interpol and FBI investigators interrogate the traffickers.
[The Polar Express, Christmas Eve, 6.55pm, ITV2].

ROVANIEMI, LAPLAND - A UK research team has disappeared amid reports of animal mutilations. Investigating the ruins of an ancient Sami dolmen or burial mound, the excavators maintained detailed journals of their work that ceased abruptly. The burial mound in question is no longer there, replaced by a 400 foot deep pit, and herds of wild reindeer normally abundant in the area are nowhere to be found. Several homesteads and farms have been abandoned in the region, with no indications as to the whereabouts of their inhabitants. Finnish authorities are investigating.
[Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale, Netflix].

LABOURS CRAZY YEAR

By Eileen Kersey

On September 12, 2015, Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party and that should have been the end of the story but it was not.

Even before he won, with a huge mandate, enemies within the Labour Party were trying to stop his leadership campaign in its tracks.

With friends like some of them who needs enemies?

But he won and there was a flurry of shadow cabinet resignations as inflated egos tootled off to the backbenches of the Labour Party in the House of Commons.

They did not resign their well paid jobs, with all the associated perks, but took to the ranks and in some cases began to spread their poison.

This led to an orchestrated coup with the main players opting to humiliate Jeremy Corbyn by any means available. Resignation letters followed at a fast and furious pace, pinned to Twitter timelines for maximum impact. Live resignations on BBC TV politics shows were in the mix.

Those of us who had been watching from day one were not surprised.

It was rather shocking though to see Corbyn isolated in the House of Commons as some Labour MPs sat behind him and chanted resign and "sit down man you are a disgrace."

Months of social media interactions that may as well have been by Tory MPs had hinted at what was about to unfold.

It was the Labour Party at its most petulant and self destructive.

But Jeremy Corbyn is not just any party leader. It is the Labour Party which Corbyn has served for more than 30 years; a man who may have rattled some previous party leaders but who never behaved like a spoiled and demanding child. He may be a man of harmony but when parliamentary enemies attacked he stepped up to the mark and some.

While Labour Party plotters enjoyed a summer of relaxation Jeremy took a "road trip" but mostly by train around the UK.

Corbyn spoke at packed rallies in cities and towns across the UK. He was and is an inspiration.

He undertook a schedule that would have floored many younger men and he did so with good grace and time for others.

When he addressed a packed rally in the northern City of Kingston-Upon-Hull the sun shone and those who turned up to listen were not disappointed.

Imagine if the Labour Party had accepted Corbyn as party leader in September 2015 and worked together toward election success. If

they had harnessed Corbyn's support base rather than alienating new party members.

But even as Corbyn worked his socks off addressing rallies in Leeds, Cornwall, Brighton, Hull, York, Liverpool and more enemies in the party were undermining his leadership.

Leaked stories by anonymous sources dominated news headlines as the mainstream media eagerly grabbed what was on offer and spun the story to within an inch of its life.

Unlike Mr Corbyn these plotters work to various agendas which rarely include ordinary working class voters struggling to make ends meet.

The Labour Party has an identity crisis but Mr Corbyn can restore old new Labour to true Labour values if his MPs will let him.

Tell people often enough that a person is unelectable and guess what? He or she becomes unelectable.

2016 could have been a successful year for the Labour Party but it was not.

In order to try and remove Corbyn there was a leadership challenge but no challenger. Finally, when pushed, Angela Eagle launched a challenge but she was quickly pushed back as Owen Smith stepped in.

His dismal attempt at relaunching old new Labour failed miserably. As soon as it was clear he would not win

people were purged from the Labour Party for various reasons; from real abuse to pure nonsense.

Plotters in the party were determined Corbyn would not win.

They made themselves and the party look ridiculous and unelectable in the eyes of many and for nothing. Jeremy Corbyn was re-elected leader with 62% of the vote.

But once again the story does not end here.

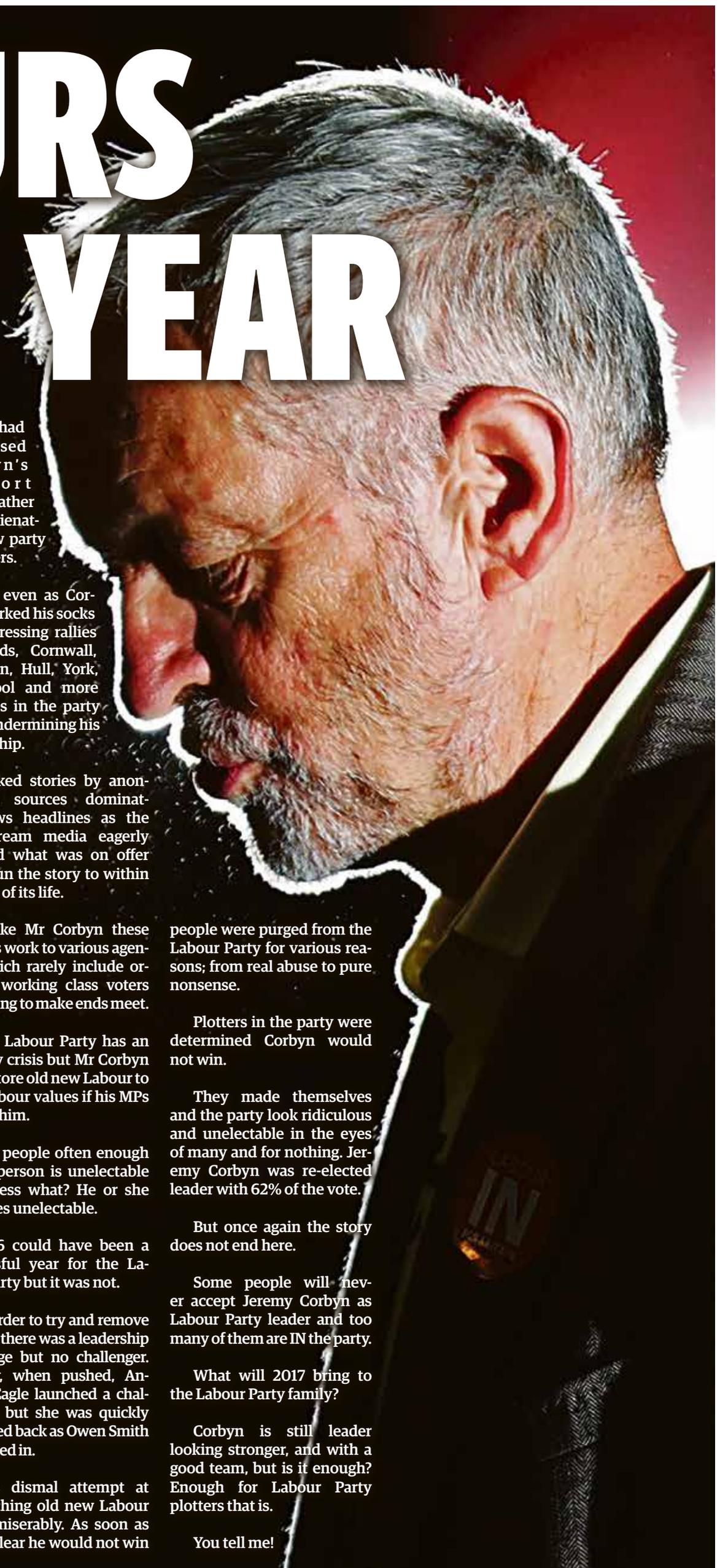
Some people will never accept Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader and too many of them are IN the party.

What will 2017 bring to the Labour Party family?

Corbyn is still leader looking stronger, and with a good team, but is it enough? Enough for Labour Party plotters that is.

You tell me!

While Labour Party plotters enjoyed a summer of relaxation Jeremy took a "road trip" but mostly by train around the UK



IS CUBA'S NHS BETTER THAN THE UK'S?

Whatever your opinion of Fidel Castro or Castro's Cuba what is undeniable is the success of Cuba's NHS. There is no private medical care in Cuba.

Cuba's medical centres are community based. They have three-storey buildings called consultorio. The GP's practice is on the ground floor. Doctors live above on the first floor and nurses live above the doctors on the second floor. These are placed all over the country and in easy reach of all Cubans.

Cuba has over 30,000 GPs for a population of 11 million compared to the UK which although having 30,000 Gps they have to deal with a population 6 times bigger. The Gps are also better trained than their UK counterparts.

Cuba has 21 medical schools compared to the UK's 12. Cuba has over 37,000 practice nurses. The UK has about 10,000.

Immunisation is compulsory and the Cuban state invests heavily in preventative health measures. This coupled with the mainly fruit and vegetables diet of Cubans because of economic difficulties means that Cubans are healthier.

There is also a lot of health tourism by foreigners who utilise the cheap but excellent Cuban medical facilities. This raises vital funds for the Cuban government. Cuban medical expertise is valued abroad in many third world countries in South America and Africa where they offer assistance.



The patient's eye – oncologist

By Ian Charles

At last I have an oncologist; I'd wondered what one was.

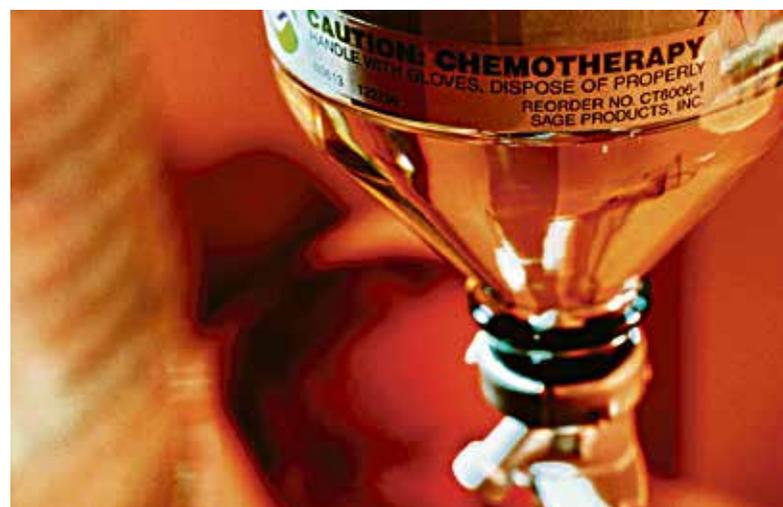
I'd been in the care of the urologist, a surgeon who prods about inside the waterworks of men with difficulties. I think he's the chaps' equivalent of a gynaecologist, although there exists something called andrology, which sounds as though it should be that. Perhaps it's a bit like socialism, where bits keep splitting off and the best way you can work out what anyone might be is by looking at what they oppose. Sometimes it's each other.

Once it was determined that my cancer was not confined to the gentlemen's regions and more importantly, once I'd pointed out that I'd now got six or seven consultants, each interested in 100 square centimetres of me but nothing

else, a nurse phoned and said that various MDTs had or were about to hold meetings about me.

A multidisciplinary team is a moderate sized group with as many different types of health professional as anyone can think of; it's the equivalent of the Leggs Eleven / Manchester United football squad that won the European Cup in 1968. One was tall; one wasn't. One was portly; one wasn't. One had hair; one didn't. You get the picture. My MDTs decided I should have an Oncologist. That meant Chemo, the nurse said.

I'd heard about chemo from a professor of molecular biology whom I'd met socially. He'd known an enormous ex-oilman, a cancer patient who lived in the Scottish Highlands. This guy, owing to his weight, had been liberally dosed with enough docetaxel to shrink the horns off a rhino, yet had no



side effects at all; he'd been getting the chemo on Thursdays, yet went clubbing 'with the missus' of a weekend, to drink his favourite 'Single Malt Whusky' too.

"How much whusky, er whisky do you drink then?" asked Prof.

"Ah, one or two on a Saturday

and the same on a Sunday," said Hamish.

"I can't imagine a couple of glasses of scotch would do you any harm," said Prof.

Hamish laughed from his huge belly until tears began to flow. The giant Highlander and his wife each

demolished one or two bottles of his favourite single malt on both club nights. The chemo, being alcohol soluble, was flushed from his system immediately it had worked its magic but before it had any opportunity to make him feel terrible.

When I got off the phone and told my wife that the various factions of the NHS were placing me with their Unity Specialist for some chemo, she went out and bought me a bottle of Glenfiddich.

"And if you don't get chemo, you can still have a tot now and again," she said. "But we'll keep you well supplied either way; don't worry."

The day came for my first meeting with the Oncologist. "So," she said. "What do you think you've been referred to me for?"

"Chemo," I said brightly, thinking of the room we'd prepared for me at home with its 400 thread-count white Egyptian cotton sheets and the single malt in a cupboard by the bed.

"Not so fast, buddy," she said. "I think we'll have another few scans and tests before we decide anything."



MENTAL HEALTH

By Brian Dash

I used to feel ashamed of my mental health condition, but now I refuse to let stigma and stereotypes dictate how I feel about myself. If you stigmatize me, that's your ignorance, not my truth. Cool people, who are educated about mental illness and confident in their own mental health, don't stigmatize. Stigma is dated, cruel and just plain wrong. Get educated about mental illness and come over to the cool side. People with mental illnesses are not less-than. They are not damaged. They are not what you see on TV, the news or in movies. They are people; brothers, mothers, fathers, daughters... People. They are valuable, vibrant, brilliant members of your community. They are 1 in 4 people, not some freaky monster you've never met. I have an awesome, successful, happy life... and a mental health condition. Big deal. Get over it. Just because I'm different, doesn't mean I'm broken. In fact, I like being different. Shame is toxic to the human spirit. I've let it go and replaced it with pride and acceptance. You can shame me all you want and have

a big ol' shame party, but it's my choice whether I attend or not. (I'm always busy with better, more important things to do than sit with shame.) Shaming yourself and others are both exhausting, heavy, soul-energy-sucking things to do. I'll be by the pool with joy and acceptance if you want to join us. I hope you'll also let shame go and move forward with pride. Here are 5 reasons why I'm not ashamed anymore:

1. It's not my fault.

I didn't choose this. It's genetics. It's not a character flaw or a negative personality trait. I'm not guilty of something. I don't have a mental health condition because I'm weak, don't try hard enough to change, don't have enough willpower, eat too many donuts, like the attention, or haven't read enough books. It's my brain being my brain. (For the record, though, I eat healthy and I've read a lot of books. I'm eating cucumbers and having an aha-moment right now.) Depression is extremely different from normal sadness. Anxiety is not "just worrying." People who have mental health conditions can't just snap out of it. Know the facts.

2. My brain is actually awesome, and I'm in good company.

I've grown to love my brain. Ya, I have anxiety, I'm a human sponge for everyone's feelings, and I'm so sensitive I'll cry at so many indignations, but the ability to feel so much is also gift. I have an extraordinary amount of empathy. My brain is out to lunch in some areas but it has extra mojo in other areas like creativity and imagination. My imagination may take me places I'm not so fond of (but I'm used to that by now) and it's worth it for the beautiful places I can travel to. I'd rather trudge through mud and then dance in seas of glittery stars than walk on flat, easy plain all the time. It's who I am and I'm also learning to appreciate the mud.. Hey, mud-pies! Mud-facials! Mud-baths!

People with mental health conditions are not doomed. Their future isn't bleak and miserable. With treatment, they can live normal, wonderful lives and have happy, successful relationships!

People with mental health conditions are in good company! Think about all the people who made unbelievable contributions to the world who also struggled with mental health conditions! (Lincoln, Beethoven, Mozart, Tolstoy, Michelangelo... the lists goes on and on)

3. We all have weird minds.

Um... everyone's mind is a little wonky. No one is thinking about unicorns skipping on rainbows (while it rains candy) all day. People with mental health conditions are not super strange aliens from a far off galaxy. (We are more like super heroes from a far off galaxy) We all have problems and struggles in life. No one is perfect. No one has a unicorn mind all the time.

4. I'm proud of how far I've coming and how I've helped/am helping others.

It takes a lot of bravery to get help for a mental health condition and stick with treatment. It takes a lot strength to tell your story for the millionth time, advocate for yourself when your care is crappy, try a bunch of medicines until you find the right one (while the cray-cray list of side effects from the chemicals plays in your mind) put up with everyone telling you what you should do to get better when they aren't qualified to do so, have your claim denied by the DWP when you can't pay your bills, and be treated like a child and talked to in an odd condescending tone when you have a degree.

People say hope is right in front of you, but depression is a blindfold. It takes so much strength to

keep searching in the dark.

Recovery is sort of like making an huge collage. You are always looking, finding, and pasting things that help you. Your your own work of art, a constant project. It takes a lot of energy and willpower. It takes being bad-ass. I'm proud that I am speaking out (not an easy decision) and trying to help others.

5. My pain has become my power.

I'm not ashamed of my pain. I think it's made me a more compassionate person. I think it's given me wisdom and inspiration. I believe pain can be like a question mark, asking us, "What will you do with me? Destruct or create?" It's energy we can transform and put to use. I believe that our struggle and pain softens when we use it to create, and then with our art/work/writing we are able to soften pain living in others. It becomes our power. It becomes our flashlight to hand to others who are still tripping in the darkness like we once were. I believe when we break down and lose everything, often we rebuild a stronger, wiser, more beautiful version of ourselves. I believe pain can be an asset. High-five, illness!

Best facebook groups

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/519949641500248/>
{We support Jeremy Corbyn}
This is one of the best forums for lively debate by democratic socialist Labour members.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/770925089714393/>
{THE WORD - supporters group}
Come and discuss the paper. Voice your opinion. Volunteer to write articles, proof read, draw graphics and generally promote the paper.

<https://www.facebook.com/WatMedMedia/>
This is an NHS social media broadcast by doctors for patients. The doctors provide honest balanced reporting. They educate, entertain & inform via content designed to promote discussion.

Best blogs

<http://breakingdownthnews.blogspot.co.uk/>
Blog by Ste Matthew Murray. He specialises in dissecting the news and political programs and presenting an alternative view of the same news.

<http://anotherangryvoice.blogspot.co.uk/>
This is a blog by a prolific writer Thomas G. Clark, with an independent and forthright Yorkshire voice who speaks about political, economic and philosophical issues.

<http://voxpolygonalonline.com/>
Mike Sivier has been a newspaper reporter for the best part of 20 years now. he switched to freelance work in 2007 in order to become a carer for his disabled girlfriend. He is interested in politics, with an emphasis on people rather than the movement of money.

<https://skwawkbox.org/>
Written by a mature man with grown-up kids, who is politically-engaged socialist (member of the Labour and Co-operative Parties). He writes about some of the political big issues of the day.
He hopes to provide some revolutionary truth to counteract the double-speak that politicians, 'leaders' and the media use to try to fool us.
He says the best antidote for bad or deliberately misleading information is good information, which he provides.

Labour lose sleaford but gain horsehay

<http://breakingdownthnews.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/labour-lose-sleaford-but-gain-horsehay.html>
ground in the Tory seat of Sleaford, coming in 4th as reported widely in the media.
Labour gain Horsehay & Lightmoor (Telford & Wrekin) from Conservative with a 20% increase in the vote but media silent!?



Tory economic treason

Tory ideology forbids the UK state from running our own vital infrastructure ...

but Tories are absolutely fine with China, Qatar or any other foreign state buying it up and extracting huge profits out of the UK economy.

<http://anotherangryvoice.blogspot.co.uk/2016/12/tory-economic-treason.html>

Around A Third Of Homeless Young People Are Being Refused Help By Local Councils

<http://voxpolygonalonline.com/2016/12/10/around-a-third-of-homeless-young-people-are-being-refused-help-by-local-councils/>

Here we are at Christmas and the most vulnerable people in the country are being thrown out into the cold because councils can't cope and the Conservative Government couldn't care less.

And it's exactly what the people of the United Kingdom supported with their votes in 2015.

Well done, Britain. You betrayed your children.

Margaret Thatcher Just Gave Britain Huge Kick Beyond Grave

<http://www.thecanary.co/2016/12/09/margaret-thatcher-just-gave-britain-huge-kick-beyond-grave/>

The former Prime Minister's privatisation of the UK's vital infrastructure has now resulted in the states of China and Qatar, along with other foreign

corporations, securing a majority stake in our gas pipe network. And much of the world will profit from this, straight from the pockets of people in Britain.

Best of

Lancashire Nana Face Prison Protesting Fracking

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/blog/climate/lancashire-nana-face-prison-protesting-fracking-20161208>

For three weeks, Tina - with the other nanas, their children and grandchildren - set up camp in the fracking field. Together they handed out free tea and cake to people who passed by and drummed up overwhelming support from the local community. And together they brought vital attention to the dangers of drilling for fracked gas.

London Underground Workers Relaunch Fight Against Cuts

<http://novaramedia.com/2016/11/28/london-underground-workers-relaunch-fight-against-cuts/>

Fit for the Future programme, which London Underground announced in November 2013. A two-year-long union campaign of industrial action managed to blunt the sharpest edges of the program and win some real concessions, but its eventual imposition in February 2016 still resulted in nearly 1,000 frontline job cuts, forced displacements of hundreds of staff, and a forced regrading which has meant every station worker has taken on the roles and responsibilities of the grade formerly above them, for no additional pay.

Green Partys Jill Stein On Obstacles

https://www.democracynow.org/2016/12/9/green_partys_jill_stein_on_obstacles

Dr. Jill Stein, who has requested recounts in three states where Donald Trump narrowly beat Hillary Clinton: Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania. But Stein has faced obstacles in all three states. Today's hearing in Wisconsin comes after two pro-Trump groups, the Great America PAC and the Stop Hillary PAC, filed a federal lawsuit seeking to stop the recount process. Meanwhile, in Michigan, a judge has already halted the recount. Another hearing will be held in Pennsylvania today to decide if a recount there can begin.

Russian Mod: 50,000 Civilians Evacuated From East Aleppo In Past Two Days

<https://off-guardian.org/2016/12/10/russian-mod-50000-civilians-evacuated-from-east-aleppo-in-past-two-days-wvideos/>

Over the past 48 hours, up to 50,000 people have been evacuated from eastern Aleppo, Russian Defense Ministry spokesperson Major General Igor Konashenkov has reported.

"More than 20,000 residents left eastern Aleppo in the first part of Saturday, and 1,217 militants laid down their weapons," Konashen-

kov said.

"The Russian Center for Reconciliation, through humanitarian corridors near Karim El-Hun and Mahayar, has organized the evacuation of civilians from the eastern parts of Aleppo to the safe areas of the city," Konashenkov added.

Best Websites

<http://www.thecanary.co/>

A formidable left wing news website with fresh and well written articles it is funded by online donations.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>

The website of Amnesty International working to defend people's human rights all over the world. Promoting and protecting freedom of speech and working to stop torture and inhumane treatment of people.

<http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/>

Greenpeace fights to defend the natural world and promote peace by investigating, exposing and confronting environmental abuse, and championing environmentally responsible solutions.

<http://novaramedia.com/>

Novara Media examines the social and economic issues of the 21st century.

They provide political commentary and stories that you won't find in the mainstream media.

The pluralist discussion can feed back into political action.

<http://www.democracynow.org/>

Democracy Now! is a national, daily, independent, award-winning news program hosted by journalists Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez. Pioneering the largest public media collaboration in the U.S., Democracy Now!

<https://off-guardian.org/>

Critical look at our allegedly liberal and free press.

<http://evolvepolitics.com/>

Evolve Politics is a truly independent, shared equity media outlet, providing incisive news reporting and investigative journalism that highlights and exposes injustice, inequality and unfairness within UK politics, and throughout society in general. It has come into existence to provide an alternative to the pro-establishment dominated media.

<http://thejusticegap.com/>

The site is run by Jon Robins (jon@thejusticegap.com; @JusticeGap). Jon is a journalist and has written about the law and justice for the national papers and specialist press for 15 years. Jon launched "thejusticegap" on October 6th 2011.

BREXIT AND BEYOND

STATE OF PLAY

By Julie Ward MEP

As the end of a momentous year approaches, many of us find ourselves rushing to the finish line feeling sick in our stomachs and anxious about the future. 2016 has been an exceptional roller-coaster of a year which has left us with many complex unanswered questions. The signs are that 2017 may prove to be equally challenging, and we must do our best to prepare for it.

Looking at all the uncertainties we face, and the complex and often Machiavellian maneuvering in our politics, many people in my constituency and elsewhere have asked me "what's going on!?". So I thought I would put together a brief overview of where we are now, and where we seem to be heading. Democrats, progressives, socialists - we have difficult times ahead, but we must brace ourselves, and get to work, to speak out, and fight for what we believe in. If this is the season of peace and humanitarian goodwill, then we must do what we can to stand up for compassionate human values in these tough times.

The Tory government has recently released yet another meaningless platitude on Brexit, that it should be "red, white and blue". (Presumably this means it could be British, American, French, Dutch, or Slovak?) Last week, the Supreme Court deliberated on the government's appeal on whether Parliament must vote to trigger article 50 of the European Union treaty. The Court is due to publish its decision in January. After the High Court dismissed the government position on the matter as "divorced from reality", it is widely expected that the Supreme Court will uphold the decision, and some have speculated that it may introduce even stricter requirements on what Parliament must constitutionally do. As the judges remarked at the end of the proceedings, the case is not about "whether or not" Brexit should happen, but how the result of the referendum could legally be put into practice.

In an attempt to head off MPs derailing her timetable, Theresa May gave in to Labour pressure, and Tory MP rebellion, and has agreed to present Parliament with a Brexit plan, and in return asked



Parliament to commit to triggering article 50 by the end of March. Only 89 MPs, 23 of them Labour, voted against the arrangement. Citing a 'Tory trap', Labour MPs raised concerns that the commitment on timing will give the government a carte blanche to present whatever plan it wants, not matter how vague or odious. Given that the signals seem to suggest we are heading towards a very hard Brexit, I would tend to agree with them.

As a Labour MEP, I will advocate for us to prioritise membership of the European single market as a condition in any future vote, with access to important programmes like Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon 2020, and European cohesion funding.

In the meantime, on the other side of the Atlantic, Trump seems to be putting together a team of elitist billionaires, and renegade extremists to run the country. His candidate for Secretary of the Treasury is a Goldman Sachs banker who made a fortune after the 2008 crash from foreclosing mortgages on people's homes and, throwing families out onto the streets. His Labour Secretary pick is a billionaire fast-food mogul who made his money exploiting precarious labour, and campaigning against the minimum wage. His pick for Secretary of Defence has committed to keeping Guantanamo Bay open and the incarceration

of more people. His National Security Adviser is a man who said that "Fear of Muslims is RATIONAL" (emphasis in the original). His cabinet is set to be the richest in American history. Far from this being a revolution for the "working man", this seems to be just the top 0.1% cutting out the middle man. These billionaires don't need to lobby the government, soon they will be the government.

This is significant because the idea that Donald Trump is somehow going to magically give the UK a specialised trade deal simply because he's been friendly with Nigel Farage is only a pipe-dream. Although none of us have any idea what Trump will actually do as president, it seems like he isn't going to take a sledge-hammer to the 'Establishment' or "drain the swamp".

Back in Britain, Brexit bills are piling up. The Office of Budget Responsibility calculated that a soft Brexit will cost the British tax payer about 60 billion pounds, and lead to 122 billion pounds more in government borrowing. European officials have estimated that the UK will need to pay its outstanding debts to the EU when it leaves, which could amount to anywhere between 20 and 52 billion pounds, depending on what kind of deal is negotiated. In the meantime, it has emerged that financial institutions in the City of London are already

preparing to move to the Continent, while the Tory government plans to deregulate and slash taxes in a race to the bottom to make us more 'attractive' to the banks, also making us more vulnerable to the next banking crisis. A leading Tory Leave MP indicated that stripping away environmental legislation would also be one result of Brexit.

The EU's chief negotiators on behalf of the Commission and the European Parliament have made it clear that the EU's core values and freedom of movement are un-negotiable and indivisible. Ministers Boris Johnson and David Davies have in the meantime astounded European diplomats with their arrogant and dismissive attitudes. But we should remember that already our influence is diminished; since the referendum there have been two EU summits with the 27 other countries meeting without the UK.

The European Parliament's chief negotiator, Guy Verhofstad has proposed offering British citizens an option of maintaining their EU citizenship. This is an intriguing offer, although it remains to be seen whether it is legally workable. Millions of British citizens are still hoping they will not lose their European citizenship, and as a pro-European Labour MEP, I will do what I can to ensure that we do not lose our rights. This is particularly important for young people,

for those in the research community and for those working in the creative industries who rely heavily on mobility and freedom of movement for work and leisure.

Perhaps the most worrying effect of the referendum so far is the way that it has revealed an unpleasant innate racism and xenophobia in our society. The Leave campaign's lies about immigrants, amplified by a scurrilous right-wing press, has made foreigners of all kinds feel very unwelcome in the U.K. This goes far beyond the recent rise in Islamophobia and the scapegoating of Romanian and Polish migrant workers. Martin Roth, the German-born highly successful Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, announced in September that the referendum result and the 'war rhetoric' of the Leave campaign had contributed to his decision to resign his post.

Of all of the votes and elections in 2016, the Austrian presidential election re-run provided relief, as the Green-Independent candidate defeated a far-right extremist contender. Austrian colleagues have been the first to say that the battle is far from over, and much work remains to be done. However, what this shows is that when voters mobilise and understand the real risks involved in allowing extremists to claim the empty space, the democratic majority turn out to vote and do defeat the nationalists. We now face a slew of elections in 2017, where that same lesson needs to be applied. We will see the Dutch election in March, the French in May, and the German elections in September. Italy will now probably be heading for elections, as Prime Minister Renzi made the error of connecting the referendum on his proposed constitutional reforms to his own personal fate. All these elections will greatly affect how much leeway European leaders are likely to give the UK during negotiations, which is not likely to be very much.

As we take a rest in between 2016 and 2017, we must recharge our campaigning batteries and be prepared to speak out loud and strong in defence of our values. I know I will be starting 2017 ready for the coming struggles, standing in solidarity with my European colleagues and comrades, speaking up for democracy, human rights, peace and tolerance.

By Shawn Vickers

A bustling London micro-venue has been soaking up the accolades while proving a massive hit with performers and punters alike.

Magazine Time Out has named Angel Comedy Club, situated upstairs at Islington's Camden Head pub, the capital's 'best free comedy club' due to its combination of high-quality acts, stunning, secret gigs and - obviously - free admission; while building a burgeoning reputation around major house talents such as Barry Ferns and 'one to watch' Masud Milas.

„one of the finest comedy venues in town“

This further highlights a shift within the capital's comedy scene, one that's slowly turning its back on more established venues such as the London Comedy Store and Soho Comedy Club, towards an 'earthier' and less gentrified type of venue.

Barry Ferns explained: "We're not promoters; this gig is run by comedians. Masud, Ed, me, we're all comedians, we're not promoters. We don't wanna be playing the O2 or promoting things or moving on; these gigs are for people to learn. If you're a normal promoter you might be 'I need to get a bigger venue' or 'I need to get this'; we just want an audience, man".

Over the past few years there has been grumbling from disillusioned comedians and punters concerning the increased corporatisation of the UK comedy scene.

Many view this as especially apparent with the Edinburgh

CAMDEN HEAD



Comedy Festival and its recent high-profile criticism by the likes of Stewart Lee and Richard Herring. Both claimed the exorbitant costs of performing at the festival are tainting the experience.

"What's the point for Richard to go up [to Edinburgh] to spend a load of money when he can get the same audience down here?" offered Barry.

The current commercialisation has been echoing elsewhere and has culminated in a creeping shift towards pristine, over-polished glass and brass venues serv-



ing bottled lager, the result often being a banal wine bar atmosphere and socially cleansed audiences. Some claim this has done little to retain the rawness that cutting-edge comedy so often requires.

Angel Comedy has managed to buck this trend, building a unique atmosphere around its audiences as opposed to merely ripping them off, and this has resulted in one of the finest comedy venues in town.

Angel Comedy Store is open seven days a week, featuring experienced acts, raw talent and improv free of charge. After the show, performers offer the audience the chance to make a contribution if they wish but there's no pressure to do so.

There's Only One Way Of Life, And That's Your Own!

Gig Review: Levelling The Land 25 Brixton 3/12/16. Karl Trevor.



I've never seen an off night from the Levellers. That's based on about 50 shows. I've seen a lot of bands from my era have the odd blip.

Last night was phenomenal. The Intro film, with a cheer for Corbyn's image and boos for Blatcherites and Trump and Fadge. The Speech from Network and a note perfect 'Levelling The Land'. And then Part 2....

"I've never seen an off night from the Levellers. Last night was phenomenal."

This was my sons first London gig - He now wants Gaz Brookfields Album for XMAS!

On the train home I asked him

"Should we do 'Beautiful Days' then?"

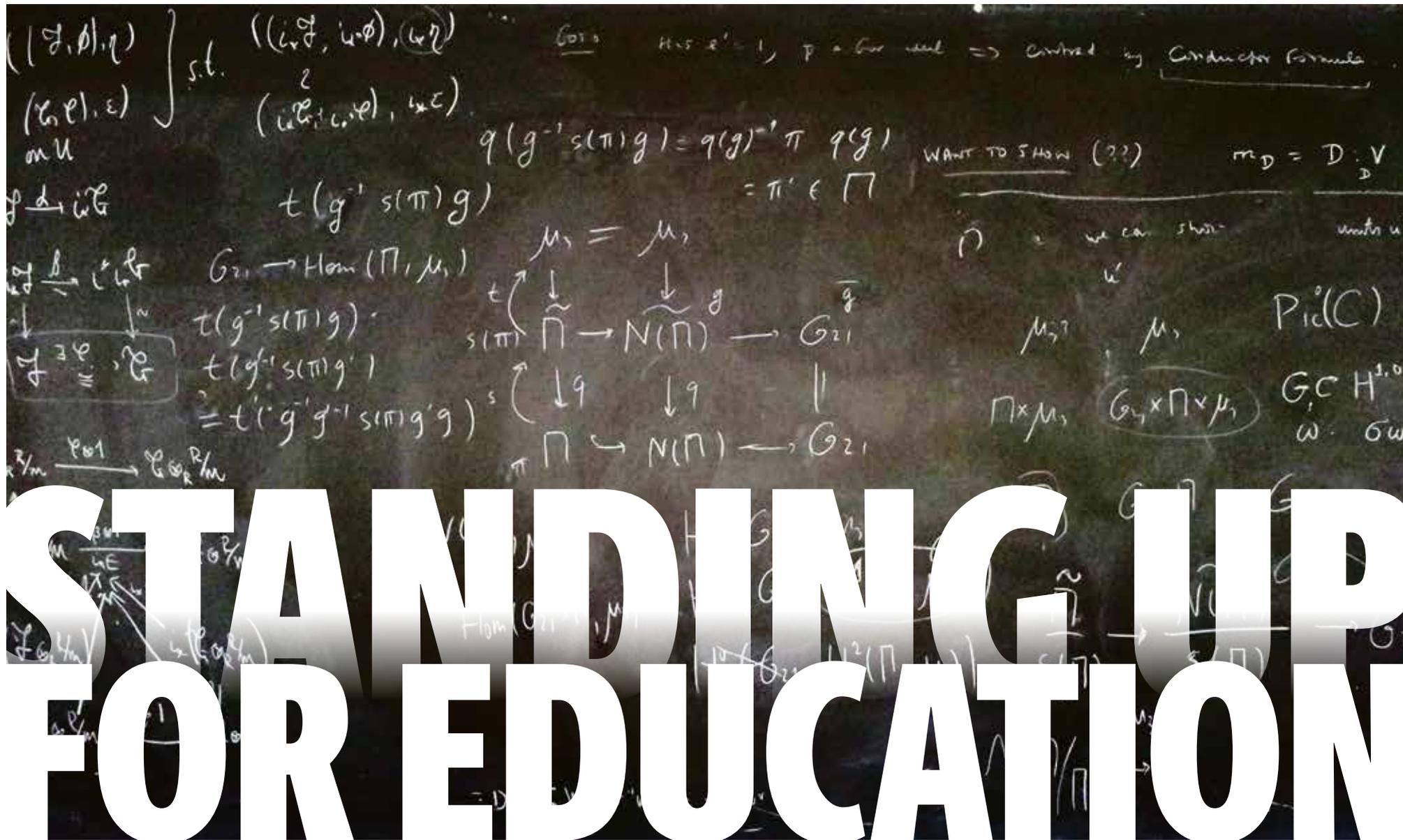
We're doing Beautiful Days!

Levellerism thrives for 28 years, through the Blatcherism years. Coalitionism, austerity, and the fall of democracy I just decided to call Mayexitism.

So as the courts hold the Tories to Parliamentary law, Labour and Corbyn are derided by MSM and BBC Comedians. I see Levellerism in 650,000 grass roots Labour members. I just wish the buggers would buy our Voluntary, Cooperative, Socialist Tabloid. Look what 'On The Fiddle' achieved with the Lev's Grassroots.

LIBERTY!!! And a f*****g good time with thousands of beautiful people on a cold Austerity surviving night in Brixton...





STANDING UP FOR EDUCATION

Edited by Louise Regan and Tom Unterrainer

Education, Education, Education

Tony Blair pinched his famous triple-charged priority from his Chief of Staff, Jonathon Powell. He hired Michael Barber to tell him what it meant: teachers shooting arrows at rapidly moving targets in a changeable crosswind and being blamed when they missed. Michael Gove loved Blair and admired Barber who now influences so much educational policy and practice across the world.

In the 50s and early 60s Secretary of State David Eccles, though suspicious of professionals, was excellent at getting money for education from the Treasury. His Secret Garden from which he felt excluded by teachers was hardly Gove's Blob. Gove wanted neither evidence nor experts (nor resources from the Treasury) and like Blair referred to his deforming changes as 'reforms', a once noble word from our school history books that we associated with the end of slavery, the extension of the franchise, greater fairness, equality and Gladstone's Act of 1870 giving us compulsory free schooling. We now witness the deformation of the NHS, education and the Welfare

State being referred to as 'reform'.

I think of it as social fracking. To see education and educators being directed to disconnect from local democracy, betray professional values, promote social division and hurt young people is deeply depressing. As this book reminds us the problem is international.

Regan and Unterrainer have brought together seventeen people who stand up for education. Combining knowledge and commitment their writings provide perspective, insight, evidence and hope. The first seven letters of professional give us profess. Books like this remind us that we have the power and the duty to articulate and offer for discussion the public values of professional educators. What do we profess? And are we not also learners integral to society?

All the contributors inform, stimulate and are good to read. The themes and specific subjects include: education as a right; the tensions of inspection; the suppression of creativity; mental health and well-being; the misuse of statistics; social control; and the refusal of government to perceive education as a social good rather than a commodity. They are not confined to one country and we are provided with perspectives beyond the classroom.

The contribution to the book

of Jeremy Corbyn is significant because of the disconnection of policy makers from participants in education. For example, educators write many millions of words for masters and doctoral degrees in which they make critical sense of the purposes, concerns, anxieties, interests, joys, fears and values of education. Those professional voices are also a conduit for the voices of learners. I am willing to bet that no politician has read one of those words or the reports evaluating their impact (happy to help if needed). That has not stopped them making and imposing policy. Gurus and consultants may gain the ears of ministers but participants in education struggle to do so.

The book is part of a fight back that is not confined to schools. Reading, for example, *Further Education and the Twelve Dancing Princesses* (2015) reminds us of the inspiring transformational part that further education can play in education despite governmental indifference. Not long ago it was possible to bring together people from all phases of education within an education authority to exchange experience, expertise, views and arguments. Now the emphasis is upon competition rather than co-operation.

The word 'community' remains in use but hardly in the sense meant by John Dewey. Together with 'reform' it needs to be recaptured. And, clearly, so does 'educa-

tion'. Dewey was born ninety-six years before Michael Barber. His vision of education and society was humane, fulfilling and shared by many. Our politicians have, too often, gone instead for Barber's deliverology, which comes with what we might call measurology.

Among those standing up for education are the Symposium for Sustainable Schools <http://www.soss.org.uk/> and Reclaiming Schools <https://reclaimingschools.org/>. They are not the only ones. My concern is that while anti educational groups take action pro educational groups are insufficiently cohesive. Buying and reading this book will help.

The types and classifications of schools (and colleges and universities) multiply. There remains a mainstream but the number of 'Ox-bow Schools' is growing. As we lose social and professional coherence we are held together by inspection in a game of blame.

This is not inspection as contemplated by Lawrence Stenhouse who encouraged educators to see themselves as researchers supported by Her Majesty's Inspectors. He was writing in 1975 at the same time as Denis Lawton was proposing a national curriculum that would emerge from professional discussion of social values.

Seven years later a group of teachers in Australia led by Ste-

phen Kemmis and others put forward the notion of the Socially Critical School that was not confined to preparing young people for society or for an individualistic life. Why prepare to join something of which you are already a part? With a socially critical approach the emphasis moves from teaching as instruction to learning as a collaborative and socially related activity.

We are told to close the gap. What gap? The gap between us and Finland? Why not the gap between rich and poor? It comes with a privilege gap. Many politicians have convinced themselves that such gaps are irrelevant when it comes to obtaining high scores, which have become the official signifier of a good education. We also have a creativity gap, an enjoyment gap, a health and well-being gap and a gap between policy makers and participants.

The campaign for genuine education needs to extend across all phases. Buy this book. Argue about it. Allow these voices to speak to you. Answer them back. Stand up for education. Don't sit down. And when you encounter a policy maker, never kneel. Shout education, education, education.

Cliff Jones (edited review)

Standing up for EDUCATION can be found at

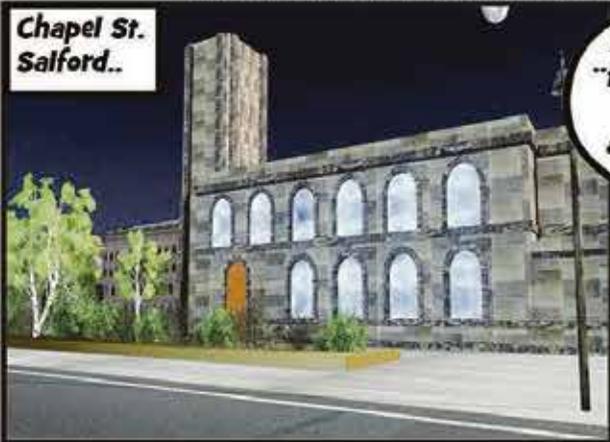
ISBN 978-0-85124-858-5



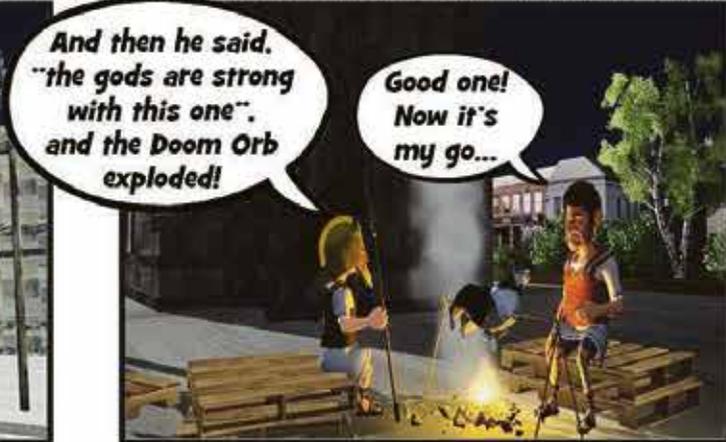
XENOPHONS ADVENTURES IN SALFORD: PART 11



PREVIOUSLY: With the cup-tie at Old Trafford ending in a predicably one sided bloodbath and an understandably bewildered John Motson, our heroes beat a hasty retreat from the congratulatory arms of the local constabulary and begin to plot the defence of their title from a dingy little backwater in the heart of the city...



Chapel St. Salford..



And then he said, "the gods are strong with this one", and the Doom Orb exploded!

Good one! Now it's my go...



This is the winter festival of the heathen!



They celebrate refugees...



Not finding anywhere to live!

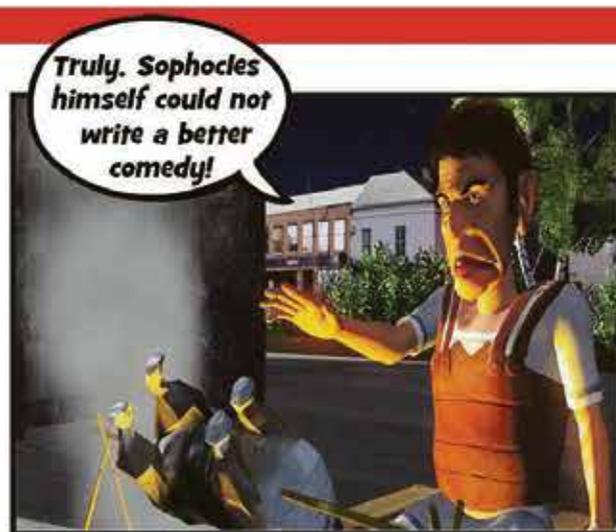


To help the poor they eat and drink more themselves!



They believe that an old man will fly out of the sky...

And give them presents!



Truly. Sophocles himself could not write a better comedy!



And like the Spartans they throw out the weak to die!

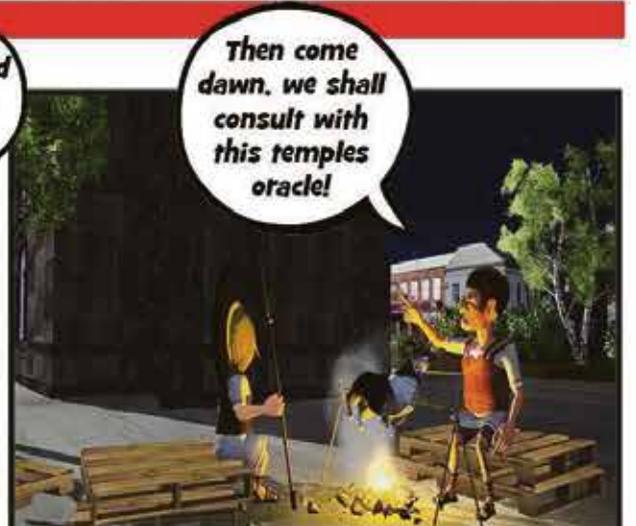


You've put me right off my corgi...

Tasty wee beggars these aren't they?



We need to find a way home. Xenophon



Then come dawn, we shall consult with this temples oracle!

Events

Wednesday at 18:00-19:30
Next Week - 6-12° Partly Cloudy

Portcullis House
Bridge Street London SW1A 2LW United Kingdom

Tickets Available
www.eventbrite.co.uk

SME Labour

DEC 14 The Impact of Brexit on SMEs - Roundtable with MP Chuka

Saturday, 28 January 2017 at 11:00-17:00

Gower St to Trafalgar Square

Hands Off Our NHS! D-Day March

JAN 28 Hands Off Our NHS! D-Day March

STOP NOT FOR SALE !!



15 December at 10:00-12:00

Jobcentre Plus
101 Old St, OL6 6BJ Ashton-under-Lyne

DEC 15 Dickensian Christmas Demonstration

Saturday, 11 February 2017 at 0:01-23:59

Leeds

"This Budget has further proved that the Chancellor's spending cuts are a political choice and not an economic necessity"
The Independent, 25th March 2016

"...would a more honest approach be to conclude that austerity was misguided and needs to be reversed?"
The Guardian, 23rd October 2016

FEB 11 Leeds Labour Campaign Day 2 - Austerity isn't working

STOP THE WAR'S **Christmas BENEFIT NIGHT**

THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 3pm-7pm

Junction House
578 Kingsland Road, London, London

DEC 15 STWC Xmas Benefit Night

Saturday, 25 February 2017 at 10:00-18:00

Rich Mix London
35 - 47 Bethnal Green Road, E1 6LA London,

Tickets Available
www.eventbrite.co.uk

FEB 25 Revolution: Russia 1917 - one hundred years on, 25 Feb 2017

FIGHT FOR MARCH & RALLY

A Living Wage **£10**

Saturday 17.12.16 1pm
Devonshire Green Sheffield

"may your choices reflect your hopes not your fears"
Nelson Mandela.

DEC 17 Fight For £10 Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise

THE PEOPLE'S QUESTION TIME

BREXIT: WHAT ARE OUR DEMANDS?

JAN 19 People's Question Time: Brexit, What are our demands?

Thursday, 19 January 2017 at 19:00-22:00
St Pancras Church
Euston Road, NW1 2 London, United Kingdom
Tickets Available
pqtjan2017.eventbrite.co.uk

Psychologists Against Austerity

'EQUALITY IS THE BEST THERAPY'

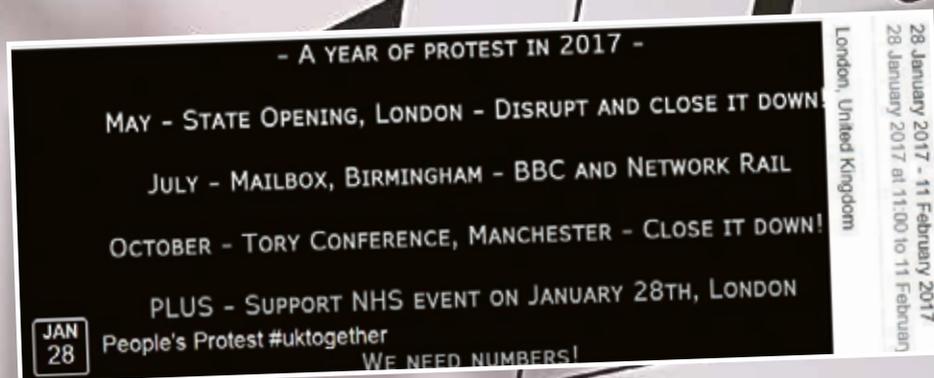
20 December at 18:30-23:00
3-7° Partly Cloudy

7 Roger Street, London, WC1N 2PB

DEC 20 PAA London Meeting - Christmas Party

St. Jeremy of London

By Alan Davies & Andrew Keir



UK Miners Pension Scheme and We Shall Overcome present..
A festive song like no other

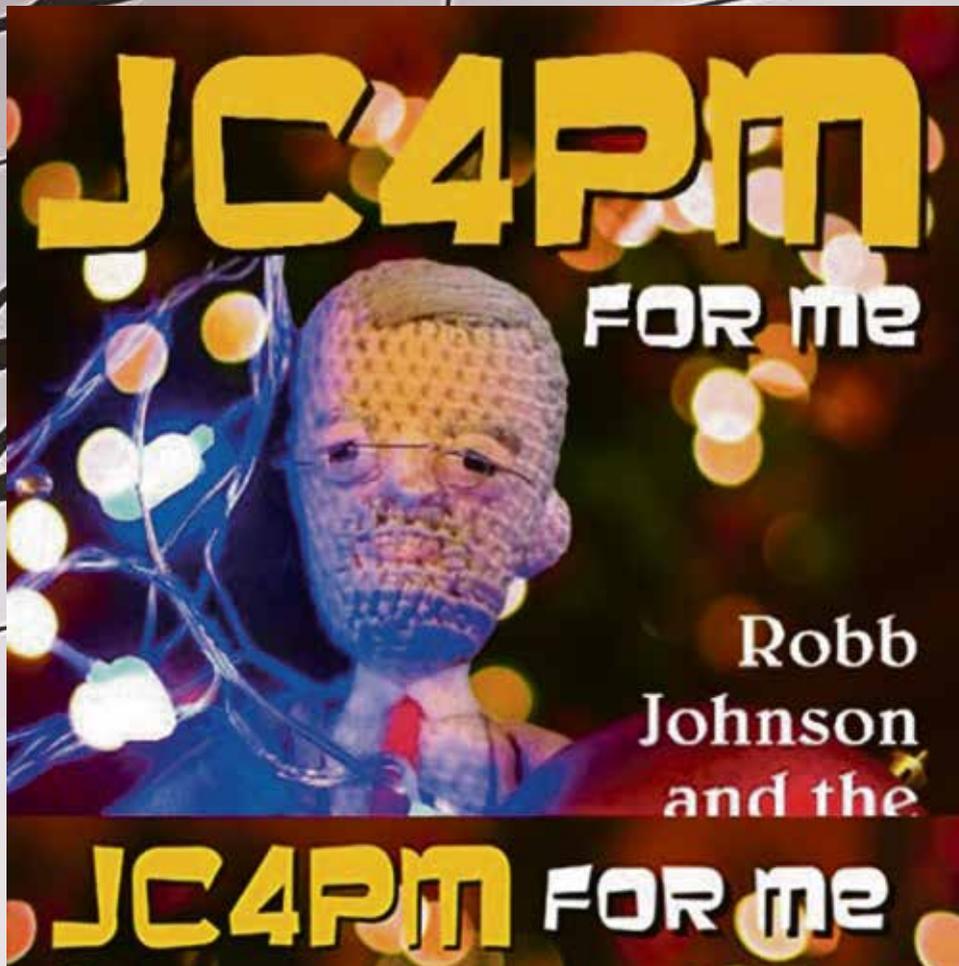
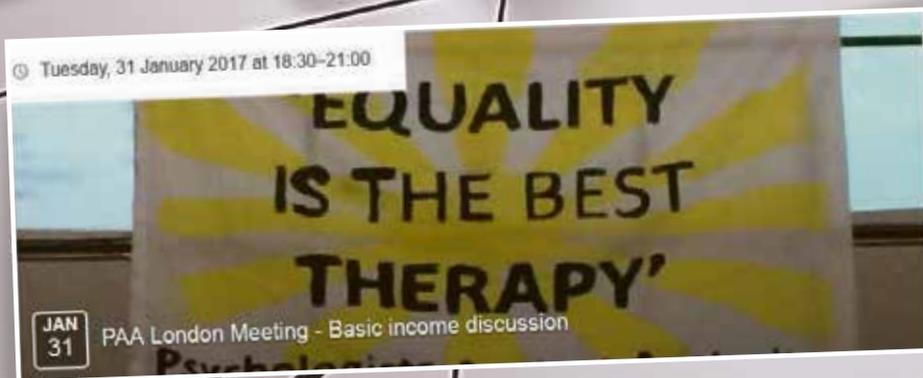
MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM HATFIELD MAIN

Joe Solo and the Hatfield Brigade

Get it on iTunes Monday!



Available to download from 28/11/2016
All proceeds to help those struggling in #FoodBankBritain



POETRY CORNER

"Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

**Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

**Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.**

**Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

**Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.**

**Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

**And you, my father, there on that sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.**

**Golden carpet
Ghostly trees
December gifts
A mellow breeze
Morning sun
Its pallid will
Nothing stirs
And birds are still
Afternoon veils
Children's song
To light the fire
Of evenings long
And softly sleep
No souls abound
The frosty realm
Of breathless sound**

JOHN FRANCIS

**Don't need a shot of heroin to kill my disease
Don't need a shot of turpentine, only bring me to my knees
Don't need a shot of codeine to help me to repent
Don't need a shot of whiskey, help me be president**

ALEX TAYLOR

By Derek Pattison,
President, Tameside TUC,
(in a personal capacity).

In this country and abroad, we are seeing a growing interest in the idea of a guaranteed universal unconditional basic income scheme for all citizens. What seems to be driving such initiatives, is the realisation that the world of work is becoming more precarious with jobs under threat from technology and automation. The Bank of England now estimates that as many as 15 million jobs are under threat from technology and a third of jobs in the retail sector, are predicted to disappear by 2025, due to such things as online shopping.

Another factor is the way in which the world of work is changing. One in seven Britons is now classed as self-employed. Although some of this so-called self-employment is possibly bogus, as in the case of Uber and Deliveroo, the latest official data shows that 83% of new jobs created in the UK between March and May 2016, were self-employed. Such is the rise of the so-called 'gig economy' that in 2015, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reported that since 1995, 'non-standard' jobs - temporary, part-time or self-employed positions, - accounted for the whole of net jobs growth in the UK since 1995.

Employment law in the UK also makes it easier to hire and fire workers by using zero hour contracts and agency working where employees have very few employment rights. The self-employed don't get sick pay, holiday pay, pensions or employment protections nor are employers obliged, to pay their NI contributions or the living wage.

My own union, 'Unite', supports in principle a universal basic income scheme and is urging other unions to support such a scheme.

Unite calls on unions to support a CITIZENS BASIC INCOME!



At the Unite policy conference in July (2016), the following resolution was adopted:

"Conference notes the growing crisis of low pay, in work poverty and precarity in a labour market increasingly characterised by casualised forms of employment that offer low pay, zero hours contracts and no long-term security.

Conference further notes the

evident inability of our bureaucratically costly social security system, with its dependence on means-testing and frequent arbitrary sanction, to provide an adequate income floor.

Conference believes that a Basic Income, an unconditional, non-withdrawable income paid to everyone, has the potential to offer genuine social security to all while boosting the

economy and creating jobs.

Conference welcomes the ongoing exploration of the concept of a Basic Income by the think-tank Compass, the innovation charity Nesta, the Royal Society of Arts, and others; further welcomes the planned practical experiments in Finland and Utrecht, Netherlands.

Conference calls upon the union to actively campaign for a Uni-

versal Basic Income and eradicate poverty for all."

Although the Tories have rejected the idea of a basic income scheme as unaffordable, Scotland is considering a universal basic income scheme pilot and the Labour Party is considering a universal basic income which would replace means-tested benefits with a flat rate payment.

Sue Castillon Portsmouth South Parliamentary Candidate 2015 "A New Style Of Leader A New Kind Of Politics"

Never more has there been a time for lateral thinking, creativity, and positivity in politics. In these times of fear, uncertainty, bullying and abuse we have to believe in a different approach to politics and give a different approach a chance.

When Trump was voted in as the president elect I felt marginalised, ostracised, not part of society, not worthy and coming from a 67 year old grandmother having led a very full and interesting life things have to be bad.

The fear is palpable and a large amount of Americans and British have not felt this before, demonstrating the un-equal nature of the world and how the far right are gaining some leverage.

On Twitter I had to switch off for a while as I could not "hack" the "Everyday sexism" stream of incidents, "hands up skirts on the tube" "baying and calling in the streets" "assuming you have



come for the cleaning job at a university interview because you are black and female - Professor Petronella Bleinburg socio linguistics expert"

Now some people feel they have the right to be openly racist and sexist post Brexit and Trump. This is pure bullying of those different to ourselves. When tutoring the PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) in secondary schools in Portsmouth I asked the students to do a simple pushing exercise (in a safe environment) and when a bully did this with their victim both boys were astounded at the personal power each of them possessed.

I trust Jeremy Corbyn's agenda

when he talks of not hurling abuse back when you are on the receiving end of it. It is very hard to do because the natural instinct is to retaliate. I admire his ability to do this whilst still putting forward his 10 point plan to change this country for the better. Strategies for investing in people, infrastructure, a sustainable environment, young people and equality.

He isn't the dogmatic "charismatic" leader we have been used to for many decades but a refreshing change. He is considered, reflective, quiet, and articulate in his arguments. I for one have had enough of the self-serving, pontificating leader who shouts but quite often says nothing.

I think Jeremy Corbyn and John Mc Donnell (a brilliant partnership) should create a platform (Dispatches documentary?) to really put their ideas forward and show the real people they are. The main stream media are so quick to "pillory" yet will not listen to the positive alternative.

So come on the media department of the Labour Party step up to the plate and promote the 2 people who are our greatest assets. I will help.

*Sue Castillon
Portsmouth Labour Party member.
Chair of Brunel branch
Vice chair of Portsmouth Momentum.
Member of Unite Community*

STORY BY ALAN DAVIES

ART BY ANDREW KEIR

CHRIS THE CAREERIST #11





Marmalade Chicken Roast

Ingredients

1 medium chicken
1 tbsp light cooking oil
1 tbsp good dark marmalade
Generous twist of black pepper
½ tsp salt
Juice of one orange

Method

Take a sharp knife and slash the chicken to the bone (see photo). Combine the marinade ingredients and put them in a large zip lock bag along with the slashed chicken. Leave it in there for a few hours and give it a massage every now and then. When you're ready to cook it, you will need to make your pouch. Take a large square of foil and place the bird on it. Then take another, slightly larger square, and place it on top. Finally, fold the edges together and press tightly to ensure your pouch is air tight. Fold the edges more than once to make sure! Place the pouch on a baking tray and put it in a hot oven (gas mark 7) for 45 mins. After 45 mins take it out, pierce the foil and fold it down to expose the bird. Put the chicken back in the oven for another 10 - 15 mins to get nice and golden. If you're not calorie conscious you can then add the lovely juices to your gravy!



QUIZ



1. Which city was the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy until 1865?
2. Zog was the last monarch of which country?
3. What did Winston Churchill refer to as 'a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'?
4. Who wrote the musical A Little Night Music?
5. What is measured by an ammeter?
6. How was Jeanne D' Arc better known in history?
7. What is a rhinoceros horn made out of?
8. In America the Hudson river runs through which great city?
9. Which marine crustacean has a front pair of legs modified as pincers; one for crushing and one for cutting?
10. In which ocean are the Midway Islands?
11. Astronauts Young and Chippen made their first flight in which type of space vehicle on 12th April 1981?
12. On the Beaufort scale, a speed of 12-18 kph (8-12 mph) is described as what type of breeze?
13. Developed in England from war-horses, what is the largest breed of horse?
14. Which Shakespeare character says: 'Yet I do fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness'?
15. Native to Europe, what is a medlar?

8. New York

7. Hair

6. Joan of Arc

5. Electric current

4. Stephen Sondheim

3. The Soviet Union

2. Albania

1. Turin

15. A small tree

14. Lady Macbeth

13. Shire

12. Gentle

11. Space Shuttle

10. Pacific

9. Lobster

Stained Glass Window Biscuits

Ingredients

- Sunflower oil for greasing
- 175g plain flour
- 1 tsp ground ginger (optional)
- 100g cold butter, cubed
- 50g caster or granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp milk
- 12 boiled sweets

Method

Heat the oven to 180 centigrade/gas mark 4 and grease 2 large non-stick baking trays with the oil.

Put all the biscuit ingredients except the milk and the sweets in a blender and whizz them up to fine breadcrumb consistency.

Add the tbsp of milk and pulse until it all comes together. Knead lightly on a

floured surface, wrap in cling film and chill for half an hour.

With your cutters, use the larger ones to cut out the biscuit then a smaller one to cut out a centre, leaving a border of a 2 to 3 cms.

Once carefully transferred to the baking tray, if you do want to thread them afterwards make a hole at the top of each biscuits using a drinking straw.

Bake for 7 minutes, remove from the oven and quickly pop a glacier fruit into each one, then bake for a further 10-12 minutes.

Allow to cool and harden completely, then thread with ribbon/string (or not) and get crunching. They'll keep for a week or so in theory, but not if there's children in the vicinity.



Those that died this year

Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro.

Boxing legend, Muhammad Ali.

Singer David Bowie.

Actor Alan Rickman.

Eagles frontman Glenn Frey.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" author Harper Lee.

Beatles producer Sir George Martin.

Songwriter, Leonard Cohen.

Singer Prince.

Boxer Muhammad Ali.

Former Israeli president, Shimon Perez.

The Man From U.N.C.L.E star Robert Vaughn.

Former King Crimson frontman Greg Lake.

Jimmy Perry, screenwriter.

Actress Jean Alexander.

And let us also remember those murdered In Syria by the empire builders of America and the dictator Assad. Those in Yemen murdered by British made bombs. Those dying in capitalist caused poverty around the world, we will remember you.

THE CAPITALISTMAS WORD

This is our special Capitalistmas word. . More pages and more content. Our next regular issue after this will be out on January 12th. So you are not disappointed we will be bringing out a PDF only version on December 29th. This will be delivered to all PDF subscribers. For all updated information join the word supporters group

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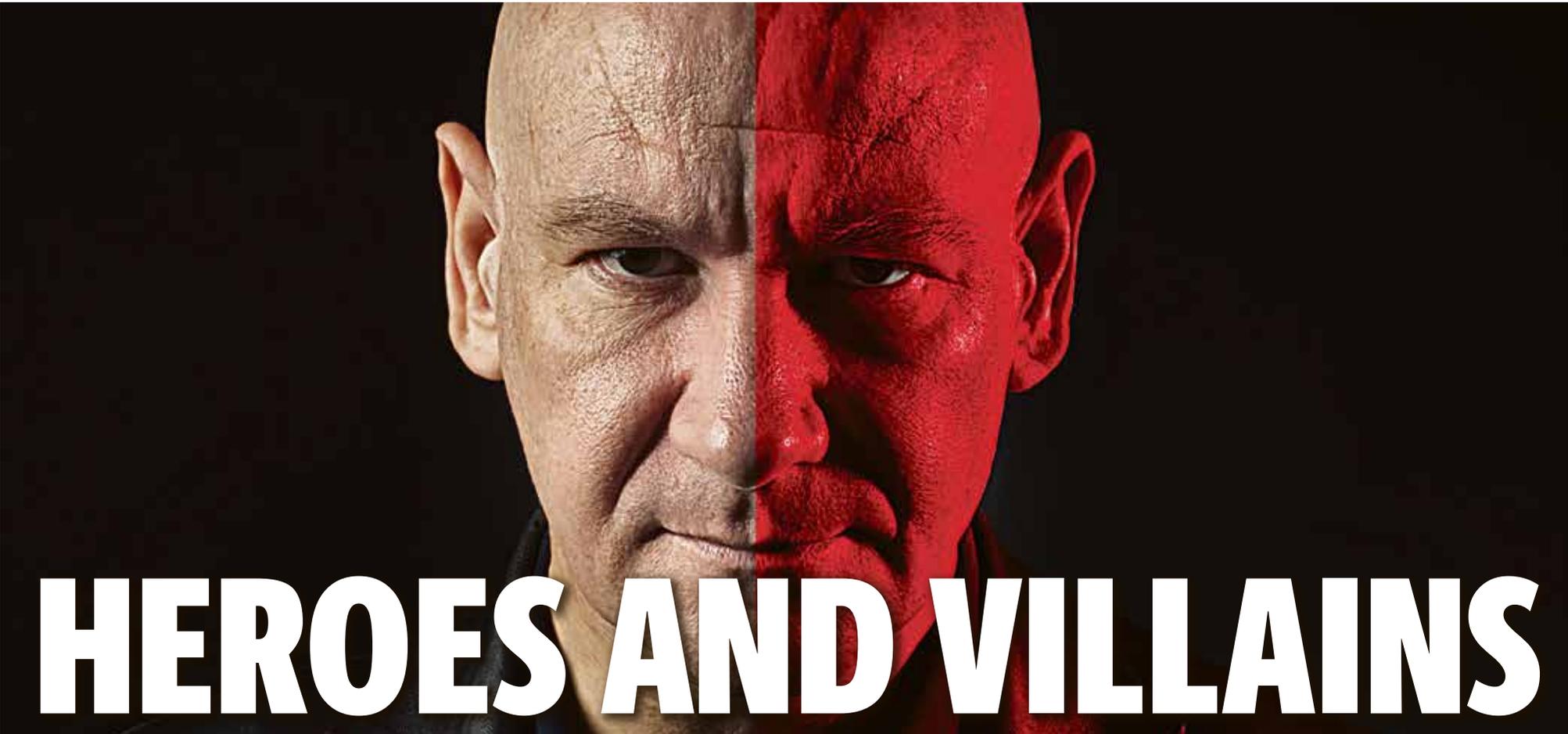
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HEROES AND VILLAINS

Think of a hero, a true hero. Whomever you choose, one thing is certain; they are a hero because they act for the benefit of others.

Think of a hero. Whomever you choose, they are a hero because they act against their own self-interest, for a greater good.

Think of a hero. Whomever you choose, they are a hero because they act for two simple reasons - because they can, and someone should.

What then makes a hero? The simplest prerequisite is adversity. There is always an issue, a quest a person must undertake. This quest must be for the greater good.

The second prerequisite is opportunity. A hero is a person with an ability to act. This ability may not be great. Folk tales abound with examples of simple men, bound to act against adversity for no other reason than because someone needs to - and so a hero does at least try. This is exemplified by Webster's definition of heroic:

- 1: of, relating to, resembling, or suggesting heroes especially of antiquity
- 2a: exhibiting or marked by courage and daring
- b: supremely noble or self-sacrificing¹

If there is no personal risk, there can be no daring, no courage,

no self-sacrifice. Therefore action without risk is not heroic.

History and Myth are filled with heroic exemplars. To name but a few; Beowulf, Robin Hood, King Arthur, Hercules, Odysseus, Perseus, the Saum, Rustam, and Suhrah.

As dictionary definitions neglect connotation, here we should provide our own, fuller definition. As we have seen, a hero is a person who, against their own self-interest, takes risk of peril upon themselves in order to serve the greater public good.

A true hero is a moral exemplar; an example by which we are invited to measure ourselves. A true hero is celebrated in myth, in legend and in tradition - a true celebrity; a hero is the standard by which we invite our children to judge themselves - and us - as we choose to reinforce myth and legend in ritual as we have from time immemorial; a ritual perhaps best recognised today as the Bedtime Story.

If you read heroic tales to your children, you personally endorse the morality of the hero. If you were read heroic tales as a child, you likely had parents who endorsed the morality of the hero. This goes on into the deepest, dimmest past of humanity.

A hero is a person who, against their own self-interest, takes risk of peril upon themselves in order to serve the greater public good.

A simple and well known example would be Robin Hood:

"Robin is no common criminal. As the famous saying goes, he robs from the rich to give to the poor. The poor have little to fear from Robin Hood. His enemies are the rich and the corrupt, especially the Sheriff of Nottingham and the bad apples in the church - like the Abbot of St. Mary's and the Bishop of Hereford.

Robin defends the underdog against oppression."²

Robin does that at great personal risk. He and his 'band of merry-men' are outlaws - living

A hero is a person with an ability to act. This ability may not be great."

outside the protection of the law, and are wanted men - the Sheriff of Nottingham has placed a bounty on their heads that any man may claim upon their capture or death. But Robin is not alone - beloved by the people he is protected by the people - and they fight with him, for he fights against oppression.

Robin is a symbol to which all men may flock in search of justice. Justice itself is the reason Hood must fight; his enemies are rich and corrupt: 'Robin defends the underdog against oppression'.

This then is the morality of a hero; having the ability to make a difference, and using it to serve the public good...whatever the cost.

We may say it takes a villain. Villain is the word we use to identify the opposite of a hero, but this word is perhaps incorrect. Its origin is steeped in the history of England, as a corruption of villein, mentioned in the Domesday Book (as another word for serf) - modified slaves counted part of the land purchased or sold by a lord, but allotted a portion of said land for their own survival.³

A more accurate term for the opposite of a hero may be the word idiot, which has also been corrupted over millennia. This word comes from Ancient Greece⁴, and was of particular interest to those conducting their original democracy experiments. For the ancient Athenian the word idiot had a very precise meaning: someone characterized by self-centeredness and concerned almost exclusively with private—as opposed to public—affairs.⁵

As a hero can be readily seen to put the needs of others before their own, a villain in its proper

sense indicates a person putting themselves before the needs of others. The Athenians held this was partly due to ignorance, partly due to a lack of education; essentially they held that an idiot - a villain - is not a fully functioning human being⁶.

Morality is somewhat subjective. Hood's villain is the Sheriff of Nottingham. The Sheriff would see Robin as the bad guy, as Robin thwarts his plans and kills his loyal men. In law, at least, he would be right. But the sheriff is the villain, the idiot; he is an evil oppressor, and the Sheriff cannot see the evil of his ways - or the error in his morals - for the Sheriff, the villain, has none. The truth of an idiot is they are often convinced they are doing the right thing - they lack the wisdom and insight to realise their evils. This perfectly fits the original definition of an idiot.

Such examples are found throughout all cultures and traditions; some millennia old like Beowulf, some truly ancient like the Hindu Pandava brothers - whose tale, the Mahabharata, is perhaps Hinduism's most important religious text - and a great many more too numerous to detail here.

The heroic moral is always the same. Serving the public and greater good should always be our aim, set above serving the private and individual gain:

Greed is the folly of the idiot.

1. "Heroic." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 28 May 2014. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heroic>>.

2. Robin Hood, A Beginner's Guide, Allen W. Wright.

3. "Villein." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 28 May 2014.

4. "Idiot." Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 28 May 2014. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/idiot>>.

5. Wikipedia, idiot, etymology.

6. Parker, Walter C. (v86 n5 p344 Jan 2005). "Teaching Against Idiocy", Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappan.

By John Jones

Just imagine it - people travelling between cities in frictionless pods through overhead tubes at speeds over 12,000 kph - twice as fast as a passenger airline. That's about 760 miles an hour to us old-folk. It's coming soon, sooner than you might think. Welcome to Hyperloop.

Glasgow to London in 40 minutes

On November 8 2016, at Burj Khalifa, Dubai, the company "Hyperloop One" - a Dubai Future Accelerators (DFA) participant, gave one of many promotional events for their "Future Accelerators" visionary program for the global transport sector.

At the event they showed how the standard journey time from Dubai to Abu Dhabi can be cut from 2 hours to 12 minutes. Phew! - just enough time to tuck away my walking stick.

Attending the future-transport event was the Dubai Prime Minister and the head of the Dubai Future Foundation Matar Al Taya who are both pushing hard for the Hyperloop project that is already at the model construction stage.

Rob Lloyd CEO: Hyperloop "can change the future..."

Las Vegas Test-Run

Hyperloop is no pipe-dream. Earlier this year, "Hyperloop One" conducted its first ever propulsion open air test (POAT) for speed in the Las Vegas desert along a half-mile track.

The successful test was de-

THE FACE OF THE FUTURE HYPERLOOP



clared as a "significant moment" for the company who promise that the high speed network can serve commuters for the price of a bus ticket.

So how does it work? And why so cheap for commuters? A network of overhead steel pneumatic tubes carries commuter pods in and around the city, while larger tubes carry "coaches" for travel between cities.

Air is pumped out of the tubes creating a vacuum. Pods and coaches levitate on magnets inside the

tubes. These innovations greatly reduce friction, noise, wind-resistance, and fuel costs - key factors that can make or break any mooted commercial transport solution.

Coaches travel in a vacuum, faster than sound

Driver-less cars or "Hyperpods" will carry commuters in short hops around the city, while a network of larger tubes will carry passengers in coaches around the country at

eye-watering speeds.

Design concepts show a large central control station known as a Hyperportal. This also houses conference rooms, shops, and commuter lounges.

Silk Road

At the Asian-Pacific Economic Forum (APEC) held this year, Putin accepted an invitation from the Chinese delegation to construct a "cargo hyperloop" as part of the

massive Russia-China "Silk Road" project facilitating Eurasian trade.

And in Moscow, Deputy Mayor Maxim Liksutov said their pilot Hyperloop project for the city could begin in December. It will cost \$1.5 billion, according to William Shor of Caspian Venture Capital, the investment branch of Russia's Summa Group.

Hang on, what about our good old British train network that our Empire so lovingly exported around the world? Our rail infrastructure is a great, indispensable blessing despite the pressures it endures from government-promoted corporate predation.

But current rail technology has its limitations: the width of the rail track or "gauge" was taken from the rails that carried 18th century colliery coal carts. This gauge presents limited scope for further developments in commuter capacity and speed.

For traditional rail, operational speed is currently max'ed out by the European AVG Italo at 360 kph (223 mph), while the Shanghai Maglev, using magnetic technology, tops the train list with speeds of 400 kph (250 mph). Limited test-runs have achieved some 25% more.

Currently, Hyperloop challenges space-travel as a national prestige project and is also envisioned as a development that will, for the near future at least, supplement but not replace current travel options. All aboard!

Christmas On Mars

What are the chances? And what would it be like?

Interest in space exploration has rekindled, with Russia, China, and Europe expressing interest in developing new space stations, trips to the moon, and even a trip to Mars.

American interest has dwindled over the years since its increasing reliance on private backers.

...This year, the European Space Agency (ESA) placed a satellite in Martian orbit, but their unmanned lander "Schiaparelli" crashed. A second rover mission is planned for 2021.

"The Long March to Mars"

Currently the best chance for a manned trip to Mars comes from the Chinese who have built and tested the first of their "Long March" series of "next generation" revolutionary rocket engines.

These are named after the historic Chinese communist army's 6000 mile trek across China that eventually established Mao as Chi-

nese premier. The "Long March 9" is expected to take them to the Moon and Mars by about 2030.

The rocket will have a lift-off thrust of 5,500 tons - more powerful than the huge Saturn V that took us to the moon last century.

Christmas day on Mars

The Martian day is about as long as Earth's, but the year is longer. This means that each December 25th can fall in any one of the four Martian seasons.

During the day we look out into a butter-scotch sky, turning blue at sunset.

Rubble covers much of the largely featureless rust-red ground and extends to a horizon that is closer to us than Earth's own.

Our pod might be covered in a layer of brown dust which electro-statically sticks to everything. Dust storms are not dangerous as the atmosphere is so thin.

Depending on the season we can see a blue-white carbon dioxide frost.

At night ... the Earth, with its moon, and Mars' two moons, will move among the same, familiar constellations, shifted in overall position, all silhouetted against an indigo-black sky.

"Carbon dioxide snowmartians"

Not much chance of building water-based snowmen on Mars, I'm afraid.

Assessments of the possibility of water on Mars took a dive this year following the discovery of rust-less metal meteorites on the Martian surface, indicating that the planet has been "very dry" for 3 billion years. Water, as ice, might only be found deep below the surface.

This contradicts previous evidence showing river-valley formations, which pointed to the presence of geologically-recent running water.

But despite the lack of water we could don our space-suit and,



with some work, make a snow-martian out of solid carbon dioxide frost!

We could even make a nose for it with a Martian carrot: tomatoes, wheat, etc., have been grown in simulated Martian soil back on Earth.

Martian Christmas Decorations

Plenty of scope for decorative madness on Mars as the gravity is just one-third of Earth's. Pins and nails will support more weight, but watch where you hammer them or goodbye Christmas.

"After-dinner Martian-Christmas stroll anyone?"

Mars' atmosphere is 100 times thinner than Earth's and so pro-

vides very little thermal blanket.

Outside temperatures on the equator at Christmas could range from a balmy 20 degrees C during the day to minus 73 C at night. Closer to the poles and in winter, our space-suit will need some extra padding as temperatures drop to below minus 100 C.

And, finally, I am sure that if we spend Christmas on Mars we will pause to remember the British Beagle 2 lander which had reached the surface on Christmas day 2003 but, sadly, sent back only silence.

And it may be the eternal quiet of the noble red planet that would eventually persuade us to spend Christmas back home on Earth - and save Santa a long cold trip through space. Ho ho ho!

For 'Owed Time Sake

A friend of mine, David Ryder, runs a group called 'The Oldham Lyceum Writers' and I found this short story of his in an anthology of Poems and Prose by his members called 'Writers Unblocked'. The title above was how it was listed on the contents page. For reasons that will become apparent the story itself carries the title 'For Owed Time Sake'.

It is a salutary warning to both sides on the Scottish Referendum and the recent referendum on membership of the EU. Do not allow the enmity between opposing sides to fester like that between the Campbell and McDonald clans as portrayed in this story. Briefly for those of you unaware of the feud, it relates to the massacre at Glen Coe of the McDonald clan by the visiting soldiers, billeted with the McDonalds under the command of Sir Robert Campbell. After enjoying ten days of hospitality the Captain followed orders to 'put to the sword all under seventy'. 38 were killed and 40 who fled died of exposure!

For Owed Times Sake.

The mist was thickening now that he was on the bye-road through the forest. Or was it that the dark conifers overhanging both sides of the road were cutting out the last of the evening light? He could just make out the overgrown, algae covered B & B sign. The old farmhouse was the only building he'd seen in the last ten minutes of driving. He pulled in to what must have been the original farmyard and was greeted by a crouching sheepdog. The black and white dog had one eye missing and an unwelcoming snarl.

"Away Tammy!", shouted a bent figure from the doorway.

"Are you Mr. McDonald?" the visitor shouted.

"Aye, Donald McDonald."

"I understand that you might have a room for the night."

"Aye I have. Come away in." The visitor took an overnight bag from the car and followed McDonald into the dark recesses of the farmhouse.

"Will you sign the book please?" McDonald motioned to a dusty leather-bound register. He took a pair of thick-lensed glass-



es from his cardigan pocket and read the entry. "Och, so it's Robert Campbell is it?" His previous uncommitted expression took a turn for the worse. He led Campbell into a back room furnished in tartan-patterned material, no TV, but a glowing, open wood-burning fire. The fire seemed the only welcoming feature of this late September visit to Argyll.

"You'll be on business then will you Mr. Campbell?"

"Well yes. I'm on my way to Oban to a trade fair. I'm a representative for Watches from Switzerland actually. I should have been there tonight to prepare for the opening tomorrow but the mist was so bad for this time of the year that I did not think I could make it in the dark. I intended to stay at Creggans on Loch Fyne. I've been there before. One of Keith Floyd's favourites," smiled Campbell straightening his tie, "but it was closed for refurbishment. One of the workmen said you might have a vacancy."

McDonald stirred the fire with a heavy iron poker. "You'll be from Edinburgh I'm thinking Mr. Campbell."

"That's right."

"And you'll be voting yes in the referendum?"

"Well no actually, I'll be voting no. Independence, separation from the UK would be bad for business. Especially if we don't keep the pound. Uncertainty, high interest rates, extra admin. Costs, duplication of civil serv-

ants and if oil prices fall, well..."

McDonald's grip on the poker tightened until his wrinkled knuckles whitened. "So you'll be a supporter of Cameron's Tory Toadies in London will ye, an' no a real Scot fighting for freedom. We won't forget Thatcher's poll tax."

"I consider myself both British and a Scot. Together we are stronger."

"Ach well, will you have hot cocoa with a wee dram?"

"Well thank you, yes please." Campbell studied a picture of the 'Stag at bay' darkened with years of fire smoke as McDonald prepared his drink. He moved on to a picture of a forbidding landscape of Glen Coe as McDonald returned with the cocoa.

"Aye that's Glen Coe. You'll know of the massacre of Glen Coe in 1692 when seventy eight McDonalds were slaughtered but not one Campbell died." Campbell didn't answer but sat down in front of the fire sipping his warming drink. The firelight glinted in McDonald's rheumy eyes.

Glen Coe in winter.

"I'll give the fire a wee stir for ye."

He grabbed the poker, walked behind Campbell and with one mighty blow struck him on the back of his head. Campbell fell forward onto the floor, a growing pool of blood the only movement. McDonald danced a jig and sang. "One less vote for no and only seventy seven more Campbells to go."

ARE N.H.S. GREATER SAFE WITH A



S. SERVICES IN MANCHESTER ANDY BURNHAM?

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016
'Doe-eyed' - Andy Burnham

Andy Burnham, who is standing as a candidate in the Greater Manchester mayoral elections, was recently described by one newspaper columnist, as 'doe-eyed' and a cross between 'Paul McCartney' and a 'Thunderbird puppet'. Last week, Andy, the Member of Parliament for Leigh, was on the stump in Ashton-under-Lyne, where he was billed to be speaking at a public meeting on 'Health and Well-being, at Clarendon Sixth Form College.

While the event was free to attend, and was advertised on 'eventbrite.com', it was not widely advertised or easy to register and many of the people who were attending the event, told me that they were Labour Party members who had received invitations to attend the meeting. Despite assurances from a Labour functionary, wearing a red tie, that it was indeed a public meeting, a Tameside councillor, told me that it was by invitation only.

By all accounts, the event turned out to be less a "Policy Development Conference on Health and Well-being" and more an Andy Burnham roadshow. A health professional, who managed to attend the meeting, who is also a Labour Party member, told NV that the event was a 'missed opportunity' and a 'waste of time'. Seemingly, proposals to integrate health and social care in Tameside and across Greater Manchester, "the first properly integrated National Health and Care Service", which Burnham supports, were presented as a shining light within Greater Manchester.

While the public are told that Andy Burnham is keen to involve the public in developing policies that "will make a real and meaningful difference to people's lives", this turned out to be even more bullshit. According to our health professional, the people in charge of the meeting were not interested in talking about the massive bed cuts at Tameside Hospital, low staffing levels, or how tax-payers' money is be-

ing wasted. Neither had they much to say about the fate of the N.H.S. Instead, all the speakers focused on how Andy Burnham's career as a Labour politician, had been full of dedication to the well-being of the great British public.

Although I think that integrating health and social care could be an excellent idea, the thought of out-of-their-depth, ten-bob councillors, in Greater Manchester, having greater control over N.H.S spending and health care in the region, is something that fills me with abject horror. In 2013, the Electoral Reform Society (ERS), said that Labour dominated councils like Manchester, Salford and Tameside, were at risk of becoming the equivalent of 'one party states' like North Korea, China or Cuba.

Last month, Sir Richard Leese, the Labour leader of Manchester City Council- a council where almost all the council seats are filled by Labour - speaking about DevoManc, told an audience at the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations (G.M.C.V.O) A.G.M, that he wanted to see ward and hospital closures across Greater Manchester, including Tameside. He believes that many people who are currently in hospital, need not be there and that their needs could be better met in other ways.

However, as part of the 'Devolution' agreement, the government have made it a condition that all the ten council's in Greater Manchester, develop 'new care models' between now and 2020, to receive the £450 million, 'Transformation' fund monies agreed in the devolution agreement. Mr Leese also believes that it is the role of voluntary organisations, to "fill in the holes", left by public service cuts.

Already, Tameside Hospital have confirmed that they are planning to close 246 beds at the hospital by 2020 and claim that this can be compensated for by the creation of five local multidisciplinary care teams. Moreover, care services are steadily being privatised - CareUK have recently been given a five-

year contract for musculoskeletal services in Tameside. Nationally, some 200 N.H.S care services have also been handed over to the billionaire tax exile, Richard Branson.

Milton Peña, a retired consultant orthopaedic surgeon, who worked at Tameside Hospital for seventeen-years, told a public meeting held in Stalybridge in September:

"Such a massive reduction in bed capacity will lead to a drastic deterioration in quality of care of patients in Tameside and Glossop. Safety, effectiveness and patient experience, will be significantly affected."

Some people are rightly suspicious about the notion of "integrated care" believing it to be a cover for cuts, deprofessionalization and the downgrading of N.H.S services. They question how private companies can provide a high standard of health and social care while making profits and point out that this is often done, at the expense of cutting staff and working conditions.

Although, Andy Burnham, failed to explain how 'integration' will improve health and social care, some sceptic's in the "Tameside Keep our N.H.S Public" group, believe that Labour in Manchester, have:

"swallowed hook, line and sinker current government ideology that believes publicly funded and provided health and social care services should be severely reduced, leaving a 'safety net' for the deserving poor, for whom no alternative is possible."

As they point out, this would mean most of us paying for services or taking out private health insurance as is the case in America, where failure to pay medical bills, is the main cause of middle-class bankruptcy in the United States.

As a candidate for Mayor, Andy Burnham, should tell the electorate whether he agrees or disagrees with Sir Richard Leese in wanting ward and hospital closures across Greater Manchester and how "integration", will improve health and social care.

Highlands Story

By Shawn Vickers

FROM the frantic hustle and bustle of Inverness to the choppy foreboding waters of Cape Wrath, the Scottish Highlands is a spectacular nexus of recreational possibilities.

THE rickety coach juddered violently on brittle suspension as it rounded the last few kryptonite hills into Ullapool harbour with its handsome array of cafes, restaurants and gastropubs.

We alighted at the ferry port; where a twice-a-day service leaves for Stornoway and I glanced over at the craggy slopes of mount An Teallach as it struggled to shed a viscous white mist glopping down its slopes towards Loch Broom.

Ullapool is a lovely little village with oodles of charm and character. There is a small campsite and a fantastic river walk just outside of town where—during the right time of year—you may just be fortunate enough to catch the salmon run.

That evening, I ate at the Seaforth Restaurant which does a great haddock and chips before heading off to the distinctly average Caledonian Hotel overlooking the harbour.

Next morning, I awoke early to take the only bus of the day further north into Durness. I'd heard many good things about Durness and hoped I wasn't about to be disappointed.

The coach in was an experience in itself; all jagged mountains and shimmering lapis lochs, nephrite glens dotted with old roundhouse ruins and churches. The lulling engine hum was punctuated only by the sporadic sighs of spellbound passengers and we reached our destination wondering how the journey could possibly be bettered.

I visited the Smoo Caves right away, a curios hollowed-out cliff that is served by a team who organise a short (mostly pointless) boat ride through the caves.. Not to be disheartened I repaired to the stunning Balnakeil Beach—and was greeted by the unusual spectacle of cows sun-bathing on the shore!

I'd been desperate to check out Cape Wrath—the most north-westerly point of the UK—accessible only by a small motorboat at Keoldale pier, but sadly, the wind had picked up so fiercely that the boatman abandoned his morning service.

My evening was spent at a lovely B&B with its owners Ray and Rhona—the sweetest couple you'll ever meet--they cooked me a hero's Full English before driving me to the local bus stop. I was going to miss Durness, dearly, but my journey wasn't over yet.

Taking the North coast bus into Thurso is somehow even more spectacular than the trip into Durness. Endless Snow-capped mountains studded with the odd en route log cabin. We touched down in Thurso where I caught a Far North Line train to one of Britain's least used rail stations: Altnebreac.

The station sees an average of just 130 people a year. I walked the barren dirt path towards Westerdale for several hours before repairing to a powdery white beach at the edge of a giant loch and spent the afternoon fishing for mud trout.

That evening, I set up my tent and through a wall of barbecue smoke I watched the heat-blurred sun disappear behind the distant mountains before setting my phone alarm for the first train home in the morning.

By Jim Gibson
(former Ruskin student)

In the aftermath of the US election we've been hearing quite a bit about fake news.

Stories fed onto social media sites such as Facebook ('Fakebook') and Twitter in particular have caused something of a stir. However, 'fake' news has not just suddenly appeared.

It's been with us in various forms for quite a while.

For anyone growing up in the 50s and 60s newspapers were the dominant medium of news. With the papers it was all there for us in black and white, so we had something tangible to pick up and read. Obviously they were called 'newspapers' because they gave us news, and generally we felt we could trust what they said. There was also BBC radio news of course, and in the cinema Pathe News was periodically featured, often feeding us shows of Royalist pageantry and upper class waffle about the new Queen and her family. It was customary in those days to stand up at the end of the main movie and remain there while the National Anthem was played, all part of our conditioning to respect power and class.

A new medium called television was just emerging too, and with TV news there came what was perceived to be a 'trustworthy' human face, newsreaders with posh voices telling us about events happening both here and around the world. Again, we readily believed what was being said in the name of news because it all sounded true. But even in those early days dark manipulative forces were afoot.

Fast forward to the coalminers' strike of 1984. By now it had become apparent to some members of the public that news stories could be angled and given 'spin' (not really a word yet), to the extent that what we were reading about or seeing on TV might not be how things had actually happened. The basic strike story, for example the conflict between the police and the striking pitmen, was of course true. But it seemed to some people, especially the miners, that there was a deliberate attempt to fudge the finer facts of the situation, with the strikers being portrayed as villains and the police as defenders of democracy and law. This was considered to be 'impartial' reporting according to the BBC, but there was a real element of bias involved. The BBC (and others) were clearly taking sides against the strikers, because they constructed their news about the conflict in such a way that it became a fake representation. Such forms of media manipulation are actually cheating, because people expect the news to be honest. We build our own mental world around what we believe or disbelieve, so if the mainstream media (MSM) are fiddling with the truth then things can become very confusing. Con-

sequently the whole topic of 'news' needs an up-to-date and thorough discussion so that levels of public awareness about what the media is getting up to can be raised.

Something else which appears to be happening now is the use of a tactic we'll call 'smoke-screen news'. This can be seen when the MSM report the pants off a particular topic, for example historic child abuse. With this being such an emotive subject it is difficult to complain about, but the purpose of over-reporting child abuse is probably to block out or obscure other stories which could complicate news agenda control. So readers

and viewers have to make do only with the stories carefully selected for their consumption. The BBC and others like to be able to control what you hear and read about in the news.

The constant blaming of Russia for all kinds of bad things is a particularly interesting use of the smokescreen. If a negative Russian (or Putin) connection can be played into a news story (i.e. athletes and drugs, Syria, the US election) then it will be used to bash the Russians and obscure other, usually more important and legitimate, news. The Russians are not planning to invade the rest of Europe, no matter what the BBC, SkyNews, Channel 4 or anyone else tries to tell you. The whole story is fake, and MPs such as Britain's Defence Secretary Michael Fallon know this full well. But it suits Fallon's agenda to enlist the MSM in his propaganda exercise, and it suits the media to go along with the fakery and keep the public guessing as to what is really going on. With anything!

When Tony Blair wanted public support to invade Iraq he came

up with the story of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. And the western media, like establishment lackeys, took up this story on his behalf without questioning its authenticity. Around 1,000,000 people marched through London protesting against an invasion, but not only was this great demo played down by many politicians and the media, the numbers of protesters were massaged so that much lower figures could be given via the news. This gave a false (or fake) impression of the scale of the objection. And of course there were no WMDs.

The current war in Syria (just next door to Iraq) has produced a rather new kind of fake news. With both the Assad government and Russia bombing IS targets in Aleppo, reports have been coming out constantly blaming all civilian casualties on Assad and the Russians. This is despite IS shelling areas of the city where there are still many civilians. The reports, coming from a group of self-appointed 'rescuers' calling themselves the White Helmets, are often accompanied by video footage

of a white-helmeted worker lifting an injured child from the rubble caused by a bomb or shell strike. All members of this group appear to wear helmet-cams, and at least two always seem to be on the spot to film themselves performing a rescue. The odd thing is, all the rescues only ever involve children, and the accompanying reports invariably state it was a Russian plane or Syrian army shell which caused the suffering. How do we know if this is true? And who exactly are these so-called rescuers sending out the reports?

No one in our MSM seems to be checking (do they even care?). With the Western coalition forces still locked into a regime-change programme in Syria these White Helmets are providing potent propaganda to help bring it about. Their reports and rescue footage create headlines in the West such as 'Russia Committing War Crimes in Syria' and 'Assad's Brutality Against His Own People'. This type of headline does not happen by chance. It could well be part of a synchronised agenda aimed at swaying public opinion.



FAKE NEWS: it isn't entirely new

Stories fed onto social media sites such as Facebook ('Fakebook') and Twitter in particular have caused something of a stir. However, 'fake' news has not just suddenly appeared

IN OTHER FAKE NEWS

BY MARA

Somewhere in a secret 5 Michelin star restaurant where paupers only admitted as human foot stools, Iain McNicol and Tom Watson must have been sitting in a tree. Gobbling human liver foie gras and wine made from the blood of virgins, their conversation must have been something like this:

- Hey Tom old boy, we have these damn peasants taking the Labour constitution a bit too literally, they want a slice back from the pie now, rallying behind this Jeremy scally, about to be re-elected despite our best efforts. What to do?

- Well it's easy Iain boy, we eject the damn paupers.

- You can't eject all of them.

- OK, then raise registered supporter fee to £25, these paupers will have to choose between bread and voting, they can't win, haha!

- Just done the figures, that doesn't get rid of all of them. You see some of them have been alerted to our machinations.

- But how?! We do own ALL the press.

- Some media organisations must have sprouted like weeds through cement: Canary, Scisco Media. Papers "of the left". Eugh.

- Well close them!

- We can't Tom, we have...erm.. "Democracy".

- ROFL.

- ROFL. I know. But the appearance must be maintained.

- Can't we tell them these media are fake?

- How very brilliant, old sport! I mean comrade.

- Yes, brill, old man. Tell the Jim Watersons and the Owen Joneses what to whisper to morons, they'll buy anything from them "bleeding hearts".

Evil rubbing of hands ensues.

Or so I think it went, I don't know, I've been passed out drunk since the Snooper Charter was passed this week. I went through my Christmas case of fake wine, and drunk my real sorrows as the last of my liberties went out the window, and I bet the rest of you didn't even notice the satanic bills just passed in Parliament.

See the idea is to do basic maths between things that "happen" in the media: 1) Nazi Trump hysteria, 2) NHS further privatised while infants and the elderly die in hospitals because of cuts, 3) Surveillance state's deathly stranglehold over your life, 4) Digital Economy Bill tells you what you may wank to (apparently male spunk fine, female ejaculation banned -let you draw conclusions on that one). And other shit, like war and famine, but

that's not on your front lawn so yawn, yeah?

Busy buying fake useless crap produced by child slave labour in the third world you're in direct competition with (hail globalisation), busy eating crap produced through animal torture and irreversible ecological devastation, celebrating yet another shopping festival dressed as "religious" holiday that walks all over whatever Jesus may have said, in a deliberate attempt by the corporatist fascism to make you squander your saving for "experiences" and needless possessions you are encouraged to throw away through planned obsolescence... you couldn't have possibly noticed what is REALLY going on in the world. I don't blame you.

The distraction is planned by the media and all corners covered for automatons to justify the state's behaviour with pseudo economy arguments fed straight into their brains by round the clock news (the real fake news, you know, the one we pay £145 per year for). But lucky you, I have lived dictatorships before, so I can tell you the symptoms: AND IT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW. And it's not in the poppety far right corner either, as much as you've been conditioned to bark otherwise. Farage is an annoying prick, but how many people died cuz of his words? Austerity on the other hand, is a eugenics scheme. Thousands left to rot already. Defrauded, after paying into the system their whole lives, but discarded when they're no longer "productive". Words vs death. What's more important?

While you SJW sheep were crying wolf at the wrong orange haired tree, the Snooper Charter was passed, meaning now they want to know all I do online so I don't find out what they're doing to me. Meanwhile the Trump hysteria chillaxed as the world discovers the man's just an attention whore who knew what to tell crowds to incense them: you know, PLAY them. And now he satisfied his ego by getting into the White House, it's back to business as usual for the establishment. Trump's not the danger here: he's a sliver of Corporate America, and we're all Corporate America now, and that's the real overarching danger.

And so is Farage. Might it be all this mass of "preoccupied" bourgeois dupes who worry about epithets and nasty little words "hurting them in the feelings" but don't give a shit about millions dying in war, ...could they have been played? Told "look here, shiny shiny" and they obediently waive their tiny fists in righteous fury, while the Snooper Charter is passed and the NHS dies and war

goes on? I don't know, to me this looks a bit...planned. Like what a clever powerful state might do if they wanted to distract you, using your "moral high ground", to get shit passed that destroys your future-without you noticing.

Boiling frogs.

The technique by which this is achieved is official government fake news. 'Member WMDs? 'Member Libya? 'Member these widespread and significant fake news items? Ah, but they don't matter because they're about war and shit and that's nasty, let's not think about it, let's talk about something nice instead- how about scented candles? "Look at the bright side". With cameras in your ass and your throat and an officer or ten over your shoulder as you type tits into google, but that's fine because yay Black Friday sales.

Looking at the comments in this article people seem to be waking up. Not enough. The higher you go on the gloss scale, the more bullshit you have to scrape with your logical fangs. Expensive people drive around in gilded cages, high on consumerist jollies. It's like you press a button and fools spout ready made pseudo intellectual garbage provided by the Guardian to explain away how the real things don't matter but someone's "hurt feelings" over social media are important enough to rearrange our existence around and dump free speech in the history bin. If I hear anymore of someone's hurt feelings from "violent" Twitter trolls invoked to silence speech about the war, the death of the NHS, the surveillance, and everything important... I think I'll puke in someone's ear.

Race? Feminism? LGBT? Avenues of division. We're all in this shit together, what good is fighting for a group going to do? That's just diverting from the main objective. Setting people up against each other in groups and fragmented identities, laying the blame. These once legit movements are now funded

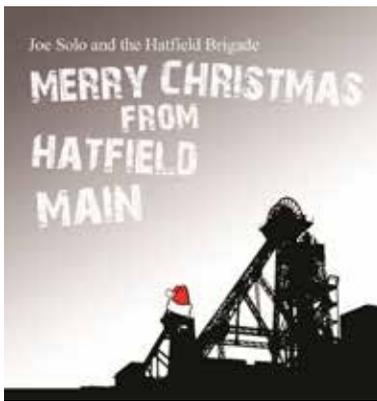
by Clinton and Soros. Would they fund liberation? No. They fund your division. Your lovey dovey humanitarianism is used against you to entrench fools fighting one another while the 1% steal your future. Moral outrage at some bad words Trump said but doesn't exhibit symptoms of believing in is the fog behind in which your freedom is pissed on by corrupt politicians.

Locally in Blighty, the fake news Tom Watson, or by his familia name "The Snake", is talking about is nothing but thinly veiled attempt at censorship of us, those who want to find out what's happening; targeting legit media like The Canary because it calls attention to their anti democratic, treacherous machinations:

"They highlighted how The Canary, one fast-growing pro-Corbyn site, recently ran a story on Watson appearing at an event held by the centrist Labour First group under the headline "A launch date for the Corbyn coup 2.0 has just been fixed, and guess who's leading the charge?"

The man who wasted a summer in a failed chicken coup and made a laughing stock of the only relevant opposition party, is giving others lecture on REALITY?! You lost, man. He was re-elected. And truth comes out. Many people buy the lies. But not all, and that's irking you.





Joe Solo

"On September 9th 2016 I was approached by Les Moore of the UK Miners Pension Scheme for Justice and Fair Play Association to write a song. Not just any old song either, a very special song with which Les planned to pay back what he called a 'Debt of Honour' he felt miners owed the nation from the Christmas of 1984. During the darkest days of the Strike, people from all over the world had clubbed together to make sure no-one went without, and miners have never forgotten.

Les had seen firsthand the poverty easily visible in his community as friends and neighbours were forced to use the local food bank to make ends meet, and he had decided enough was enough, it was time to roll up his sleeves and do something about it.

"Course Les," I said, "when do you need it by?"

"No rush Joe lad," he replied, "tonight will do."

I was 24 hours late, but writing Christmas songs in late summer ain't easy!

We finished the recording at Stainforth Central Club on Sunday October 30th with an assembled choir of former miners and their families. Dean and the staff at the club had done us proud, taking down Halloween to put Xmas up for one very special day before dismantling it and putting the pumpkins back up after we'd done. There was a great community feel about the whole event, and I think the fun shines through on the song.

All proceeds from sales will go to local independent food banks and a new Hardship Fund for people struggling to make ends meet in the South Yorkshire pit villages; and hopefully, with your help downloading it, we can go some way to paying back that Debt of Honour from 32 years ago."

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM HATFIELD MAIN

LES MOORE, former Miner:

My good friend and co-conspirator asked me to put a few words together for a new socialist leaning paper called the word, this was the first I had ever heard of this paper the word, now I will have to buy a copy just to read from cover to cover, check out the stories against my personal dislike of media programming attempt's, then make a opinion of the content. At this point I'm thinking I haven't bought a news paper for 25 years that was a few years after I took my name off the electoral roll, withdrew my political levy from my union sub's, ripped up my Labour party card and flushed it away to where I thought it fitted right in.

I nearly said no to Joe but he is such a decent human being, full of hope for the future and a better world, I think I lost that after thinking to hard about the Rothschild's steering group the Bilderburgers. I just couldn't say no, not only that I have put my name back on the electoral roll a few months back, after reading about Jeremy Corbyn's view of the world while at the same time it seemed everyone living to the West of the Dogger Bank was taking a dislike to him even his own mates, that told me he can't

be all bad.

I really should say a bit about myself, I work as a self employed plumber/heating engineer that at one time spent loads of my time down a black hole in the ground known in this area as "Hatfield Main Colliery" "being what was called a development man or in pit slang, a big hitter, we were the men that built the coal face's, junction's ect down the mines negotiating our own bonuses, even when we were just pottering about underground. My dad worked at the same pit, sometimes we worked together he was a ripper, my uncles cousins and mates all worked underground in the dark damp smelly yet dusty condition's of a coal mine. My granddad came from Castlecoomer in Ireland to help dig the shafts; he also did his bit in the Royal Irish Rifles, before returning to an early death in my village of Stainforth Nr Doncaster.

Who am I now the pits are gone, I'm still a miner, without a mine as are most of my friends still wondering why we went back to work after keeping the faith in 84. Now I miss the atmosphere of the closeness of the men, my brother's for life. I am the spokesman for "The UK Miners Pension Scheme Association, for justice & fair play".

What we are about is this we are wanting justice plus the return of the money taken from our pension scheme, the MPS, I dare not tell you how the government have taken our money or how much. I can tell you this though my friends the UK Governments example was not lost on Mr Maxwell, Mr Green and others. All of our pensions are now at risk from the government be prepared get ready they will be coming for yours soon. All things considered I can see I'm guilty of still fighting back from 84, I may have even been fighting back over other issues before 84, but that can wait for another day, today it's time to let you in on my next adventure.

My good friend Joe who somehow has encouraged me to write a article for his double page in this paper the "Word" "Joe myself a few other's my cousin's Mick Langan, (another grandson of a Irish Immigrant) with the well known trouble maker the top London Lawyer Peter Stafonvitch are in the process of taking X factor on in the charts, I can understand your wheel's spinning thinking what on earth are they doing. I thought the just same just after I came up with the idea conned Joe Solo to write a song for me for Xmas, I explained I wanted the royalties of a Xmas hit, my problem is I have to



CHRISTMAS HATFIELD MAIN

much confidence or I need or had a bat to the head. I think Joe just went along with it thinking he's gone mad this time, right good and proper, he still wrote me the song for me, I think that made him dafter than I am, I have another friend yes that's two of them, he runs a Club I managed to get him on side he was excited straight away, were given all the help he could offer us and the use of his Club "The Central" in Stainforth, I like to call my village St Ainforth just to annoy those in the next village who never had a pit, or a canal, or a pack of dog's on every corner. The song was sung, maybe sung was a song I'm not sure which, it was recorded Joe now has taken over he has all the skills needed to create something special our Xmas Single, "Merry Xmas from Hatfield Main". It's a very special song to us here in Stainforth as well as the families of "Hatfield Main" Joe quite cleverly tells the story of Xmas in 84 for us miner's in fact for every miner who kept the faith in 84, he put the rhythm to the words the guitar that made the music was Joe playing, Joe gave life to the words there is something very special about this creation that I cannot just put my finger on the word's escape me.

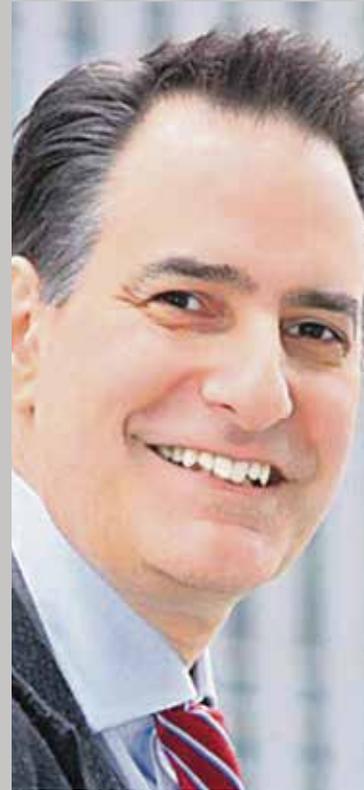
Now I'm sure some of you will be wondering about the royalties

that I explained to Joe I needed, I can understand the curiosity, of some of you reading this. This is the truth, my motive my wish and it's my way of paying back, In the year 84 at Xmas time all mining villages with the men on strike were struggling, people from around the UK from places I couldn't pronounce provided us with the means to eat to enjoy just for a short while a few days of togetherness like no other day in our lives', We the miners owe a debt of honour to the people that fed us this is us paying back in a small way, we have opened a community bank account, we will be supporting the DN& food banks as far as we can we will provide support were we can for our people facing the hardship of being sanctioned by a cruel savage government with no humanity or fellow feeling for their brothers, we will not walk by and watch our citizens targeted for cruel treatment by our political master's there is something of the night in these ministers that desire to meet out this punishment for being a out of work or a old sick human being, not on our watch without trying to give back, I would encourage you all to visit your local food bank, set up a fund and save your brother or sister from this cruel punishment for being alive and in dire need Les.

Peter Stefanovic, a high-profile Lawyer and Campaigner and now an honorary member of the Hatfield Brigade says:

"When former miner Les Moore came to me with his idea for a charity Christmas single I needed no persuasion! When he said *"the people fed us in 84/85 it's a debt of honour we have to repay"* it brought a lump to my throat. Our miners are quite simply national heroes and the establishment, in all its attempts to break them, underestimated their solidarity and determination to stand against injustice no matter what the odds. The Miners have never stopped fighting and we've never needed that sort of courage and resolve more. At this very moment over a million people are reliant on food bank hand-outs to survive. Last year over 400,000 children were forced to use food banks and this winter many elderly will be forced to make a choice between heating or a meal. How can we let this happen in the fifth wealthiest nation in the world! We've recently seen GPs prescribing nutritional drinks to starving patients and every day fresh cases of Victorian illnesses like rickets and beri-beri, long thought eradicated, are diagnosed because of food poverty. It's a national disgrace. I've filmed at food banks and spoken to many of the desperate people forced to turn to them for help. The situation is dire and the Government, aided by a biased right wing media is deliberately keeping the truth about food poverty from the nation.

Les and his group the UK Miners Pension Scheme Association are no strangers to rolling up their sleeves and taking on the Gov-



ernment and right now I'm supporting them in their fight over a staggering £8 Billion which has been ransacked from the miners Pension fund by successive Governments leaving former miners and their families destitute.

We are talking about successive Governments now, both Tory and Labour. John Major's Government may have been the first to rob the miners pension fund when it was privatized in 1994, but labour, under Blair and Brown was happy to continue! In 2003 when stock markets were depressed, the Blair Government robbed the Miners pension fund of £400 million threatening its very existence! Miners at that time got an average pension of only forty quid a week, some as little as ten quid a week. I've been a lawyer for twenty-five years,

I've seen a lot of injustice in that time, but it's difficult for even me to comprehend that a Government can ransack £400 million in a year from the miner's pension fund, it costs the Government not a single penny, and some miners only got ten quid a week!

The tory Government did much worse of course, in 2014 alone they took £750 Million out of the miner's pension fund! It's an absolute disgrace and every person that has played a part in this scandal should be ashamed of themselves. We are talking about robbing good working men who risked their lives every day in the most dangerous conditions imaginable to keep our homes, schools and hospitals warm!

It's so important to remember that Generations of miners paid into the pension fund with their blood, sweat and tears. Many paid with their lives, all sacrificed their health, many now suffer slow and lingering deaths. Sadly 8000 miners die every year because of chronic health conditions. Those who remain, like Les and his group, refuse to give up and continue to fight on, not just for themselves but for their communities and now for the people who stood with them and supported them in the strike of 84/85. I know from the films I've made on the Miners Pension scandal there is huge respect, love and affection in this country for our miners, the people remember what they did for us and our Miners have never forgotten what the people did for them. Through Merry Christmas from Hatfield Main and other charitable campaigns our Miners are now endeavoring to repay that debt, as Les would put it, *"a debt of honour"*.

HOPE AND GOOD NEWS STORIES

I will start with Hope as it seems a rare commodity in today's world. For those who despair that we are powerless to effect changes hear the example set by two elderly citizens

Last year I was at a Conference hosted by Assemblies for Democracy looking at other models of democracy. I was fortunate to share a table with a 94 year old lady who was still active politically. She apologised to people around her for not being able to stay to the end because she had promised to attend a Green Party Meeting in a leafy Wilmslow, knowing that her vote in the General Election could not change the inevitable outcome there of a Conservative MP being elected.

After the shock of Conservatives gaining an outright majority I read this message from a local 38 Degrees member. This is what she said: "I am 89, have had many reversals in peace and justice work, but we must keep on finding new ways of working for peace and justice wherever it is threatened. Time for apathy, indifference and lemming - like attitudes to disappear and activism to be creative, humorous and positive.....I shan't see success but some of you will."

So in the spirit of her message

and as comedian Russell Kane does in his tv show, I would like to share some Good News Stories.

USA - In response to the spate of black deaths at the hands of the police, campaigners are turning to economic empowerment to get their message across. They hope to draw funds away from banks that have shown prejudice to minorities, an example being BancorpSouth fined \$10.6 million for discrimination. Instead, people are urged to use 318 black - owned financial institutions and examples of these include The Industrial Bank of Washington and OneUnited Bank. New accounts at the former have leapt from 100 to 3,000 per month. The latter lends more than \$1billion to low and moderate income families giving 'more jobs for the black community, more.... affordable home loans, and education on financial literacy'. New Internationalist, December.

Afghanistan - A pilot scheme sees ownership rights to property split equally between married couples. In a country where homes almost exclusively male - owned it is seen as 'an important first step towards sole property rights for women'. New Internationalist December.

GlaxoSmith Kline - 'has announced it will cut the price of its pneumonia vaccine to Medicinsans Frontieres and other humanitarian organisations' treating children in crisis situations. Dispatches magazine of MSF.

Poland - MPs have backed down from a total ban on abortion after mass protests. Amnesty Winter Edition.

Oman - Activist freed after writing a blog about 2011 protests in Dhofar Province. Two journalists also released on bail after publishing an article making accusations of wrong - doings by senior judicial figures. Amnesty.

Human Rights Act - Half the Winter edition of Amnesty Magazine devoted to the benefits which have accrued from this act. Briefly the article claims:

There would not have been any justice for families of the Hillsborough Disaster.

The Good Friday Peace Agreement, should the Act be repealed it would breach the Agreement.

Helped the pursuit of justice in the Mid-Staffs hospital public inquiry.

Stopped the extradition of Gary McKinnon to the USA on charges of hacking into NASA computers. The probable 60 year sentence and

Good News Postscript

Having submitted this article I could not resist adding a postscript because I found it in a surprising source, The Daily Mail!

On P45 I found the headline 'Gambian Dictator is toppled after 22 years ...'

Gambia has been ruled by Yahra Jammeh over that period, having removed the limit on Presidential terms and in 2011 saying he would rule for "one billion years if Allah decrees it"

He has been replaced by businessman, Adama Barrow, and one hopes that Gambia can follow Ghana, the first African country to change leadership without bloodshed, and Botswana as an examples of more stable democracies. To quote human rights activist, Jeffrey Smith in the article if Jammeh steps aside 'it will show Africa is changing for the better' and will have 'resonance beyond.... Gambia'.
Daily Mail December 3rd.

his Asperger's Syndrome meant his risk of suicide would be high and the Act was the ONLY legal argument to prevent extradition. Amnesty.

Fallowfield, Manchester, England - Two ladies, Cath Clarke and Lil Luckham, were founder members of The Friends of Fallowfield who after three and a half years have saved their local library from closure. Lil stated 'The Council was closing libraries in the poorest parts of Manchester and it was such a short - sighted decision.' Working with the local council and housing association and eighty volunteers, they secured the library's future this summer as the group became

a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The council just charge a 'peppercorn' rent and an annual fee for services which as well as the library includes a wide range of services from a social isolation cafe to a credit union. *Yours Magazine September edition.*

Those of us who are younger than the two ladies mentioned at the start of the article have no excuse for not continuing to work for peace, less inequality and better democracy.

If you have a local, national or international 'GOOD NEWS STORY' to share, please send a brief outline to The Word, so it can become a regular feature.

Part 5.

Turn in Part 5 of the series to three women who raised the status of women during and after the Crimean War. You are probably quite familiar with the achievements of two, Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, but less familiar, or like myself oblivious of the third, Betsi Cadwaladr. I would urge you to find out more about the latter as space precludes me giving a fuller account.



Nightingale circa 1854

Though Nightingale's achievements in helping the wounded in the Crimean War are legend, it is the way she organised nursing into a profession that marks her out. She established the first secular school of nursing in the world at St. Thomas' Hospital, London.

However she was certainly no feminist and was critical of the early women's rights activists, believing women craved sympathy and were not as capable as men.

Having learnt the benefits of better sanitation, dangers of contaminated water and inadequate ventilation from working in the

WOMEN

WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE

Crimea and India, she campaigned to improve the sanitary conditions back in Britain. She lobbied politicians to strengthen a Public Health Bill which led to proper drainage of properties to the mains drainage. Some historians feel this was a major factor in increasing life expectancy by 20 years from 1871 to the mid 1930s.

Mary Seacole is no longer an



'An unsung heroine'... Mary Seacole

unsung hero, though controversy over the status of Nightingale and Seacole exists both are eminently worthy of recognition.

"I have a few shades of deeper

brown upon my skin which shows me related - and I am proud of the relationship - to those poor mortals whom you once held enslaved'. Mary had a Jamaican mother and a Scottish soldier as a father so she was a free woman and therefore able to own property. She travelled a lot, set up a hotel/boarding house in Jamaica and later a hotel in Panama. He she used her knowledge of herbal medicine to help with a cholera epidemic there, treating free those without money.

When she was turned down by the War Office to help in the Crimean War she funded herself to go there. As well as setting up a 'mess house' to give refreshment to officers she went out on the battlefield itself to help to the wounded! Her kindness helped their suffering as much as her limited medical skills.

Returning to England from the Crimea she became bankrupt because of debts her and her business partner had accrued there. She had however earned the love and affection many of the soldiers so they and some leading politicians helped her financially here and on her return to Jamaica.

Her bravery and kindness are her enduring legacy and arguments amongst historians should not blind us to the fact that she

was an inspiration to people of colour and deserved the bronze stature unveiled in the grounds of St. Thomas' Hospital, opposite the Houses of Parliament this year.

*'She gave her aid to all in need
To hungry, sick and cold
Open hand and heart, ready to give
Kind words, and acts, and gold
And now the good soul is "in a hole"
What soldier in all the land
To set her on her feet again
Won't give a helping hand?'*

Punch Magazine.

Much of this readers will know already but what about Betsi Cadwaladr? She was born one of 16 children in North Wales. She had a religious background but escaped home aged 14 to pursue her own life and avoid being 'married off'.

She found work as a maid and took an interest in theatre and found work abroad, including France where she was moved by the plight of the wounded at the Battle of Waterloo. As maid to the captain of a ship's captain she travelled around the globe but also got experience caring for the sick and even acting as a midwife.

Amazingly on returning home on hearing of the dreadful plight of soldiers in the Crimea she trained as a nurse and enlisted in the mili-



Betsi Cadwaladr

tary nursing service aged 65! Nightingale initially blocked Betsi from working under her jurisdiction. Nightingale came from a privileged background and it is thought that she viewed that the Welsh were, as portrayed in a report on Welsh education, 'lacking basic education and morality'. They clashed often because 'Nightingale was a stickler for rules and bureaucracy' whilst Cadwaladr felt restricted by 'red tape'. However when Betsi moved to another hospital nearer the front lines she made sure that supplies got through and took charge of the kitchen, recognising like Seacole the value of food for those convalescing. Her work was seen by Nightingale who later gave her the credit due to her.

Sadly she suffered bouts of cholera and dysentery and returned to Britain in 1855, dying five years later, being buried in a pauper's grave, although she managed to write her autobiography in that period. Her name lives on as the largest health organisation in Wales, the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

An Immigrants View CHRISTMAS

It's been a very tough winter for democracy, freedom and human rights: Snooper Charter, Digital Economy Bill, fake news paving the way for censorship.

This is more than general bitching about the state of Tory rule, this is a panicked acknowledgement that we're at the edge of the precipice, jumping straight into totalitarianism. I see nothing to celebrate here. Christmas is devoid of humanity, it's a sinister shopping festival with forced smiles, overpriced useless junk and cheesy music. I don't celebrate Christmas, I dread it.

From the noble teachings of a political dissident—Jesus, the content of Christmas has shifted into fragrant violation of his most sound humanitarian and honest principles: remember the Cleansing of the Temple? Christian val-

ues are trashed and denigrated with Christmas. He would have a fit or rage with these obscene exhibits of greed. The monstrous thing is the contrast between the false prosperity of some with the extreme poverty of downtrodden pensioners, disabled and young people pushed into homeless-



ness on the side. The two worlds coexist in the Christmas market as parallel universes clashing, one pseudo lavish class ignoring the other as it's convinced meritocracy is real and the poor deserve it. Evil runs society and its festival is Christmas. Hasn't anyone noticed how convenient that Jesus' birth is celebrated with BUYING lots of shit, most of which ends up as unwanted gifts up on eBay anyway? Or forgotten in an attic? ...Almost like a neoliberal ploy.

I look at mountains of coloured shiny presents, with bells and whistles and Christmas carols, and I see child slave labour, suicide nets in China, desperate kids sifting through e-waste, girls getting cancers from chemicals in the production of cheap throw away jewellery. Friends and family tell you you're negative, and

you should enjoy and live a little. Tell them they're negative, as their collective greed craze is robbing youth of their future.

In 1989, I celebrated Christmas with promise of freedom. I was under the tree, hiding from bullets flying in the Romanian revolution, my head drowned in baubles, my eyes blinded by Christmas lights. My mum held me while my dad was out to fight with the students. On the 24th of December, we watched Ceausescu get killed on our small black and white TV, with chants of triumph. There was blood on the streets, we were hungry and had no presents. But we were free. It's always been a liberation holiday for me, in parallel to droves of drones who celebrate here, in the West, further entrenchment in tyranny.



This Christmas is, I think, the official re-descent into tyranny for me. Snoopers Charter, Digital economy bill, and the mountain of other unlawful freedom-crushing legislation to come, is a tightening noose, taking our internet, that liberated us, and making it a harrowing, sci-fi jail. A form of mind control so scary and extreme nobody could have pictured this in the Gulag.

I AM IN MOURNING. I am going into 2017 a sad terrified prisoner. The "free world" is a nightmare, and the artificial festive cheer a sideshow designed for fools to inebriate their intellect so as to not notice the abyss.

ONTARIO, CANADA [CTV]

Drivers travelling along a rural back road outside of Timmins, Ontario, are doing double-takes over a giant snowman that stands nearly six metres tall and wears a 45-gallon drum as a top hat. Michel Campeau built the massive frosty-like figure with his family, a labour of love that required two weeks of construction and borrowed snow from neighbours' yards. "Everybody loves it," he told CTV. "Every year I always make it a little bit bigger and a little bit bigger. Two years ago we did a 15-and-a-half-foot snowman. This year I had to challenge myself." Everything about Campeau's creation is supersized. The snowman's scarf is nine metres long. The nose is made from a piece of lumber, since an appropriately sized carrot was impossible to come by.

NEW YORK [AP]

A decades-long trend of rising life expectancy in the U.S. could be ending. It declined last year and it is no better than it was four years ago. In most of the years since World War II, life expectancy in the U.S. has inched up, thanks to medical advances, public health campaigns and better nutrition and education. But last year it slipped, an exceedingly rare event in a year that did not include a major disease outbreak. In 2015, rates for 8 of the 10 leading causes of death rose.

LONDON [AP]

Police overseeing the sex abuse scandal in British soccer say 83 potential suspects have been identified and linked to 98 clubs. Officers across the country are sifting through 639 referrals received by both police and a helpline established last month when former players started going public to say they were abused by coaches while in youth teams. The National Police Chiefs' Council said in a statement on Friday that the age range of potential victims was seven to 20 years old. Although 98 clubs have been "impacted," the NPCC said this does not equate to them all being "under investigation." The unidentified clubs are from across all levels of the English game "from premier clubs through to amateur," the NPCC said.

COLUMBUS, OHIO [AP]

Godspeed, John Glenn. Mr Glenn will lie in state in Ohio's capitol building before a celebration of his life of military and government service and two history-making voyages into space. The public viewing at the Ohio Statehouse and a memorial service at Ohio State University's Mershon Auditorium are planned for late next week. Glenn, who died Thursday at age 95, was the first American to orbit the Earth, in 1962, and was the oldest man in space, at age 77 in 1998. A U.S. Marine and combat pilot, he also served as a Democratic U.S. senator, representing Ohio, for more than two decades.

NEW YORK/LONDON [Reuters]

Rupert Murdoch's Twenty-First Century Fox Inc has struck a preliminary deal to buy the 61 percent of British pay-TV firm Sky Plc it does not already own for about \$14 billion, five years after a political scandal wrecked a previous bid. Owning Sky would give Fox control of a pay-TV network spanning 22 million households in Britain, Ireland, Austria, Germany and Italy. It is claimed Fox had pounced after Britain's vote to leave the European Union sent the pound down against the U.S. dollar and Sky's share price tumbling.

WASHINGTON, DC [Reuters]

U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that Russia intervened in the 2016 election to help President-elect Donald Trump win the White House, and not just to undermine confidence in the U.S. electoral system, a senior U.S. official said on Friday. U.S. President Barack Obama has ordered intelligence agencies to review cyber attacks and foreign intervention into the 2016 election and deliver a report before he leaves office on Jan. 20, the White House said on Friday.

UNITED NATIONS [Reuters]

The United Nations Security Council discussed on Friday what a senior U.N. official described as "appalling human rights violations" in North Korea, despite a failed attempt by China to stop the third annual meeting on the issue. China's U.N. Ambassador Liu Jieyi said the Security Council was "not a forum for discussing human rights issues and still less for the politicization of the human rights issue." U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power warned North Korean officials, saying: "We are methodically documenting your abuses and your impunity will not last forever. When the day comes that you are publicly held accountable, we will be ready."

CAPE CANAVERAL, FLORIDA [AP]

A Japanese capsule blasted off with much-needed supplies for the International Space Station on Friday, a week after a Russian shipment was destroyed shortly after liftoff. The Russian rocket accident and the grounding of one of NASA's commercial suppliers make this delivery all the more urgent. The spacecraft should arrive at the station Tuesday. "Have a safe flight," French astronaut Thomas Pesquet said in a tweet from the space station. "Looking forward to your arrival!"

CARACAS, VENEZUELA [BBC]

Authorities have arrested two toy company executives and seized almost four million toys, which they say they will distribute to the poor. Officials charge the executives with hoarding toys and hiking prices in the run-up to Christmas. Venezuela's consumer protection agency, Sundde, said toy distributor Kreisel had stockpiled the goods and was reselling them at a margin of up to 50,000%. "Our children are sacred, we will not let them rob you of Christmas," it said in a tweet, along with photos and video of thousands of boxes of toys.

BANJUL, GAMBIA [Reuters]

President-elect Adama Barrow said on Saturday that outgoing leader Yahya Jammeh had no authority to reject the results of the Dec. 1 election, while the United Nations and African Union piled pressure on Jammeh to step aside. Long-ruling Jammeh had conceded defeat publicly last week after his narrow loss to opposition leader Barrow. On Friday he called for another election, jeopardising what was expected to be Gambia's first democratic transition of power in more than 50 years.

LAGOS, NIGERIA [AP]

The roof of a church collapsed onto worshippers in southern Nigeria, killing at least 60 people. Congregants say the Reigners Bible Church in Uyo city was still under construction when it was used for a ceremony to ordain a bishop Saturday. They say hundreds of people were inside when metal girders crashed and the corrugated iron roof caved in. A rescue official says at least 60 people died but the toll could mount as a crane removes debris. The state government says it will investigate if anyone compromised building standards.

GLOBAL HEADLINE - VIENNA, AUSTRIA [AP]

OPEC has persuaded 11 non-members to cut oil production, a move aimed at draining a worldwide oil glut and boosting low prices that have squeezed government finances in Russia, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Officials said Saturday that non-members agreed to cut 558,000 barrels per day for six months starting Jan. 1, and that the deal was renewable for another six months after that. The figure was less than the 600,000 barrels a day that OPEC had hoped for. Those non-member cuts come on top of an OPEC decision Nov. 30 to reduce member output by 1.2 million barrels a day. Saudi oil minister Khalid Al-Falih called Saturday's deal "historic" and said it would stabilize the market through next year and encourage industry investment.

ISTANBUL, TURKEY [AP]

Two explosions struck Saturday night outside a major soccer stadium in Istanbul after fans had gone home, in an attack that caused fatalities and wounded at least 20 police officers, Turkish authorities said. A private television channel put the wounded at nearly 70. One of the blasts was thought to be a car bomb and the second appeared to have been caused by a suicide bomber. Police cordoned off the area as smoke rose from behind the newly built ground, known colloquially as Besiktas Stadium.

ALEPPO, SYRIA [AP]

Syria's President Bashar Assad is on the verge of recapturing all of Aleppo from rebels, but the victory won't be his alone. The battle for Syria's largest city has attracted thousands of foreign forces backing Assad — including Russian soldiers and Shiite fighters from Iran, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. The remarkable political and sectarian alignment underscores Aleppo's symbolic and strategic importance, which goes beyond the confines of Syria's civil war. Syria's former commercial center has long been regarded as a major gateway between Turkey and Syria.

HONG KONG**[Reuters]**

Vietnam has begun dredging work on a disputed reef in the South China Sea, satellite imagery shows, the latest move by the Communist state to bolster its claims in the strategic waterway. Activity visible on Ladd Reef in the Spratly Islands could anger Hanoi's main South China Sea rival, Beijing, which claims sovereignty over the group and most of the resource-rich sea.

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA [AP]

South Korean President Park Geun-hye's days in office may be numbered. Park was suspended as president following a parliamentary impeachment vote Friday. She will be formally removed from office if six of the Constitutional Court's nine justices support her impeachment in a review that could take up to six months. The chances of the court reinstating Park are considered low, and if she's unseated, the country must hold a presidential election within 60 days. The vote for impeachment left protesters basking in pride, believing they had repaired a damaged democracy with their weekly demonstrations. Thousands of people marched near streets close to the presidential palace.

NEW DELHI [AFP]

Indian investigators on Friday (Dec 9) arrested the country's former air force chief S. P. Tyagi over a scandal-hit deal with Anglo-Italian firm AgustaWestland to supply high-end helicopters to India. India suspended the deal in 2013 following accusations AgustaWestland paid bribes to win the contract for 12 helicopters intended for use by the prime minister and other VIPs. India's Central Bureau of Investigation arrested Tyagi in New Delhi over his alleged role in bribing officials to swing the deal in favour of AgustaWestland.

SANAA, YEMEN [AP]

A suicide bomber on Saturday blew himself up inside an army base in the southern city of Aden, killing 45 soldiers and wounding another 50, security officials said. They said the bomber detonated a belt of explosives he was wearing amid hundreds of soldiers lining up to collect their salaries in the city's Solban army base.

PETALING JAYA [ST]

Malaysian comedian Harith Iskander is the funniest person in the world after emerging triumphant in the finals of the Funniest Person In The World competition in Levi, Finland. He defeated four other finalists - Alex Calleja from the Philippines, Katerina Vrana from Greece, Mino van Nassau from India and David Kilimnick from Israel - to win the title on Saturday.

NAIVASHA, KENYA**[Daily Nation]**

An oil tanker exploded on a road in Kenya on Saturday evening when a truck carrying flammable chemicals rammed into several vehicles before bursting into flames on the Nairobi-Naivasha Highway. The number of fatalities has increased to 40, deputy county commissioner Isaac Masinde has said.

JAKARTA, INDONESIA [AP]

At least 45,000 people have been displaced by the powerful earthquake that hit Indonesia's Aceh province, authorities said Saturday, as the government and aid agencies pooled efforts to meet the basic survival needs of shaken communities. The estimate of the number of homeless people continues to grow while relief efforts fan out across the three districts near the epicenter of Wednesday's magnitude 6.5 quake. National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho told a press conference.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA [ST]

A group of Australian schoolchildren working on a shoestring budget has recreated the HIV drug whose price was controversially jacked up by 5,000 per cent by a former hedge fund manager. American drug company chief Martin Shkreli became a global figure of hate after buying the rights to Daraprim, then raising the price in the United States from US\$13.50 (\$20) a tablet to US\$750. Youngsters at a Sydney school decided to draw attention to the scandal and went to work creating pyrimethamine, the active ingredient for Daraprim.

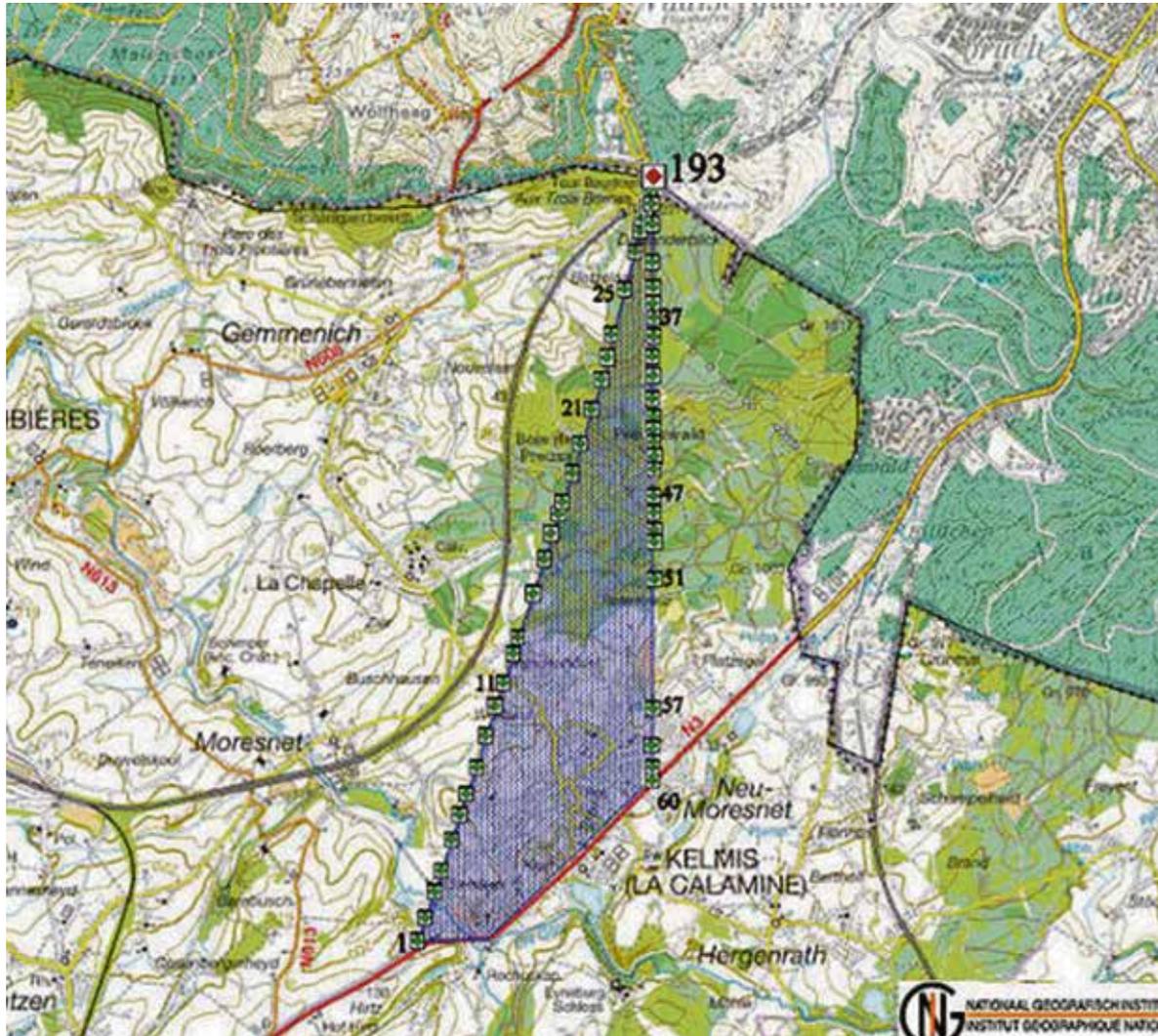
Any visitor who has ever been to the Vaalserberg on the European mainland will know that it hosts a tripoint, as it's where the borders of the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany meet. Those who have visited may not have noticed the unsightly little slither of the tripoint monument that is seemingly reserved for a fourth country. It's the remainder of a 'lost' country.

The history of this mysterious 'fourth country' starts in 1815: Napoleon has been defeated and the victors busy themselves with re-drawing the map of Europe during the Congress of Vienna. Prussia, one of the ancestors of present-day Germany, and the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (which split up into the Netherlands and Belgium in 1830), could however not agree on the ownership of a very small plot of land (1.3 square miles) on their borders.

The reason for their disagreements were simple: the plot of land was home to a zinc mine, which was a very profitable operation. However, with both Prussia and the Netherlands keen to avoid an armed conflict, they resolved the matter in a manner that is becoming increasingly alien nowadays: by diplomacy.

Both countries agreed that neither party would own the mine; instead, the mine and its surroundings became a neutral piece of land, to be governed by both countries. Effectively, the mine became a small country in its own right and was named 'Neutral Moresnet'.

With neither party being in control, it was decided that neither could enforce their own laws in Neutral Moresnet - meaning that the land continued to be governed by the law code that was introduced by Napoleon himself. The biggest power in Neutral Moresnet became Vieille Montagne, the company that operated the mine and which lent its company colours to what became the



A RELIC OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

official Neutral Moresnet flag.

Life in Neutral Moresnet

Life for the people of Neutral Moresnet had some distinct advantages compared to their Dutch, Belgian and German brethren. First and foremost, they paid very little taxes and, as they were officially state-

less, the inhabitants of the territory could not be drafted into any army.

Unusual for its time, Vieille Montagne displayed to have great social awareness; the company put in place free education for the miners' children, relief funds for workers, provision of food at a

discounted rate and a retirement home for miners of old age. The company also organised annual social events for the residents of Neutral Moresnet. It therefore should not come as a surprise that its populace increased eightfold during the 100 years it existed.

Plans for Neutral Moresnet

The very existence of Neutral Moresnet came under threat by the end of the 19th century, as the zinc deposits of the mine were exhausted and mining activities were halted, but neither Belgium or Germany were interested in ending its neutral status.

The prolonged existence of the territory led to some wild ideas; some wished for it to become fully independent and started production of Neutral Moresnet stamps and money - both Germany and Belgium did not agree to this.

Most famously, a one Dr Wilhelm Molly regarded Neutral Moresnet as an opportunity to create a country with Esperanto as its national language. Esperanto had only been invented a few years before Dr Molly's idea, with the intention to be a 'bridge between cultures' and to bring the world closer together. Dr Molly saw the neutral territory as the ultimate location for his idea; some locals did indeed apply themselves to learning the language, and started referring to Neutral Moresnet as 'Amikejo' - Esperanto for 'place of friendship'.

The plans never came to fruition, as a few years later the First World War broke out and Germany swiftly occupied the territory. After Germany lost the war, the Versailles Treaty stipulated that Neutral Moresnet was to be Belgian territory henceforth, which it still is today.

Legacy

This legacy of civilised diplomacy was ultimately destroyed by the horrors of war. Presently, Neutral Moresnet has been forgotten by virtually everyone. However, in the turbulent times that we are experiencing today, we will do well to remember the 100-year legacy of Neutral Moresnet; it teaches us that war is not needed to solve (territorial) conflicts, and that there are no boundaries to the innovative and peaceful ideas of humankind.

Noras 'Merry Christmas'

Police were called to what they described as a scene of 'utter mayhem' in the Corke Abbey estate last night.

Disgruntled neighbours had gathered for a peaceful protest outside the house of old age pensioner, Nora Nollaig.

Nora has been driving the residents berserk for years by leaving her Christmas decorations up for the entire year.

'I don't see the point in put-

ting them up, taking them down, putting them up again,' said Nora, speaking from her cell in Bray Police station. 'I like to be in a state of constant preparedness,' she added and went on to tell our reporter about the gigantic freezer in her upstairs box room in which she has stored one hundred and sixty seven (167) Christmas puddings and four thousand (4000) mince pies. 'I baked them in 1993,' she said proudly.

'It's ridiculous,' said Tommy Harper of CARA (Corke Abbey

Resident's Association). 'Three plastic snowmen, a reindeer and a big fat Santa in her garden all summer long. The younger kids are going around in a state of total confusion.'

'She's just a lazy cow,' one of the protesters had screamed, which sparked chants of 'Lazy Cow, Lazy Cow' from the six hundred strong crowd. At this point Nora, 68, went on the offensive and started pelting the crowd with frozen mince pies, also lobbing rock hard 22lb puddings

from the upstairs window.

Police responded quickly to several simultaneous emergency calls and arrived at the scene in three squad cars and a Black Maria. 'It was utter mayhem,' said Sergeant Sillybottom. 'At one stage we considered calling in the Army!'

Instead he elected to call members of the Special Response Unit and four officers in full Riot Gear stormed Nora's house. It took them fifteen minutes to carry the old age pensioner, kicking and screaming, down the stairs before bundling her into the back of a squad car.

Eight of the more seriously

injured were piled into the Black Maria and taken to Loughlinstown hospital, where a member of staff said their injuries are not life-threatening.

Nora was showing no sign of remorse, nor concern, for her neighbours when she said, 'F.k them. I'm moving to Elgin Heights in January.'

Sergeant Sillybottom insisted that the decorations remain in place and any interference would lead to prosecution.

'It really is ridiculous,' said Tommy. 'The old bag goes to the Canaries every Christmas.'

MUMMERING FEATURE

By Kristin Harris Walsh

IT'S THE same story every Christmas; you're stuck indoors, you're sick to death of the sight of turkey, the sound of exploding crackers and the smell of brussels sprouts. The next thing you know, a bunch of masked strangers tap at your door, invite themselves in and proceed in drinking you out of house and home.

At least it is in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where the strange but intriguing tradition of mummering has just celebrated its sixth annual festival – problem is they can never get their hands on enough bras!

This year, thousands of mummers swarmed the streets of St John's in their finest sheets, bras and pillow cases to usher in the Christmas period and the reawakening of one of the province's greatest Christmas traditions.

And for Newfoundlanders mummering means three important things: Drinking, dressing-up and harassing friends and neighbours in disguise.

Mummering (also known as janneying or mumming) was brought into the province by English and Irish settlers in 19th century. The word itself comes from old French 'momeur' meaning 'to wear a mask', and over the 12 days of Christmas that's exactly what rural Newfoundlanders do – knock door to door around local villages uttering the immortal words, 'Any mummers 'llowed in?'

If invited, the mummers will run roughshod through your home demanding food and

spoons together.

The host then has to guess a mummer's identity in order for them to remove their mask and to start behaving with some level of decorum. Quite often the host will then don their finest garbs and set off with the visitors to the next house.

As Andrea McCormack, 32, a Newfoundlander now residing in England explained, "The whole time that they're in your house you're trying to guess who they are through their mannerisms, how they're

getting on with each other or how much booze they can drink. "Sometimes you can tell who they might be from what they're wearing, it could be a lampshade from aunt Mary's den or a curtain that looks vaguely familiar, you can't quite put your fin-

ger on it but you know that you know them 'cause of the curtain draped over their head."

The Mummers Festival continues to go from strength to strength, culminating in a large parade that's numbers have increased from a mere 300 at the first festival in 2009 to the thousands thronging the streets of St

John's in December.

This divine comedy of errors is what happens when you mash Halloween with Christmas and throw in some paganism for good measure; but it hasn't always been such a friendly (though incredibly odd) provincial love-in.

In the last few years researchers Fraser Joy and Paul Smith uncovered more than 20 cases of m u m m e r

violence between the years 1830 and 1863, including brutal attacks involving swords, sticks and guns and in one case, a blown bladder filled with pebbles.

In two of the cases Fraser mentions, the mummers in question are believed to have forcibly entered the victims' properties—a far cry from the friendly door-to-door visits described by some historians.

And infamously, in 1861, Mummering in Newfoundland was effectively outlawed after the death of Isaac Mercer in Bay Roberts. Mercer had been murdered by a

group of three mummers on December 28, 1860 and this is widely believed to be the catalyst for the tradition's demise during the mid-late 20th century.

A Bill was passed that made wearing a disguise in public illegal unless permission was granted by the local magistrate. And although the tradition waned, Mummering in the lesser-policed rural communities continued despite the Bill; though the practice was pretty much wiped-out in the towns and cities.

As Joy Fraser puts it in his Mummers On Trial paper 'the resurgence of Christmas mumming in Newfoundland is largely based on a selective and idealised conceptualisation of the custom. As part of this revival, one particular form of mumming – the informal house-visit described above – has come to represent the custom in Newfoundland as a whole, while other forms that were equally prominent in the island's cultural history have received com-

paratively little attention. Moreover, as Gerald Pocius points out, the revived version of mumming serves as a "nostalgic icon" that contains no hint of the negative elements of the custom as it existed in the island's past, most notably its associations with fear and violence..

Of course, barely a hint of Janneying's dark past remains in its modern form. Indeed, even the KKK would struggle to be taken seriously if they arrived at someone's house riding a hobby horse and clad head to foot in bed linen.

So if any seasoned traditionalists feel the modern resurgence is lacking something from the tradition's heyday, well, they may have a point.

As festival coordinator Ryan Davis conceded to CBC news: "We need a hundred or so more bras." Why? Well, the reason was never really made clear, but it's safe to say it had something to do with the thousands of mummers stomping around the capital proudly donning Aunt Mary's bra-cross-dressing as they have done for centuries.

EPILOGUE

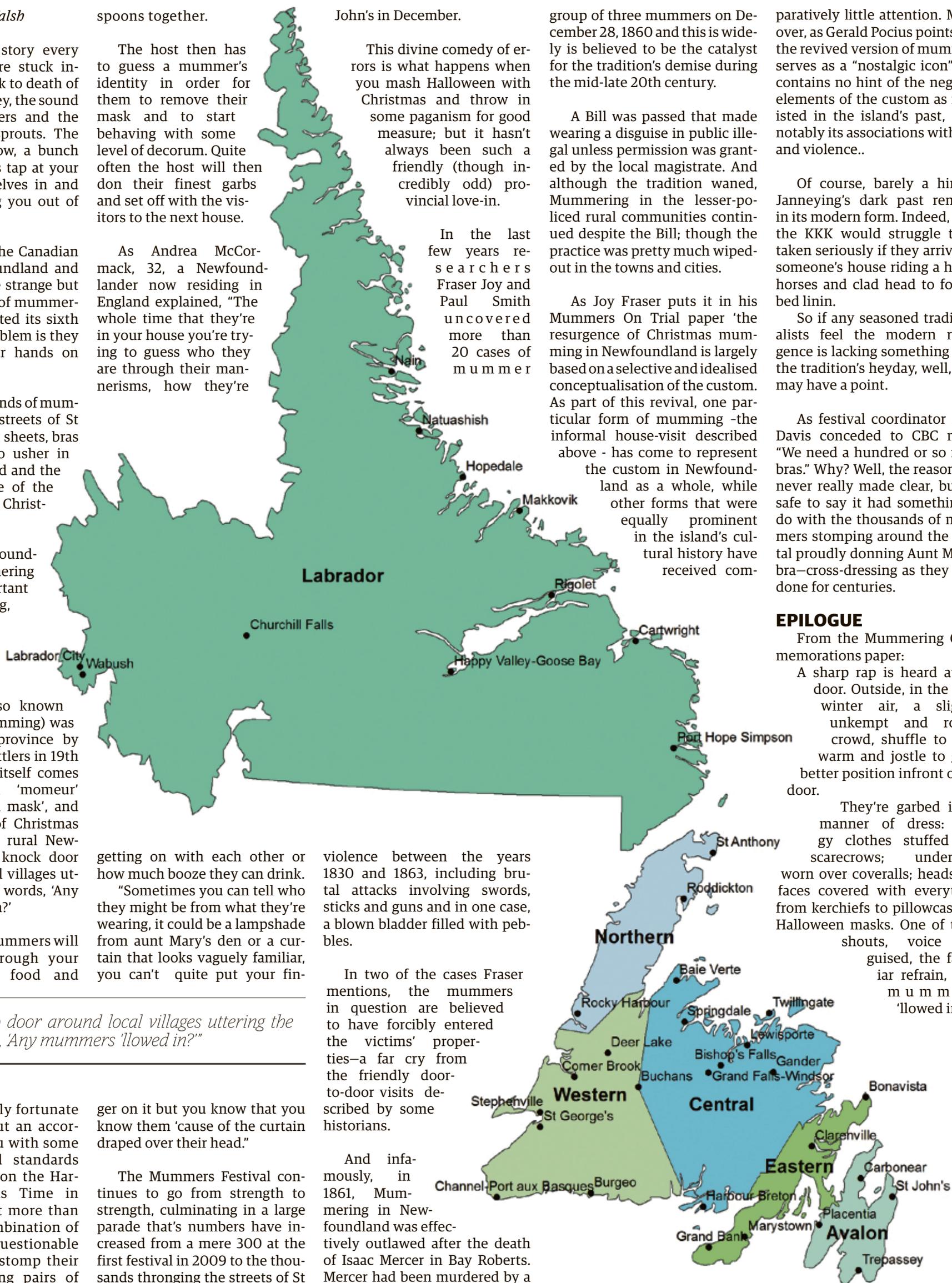
From the Mummering Commemorations paper:

A sharp rap is heard at the door. Outside, in the crisp winter air, a slightly unkempt and rowdy crowd, shuffle to keep warm and jostle to get a better position in front of the door.

They're garbed in all manner of dress: baggy clothes stuffed like scarecrows; underwear worn over coveralls; heads and faces covered with everything from kerchiefs to pillowcases to Halloween masks. One of them shouts, voice disguised, the familiar refrain, "Any m u m m e r s 'llowed in?"

"...knock door to door around local villages uttering the immortal words, 'Any mummers 'llowed in?'"

drink. If you're really fortunate one might whip out an accordion and regale you with some old Newfoundland standards such as Christmas on the Harbour or Christmas Time in Newfoundland; but more than likely, due to a combination of hard liquor and questionable talent, they'll just stomp their feet whilst clanking pairs of



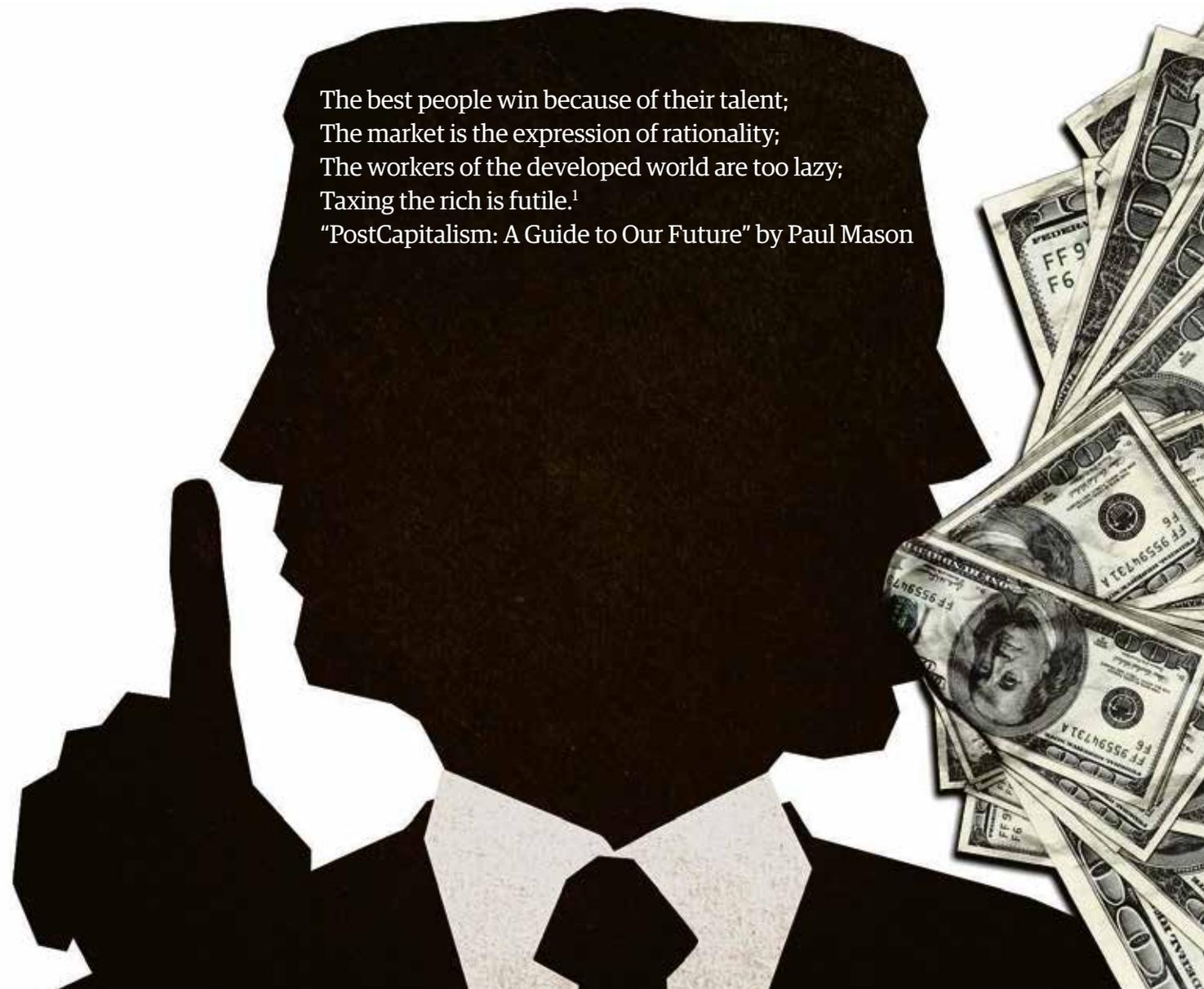
POSTCAPITALISM

A GUIDE TO OUR FUTURE

We are surely all familiar with the mantra that *'it's futile to tax the rich because it'll drive them away and our economy will suffer'* - as though it isn't damaged already. (Perhaps they should go and live on Necker with Sir Richard Branson). The other side this assertion is the myth that *'workers are lazy and that's why the economy is struggling, but there's no reason why you can't be a millionaire - just apply yourself; talent will always win through.'*

Try telling that to the thousands with degrees who can't get a decent job! Then there are those of us who've spent most of our working lives slaving away and are tired of being continually excluded from the rewards paraded in the sacred texts - the magazines, as a prelude to worshiping in the temples of material success - the shopping malls, as if they're there for everyone who wants them. Alienation from the 'have it all society' and resentment that it favours a semi-mythical **ideal person,** slim, athletic and ultra-wealthy, who looks young yet probably isn't, runs deep in the psyche of many who are 'just about managing.' If there is the slightest shock to their income it could spell a personal catastrophe, because this very lack of economic reserves has turned so many people into the 'Precariat' a modern equivalent of the Proletariat, as precarious as ever.

Faith in the market as the ultimate arbiter of value is frankly laughable; Chancellor Hammond's apparent trust in it raises doubts as to where he might have been living since the banking crash. Even if the public can forget the unpalatable truth, it must still be that the Establishment is holding its breath and crossing its fingers in the hope that nobody notices that it got away with a monumental deceit. The fundamental weakness in neoliberalism has not gone away; cracks have merely been papered over with trillions of dollars, pounds and euros, thus giving an appearance that stability has been restored. The whole banking system which underpins the neoliberal economy is precariously balanced on a knife edge. It relies on borrowing vast sums of money from productive countries like Japan, China and Germany, lent at very low interest rates both to subsidise the underpaid consumers' ability to buy products through credit that they couldn't otherwise afford, and to provide the essential liquidity national governments such as the US, UK, France, and others need to pay for services that keep their economic infrastructures working and allow them to buy the goods they need to make life bearable². Since the 2008 crash, governments have solved problems in liquidity by 'printing' vast amounts of money which they've used to buy up the banks' massive debts - known as QE or quantitative easing. None of this money is supported by tangible assets, wealth from untapped resources, or potential productivity.



The best people win because of their talent;
The market is the expression of rationality;
The workers of the developed world are too lazy;
Taxing the rich is futile.¹

"PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future" by Paul Mason

With the advent of neoliberalism came the ability of banks to print unlimited amounts of money - in reality only about 2% of money was actually printed, the rest being digitally produced as numbers on a balance sheet. Unlimited money enabled vast amounts of unregulated lending with interest rates so low. But when the system became unbalanced by the massive amounts of unsecured loans that could not be repaid, it inevitably led to the collapse of 2008. But the solution - to bale out the culprits and make the innocent pay by cutting welfare payments, along with money to public services such as education, the prison service, the NHS, police etc, was presented as the only way, and we should be grateful that the wealthy made billions out of it without suffering any sort of punishment or hardship and just accept that the rest of us have to endure the grinding effects

of austerity, after all "we're all in it together" and "we have to stay within our means".

With semi-permanently low interest rates dipping into the negative in an almost stagnant economy, the rich made massive amounts of money at the expense of the taxpayer. One of the preferred ways of doing this by the Tory led administration was to rundown public services then sell them cheaply to private capital which would then be subsidised by tax payers' money. This is often sarcastically referred to as 'socialism for the rich'. Further, it has been suggested by critics, that one of the additional 'benefits' of such a system is that ministers who facilitate it are later rewarded with non-executive posts on various boards of directors or are gifted substantial shares options as reward for 'hard work and diligence'.

The problem in the economy is lack

of real growth through **making things,** at present the only real advance has been in 'financialization', where growth is on the back of credit rather than productivity. As Larry Summers, former United States Treasury Secretary and one of the architects of bank deregulation, alarmingly pointed out in 2013, the West's economies face *'secular stagnation'* through low growth and that in reality it had been present for quite some time. The 'solution' as proposed by the multi-millionaire Tidjane Thiam, of Credit Suisse, has to be Austerity! At the Davos forum in 2012, while CEO of Prudential, a company fined in 2013 by the FSA and himself censured, Thiam stated without any sense of embarrassment that Unions are the *'enemy of young people'*, and the minimum wage is *'a machine to destroy jobs workers' rights and decent wages stand in the way of capitalism's revival and must go!'*

¹"PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future" by Paul Mason

²Known as political surplus recycling.

By B. Evan

Look away now if you have a delicate disposition! This year, flocks of Chief Executives have been busy drawing up Sustainable Transformation Plans for their "footprints". That is, they have decided how much each of the 44 regions can be made to take responsibility for about £60 billion cut to the NHS. Though estimates vary, we have no way of knowing how much exactly the cuts will be because the plans all started off as secret.

Some areas have managed to get hold of the plans now, but we can't add up all the proposed "savings" for the country until all local people have found some way of accessing the plans. Naturally, these plans will be represented as triumphs of cooperation. However, you cannot tell people who are expected to carry out the plans to be actually told what these plans are. They might find fault. Tut!

We do, indeed, have access to the local STP in my Local Authority, but I can't honestly say we are any the wiser beyond finding out how much of the NHS "saving" we are supposed to make. So far, not a single question that I have asked has been answered by the local high command of the CCG or NHS Estates Officers.

A glance through my local plan is enough to establish that it was not drawn up by anyone with the faintest interest in matters medical. For example, mental illness and learning difficulties are conflated throughout. Oddly enough, the NHS website can tell the difference, so it seems that basic medical knowledge has not yet vanished without trace from the high command of the NHS. Among the army of Chief Executives there is a sprinkling of doctors.

One of these is in Ealing CCG, and, as it happens, Ealing is one of the parts of the North West London footprint that is rejecting the plans, which they have found access to. You see, these plans, though hush, have been chopped and changed a fair bit and, in an earlier draft, axing A and E and acute beds from Ealing hospital was mentioned: so, not much chance of that being accept-



NHS CUTS REJECTED

any way that someone proficient in English would understand the term. We are given a wish list followed by a promise that if the foot-

round my way aren't exactly good because we are a) flanked by two boroughs that have rejected the plans, and b) we return nothing but safe Labour seats from here to Parliament. There is no chance of our footprint making a £1.3 billion cut and no one is going to take pity on us.

I have had one question answered that I asked during a Scrutiny meeting. We had made the interesting discovery that Clinical Commissioning Groups are

there, apparently, to fund voids. Very expensive voids, e.g. a bereavement counselling charity had to quit a local hospital because of an 800% hike in the rent. We suggested to the spiders (oops, auto correct) of the CCG that they accept a lower rent from voluntary bodies, perhaps on a 'meanwhile' basis.

According to their own projections there would still be large voids at a number of health locations, particularly the place from whence the charity was banished, but they said no. This inevitably means that more money is being siphoned out of CCGs and into the property owned by NHS Estates.

This organisation runs as though it were a private estate agency, which,

no doubt, it will be soon enough. A good investment made all the better with public money. There are those who are well meaningly trying to negotiate a new deal for the charity and voluntary organisations generally. Anyone want to run a book on whether the charity will get their old premises back at a similar rent?

The plans include some unsubstantiated claims about NHS finance, and assume that fewer hospitals will be needed in areas that are being intensively redeveloped and will continue to increase in population. No heed is paid to a growing body of independent evidence.

Contradictions as to finance and bed provision comes from organisations such as the King's Fund, The Nuffield Trust, The Policy Innovation Research Unit, the BMA and various academic papers. Could readers of this article ask their own local authority and health networks whether they have access to their STP yet, and how much the cuts ("savings") are? All these STPs are due to be agreed by the local authorities on about 13 December.

It is worth noting that the sound of Aneurin Bevan turning in his grave is perhaps misleading. There are so STIP plans in Wales or Scotland, just England. In this same year the contract that caused such ructions with the junior doctors was simply ignored by NHS Wales and NHS Scotland. It's embarrassing to be English right now.

'Most of these plans give no information as to who will do what or where. Indeed, they are not "plans" in any way that someone proficient in English would understand the term.'

ed by Ealing local authority.

It is a bit of an exception. Most of these plans give no information as to who will do what or where. Indeed, they are not "plans" in

print as a whole manages to "save" £1.3 billion (IF we do indeed make that "saving"), then we can have a few million to help with the wish list. The chances of this happening





OBSOLETE WELFARE

By Kitty Jones

The government has been accused of following a “historically obsolete” welfare strategy by a team of Cambridge University researchers. Research by Simon Szreter, Ann Louise Kinmonth, Natasha M Kriznik, and Michael P Kelly also supports the work of campaigners, charities and other academics raising their concerns about the harmful social and economic impacts of the Conservatives’ austerity measures. These include the draconian welfare “reforms” and the consequences of the increasing privatisation of and political under-investment in the NHS from 2012 onwards.

In an article published on Friday in *The Lancet* titled ‘Health and welfare as a burden on the state? The dangers of forgetting history’, the group of academics criticised Conservative austerity policies. These were instituted by David Cameron and George Osborne, and continued by Theresa May and her chancellor Philip Hammond. The researchers point out that investment in welfare has always been crucial for Britain’s economic success.

The Conservatives have fre-

quently claimed that welfare provision isn’t “sustainable”. Welfare support has been reduced so much that many people have been unable to meet even their most basic needs. Food and fuel poverty have significantly increased over the past four years, for example. We have witnessed the return of absolute poverty in the UK, something we haven’t seen since before the inception of the welfare state, until now. Social security is also harshly conditional, with embedded punishment regimes and psycho-com-

Investment in supporting the poorest citizens has always gone hand in hand with economic growth

pulsion embedded in the diminishing “support” being offered. The emphasis has shifted from “support” to managing and enforcing poor citizen’s compliance and conformity.

Crucially, the researchers, who are based at St John’s College, are opposing the idea that welfare and health spending is a “burden” on the country’s economy, arguing instead that economic prosperity is intrinsically tied to an adequate

level of welfare provision.

Simon Szreter is a Professor of History and Public Policy at Cambridge’s Faculty of History. He writes: “The interests of the poor and the wealthy are not mutually opposed in a zero-sum game. Investment in policies that develop human and social capital will underpin economic opportunities and security for the whole population.”

The report also states: “The narrow view that spending on the National Health Service and social care is largely a burden on

the economy is blind to the large national return to prosperity that comes from all citizens benefiting from a true sense of social security.”

The authors continue: “There are signs that Theresa May subscribes to the same historically obsolete view. Despite her inaugural statement as Prime Minister, her Chancellor’s autumn statement signals continuing austerity with further cuts inflicted on the poor and their children, the vulnerable,

and infirm older people.”

To support their position, the researchers point to the period of economic growth the UK experienced following the post-war settlement - including the development of the welfare state and the NHS, something which they argue also brought about greater equality, with the rich-poor divide falling to an all-time low during the 1970s.

The report establishes an interesting and useful historical context, following the effect of welfare provision on the nation’s economic prosperity prior to the creation of the modern health and welfare apparatus and institutions that we are familiar with today, and claims that investment in supporting the poorest citizens has always gone hand in hand with economic growth. The researchers argue that the concept of a British welfare state can be traced back to the reign of Elizabeth I and the reforms to the Poor Laws introduced in 1598 and 1601. There are also parallels drawn in the report between the perceived problem of the “idle poor” during the Victorian era and contemporary political narratives that label benefit claimants as “scroungers” who benefit unduly at the expense

of “hard-working families”.

There is a clear comparison between the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, particularly the principle of less eligibility, with the Conservative’s recent punitive approach to “making work pay”; which is about reducing social security provision, rather than raising national wages.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 is largely remembered through its connection to the workhouses that were famously instituted across Victorian Britain. The researchers argue that, although the 1834 Act was passed out of “concerns” that the welfare system was being abused and was an unduly heavy burden on taxpayers, there isn’t any evidence that it had much of an economic benefit. They also point out that Britain’s growth actually fell behind that of rival nations after 1870, only recovering in the 1950s, following the post-war settlement.

Simon Szreter said: “We are arguing from history that there needs to be an end to this idea of setting economic growth in opposition to the goal of welfare provision. A healthy society needs both, and the suggestion of history is that they seem to feed each other.”

Malnutrition, Austerity And Eugenics

By Kitty S Jones

Earlier this year, I reported that figures released by The Office of National Statistics (ONS) showed 391 people died from malnutrition in 2015. There were 746 hospital admissions for malnutrition in just 12 months. The statistics also showed two people in the UK are admitted to hospital with the condition every day in what campaigners have called a "national scandal."

Official figures more recently from the Department of Health reveal that people with malnutrition accounted for 184,528 of days in hospital beds taken up in England taken up last year, a huge rise on 65,048 in 2006-07. The sharp increase is adding to the pressures on hospitals, which are already struggling with record levels of overcrowding and limited resources because of underfunding.

Critics and campaigners have said the upward trend is a result of austerity and rising absolute poverty, deep cutbacks in recent years to meals on wheels services for the elderly and inadequate social care support, especially for older people.

Theresa May has made it clear there will be no end to Tory austerity, she said: "What I'm clear about is we're going to continue as we have done in Government over the last six years - ensuring that we're a country that can live within our means."

The figures once again directly contradict the glib claim from government ministers that the rise in the use of food banks is linked to the fact that there are now more of them. Ludicrously, millionaire David Freud has claimed that people use food banks just because they provide a "free good". However, research shows that people turn to charity food as a last resort following a crisis such as the loss of a job, the delays and problems accessing social security benefits, and through benefit sanctions.

People may only be referred to a food bank by a professional such as a social worker or GP. If someone turns up without a voucher, food bank staff put them in touch with relevant local agencies who can assess whether they need a voucher and signpost them to the right services. The number of people receiving emergency food is disproportionate to the number of new foodbanks opening: following the welfare "reforms", by 2013, numbers helped by foodbanks increased by 170% whilst there was only a 76% increase in new foodbanks opening.

Over 50% of children living in poverty in the UK are from working households and many of the people helped by food banks are in work, with the rising cost of living combined with no rise in low wages causing many to hit a crisis where they can't afford to meet basic needs such as eating.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shad-



ow health secretary, unearthed the latest figures in a response to a recent parliamentary question submitted to the health minister Nicola Blackwood. He said:

"These figures paint a grim picture of Britain under the Conservatives. Real poverty is causing vulnerable people, particularly the elderly, to go hungry and undernourished so much so that they end up in hospital.

Our research reveals a shocking picture of levels of malnutrition in 21st-century England and the impact it has on our NHS. This is unacceptable in modern Britain."

In a very wealthy first-world democracy, it is completely unacceptable that anyone is left hungry, malnourished and in absolute poverty.

The Department of Health figures showed that the number of "bed days" accounted for by someone with a primary or secondary diagnosis of malnutrition rose from 128,361 in 2010-11, the year the coalition came to power, to 184,528 last year - a 61% rise over five years.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence classes someone as malnourished if they have a

body mass index of less than 18.5, have suffered the unintentional loss of more than 10% of their weight over the last three to six months, or if they have a BMI under 20 and have unintentionally seen their weight drop by more than 5% over the previous three to six months.

The worrying decision by the chancellor, Philip Hammond, not to fund the NHS or social care with any more money in his autumn statement last week will only worsen this already unacceptable situation.

Ashworth said: "The reality is the government have failed this week to both give the NHS and social care the extra investment it needs while also failing to invest in prevention initiatives to foster healthier lifestyles. The cuts to public health budgets along with an emaciated obesity strategy are both utterly misguided."

Figures are not available for exactly how many patients accounted for the 184,528 bed days last year, but information supplied to Ashworth by the House of Commons library shows that 57% of the patients were women and that 42% were over-65s.

Worryingly, four out of five peo-

ple who needed inpatient hospital care because of malnutrition were admitted as an emergency, which suggests their health had deteriorated significantly in the days before they were taken in.

Not enough health and social care professionals have the time or knowledge to correctly identify malnutrition.

Stephen Dalton, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents hospitals, said: "Our members take malnutrition seriously. Good nutrition is a fundamental human right our citizens can expect, and vulnerable, particularly older, people are most at risk of serious consequences if denied basic compassionate care. At a time of unprecedented demand on health and social care we need to be alert and will take seriously any reliable evidence of basic care not being delivered."

Time and time again, when challenged and confronted with overwhelming empirical evidence of the harm that their class-contingent austerity policies and welfare "reforms" are inflicting on citizens, the government simply deny any "causal link". They say that the increase in absolute poverty, malnutrition and hunger, deaths and distress are unrelated to their policies, which they claim to be "working".

With no sign that the government are going to emerge from behind their basic defence mechanism of collective denial - nor are the Conservatives remotely interested in investigating a clear correlation between their blatant attacks on the poorest citizens via their draconian policies and the terrible hardships people are suffering - we do have to wonder what the real intention is underpinning such clearly targeted austerity.

Conservative ideology seems to be founded on the hypothesis of an inborn and "natural order" - a society that is based on a human hierarchy of worth. The Conservatives feel justified that they are part of a superior class in society and therefore they have an entitle-

ment to hold power. Their policies don't include the majority of us in their design or aims. The government are not democratic, they are authoritarians. Conservative policies act upon ordinary citizens and have become increasingly detached from citizen needs.

I was accused of the terrible crime of being an "interfering do-gooder" recently by someone with social Darwinist ideals. I couldn't understand his ferocity. Then I made a connection, the proverbial penny dropped. Again. I suddenly felt very weary, disgusted and shocked - the recognition froze me. Again.

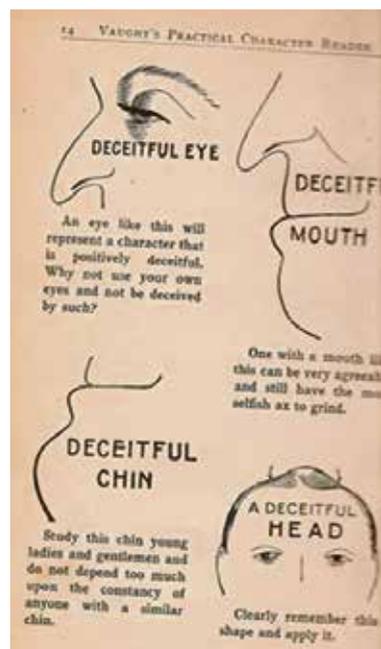
Historically, eugenicists thought that misguided "do-gooders", by giving poor people help and support, were allowing them to survive "unnaturally", and were consequently interfering in human "natural selection", a benign force which they thought was "deselecting" the people with the "weakest" genes and the "moral defectives". The Conservatives moralise about people who are poor and their punitive anti-welfare policies indicate plainly that they think that poor people have moral deficits.

The Conservative message that poverty is caused by character or behavioural "defects" and not socioeconomic and political circumstances should have been ringing alarm bells very loudly everywhere. The problem with authoritarian governments is they usually have sufficient power, one way or another, to mute the alarm. The first base of power over public perceptions that all authoritarians build is invariably facilitated by the corporate mass media.

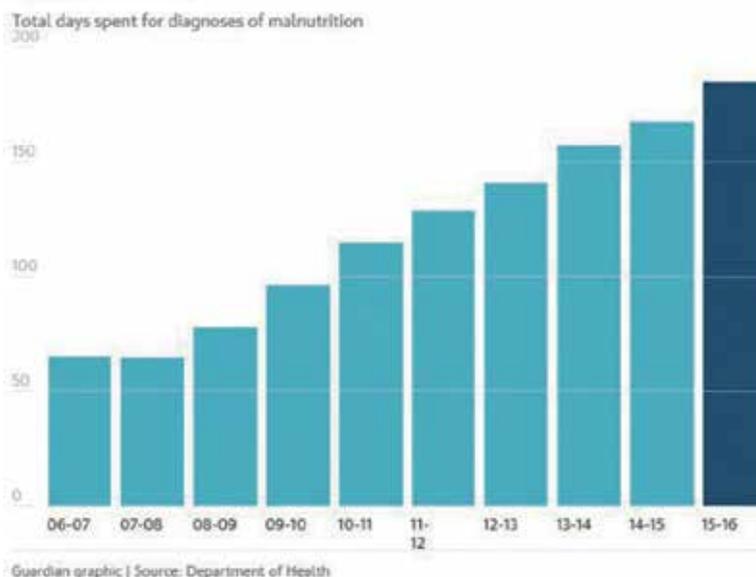
Austerity, "the national debt", "a country living within its means", "hardworking families", the scrounger/striver rhetoric, "hard choices" and the "culture of entitlement" has all been a smokescreen for eugenic policies.

We cannot find any comfort in the belief that the government are simply neglectful policy makers. The persistent and loud denial regarding the increasingly precarious existence of the poorest citizens - especially disabled people - and the loud refusal to investigate the correlation between austerity policies and social outcomes that are damaging and harmful, and to consider the empirical evidence of humanitarian harm presented by citizens, academics, charities and campaigners, indicates a government that is not ignorant of the consequences, yet has no intention of changing their policies. The Conservatives are appallingly unconcerned about the terrible harm they are inflicting.

"Eugenic goals are most likely to be attained under another name than eugenics." - Frederick Osborn



Diagnoses of malnutrition accounted for 184,528 hospital bed days in England in 2015-16



CONSERVATIVE WAR ON POVERTY FACT OR FICTION

By very definition claims that the Conservative Government since 2015 and before them the coalition Government of 2010 made up of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats are at war with poverty is definition completely fictitious. I can hear some people yelling at me already. Especially those people who know me to be a Democratic Socialist and very much a supporter of Jeremy Corbyn. Think about it for a moment what does being at war with poverty mean? Ok time up, you're right I haven't given you time to work it out because it's plain English and easy to understand..... Still not got it? Alright let me explain. To be at war with poverty means to do all you can to eradicate it to rid our society of poverty, that no one ever be so poor they have to choose between eating and heating, that no one be homeless, that no child is hungry, no one needs to be in arrears with rent etc etc. I'm pretty sure you get it now.

This regime and the Coalition before have done nothing to fight poverty instead they have waged war on the poor. What they have actually done is create more poverty by waging war on the low paid, the unemployed and the disabled. To be fair the only thing they have done to reduce poverty is try to hide it or as some of us have accused, cause the death of those that are poor and vulnerable. More on the latter part of that later later.....you can agree or disagree, it's up to you but I have no fear about sticking my head above the parapet and saying it how I and so many others see it.....

So now that's cleared up and you are breathing a sigh of relief that I haven't become a denier, switched sides or become confused, I hope you'll agree that what we have actually seen since 2010 is a war on the poor and as a result an increase in poverty!



Earlier this week I was watching the Daily Politics programme on BBC2, an interview with Ken Loach Film Maker and Conservative minister Sam Gyimah were discussing the merits of Ken's film 'I, Daniel Blake'. Ken made a great assessment of his film and how common place Daniel Blake's experience is in today's Britain. When asked Sam Gyimah said in effect that Ken was a film maker, the film was a story and therefor an exaggeration. After all isn't that what film makers do' He claimed.

Now either the Conservatives are just totally out of touch or deniers of the truth because, let's face it if you pretend it isn't there then it ain't a problem, in Tory land and you don't have to answer to the charges!! Well our mate Sam can pretend all he likes or, as I see it, being totally out of touch with reality

is a crime much worse given that he and his ilk are the party running this country and creating this mess.

As the law says ignorance is not an excuse! Or maybe that just applies to us and not them.

In the 1980s Mrs Thatcher banned her ministers and civil servants from using the poverty word. Cameron, Osborne and Iain Duncan-Smith have been trying too to wipe the poor out of the political script by redefining them away and nothing has changed that policy since Theresa May took the helm and Cameron and co have all been replaced.

The Lords dealt a hammer blow to the government's plans for tax credits and the planned next round of budget cuts by voting against the credits when the government introduced the laughable New



National Living Wage of £7.20 an hour. The revolt was by a mix of opposition peers, crossbenchers, bishops and government loyalists who forced the government into a rethink on a flagship policy and it threw the Chancellor's deficit reducing plans badly off course.

The Lords also thwarted the attempt by Cameron and co to completely redefine child poverty and reduce child poverty. Now, as I said earlier this is the one of the few attempts at eradicating poverty, at least the Conservative idea of waging war on it. What they actually wanted to do was hide it.

In 2004 the very nice Iain Duncan-Smith set up the CSJ, the Centre for Social Justice to look at the causes of child poverty. In the way that the Conservatives would they found that in a few cases, given the extent of the problem that some of the causes could be down to bad parenting, alcoholism and addiction to drugs. So they wanted to stop defining child poverty on household income and put it down to addiction and bad parenting. That would have the effect of bringing down the statistics. For the conservatives job done child poverty reduced! In actual fact according to Child Poverty Action Group.....

* Child poverty reduced dramatically between 1998/9-2011/12 when 800,000 children were lifted out of poverty. Since 2010, child poverty figures have flat-lined. The number of children in absolute poverty has increased by 0.5 million since 2010.

* As a direct result of tax and benefit decisions made since 2010, the Institute for Fiscal Studies project that the number of children in relative poverty will have risen from 2.3 to 3.6 million by 2020 (poverty figures before housing costs).

* Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one member works.

Homelessness among English households has risen 54 per cent since 2010, according to government figures.

A report, released by the De-

partment for Communities and Local Government, reveals there were 57,750 acceptances in financial year 2015-16 - a rise from 54,430 (6 per cent) from 2014-15.

New Housing Benefit Caps about to be introduced are only going to make matters worse. Tens of thousands of tenants in sheltered housing, including frail older residents, domestic violence victims and people with mental illness may become homeless as a result of benefit cuts, landlords have said.

Government plans to cap housing benefit for social rented properties from April will put an estimated 82,000 specialist homes under threat of closure, leaving an estimated 50,000 vulnerable tenants who are unable to work without support.

The rise of food banks and people needing food parcels, some of them working in low paid jobs and reports that some of our NHS nurses have too shames our country and yet is going unchallenged.

So why is the country and its people sitting back doing little about these things? Well the clever politicians, their spin merchants along with the right wing media and tv have demonised the poor, the unemployed, the low paid. They have used the CSJ idea that people are not managing their money properly or spending too much on booze, cigarettes and drugs because a small minority of people do so. The fact that the vast majority of people do not splash out on anything but essentials, budget as carefully as they can is of no consequence when the story of waste and frivolity is pushed in our faces. So most people think the poor, and unemployed deserve no pity. Channel 4 are big on benefit porn, much of which I have watched and even knowing they pick the worst to star in these programmes I still occasionally find myself drifting towards the thinking these programme makers want us all to think. I can't tell you how many times I have had to rush to the bathroom and throw myself under a cold shower and slap my face until I wake up again and smell the proverbial roses!!

I have recently been forced at the age of 57 to give up living alone

because people have less disposable income and either want to pay less for my musical talent at their weddings and other special events and move in with my mum. To be fair I would have had to do something like that anyway because mum who spent her whole life bringing up eight children of her own, did some fostering and then when my sister was killed in a road accident brought up a surviving child from that accident who suffered a brain injury, now only receives a basic pension and is struggling on it. Mum always had what we call goodies in the cupboards, you know biscuits, chocolate bars etc but now she is barely buying essentials so she can heat her home. I haven't lived at home since I enlisted into the army at 16.

What we have had plenty of media reports on are the attacks on our disabled and the sickest of our people but not without an undercurrent of these people are not as sick or disabled as they make out. People who cannot work and rely on benefits to survive and live a decent life. The Welfare System for them has been in the past reasonably fair, not perfect but has given our disabled a standard of life that without it would not be possible, a standard of life that if able to work may give them but we have seen that slowly taken away so that few now cannot enjoy a life instead now endure a life that is about survival. Care has been reduced or taken away, cash reduced, benefits like mobility aides are no longer so readily available, if at all. Many have been deemed fit for work having undergone humiliating accusatory assessments by people medically unqualified to make those assessments and because they have been 'found fit' for work are reduced to the basic rate Job Seekers Allowance and made poorer as a result.

And here we see the only other attempt at reducing poverty and the governments so called war on it, sadly many have, unable to face the futures now decided unfairly, taken their own lives.

So next time you hear the Government are waging war on poverty who think its a vote winner because they understand English..... put them right and tell them the Government are not. What they are really doing is waging war on the poorest and increasing poverty.

I will leave you with one more area where this Government have waged war on poverty.....reducing poverty by eradicating those in poverty for real

Mortality Statistics: Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance





Georgie Harrison

DEAR AGONY AUNT...

Dear agony aunt

I have met someone through a political site on face book and we have started to talk all the time on the phone as well as meeting up once. I really like her but I have a dark secret that I have kept from everyone. I have a terrible past of drug abuse that goes back many years. Do you think she will believe I have changed?

Dear reader,

I sense that you have a strong affinity for this lady. I can understand why you are anxious to make a good impression and that you are worried that she may not accept that you have changed. Forgive me for this but I think you are asking me whether you believe that you have changed!

Let's just pause here a moment to reflect on this. You have just admitted to me, yourself and others that you are powerless over drugs. That is fantastic and is literally the first step of a 12 step program. You do not mention whether or not you attend meetings; I recommend that you do and that you avail yourself of a sponsor - someone who will use their experience, strength and hope to guide you through the 12 steps. All people who have had any form of addiction are only ever an arms' length away from using and need the support of their peers.

It is important to be honest in all relationships so I agree that you need to share your past history. Do not be concerned about whether your new lady thinks you have changed; make sure that you are satisfied that you have left behind that old life and are moving towards a life beyond your wildest dreams by following a 12 step program of your choice. Wishing you every happiness and sending up a prayer to that effect.

Dear GEORGIE

When I was 15 I was in a children's home for a few months. The son of the women who ran it was 21 and really big. He beat me up and locked me in the boot room. I was terrified. I heard afterwards from one of the other inmates that others were not so lucky. They reported him but nothing was done. I reported at the time being beaten up but no one seemed to care. If I found him now what should I do?

Dear reader,

I am so sorry to hear about the awful abuse you received in the children's home. Firstly, I need to know that you have some supportive loved ones surrounding you so that you can share this burden with them. I also recommend that you find additional help from counselling. Many people do not like the idea of counselling but it is a safe space for you to pour your heart out.

As to the bully that terrorised you and the others - I don't think it's a good idea to track him down and if your paths cross do not confront him. I highly recommend that you go forward to the police and report your horrible experiences as soon as possible. I know that this may be difficult and I suggest that you go with a supportive friend or loved one. You could simply show the police this letter that you have written to me. Do remember you are not to blame for the awful things he did and you need to be loved back to health.

I am lifting you in prayer and I wish you every happiness for the future.

Dear GEORGIE

My daughter just lies asleep all day at home doing nothing but sleeping and eating junk food. She rarely goes out of the house and expects me to wait on her hand and foot like a slave. If at any time I refuse she will shout and swear at me. I am at my wits end.

Dear Reader,

I can feel your pain and I will admit that I have experienced similar troubles. I found my daughter's behaviour infuriating, upsetting and sometimes plain disrespectful but I now recognise that she was suffering from depression. Is it possible that your daughter is experiencing the same? Like yours, my daughter sometimes used to demand service from me but it turns out her love language is "acts of service" (http://www.5lovelanguages.com/?q=t4&utm_expid=26154458-1,yxl0oZsdS_qqx1h1sReHA.1&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bing.com%2F) and she felt unloved when I refused to run round after her. There are 5 love languages and 1 or 2 will be our more dominant ones; for example, mine are "words of affirmation" and "quality time"; my daughter's are "acts of service" and "receiving gifts". (The fifth love language is "physical touch")

I found out that when I take her out for a drive in the car, she opens up and tells me how it is for her. She has started counselling and sometimes helps me around the house and our relationship has improved but it's still a bumpy ride!

I suggest you have film night or other girlie night with your daughter and explain how it is for you. Maybe carry out the Languages of Love quiz to discover your love languages and those of your daughter? Communication is key but it can be incredibly difficult, especially with your own flesh and blood! Are there any other parents that you trust that could offer you support too? It is important for you to know that you are doing the best for your daughter and that you are a precious human being and need some "you" time.

I am sending up a prayer for you both to improve your connection together and I wish you both every happiness and a fresh, loving connection.

Dear THE Word

Many years ago at the end of a relationship I had a breakdown. It lasted for many years and one of the ways I tried to get back on my feet was to take up playing the guitar. This would have been alright if I had had any musical talent but I haven't. I started writing songs but could never finish any. Now I can't stop trying to write songs. Please help this really is an obsession I want to get rid of?

Dear Reader,

I'm so sorry to hear about your breakdown and I would usually recommend that you choose a creative outlet to help alleviate and divert your attention away from the pain. In your letter you have explained that you have tried this and it has led to an obsession which you would like to have removed. You also say that you have no musical talent and appear to be overly self-critical.

Please start by being kind to yourself; change the negative language you use to describe your musical efforts - it doesn't matter if you're not the next Eric Clapton. Music is good for the soul and can lift one's mood. I sense that you need someone to offload your thoughts to and I do recommend that you consider counselling. You don't have to strive alone; you are worthy of only the best.

This next paragraph may offend but please read it as it is intended, from a position of love. It is possible that you have been attempting to fill a "hole in your soul". I recommend that you also investigate faith systems. Personally, I was very much an atheist, however during a very dark period in my recent history, I discovered the warmth and love of God. This encounter has helped to fill my world and though I'm very much a work in progress, I would highly recommend it for all.

I am holding you in my prayers and I applaud you for taking that first step by sharing your world with me. I urge you to stop being brave by trying to manage alone; reach out to others for support. I pray that your life will be filled with love and happiness in abundance as you walk to freedom from the darkness.

If you have any questions for our agony aunt please send them to thewordnewspaper@outlook.com or to submissions on our website at thewordmedia.org.uk



Beetroot and Bean Burgers



Makes about 12 burgers

- 3 large red beets (about 1 pound)
- 1/2 cup brown rice (not cooked)
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced small
- 3 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup old-fashioned rolled oats (gluten-free, if necessary) (or use Quick oat type Oats).
- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans black beans
- 1/4 cup prunes, chopped into small pieces.
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 to 3 teaspoons smoked paprika, to taste
- 2 teaspoons brown mustard
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 large egg (optional, leave out for

- vegan burgers)
- Salt and pepper

First, cook the beets: Heat the oven to 400°F. Wrap the beets loosely in aluminium foil and roast until easily pierced with a fork, 50 to 60 minutes. Set aside to cool. (Or use ready cooked - but NOT vinegared beetroot).

Cook the rice: This should take about 35 to 40 minutes. Drain the rice and set it aside to cool.

Sauté the onions - add a pinch of salt, cook until they are golden and getting charred around the edges.

Add the garlic and cook until it is fragrant, about 30 seconds. Pour in the cider vinegar and scrape up

the dark sticky crust. Continue to simmer until the cider has evaporated and the pan is nearly dry again. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

Process the oats in a food processor until they have reduced to a fine flour. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside. (Or use Quick Oats).

Drain and rinse one of the cans of beans and transfer the beans to the food processor. Scatter the prunes on top. Pulse in 1-second bursts just until the beans are roughly chopped - not so long that they become mush - 8 to 10 pulses. Transfer this mixture to a large mixing bowl. Drain and rinse the second can of beans and add these whole beans to the mixing

bowl as well.

Grate the beetroot: on the largest holes of a box grater. Transfer the beet gratings to a strainer set over the sink. Press and squeeze the beet gratings to remove as much liquid as possible.

Combine the veggie burger mix: Transfer the squeezed beets, cooked rice, and sautéed onions to the bowl with the beans. Sprinkle the olive oil, brown mustard, 2 teaspoons of smoked paprika, cumin, coriander, and thyme over the top of the mixture. Mix all the ingredients until combined. Taste the mixture and add salt, pepper, or any additional spices or flavourings to taste. Finally, add the oatmeal flour and egg (if using - it helps

hold everything together, but isn't 100% necessary), and mix until you no longer see any dry oatmeal or egg.

Refrigerate the burger mix 2 hours, or up to 3 days:

Shape and fry the burgers on a good high heat: If you're adding cheese, lay a slice over the burgers in the last minute of cooking.

Serve the veggie burgers on soft burger buns or lightly toasted sandwich bread along with some fresh greens.

Recipe Notes:

Freezing Burgers: Burgers can be frozen raw or cooked. Wrap each burger between sheets of parchment paper, and freeze. They cook from frozen extremely well.

MESSAGE TO JC & MEMBERSHIP

Message to Jeremy Corbyn:

Dear Jeremy, Momentum is desperately in need of your active involvement and presence as a figurehead, the values expressed in your leadership campaigns are being undermined and abandoned and have been since Momentum first began to get more organised earlier this year.

Principles of inclusion and democracy have been and are being actively abandoned and activists are going to leave in droves if democracy doesn't take form, frustrated and disillusioned. If groups can't talk with one and other routinely, if the national Committee is disbanded, if the delegate system is dispensed with, if decisions are centralised to a committee of 15 people, and if a maximum of 8 proposals from the grassroots are all that's allowed each year then the lifeblood of grassroots involvement will have been drained from the organisation.

The very fact that these ideas are being proposed shows something profoundly wrong in the mentality of the Momentum leadership. This is not how to build a grassroots organisation, the moves are clearly designed to centralise power and remove decision making and agenda setting powers from groups.

Message to Momentum Membership

A grassroots organisation is one that asks you what you think, it doesn't dictate to you what a group is, how you can vote, who can represent you, and what your group is allowed to discuss and vote on with regard to the wider movement.

Since January of the year all we have had has been rushed decisions and imposed dictates about all this and even being told who we are allowed to welcome into our meetings and who we must bar.

None of the major decisions have been discussed at group level - they have all been imposed by HQ, with votes being forced upon ill-prepared delegates who often would have preferred to go back and seek their group's input rather than make decisions under the pressure imposed at the NC by leading figures.

If you want an organisation which is vibrant, inventive and successful then it must be one that is run from the ground up and if you want this to happen then your group is where it starts. Please send a strong message to Momentum HQ about the structures you and your group want to see in place!



Kevin Courtney

LABOUR BRIEFING

Quotes 55

Glyn Robbins, housing worker and activist, reporting on the Axe the Housing Act national summit

"Perhaps most surprising - and worrying - is that Momentum has apparently failed to recognise and act on an important opportuni-

ty to connect with working class communities on an issue [the housing crisis] that has huge potential to attract potential Labour voters."



Photo: Summer Dean

Matt Wrack addressing the LRC AGM

MATT WRACK

Matt Wrack, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union and new Chair of the Labour Representation Committee, charts a way forward:

The debate in Momentum about the organisation's future structures hit the news recently and some journalists clearly enjoyed seeing a public disagreement blow up within the Corbyn-supporting movement. But we should not be afraid of debate. There are differences of opinion and these should be discussed at all levels of Momentum.

What is the role of local Momentum groups - especially in their re-

lations to the London-based office?

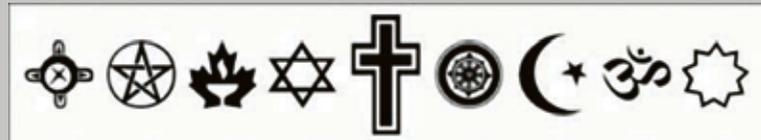
One thing that has emerged is a level of distrust of local groups from some people - including people on the Momentum Steering Committee. [There is] opposition to a delegate type structure for any conference.

No mass movement or campaign can be built without activists....if Momentum is to establish itself as a serious left wing campaign of Labour Party members and supporters, the starting point has to be local groups. It is at local level where we need to build the Labour Party, where we need

to help people train and develop themselves. The local groups are certainly not perfect, and they don't exist everywhere, but if Momentum is to develop and sustain itself for the long term the local groups need to be built and to be the basis of the campaign - the building blocks for the future.

With goodwill the difficulties and disagreements can be overcome and a way forward can be found. That can involve online discussion and decision-making but it also needs to have representatives from local groups at the heart of the process and of the conference. Let's find a way through.

Letter from Muslim to Jew Stamford Hill



In Stamford Hill, London, this email was sent from a Muslim to a Jew, after an anti-Semitic attack. A lot of good works are going on between the two communities;

Peace be with you / Salaams Councillors Abraham, Ian and everyone at Shomrim

I hope and pray you and all your colleagues are well. I heard of the despicable anti-semitic incident this morning of the swastika graffiti on vans and cars on Alkham Rd. This is on top of the increasing attacks faced by our local Jewish brethren over recent months with such incidents sadly taking place more or less every other week. As a born and bred local resident of Stamford Hill since the 70s I show my full support and solidarity with you. Your

neighbourhood Shomrim patrol and Hatzola ambulance are an absolute treasure for all of us living here in Stamford Hill. In your times of need and vulnerability I give your community my full support and stand with you should to shoulder in the face of such appalling incidents/attacks.

Thanks for all your help. You're a massive part of what

makes Stamford Hill a brilliant place to live - an attack on you isn't just on you but on us all here on the Hill. If there's anything I can do to help please do let me know. I pray for your and all our local communities' safety and security during these times and hope the perpetrators are brought swiftly to justice.

Musa Jabbar
Springfield Road E5

OMOV and Delegate System

THE OMOV (ONE MEMBER ONE VOTE) PROPOSALS:

1. The National Committee of around 240 people will be abolished.
2. Momentum will be directed by a Steering Committee of up to 15 individuals, 3 of these members will join the SC on a three-month basis, having been selected by lottery.
3. The final composition of the SC will ensure a minimum of BAME, LGBT+, youth and disability representation, as well as gender parity.
4. SC elections will take place each year, and be preceded by hustings at a national gathering.
5. A national gathering will take place once a year where members can engage with key issues and specific policy proposals will be debated. Following this event, proposals will be decided by the online OMOV system.
6. Local groups will be free to organise as they see fit, so long as they do not contravene Momentum's ethical and political statements.

THE DELEGATE SYSTEM:

1. Each Momentum Meeting elects a male and female representative and send them to the National Committee (NC) meetings. (with over 150 local groups in the UK that could mean 300 delegates).
2. Proposals from groups are brought by delegates to the NC.
3. Proposals from the NC are brought by delegates to their groups.
4. The vote of each group is heard in all decisions at the NC.
5. The NC votes in the Steering Committee (possibly from a combination of membership/MPs/Union reps).

WATER AID WHAT WE TAKE FOR GRANTED, MANY BARELY SURVIVE WITHOUT

By Matthew Clifton

Access to clean drinking water, proper toilets and good hygiene is a necessity and millions of people across the globe don't have access to these basic services. It is these that everyone in the west often takes for granted. What is being done to combat these basic issues and needs for those less fortunate than ourselves?

Everyday adults and children are dying from preventable diseases and are walking miles for dirty water to survive. Young children aren't living past the age of 5 and girls are dropping out of school because a lack of private toilets, but Water Aid has been working to change these issues.

Water is something we can all get hold of by walking to our taps and simply pouring a glass of water, yet too many take this simple act for granted. 650 million people do not have access to safe water, which means that they are forced to drink dirty water. A sustainable supply of water is vital to basic human survival and is right for everyone; used for drinking, washing, cleaning, cooking and growing food. A supply of safe water is a vital right for everyone but millions live with the reality of dirty water.

It affects women the most, it is often girls and women that are



forced to walk for miles to get dirty water, wasting time and energy. This also often forces them to miss vital education. If as a society we look back at our own history, it was only some 100 years ago, that we faced problems such as these. The scale of which those in the worst places is far greater and the threat they face every day is significant.

Sanitation is important and how many could imagine life without access to a proper toilet. 2.4 billion or 1 in 3 people don't have

access to these facilities, meaning that many are forced to go in the open and this spreads many deadly diseases. Women face other dangers also, they face harassment and attack; girls also drop out of school because they are unable to manage their periods privately. It is access to these simple facilities that everyone takes for granted.

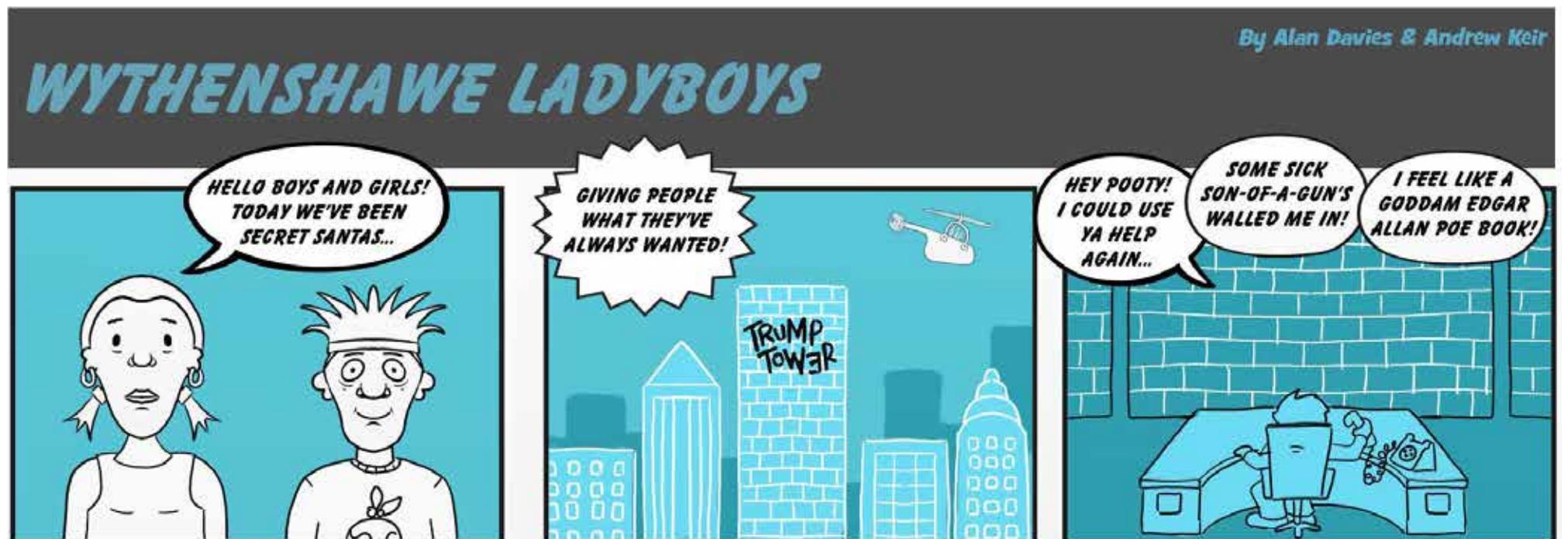
Hygiene is largely overlooked at how vital it is for our society and halting the spread of disease. Without good hygiene, it increases

the spread of deadly diseases and speed of which they do spread. The simple act of handwashing could reduce diarrhoea cases by half and teaching hygiene habits properly maximises the potential of clean water and proper toilets.

There are already hygiene promotion schemes that do exist, but where they do exist they fail to deal with entrenched hygiene issues for example, going toilet in open areas around the community. They also fail to deal with key issues such

as menstrual health training for young women.

This Christmas we have our own issues and it is not just countries in places such as Africa that Water Aid works with the most vulnerable. But in Colombia, despite their economic growth, still face severe inequalities that see millions of people lacking access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Visit wateraid.org for further information on how to donate and if you would like to get involved.





A Tale of Two "United" Kingdoms

By Hayley Kemp

Two stories have been very much on my mind since this morning. One about Teresa May PM wearing a pair of leather trousers that cost 1000 pounds. The other, a story of a teenager killing himself 'after being belittled by Jobcentre staff' whilst trying to find work. I didn't initially want to write about Teresa May's trousers as I thought, 'would we comment so much on what a man was wearing?'

I thought it through and I'm writing about it now because - yes - I would comment on a male PM, or MP, wearing a pair of trousers that cost £1k while claiming to be 'in touch with the people' & 'working for everyone'.

Are 'the people' Teresa May

is in touch with the 1 million and more who are using foodbanks this year? The ones taking their own life whilst looking for work or trying to claim benefits? Or the Woman on R4 this morning saying she is £120 worse off on Universal Credit, who has also been sanctioned whilst working, stating, 'there's no hope'. Or the 120,000 children who will be waking up homeless this Christmas Day?

Meanwhile Teresa May launched the defence of her clothes on board her RAF Voyager plane as she flew to Bahrain for a summit. It was her fourth trip on the Airbus A330 jet, which underwent a £10million makeover after being ordered by her predecessor David Cameron.

Momentum = Force x Time



By Alex Taylor

The whole of the Momentum movement could usefully spend a few minutes considering some fundamental physics!

Other important equations: **Force = Mass x Acceleration.**

The Momentum powerbase seems determined to attempt to create a powerful movement, using acceleration alone, at the same time as cutting the mass of the committees from a potential 300 people to a startling 15. If this is achieved, the impossibility of it will surely show - as time goes by.

My experiences of Momentum have mirrored those in other areas I know - meeting have been badly run, sometimes cancelled in order to suppress debate, left-wingers have been bullied out and those from other parties excluded without regret by the executives to spite widespread disapproval. The sum total of the actual work being done here amounts to whatever the local Labour Party want - usually doorstep campaigning and that's it. A pressure group we are not. Jeremy Corbyn's initial framework for Momentum, published initially on the website, but subsequently altered and watered down, seems to be a long abandoned dream.

It's true that we've also had John McDonnell come and visit us as well, but by and large numbers here are terrible as a result of lack of democracy and rambling ineffectual meetings.

National Committee Held in Very Low Regard by Momentum HQ

I discussed the issue of the OMOV voting system and the proposals now being put forward with Jack Witek, who drafted the proposals which are now online.

Me: There are at least 150 Momentum groups in the UK, that's a potential delegate base of 300 people. Isn't replacing that with 15 people a bit of a joke?

Jack: The NC is hardly a necessity is it? Just another layer of delegation doing god knows what.

Me: So it will be replaced by a SC of 15 people...And you're convinced that because ONE of those people is an MP you have covered requirements to be representative?

Jack: You'll have basically universal suffrage on the steering committee and OMOV for most everything else. That's 20 thousand members currently.

Me: So, the Steering Committee decides what we get to vote on..... And allows 20 000 people potentially to vote on the options they decide to propose: 7 elected Momentum members, 3 union reps, 1 MP, 1 councillor and 3 "lottery winners", sounds like something out of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

Jack: I thought you'd considered it more a totalitarian model? [Jack missing the point that that's exactly what the chocolate factory was]. Actually you know the lottery could be done via gold wrappers. The chocolate could be Dime bars. A red wrapper of Labourism and a golden centre of Fully Automated Luxury Communism.

The proposal states: There will be a yearly referendum, where the 8 most popular motions will be debated at a national gathering and

voted on by all members online. The 4 most popular motions from local groups & the 4 most popular motions from individual members, as shown via endorsements on MxV. ["likes"].

Me: So every 12 months 8 proposals from the grassroots will be voted on. That does seem to be a lamentable claim to democracy. In a delegate system, around 100 - 200 proposals would be voted on every year.

Jack: Hundreds of proposals, that no one will know or care about because no one but the delegates will turn up to the meetings to hear and debate them for endless hundreds of hours. Because people have lives. And the Labour Party, which already does that, and unlike Momentum, has a viable path to taking power.

Before you reply read this: (https://medium.com/@the_dbh/what-if-the-problem-with-momentum-is-something-much-more-systemic-22e168493bf#.oz1aa8554)

Me: Thanks - there is a systemic problem in Momentum, it's always been there - it can be summarised neatly as "authoritarianism".

Your main argument seems to be that the NC are a bunch of time wasters and therefore need to be got rid of.....Is this because they don't decide things Jon Lansman wants them to quickly enough? Do they take too long? Or perhaps make the "wrong" decisions too often? The delegate system is a robust defence against coups and bullying, bribery and blackmail.

A 15-person committee is not. Maybe it's as simple as that?

CONTINUED FROM P. 48

THE YEAR OF THE SMALL

A referendum won by *small is beautiful* Boris Johnson and *beauty is skin deep* Michael Gove four days previously had influenced England so they'd taken the result to heart and triggered Brexit ten minutes into the second half, leading to manager Dave Cameron's and coach Georgie Osborne's resignations.

There was another Labour Leadership contest, again featuring the minuscule Jeremy Corbyn versus weighty opposition, the vaunted *Team Owen Smith*. The flag was dropped by Director of Football Stan Mandelson in a long dark coat on the 24th June after Jeremy had emulated Scottish team coach Nicky Sturgeon in getting over 60% of party voters to support Remain.



Clearly reading from notes prepared in advance Ser Mandelson said in a Voldemort voice, "I blame Jeremy Corbyn." Hysteria broke out in Labour's dressing room and everybody from Roy Hodgson to Angela Eagle was tipped to win the leadership. 2016 now saw the lit-

tlest guy up against the 1966 World Cup Team: Banks, Cohen, Watson, Kinnock, Blair, Obama, brothers Ed and David Charlton, Hurst, Peters, Owen. But Corbyn won again; it was like watching Iceland, or Leicester.

2017 will be the *Year of the*



Huge. Labour with 600,000 members, many back after suspension, will defeat the 2015 winners, with fewer supporters, some also UKIP season ticket holders; Ten Pledges appealing to fair play against May/May-Not and her tic-tac-a (Brexit Means Brexit) and

team chant ("It will be red, white and blue.") The election will have as its heart not Europe nor Immigration, but Housing; Corbyn will become PM.

Leicester might win the UEFA Champions League. That bit I'm not certain about.



THE YEAR OF THE SMALL

With the possible exception of Sepp Blatter, Small was Beautiful in 2016. Underdogs won a number of competitions. The Football Season had kicked off on 2nd August 2015, when unknown local politician Jeremy Corbyn's Arsenal nicked the Charity Shield off Chelsea's Plutocrats. In September Jeremy triumphed again, beating a gang of New Labour Bureaucrats to the Party Leadership against the received wisdom of pundits Eddie Miliband, Tony Blair, Pete Mandelson, Davie Blunkett and Iris Murdoch, whose press empire wrote Corbyn off initially as it did Leicester City.

Another unknown, Jamie Vardy, blank CV, looking like a man jonesing for smoky bacon crisps, began a scoring run which broke Ruud van Nistelrooy's previous record. BBC political heavyweight and *Journalist of the Year* Gary Lineker suggested in January that Leicester might do the unthinkable and promised us he'd present MoTD in his boxers should Leicester win the EPL, confirming 2016 as *Year of*

the Smalls, if not the Small.

A complaint that Lineker was biased was dismissed under BBC processes, as Lineker had never played for Leicester and wasn't their centre forward at the time. He'd scored prolifically himself so had no interest in Jamie Vardy, who incidentally had no connection with Walker's Crisps.

Vardy represented his country at Euro 2016; England sent some footballers to the competition, though not as a *team*. Compare them with, say, Iceland. Firstly, Iceland as a nation had responded to the financial crisis of 2008 by bailing out its poor and jailing bankers, whereas the UK had bailed out bankers and put its poorest people in jail, convicting them of benefit fraud, Driving While Black, having more bedrooms than necessary in a dwelling, and making a fuss about things generally. Secondly, nobody had any expectations of Iceland, whereas every newspaper fancied England to win the Euros. When they met, there could only ever be one winner.

➤ CONTINUED ON P. 47

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