

UNIFIED EUROPE /
DIVIDED BRITAIN

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The following five articles were all submitted for publication during 1989 and 1990: two were published; three were not. "Itemised Telephone Bills: A Doubtful Blessing" was published under the title "Telephone Lines" in Outlook, (issue 6, Oct/Nov 1989), a magazine I have no further wish to be associated with. "The Real North-South Divide" appeared in a severely edited form in Briticism, (Vol 1 No 4, Dec 1989/Jan 1990), a magazine published in New York by and for British ex-patriates living in the States. I have dotted an "i" and crossed a "t" here and there, but both articles are essentially unchanged.

The article on Edward Heath and united Europe and the filler "Out Of The Frying Pan" were both submitted for publication more than once; neither was ever accepted.

Finally, "Freedom Of The Press" was submitted on spec to Index On Censorship and was also rejected.

CONTENT AND COMMENT

"Freedom Of The Press" was written specifically for Index so was toned down substantially; indeed, if I were to commit to paper my complete, uncensored views on the gutter press, no distributor would even consider handling the publication. Before I ever met a so-called "journalist" I had already formed an extremely low opinion of the type; nothing I have seen since has caused me to alter that opinion except to revise it downwards. It is most unfortunate that the word "journalist" is used so freely to describe anyone who contributes to magazines and newspapers; the trade press and the gutter press are entirely different media and should always be treated as such. Certainly there is no love lost between them. While the trade press is not always painstakingly accurate and meticulous over every last detail, it is true to say that it exists to inform an educated readership. The function of the latter I have yet to divine.

Early on in my struggle to establish myself as a freelance I

submitted articles, synopses and ideas to the gutter press. All were either ignored or rejected, and in retrospect I have no regrets; one can become tainted with guilt by association. At one point I managed to get myself invited into the editorial offices of a major daily publication; the sub-editor I had come to see was unable to give me more than a few moments of his time so passed me over to the news editor. After keeping me waiting for half an hour he asked me what I wanted in as condescending a manner as possible. Then, when I explained my proposed feature, he gave me a sombre lecture in a hushed tone asking me such pertinent questions as "did I have any training in journalism?" Training indeed!

At this point I should have pointed out that being neither an habitual liar nor an alcoholic I was not a "journalist", had no desire to become one, and left. However, instead of walking out of the office I sat and endured a lecture from this patronising wanker on how "we have to be very careful" and thus I was not considered fit to write for their illustrious colour supplement. I resolved this would be the first and last time I would ever be subjected to such treatment. The arrogance and ignorance of this particular individual are pretty standard. I found his "we have to be very careful" less ironic than a sick joke. Just how careful are these colour supplements about the feature writers they employ?

In a relatively short space of time I read two "kiss and tell" stories about then undisputed world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson. In one, a self-styled actress with the equally phoney name of "Peaches" explained how she had been used and abused in a sexual (and brutal) manner by Iron Mike. In the other, a self-professed homosexual made essentially the same claims. In spite of his well documented, self-destructive behaviour and short fuse outside the ring, Mike Tyson is obviously a highly sensitive and at times strangely vulnerable person. One thing that has always come across to me is that he desperately wants to do the right thing. Who can tell what thoughts must go through his head when he reads crap like that? The only thing for certain is that he must find such libels infinitely more painful than the beating he suffered at the hands of Buster Douglas.

To take an even more extreme example, not from a colour supplement, but from a Sunday newspaper. About the same time as these libels appeared, a much loved, deceased Hollywood actor, whom I will not name, was accused of no lesser perversion than necrophilia. In particular it was alleged that he bribed a mortician to bring him the fresh corpses of young girls killed in automobile accidents. Obviously they would never have dared

print such filth while he was alive, but of course, the dead cannot be libelled.

Such canards, though extreme even by Fleet Street's inestimably low standards are by no means unique. This is what is known as "freedom of the press", and is defended tooth and claw by its practitioners and apologists. Nothing, we are told, is more important than the "freedom" of "journalists" to publish whatever libels, defamations and filth they care to fabricate in the interests of, (get this) preserving our cherished liberal democracy.

Earlier this year, when the Iraqi government arrested one of their ilk for spying; tried, convicted, sentenced, then promptly hanged him, the press whined for weeks. Yet this man was almost certainly a spy. If not a paid agent of Britain or Israel there is good reason to believe him to have been gathering intelligence to sell to either or both these governments. He was also an Iranian, so presumably he was well aware of the risk he was taking. Still, a hue and cry went up around the world: the beastly, inhuman Iraqis have hanged a journalist for spying. It's a good thing libel isn't capital; they'd have hanged the lot of them! Since this happened there has been an incessant barrage of hatred against Iraq in the British media. Could there be a connection, do you think?

It would be possible to fill several thick volumes with well documented libels, smears and fabrications emanating from Fleet Street, (and its equivalents worldwide). Unfortunately, this book is scheduled for publication in 1990, not some time after the turn of the century. However, I would heartily recommend Henry Porter's excellent "Lies, Damned Lies....." (Chatto and Windus) 1984 as a starting point for further research.

What is or can be done about Fleet Street? The last thing anyone should do is complain to the Press Council, and by virtue of the enormous expenses and commitment involved, libel actions are open only to the few. Unwittingly, the Iraqis have given us the solution: the individuals themselves must be held culpable. If everytime a journalist wilfully libelled a public figure or ordinary person he were to be dragged round the back and given a good kicking, standards of reporting would rise immediately and visibly. But until the public are prepared to take such action, either individually or collectively, we will continue to get the press we deserve.

The article on itemised phone bills is straightforward and requires no further comment; likewise "Out Of The Frying Pan".

"Heath's Attacks On Thatcher: The Real Motive?" is a difficult piece to expand on without dragging in a lot of detail about the real nature of world politics. Much of this is and has

to remain highly speculative by virtue of the fact that the people in the know are not likely to open their mouths. Certainly though, those of us who have been observing the world scene for some time, albeit from afar are more than justified in asserting that at the very least, the true nature of unrest, depressions and so forth cannot begin to be comprehended without a thorough study of the various covert power groups, political and financial who have been manipulating the world from behind the scenes for the greater part of this century and, according to some authorities, considerably longer. (See for example Tragedy And Hope by Carroll Quigley or The Naked Capitalist by W. Cleon Skousen).

Even if these groups operated openly and above board, (as to some extent the Trilateralists do), the man in the street would still have the greatest difficulty in understanding their machinations because they talk in code. The term "New World Order" for example means world government; "economic development in South America" means running a motorway through Amazonia and stuff the rainforest; and I'm sure the reader will recognise such delightful euphemisms as "rationalisation" (redundancies); and "realistic settlement" (a 4% rise for the shopfloor and a 20% rise for management).

However bad is the record of the Thatcher regime, and from a worm's eye view it is pretty appalling, one thing is for certain: if Edward Heath had still been prime minister, this country would be in an even greater mess; our National Sovereignty would have been sold down the river long ago, albeit from the very best of motives.

Recently I was informed by a fringe publisher, a man who is to some extent in the know, that the Iron Lady has been "educated" in certain matters, particularly with regards to the true nature of the financial system. It could well be for this reason rather than the current poll tax fiasco that it has been decided that 11 glorious years is quite enough.

The main article requires relatively little comment, though I should perhaps point out that I am nowhere near as naive about Social Credit as I made out. Stan Goddard, (not his real name), is a gentleman I have come to know quite well over the past couple of years. I met him through an advertisement when I was trying to organise a study group. Unfortunately, he was the only serious respondent so the group never got off the ground, and though he is considerably older than me and our backgrounds could hardly be more different, we were both introduced to the writings of C.H. Douglas about the same time and by the same man, even though we were then living over two hundred miles apart.

Like Stan I agree that "unemployment" is a myth. In a world

where automation is forever increasing and consequently output per worker is rising, there can never be full employment again. Not in any meaningful sense. Unfortunately, organised labour has allowed itself to become brainwashed into accepting the "no such thing as a free lunch" nonsense, and even with the crumbling of the "Evil Empire" the left are more intent on pursuing the class war than in declaring war on the real enemy of the working class: work itself.

Consequently, few people are even aware of the A+B Theorem, while the practice of credit creation, which is the root cause of all the evils of the capitalist system is seldom mentioned, hardly ever discussed and never attacked. Yet it deserves to be damned on moral grounds alone.

The article North-South is primarily about unemployment and workfare, and although it was researched in some depth this is a subject which is surely deserving of a full length book rather than a few pages in a general interest magazine. As C.H. Douglas would undoubtedly have pointed out, the problem of "unemployment" is purely an economic one. Economic problems require economic solutions, yet the solutions which are being applied are essentially "moral" ones; we are back to the reward and punishment syndrome again. It is a pity that the writings of Major Douglas are not more widely known, but there are very definite and unquestionably sinister reasons for this. For those interested in acquainting themselves with the real nature of the problem and the real solutions, a good starting point is "Social Credit" or the somewhat more readable "The Monopoly Of Credit". Both are still in print.

The term North-South suggests polarisation, and that more than anything else is what eleven years of Thatcherism has meant for Britain. If you're doing well, you're doing very well; if you're not, tough. This polarisation has gone to such extremes that even the newly emerging class of street beggars can be sorted readily into the haves and have-nots. A while ago, a current affairs programme screened by Independent Television told the story of 19 year old Carol Wilson. She had been sleeping rough in the capital for some time, regularly made 120 per week and was apparently loving every minute of it.

Some time later I saw a youngish, scruffily dressed man standing outside my favourite Chinese takeaway in the Charing Cross Road trying to tap passers-by for the price of a cup of tea. I'm not usually a soft touch but there was something rather pathetic about this fellow so I gestured him into the shop and gave him fifty pence. He bought himself a tea, proffered me the change, which I think I declined, and then, to my horror, began foraging in the waste bin and devouring the leftovers of

somebody's meal. After that, beef ho fun has never tasted quite the same for me again.

The difference between Carol Wilson and this miserable wretch is that she was a young, quite attractive woman while he was a somewhat older man, unshaven and ugly with it. Not the sort of person you'd invite into your living room. He didn't appear to be mentally disturbed, just a man down on his luck, but the same cannot be said for many of those one finds on the streets of the capital nowadays. These people have literally been flung out onto the streets and left to rot. If it were not for charities and other agencies operating outside the public sector, many of them would not survive. Whether this quality of life is worth preserving is highly debateable. Certainly many ordinary people would consider themselves better off dead than living such a sub-human existence.

This then is the real North-South divide: a socio-economic schism rather than a geographical one. For those at the top of the ladder, life's a ball; for those on the bottom rung, it's workfare or wage slavery. For those below even that it's sleeping in the gutter and a meal of stale beefburger and french fries foraged from a rubbish bin in a city which is still one of the major financial centres of the world.

LONG LIVE CAPITALISM!

ITEMISED TELEPHONE BILLS: A DOUBTFUL BLESSING

A recent announcement that BT are to provide customers with itemised phone bills has caused consternation amongst the voluntary groups who operate the 0800 services. They feel that if records of calls appear on bills, people will be discouraged from using such services as Childline, (what will Daddy say?); the AIDS Helpline, (who else have you been sleeping with?); and crimestoppers, (who have you been grassing up?). As such calls are free, there is no need for them to be billed at all. Employers, and parents of lovesick teenagers may be grateful, the rest of us should be alarmed; but so far hardly a squeak of protest has been forthcoming from the usually vocal civil liberties lobby. The fact that it is now possible, (theoretically at any rate) for British Telecom to record the destination of every call made in the UK should give every half awake citizen nightmares.

If such information is available to BT it is of course, available to the government. Such is the efficiency of the present generation of computers that any call made at any particular time could be matched against every other. By careful screening, calls made to specific numbers - IRA sympathisers, known or suspected drug dealers, trade unionists.....could be detailed and, on the merest suspicion of criminal or "dissident" activity, taps could be authorised.

The stock reply of totalitarian apologists is: so what? If you've done nothing wrong, you've nothing to hide. Only the guilty need privacy, and anything which increases the security of the state and the insecurity of the criminal is not only justifiable but desirable.

The points so often missed are that the most secure place anyone can live in is a prison, and that the most ruthless and dangerous criminal throughout history has been the state. Far better our citizens are plagued by a myriad of ordinary criminals than molly coddled by Big Brother.

More frightening still will be when it is possible not just to itemise, but to tap and tape every phone call made from anywhere in the country around the clock. If that sounds absurdly futuristic, think again: the technology and the means to do it is probably realisable this century; the will to do it has been here for some time.

THE REAL NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE:
UNEMPLOYMENT AND WORKFARE IN THATCHER'S BRITAIN

Recently, the British people celebrated ten glorious years of Thatcherism. Judging by the reception the Prime Minister received on her last visit to the United States, the Americans view this as Britain's new economic miracle. It is true that even after the crash of October '87 and subsequent stock market "shake out", and in spite of the Tories' failure to cap inflation and rising unemployment, that an increasing number of our people never had it so good. But it is also true that the gap between the haves and the have-nots has never been wider, and that a new underclass has come into existence over the last few years. Much has been made of the so-called North/South divide; the rising salaries and house prices in the "affluent" South East, and the supposed desolation of all industry north of Watford Gap. In reality though the truth is not quite so simple. For while there is undoubtedly a higher percentage of wealthy people resident in the South East, and while salaries (and prices) are generally higher, there are also more people sleeping rough in London than in any other ten cities in the country.

But poverty does not begin and end with the homeless. A recent survey indicated that one family in six now lives in some degree of poverty. At the same time, a government minister claimed there is no absolute poverty at all in modern Britain! (John Moore: his statement caused an outcry). Certainly there will soon be no unemployed, not because the two million currently signing on will be miraculously found jobs, but because the government is very cleverly moving the goalposts, first by pressurising, then by coercing, and finally by compelling the long term unemployed into taking up low paid jobs on approved "training schemes."

WHAT IS ET?

ET, and the junior equivalent YTS, (Youth Training Scheme) is a cleverly disguised system of work for benefits. Last year, Independent Television screened a documentary on the American workfare system in which the former government minister Michael Heseltine, (he of Westland fame) was interviewed. Mr Heseltine was very enthusiastic that people who were unable to find full

time work and who had no visible means of support should be required to work for their benefits. It is not known if Mr Heseltine's distaste of unearned income extends to his own portfolio, but he is adamant that able bodied men and women who refuse to work for their benefit should receive none. The chorus was taken up by Norman Fowler, Secretary of State for Employment, although he stressed in the first instance that the scheme would be purely voluntary. Another scheme which began life in the voluntary sector was Restart.

RESTART:FROM VELVET GLOVE TO IRON FIST

Between April and August of 1987, Job Centres contacted over one million unemployed people, and some 840,000 attended Restart interviews. In principle, the idea of Restart is a good one. Certainly most long term unemployed people get themselves into a rut psychologically, and need to motivate themselves. Many also do not know how to effectively look for a job besides visiting their local job centre once a week and taking cards off the notice board. At Restart interviews some of the ways out of unemployment would be suggested by the interviewer/counsellor. These would include the Community Programme, (now scrapped), and the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. The latter, in spite of its high failure rate, has led to many thousands of previously unemployed men and women starting up and running their own successful, thriving businesses. In fact, for those with some capital to invest, (eg redundant workers with sizeable golden handshakes) the government has made available a number of direct and indirect schemes varying from courses in business management to guaranteed loans, and they should certainly be given credit for this. One cannot challenge the sincerity of the Thatcher government's devotion to the enterprise culture. However, for those without a nest egg to dip into, (the majority of the unemployed, and nearly all the long term unemployed), the element of encouragement and nurture has been replaced by one of coercion and compulsion.

In May of last year, formal testing was introduced into the Restart interviews. The invitation to attend is one which, if refused or ignored, can and does lead to the claimant's benefit being stopped. In fact, I met one young black man who was very distressed when his benefit was stopped on this pretext, even though he had actually attended the interview!

The Restart form now consists of no fewer than 22 questions, all of which must be answered. You don't win a

coconut if you get them all correct, but you do run the risk of losing considerably more should you give a wrong answer. Many of the questions are ambiguous, or of the type: Have you let off beating your wife? What for example is a claimant supposed to answer to: What is the minimum wage you will accept? or: How far are you prepared to travel to work? The form has to be seen to be believed; it is not so much a questionnaire as an inquisition.

Clearly the emphasis of Restart has shifted from assisting the unemployed to find work to "greater testing of the claimant's availability for work." to quote verbatim. There is talk now of claimants being required to give written evidence that they are actively seeking work everytime they sign on.

THE NEW POOR LAW

According to Hugh Lansdowne of the Woolwich based unemployment centre GAGOU, (Greenwich Action Group On Unemployment), the eventual aims of the new system are to a) privatise the entire benefits and "retraining" systems, and b) to create a new underclass, a servant class. I raised my eyebrows at this suggestion, but he showed not the ghost of a smile. Indeed, it was made with such conviction that I found it impossible to dismiss the idea as empty Marxist rhetoric. It was the Second World War, says Hugh that liberated the underclass in this country. Before the war, and certainly before the First World War, everybody who was anybody had to have at least one servant. Servants, he says couldn't afford to raise families, and were dependent on their master/employer. He mentions the new trend of promoting in-work benefits such as family credit, and says that under the new, proposed legislation an employer would be able to offer an applicant a job on any wage, even five pounds per week, and the applicant would be obliged to accept or have his benefit cut off. His take home pay would then be made up to subsistence levels by income support and family credit.

JOB CLUBS

I asked Hugh about job clubs; weren't they an alternative to ET? Over the past couple of years the government has run a number of advertisements in the press and on TV promoting job clubs. The idea of the job club was/is, apparently, to find each member the best job in the shortest possible time. The clubs provide use of newspapers, telephones, stamps, advice.... According to Hugh, members of the Woolwich Job Club had to make ten job applications a day! If nothing else, this brings a subtle irony to one of the catchphrases used in the advertising campaign".....finding a job is a job in itself."

THE MYTH OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Returning to ET, its immediate predecessor was CP. This is not corporal punishment, but Community Programme. CP was run by the Manpower Services Commission, (now abolished and replaced by a new Training Commission). Though often criticised, the Community Programme had its good points. CP consisted of full time and part time jobs, many of them with some training and offering proper work experience. Jobs varied from landscape gardening and nursery work to insulating old peoples' homes and sports coaching. There were also some financial incentives. Most part time workers were more than fifteen pounds per week better off than on the dole. Men who worked full time were £28.87 net in pocket, and women £26.62 on CP on average.

ET has no such financial incentives, and nothing at the end to show for it. It is in fact a strictly work for benefits scheme. Participants are paid their benefit plus a "premium" of ten to twelve pounds per week. Out of this, "trainees" have to meet their costs of working: eating out for example, and the first five pounds of their travel expenses.

RESPONSE TO ET

Several blue chip companies have taken up the ET scheme, including construction giant Taylor Woodrow and the supermarket chain Sainsbury. No doubt the latter's enthusiasm for the scheme has waned considerably since a number of London stores were picketed by the South East London Anti-Workfare Movement. Hugh again: Sainsbury's give their staff two days on the job training: so much for work experience. So in theory, and practice, one can find two men working side by side, one taking home a hundred and twenty pounds a week, and the other doing exactly the same job for his dole money. Obviously an unscrupulous or greedy employer would think nothing of sacking the first man on some pretext and taking on another ET "trainee" in his place.

Incredibly the TUC, (Trades Union Congress) gave ET the green light. Perhaps they have become so emasculated by anti-trade union legislation that they could do nothing but tamely acquiesce. Or perhaps they didn't appreciate where it would lead. At any rate, an increasing number of individual trade unionists and unions have been waking up to the reality of ET. In August of last year, three of the country's biggest unions: the TGWU, NALGO and NUPE went so far as to sponsor a booklet: "Square Pegs In Round Holes" which roundly condemns the scheme and calls for proper training and adequate rates of pay.

The slogan of ET is "Let's train the workers without jobs to do the jobs without workers." In some areas, graffiti artists have altered campaign posters to read ".....the jobs without wages," and other witty but depressingly true captions. The extent to which ET has been both actively boycotted and simply avoided can be gleaned from the following figures: NACRO - the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has so far managed to recruit less than 2,000 out of the 20,000 required, in spite of the management's removal of all those staff who oppose the scheme. In provincial Norwich not one unemployed person was recruited on to it. The latter is remarkable since many less aware unemployed people are being left with the impression at Restart interviews that if all else fails, ET is compulsory. Well, it isn't, yet! And if the Anti-Workfare Movement and other organisations keep up the pressure, it won't become so.

MOVING THE GOALPOSTS

The government is committed not just to pushing workfare, (let's call a spade a spade), to reduce the unemployment statistics, but also appears to be engaging in a certain amount of stochastic gymnastics in order to manipulate the unemployment figures downwards. Since 1982 the method of counting the unemployed has changed no fewer than 28 times! When they claim unemployment is now below the two million mark they are excluding the remaining CP workers (88,000), those on the Enterprise Scheme (93,000), the 106,000 who have already been inducted on to ET and the 428,000 on the (compulsory) Youth Training Scheme: no training = no benefit. These figures are by no means inclusive. And the government is not only continuing to juggle with the figures, but is stepping up its propaganda campaigns, both against the long term unemployed and for ET.

LABOUR CAMPS

If anyone thinks labour camps are an alien phenomenon they had best think again. For as well as under the Nazis and the Gulag Archipelago, they were also found in Britain in the nineteen thirties. These camps did not have barbed wire and armed guards, but the element of compulsion was still there: no work = no dole. Where have we heard that before? Norman Fowler perhaps? The British labour camps have been highlighted by a recently published book: Labour Camps: The British Experience, and by a dramatization: Brandon: The Spirit Of Resistance, which is currently on a tour sponsored by the trade union NALGO. The play is performed by Sheffield Popular Theatre Company and is based on the experiences of unemployed men in the 30's, (some 120,000 of them) who were sent to labour camps to "harden them up." These camps were set up to train as one minister put it "a certain class of men" who had been softened by being on the dole too long. They were located in rural areas. The men who attended were given four shillings a week pocket money and were set to work on a variety of tasks such as forestry and carpentry, which, like ET involved no real training and nothing to show at the end of it, no qualification and no recognised work experience. Part of the "training" included digging and refilling holes and other equally soul-destroying exercises.

I attended the performance of Brandon at Riverdale Hall, Lewisham on May 12th. Sadly it was not well supported. Within the limitations of this kind of theatre it was both well acted and thought provoking. The government haven't got around to building a new generation of labour camps, not yet, but one wonders when they will start. One might also ask what are the alternatives to ET and finding jobs/training for the unemployed, especially the long term unemployed. Unemployed centres have been in the forefront of the anti-workfare movement and in the resistance to the harassment of unemployed people, but it is one thing to attack a system; it is quite another to replace it with something better.

ALTERNATIVES TO ET

According to retired accountant Stan Goddard,, the problem is not that of finding work nor even of training, but of redistributing incomes. Stan, who has just had his first book published: *The Myth Of Unemployment*, explained the principle of Social Credit to me over coffee and bagles at his North London apartment. "Actually it's not so much a book as a grubby little pamphlet," he says, because I couldn't get proper distribution.

According to Stan, the purpose of employment is not to enable people to earn a living, but to distribute the goods and services demanded by the community. "What we call unemployment is really only superefficiency. With modern technology there are too many workers chasing too few jobs. If a machine can replace ten men or even a hundred men, then it makes sense to employ the machine instead. The other nine or ninety-nine who have been made redundant do not need to be found work, but what they do need to be found is spending power.

"What the government should do is not create unnecessary or even useless jobs, but create the credit, ie the spending power to enable these men to purchase the products they are eager to consume." How is the government to do this? I ask.

"By the simple expedient of writing figures in a book," he says. "Provided it is done scientifically it need not lead to inflation; the banks do it all the time and charge us interest for the privilege of borrowing what is in effect our own money." At this point he loses me by going on to discuss the A+B theorem, but I understand the gist of it.

According to Stan, if the government were to create its own credit and distribute it to the public direct instead of borrowing it from the banking system by the process of selling

securities, there would be no National Debt, and no unemployment because the resulting increase in purchasing power would mean we could all live comfortably by working a three or even a two day week!"

I eye him suspiciously at this point, but he backs up his claim with concrete documentation. As long ago as 1931, the Economic Research Council concluded that the government should create all its own credit for public works and that this would have saved over thirty thousand million pounds since the War. "The problem," says Stan, "is an international one. The only place where the state does create its own credit is the Island of Guernsey. Every other country in the world borrows money at interest when it could create its own credit as a sovereign right.

"Then why don't they?" I ask.

"Why doesn't the government ban smoking? That kills a hundred thousand people every year."

I shake my head.

"Because it's a racket," he says, "the whole system is a racket."

ABOLISHING THE POVERTY TRAP

GAGOU and other unemployed centres don't go as far as Stan, but they do, interestingly, advocate the abolition of the means tested benefit system, and its replacement by a basic income. Amazingly this idea is also mooted in part by Milton Friedman, Mrs Thatcher's monetarist guru. Friedman inclines more to a negative income tax, but Hugh Lansdowne says that the basic income would solve all the problems. - This is much like Stan's Social Credit, the main difference being that this would not be a credit created by the government, but one financed out of taxation. The problem most unskilled people have is that they can earn only a low wage, so if their take home pay is say seventy pounds per week, they might be no worse off or even better off by staying at home drawing the dole. But if they had a guaranteed non-means tested income of say forty pounds per week, anything they earned on top of that, by working part time perhaps, would not be clawed back by the DHSS. This would give them a real incentive to work. If on top of this one applies Professor Friedman's negative income tax, it will be seen that the poor and those on very low pay will drop out of tax altogether and at the same time, the "culture of dependency" will have been eroded.. As Stan says: "What is needed is to destroy the poverty trap without removing the safety net."

Whether or not one inclines to either of these solutions, it is obvious that something is radically wrong with the present system. Certainly the idea of creating jobs for the sake of it is a pointless exercise. Here one is reminded of those men at Brandon digging and refilling the same holes over and over again. Paying the unemployed to do nothing may be abhorrent to the Thatcherites with their "No such thing as a free lunch" philosophy, but for the unemployed, workfare is a medicine which, if it cures the disease, damn near kills the patient as well.

The Myth Of Unemployment: Stan L Goddard one pound from A Distribution, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

Labour Camps: The British Experience: Dave Colledge four pounds ninety-five available from NALGO.

Square Pegs In Round Holes: Employment Training - Quality or Workfare? by the Unemployment Unit, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

WHAT ARE UNEMPLOYED CENTRES?

Although unemployed centres like GAGOU have only really come into their own over the past few years, they have been around in one form or another since the late sixties. They started as claimants' unions: pressure groups run by and for unemployed people, most of them without a grant.. Now, many of the centres are grant aided - by local authorities, trusts, or a mixture. Most are still run on a shoe string. Slightly different from claimants' unions are TUC centres. These are not so much representatives of the unemployed as an extension of the union bureaucracy.

GAGOU is a typical centre, as far as any centre is typical. It is situated in the Macbean Centre, a few hundred yards from the south bank of the Thames. The Woolwich centre has a drop-in facility which, says Hugh Lansdowne, has a nucleus of forty to fifty regulars. He stresses though that this is a very marginal function of GAGOU. The centre, which opens five days a week, has a disabled group, various minority groups, women's group, and even a graffiti arts group. They have a photocopier and stock a wide selection of advice, information and anti-workfare leaflets.

GAGOU came together in its present form about 1979. Since 1984 it has been grant aided, and now has two full time workers plus an administrator. Although it caters for a wider selection of groups, it is principally concerned with advising and assisting unemployed people. It also does outreach work and is affiliated to the South East Federation of Unwaged Groups, the secretariat of which is the Tottenham Claimants' Union.

HEATH'S ATTACKS ON THATCHER: THE REAL MOTIVE?

With the Labour Party in schism: half drifting further to the left; the other half pledging to run capitalism better than the Tories, exPM Edward Heath is rapidly shaping up for the post of Leader of the Opposition. His increasingly vitriolic attacks on Mrs Thatcher are fast becoming a nagging thorn in the side of the Tory mainstream; his latest, on the theme of National Sovereignty is by far the most outspoken. But those who are inclined to put it all down to sour grapes and disillusionment have seen but one face of the coin. Undoubtedly Mr Heath does dislike Mrs Thatcher, probably he even despises her, but his mocking of her stance against European unity should not be interpreted as disloyalty either to her or to the Tory party, but as a declaration of loyalty to an obscure, and somewhat more cosmopolitan organisation.

MONOPOLY

Ever since she ascended the throne, (figuratively speaking), Margaret Thatcher and her government have been breaking up state monopolies and privatising everything in sight. Leftists have interpreted this as a rather unsubtle attempt to asset strip nationalised industries and give them off for the benefit of the rich. Stuff the working class! In fact this is simply not true. The Thatcherites really do believe privatisation benefits both the industries and the consumers, to them, state ownership is anathema, so is monopoly. Far from intentionally lining the nests of their traditional allies and supporters, they have pursued the causes of privatisation and de-monopolisation with unrestrained vigour, and with total indifference to whom they upset; if it's a monopoly, it must go. They have already angered solicitors by opening up conveyancing; barristers by proposing to open up the bar to solicitors; and the brewers by ordering them to sell off many of their pubs. All these groups are traditional Tory voters. And they are adopting the same no-nonsense attitude to the biggest monopoly of all: the Common Market.

UNITED EUROPE

To the Thatcherites, the main appeal of a united Europe is that it will give them the opportunity to practise their own brand of laissez-faire on a very much larger scale, in particular, totally free trade. For, with increased trade comes prosperity, (in theory at any rate). There are of course, many other attractions: a reduction in red tape and better co-operation between law enforcement and drug control agencies to name but two. This is what the Thatcherites want. However, there are those whose view of a united Europe extends much further.

CONSPIRACY

When Mr Heath voices his opinion that the concept of National Sovereignty is outdated all he is doing is repeating publicly the private utterings of the self-appointed internationalist elite.

In May of 1954 a group of bankers, industrialists and internationally minded politicians met at the Hotel Bilderberg, Oosterbeek, Holland. Since then, Bilderberg meetings, as they have become known, have been held annually. Over the years, a mere handful of press releases have been issued concerning the purpose of these meetings. The media, our self-appointed guardians of democracy, have had little or nothing to say about them, and this has led to a vast array of literature aimed at conspiracy buffs who view the supposed machinations of this group as a plot to run the world from behind the scenes.

In 1973 the Bilderberg Group was augmented by the Trilateral Commission; the Commission, which has an overlapping membership with the Bilderbergers, maintains a somewhat higher public profile and even publishes a journal: *Dialogue*, which was, (and as far as I know still is) available to the public on subscription. Apart from this, the Commission differs from the Bilderberg Group in that whereas the latter is bilateral, ie is made up of Americans and Europeans, the Trilateralists include Japanese politicians, industrialists and intellectuals. Needless to say, Mr Heath is a long standing Trilateralist. Those who attend Bilderberg and Trilateral meetings do so as private individuals. The Commission's declared intentions are to seek ".....to promote among Japanese, West Europeans and North

Americans the habit of working together on problems of mutual concern, to seek to obtain a shared understanding of these complex problems....."

This all sounds very grand and moral, but what does it really mean? In the United States where, largely due to the efforts of the "right wing" Liberty Lobby, the Trilateral Commission and the Bilderberg Group are discussed openly, they have acquired the reputation of being the shadow government of the West. That the Commission has tried to pick the presidential candidates in both parties is a matter of historical record.

EUROPE

For Europeans, the machinations of the Trilateralists and other semi-secret groups have led to the setting up of a power structure which is designed, not so much to promote prosperity by free trade, but to impose upon them a vast and largely unaccountable bureaucracy of a corporate socialist nature which will run the "free market" as a cartel in the interests of power, profits and greed.

OUTDATED SOVEREIGNTY

What Mr Heath really means when he says the concept of our (and everyone else's sovereignty) is outdated is that we should surrender it to the puppets of the power brokers in Brussels. The result of this will be that faceless bureaucrats thousands of miles away will make decisions which affect our lives, and there will be nothing we can do about it. So, if in the interests of trade, improved efficiency or whatever pretext they decide they want a road built through the green belt in Kent, to place a quota on sheep in Wales or levy an extra tax on certain goods, we will have no choice but to shrug our shoulders and timidly acquiesce.

Mr Heath's obvious annoyance at Mrs Thatcher is not based on envy or personal dislike so much as on her refusal to toe the line with the supercapitalists and her refusal to barter away our national sovereignty and self-determination for some wishy-washy

notion of European unity.

DICTATORSHIP

Those who look on the Thatcher government as a virtual dictatorship can at least take some comfort from the fact that there is still a degree of accountability in our imperfect democracy. In spite of her stated preference for the rope, the Prime Minister has been powerless to bring back capital punishment. The government does not invariably get its own way, either in the Upper House or in the Commons, and MP's of all parties are receptive to lobbying and pressure at the grass roots level. If the Tories have done their best to strangle local government, the correct course of action is for the people to campaign to reinstate it, not to take away the power from our masters at Westminster and hand it over to an even more remote entity over whom we have no control at all.

Britain has nothing to gain from surrendering any part of her National Sovereignty. If Mr Heath truly believes otherwise he need only look at Southern Africa, Central America, Korea, Afghanistan or a dozen other places. People there are prepared to die for it. Mrs Thatcher is prepared to fight for ours, and we should be too, even if, like Mr Heath, we would rather see someone else move into Number 10.

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN

Recent events in Eastern Europe, the spontaneous, bloodless revolution and subsequent liberation of Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany from communist repression is awe-inspiring, even more so when one realises that none of this would have happened but for one man. While Mikhail Gorbachev is unquestionably the greatest thing since sliced bread, and the changes he has brought about are to be welcomed, there is a cloud to this silver lining. On November 10th, LBC Radio (London) interviewed two gentlemen from the City of London who were at that very moment en route to Poland to help the fledgeling democracy set up a stock exchange. The infiltration of the "loony left" into our town halls was bad enough, but is the invasion of the Kremlin by the Thatcherites likely to be any better?

Before the comrades burn their last copies of Das Kapital and tear up their Communist Manifestos they would be well advised to take an unblinkered look at our great capitalist democracy. Some of them might consider a tenth of the workforce idle, vast numbers on slave labour YTS and "employment training" schemes, industrial unrest, AIDS, crack, rising crime and people sleeping in cardboard boxes on the South Bank too high a price to pay for the right to vote in free and fair elections.

Capitalism has its success stories, but the increased polarisation of the haves and the have-nots in our society is the other side of the coin. The peoples of the Eastern Bloc have seen the errors of their ways; let us hope they learn from rather than repeat our mistakes.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.....TO LIBEL WITH IMPUNITY

Although I've only been freelancing for about a year I've never had any illusions about the press, especially the British press. Recently though the full extent of the mendacity of the Fourth Estate was brought home to me by a personal experience.

Before Christmas I secured an interview with a well known sportsman, and developed two articles from it. The person in question is known in fashion circles and has acquired a reputation both as a ladies' man and as a bit of a playboy. This image is totally false, something which came across emphatically in the interview.

When the fashion article failed to appear I queried my editor, who said that a similar article had appeared the previous week in a Sunday supplement. Obviously he hadn't read the article in question, because when I checked with the sportsman's management I was informed that a "journalist" from ----- had interviewed him the previous week, ostensibly about his career, and had then proceeded to write an entirely fictitious account of "how he bunks to keep fit." The following week he informed me in person that he intended to sue the magazine in question.

To many people such a story may seem humourous, but it has a serious side to it and raises fundamental questions about freedom of the press, more particularly the persistent abuse of this freedom. True, it's not always the press who are disingenuous; rank dishonesty is something which cuts both ways. The very first article I ever wrote for this same newspaper brought threats of a libel action when the two model agents I had interviewed both decided they hadn't said things they had, they didn't want to be quoted and a host of other things. They were both liars and one was a particularly unpleasant individual, so I didn't lose any sleep when the article had to be withdrawn. Some time later I was threatened with legal action by a man who claimed I had libelled him, his leader and his organisation. The person in question holds a spurious doctorate, calls himself "Reverend" and believes flying saucers come from the planet Venus. Recognising his sabre rattling for what it was, I went ahead and published.

As well as publicity seekers, liars and just plain idiots there are many other obstacles which can distort or even totally misrepresent someone's words or actions. I have found many printers' errors in my own articles. I have even written things which with hindsight I would have phrased differently or omitted altogether. With news reporting there is the added problem of producing fast, accurate copy. This can be a near impossible task for someone working under pressure to a deadline literally minutes away.

But feature writing is different. To sit down with someone

for half an hour or more, perhaps with a tape recorder, and to then produce a completely fictitious article is totally inexcusable. Just how prevalent this sort of thing is would be difficult if not impossible to ascertain, but some of the reactions I have experienced from different quarters lead me to believe it is all but universal.

On approaching one editor with an interview of a well known ecologist I was told to print what he said, but if he didn't say it, not to make it up. The editor of a financial monthly told me the only paper he has any time for is The Sport simply because it is generally accepted that this paper makes no pretence at being either truthful or objective. Many people I have approached to interview have been extremely wary or demanded to see the finished article before it goes to press.

Sportsmen and other people in the public eye are not the only ones to be abused by the media; there are far more serious and disturbing cases on both national and international level. One wonders how many wars have been started or unnecessarily prolonged; how many riots have been incited, how many murders perpetrated, and how much unnecessary bitterness and hatred sown between the peoples of the world just because somebody somewhere thought misquoting a bellicose politician would make good copy.

My sportsman friend may well sue the magazine which libelled him. If he does, I have no doubt that he will win his case. Most people though are unable to seek redress through litigation because of the enormous costs involved in bringing a libel action. What then is the alternative, to complain to the Press Council? This is little more than a sick joke; the Press Council has no meaningful powers.

Personally I would never sue anyone or any organisation for libel, slander or defamation, no matter how blatant, but I do believe that anyone who feels he or she has been wilfully misrepresented by the media should have an automatic right of reply. A man standing trial for a most heinous crime on the most damning evidence is entitled to have his case heard without prejudice. Should ordinary people receive less justice than an accused murderer?

There is also the question of policing the media. Neither the press nor broadcast media ever has any qualms about attacking anything they perceive as an injustice, from alleged police brutality to apartheid to Tiananmen Square, and often rightly so. Yet when it comes to their own excesses, they are strangely silent.

We are ruled by politicians, but there are others who exert enormous influence over our lives, none more so than the Fourth Estate. Politicians have power, but they also have responsibility. The media, particularly the press, has the former without the latter. Any attempts to contain or curtail their power brings forth cries of outrage and accusations of censorship and totalitarianism, but the central issue is always

avoided. If the press want power, they must exercise it responsibly. If a policeman behaves improperly towards a member of the public, he can be disciplined, even to the extent of prosecution or dismissal. In practice this does happen: policemen are disciplined, sacked, even gaoled for abusing their power.

In a truly free society there is no reason for the press to be any less accountable than the police. Power without responsibility is not freedom; it is tyranny.

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