

Waiting for Chilcot

a response to

BROKEN VOWS

TONY BLAIR

THE TRAGEDY OF POWER

BY

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Cliff Jones 7th May 2016

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Preface

In 1971 I became part of a now defunct movement promoting political education, also known as political literacyⁱ. I felt it was important that young people not only acquired knowledge of how government worked but also that they learned to practise politics: the inclusive discussion of and consensual arrival at public values. In 1979 Margaret Thatcher began to drastically reduce inclusion and consent and replace democracy with absolutism. The election in 1997 of a Labour government led by Tony Blair did not reverse this. The politician who told us he had no reverse gear increased the speed at which ordinary people were to be excluded from the political process and instead of the people holding governments to account the people were to be held to account by a target setting government devising more and more means of measuring their performance. To make things worse both the targets and the means of measurement had a tendency to change just as people became used to them.

Had that been all it would have been enough for me to want to see the back of Blair, his 'ism' and his 'ites'. It was not, unfortunately, all. In our name, the name of the voters, deadly lies have been told, millions died and displaced, babies born deformed and truth distorted. And, lest we forget, millions made. My purpose in writing here is to contribute to a short-term effort to bring Blair to justice but also to a more long-term effort to make politics more inclusive and consensual and governments more accountable. As is often the case I also write to make sense of things for myself in hopes that it might help others who may agree, disagree or dispute what I have written. Many of my examples are from the world of education because that has been where I have spent most of my professional life. I hope that does not deter too many potential readers. [[Back](#)]

Introduction

Reading the early reviews of this book I felt that they were pleas in mitigation made by defence counsel for Tony Blair. Some of them were composed by members of what has become known as the 'commentariat': journalists who not only report but also comment upon what they see through their magnifying glasses as they examine the Westminster bubble, from the inside. There are criticisms to be made of Bower's book but I hope to make mine from wider and more positive perspectives while pointing out where I hold a different view.

Please note that I make use of the word 'response' rather than 'review'. It may explain the length and self-indulgence of what I have written and why I have made it possible to click on what you fancy and ignore what you don't. Some parts are long and some are short. I make no claims for word count consistency.

The issues that Bower lays before us are so very serious that it is not appropriate to treat what he has written as though he had presented an essay for marking. His book requires that, instead, we engage with it using our knowledge and understanding (possibly also our ignorance and misunderstanding) in order to make critical sense of and a judgment upon the impact of Tony Blair. My contribution to that engagement is this attempt to write something that can be used, dipped into, selected from and disputedⁱⁱ as we prepare ourselves for what is likely to be a storm of comment after the publication of the Chilcot Report.

I make no claim for what follows to be exhaustive. Blair is not just voluble in himself but the cause of volubility in others and too many shelves groan under the weight of publications on him, his 'ism' and his 'ites'.

In anticipation of the responses to the Report by Blair and former members of his court I have in the past referred to what I call OPERATION SPIN CHILCOT. Under the Maxwellisation rulesⁱⁱⁱ those that have been criticised in the forthcoming Report already know what to expect and we must assume that for some time now their actions and speeches have reflected this knowledge. The spin is in. [\[Back\]](#)

The nature of discussion, varnish stripping and a damp Chilcot squib

Under New Labour carefully constructed narratives were employed to gain our acceptance of Blair's often-changing visions of the future^{iv}. They used to dominate discussion of Blair, Blairism and Blairites. Not only was discussion of the Labour Party carried out within those narratives but for a long time our view of the entire political landscape has been influenced by them. Tom Bower, however, gives us a means to escape such received narratives and, on the basis of solid knowledge and well-constructed questions, formulate for ourselves a reliable and credible understanding of what Blair continues to signify.

I do not believe the invasion of Iraq in 2003 to have been an isolated mistake that can be counterbalanced by all the good Blair is supposed to have done in, for example, health, education and social policy in general. For me he not only harmed those examples I mention but he also diminished political discourse, damaged democracy and rationalised greed. Yes there were domestic positives but I suggest Blair should not be given the credit^v. The good done by his administrations lacked coherence and consistency and the contrast with the social fracking^{vi} of our current government does not justify any great claims for New Labour to have constructed a society in which wealth was distributed more fairly and privilege curtailed^{vii}. Iraq 2003 was simply typical Blair taken to a murderous extreme. Despite his towering self-regard he was actually incompetent at the business of government. This book reduces him to the playground show-off surrounded by eager sycophants,

bemused servitors and, too often silent or silenced, dissidents. I did, however, hold that view before opening the book and you are entitled to ask if my regard for it has been coloured by the extent to which it has confirmed my judgment.

I am glad that I bought Tom Bower's book and I recommend it. In the run up to (we must hope) the publication of the Chilcot Report it contributes to the stripping away of layer upon layer of varnish covering the flaws, faultlines and falseness of Blair the Leader of the Labour Party, Blair the Prime Minister and now Blair the global commercial traveller selling expensive snake oil not only to dictators and global corporations but also to charitable and well-intentioned governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Bower is by no means the first to have engaged in varnish stripping. A prominent varnish remover was the former Labour MP Bob Marshall-Andrews whose early opinion of Blair was made clear in his book ***Off Message (2012)***^{viii}. Others include academics such as Anthony King, Ivor Crewe and Archie Brown^{ix} and the journalist Peter Osborne^x. ***BLAIR INC (2014)*** by Beckett, Hencke and Kochan^{xi} is, furthermore, an unputdownable critique of Blair's activities after his official leaving of office. To read ***Broken Vows*** after the work of Beckett et al is to gain a sense of how an irresistible force is at last beginning to overcome a once immovable object. The pressure is building.

Tony Blair, meanwhile, is never out of the headlines as he dispenses his wisdom on a myriad of subjects in, we can assume, an attempt to convince himself that he retains an eager audience.

Chilcot may turn out to have been history's most expensive damp squib: a firework rocket that fizzed for a while but never left the empty milk bottle from which it was intended to be launched. It is, nevertheless, very necessary that before the emergence of Sir John's report we should be prepared for how the media, government and those that have sailed, and continue to sail, in Blair's ship might respond to the report. Bower's book helps because my guess is that decisions about charging Blair are likely to be influenced not merely by the bare facts but also by the conceptual frameworks we use to discuss what we believe should be acceptable behaviour by politicians with power. Those that are well practised in the art of spinning must not provide the sole framework and dominate that discussion in order to, as they have done so many times before, manipulate public values. Too often the New Labour frameworks through which we were required to make sense of our world were composed of bland and ill-defined concepts such as 'modernisation', 'progress' and 'aspiration'. They were not concepts we were encouraged to explore inclusively in order to arrive at a consensual meaning for them. Even in their most amorphous form we were expected to accept these concepts and concentrate our efforts on implementing the often contradictory and confusing policies that emerged from them.

We should also beware those whose default response to criticism of Blair is to aim at 'balance'. There are times when 'On the one hand X but on the other hand Y' becomes a contrivance to distract us from confronting the real issues.

The work done by Bower and others provides us with a means of making discussion serious and, a Blairism coined by a Blairite, staying on message.

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The purpose of Bower's book

Bower's personal need to make critical sense of Blair is threaded through the book. Words such as 'broken vows' and 'tragedy' convey a sense of unexpected disappointment because, like so many, Bower hoped for better from Blair. There will be readers that constructed a negative judgment upon Blair very early on. For them what Bower found as he researched his subject is likely to be interesting, even fascinating, but of little surprise. Other readers might, perhaps, be forced by the nature, strength and significance of the evidence Bower presents to us to confront for the first time the extent of the harm done by Blair not only to the British body politic but also globally.

If I am right about Bower's purpose then he certainly achieved it and revealed a man of power whose urge to intervene over rode the need to think, consult, listen and, when presented with discomfiting facts, give way to the evidence. When it came to policy making and its implementation Blair was not in favour of slow cooking. He always wished to microwave. Unfortunately, he was never one for keeping an eye on things and, having shoved a raw policy into the microwave without thinking about what timing to set, he would be off to intervene in another part of the kitchen (often someone else's kitchen). Later would come puzzlement when his raw policy was not cooked all the way through or, as also happened, it had not only been overcooked but had gone cold. Commis and sous-chefs would, meanwhile, scratch their heads as they tried to work out what was expected of them. [\[Back\]](#)

The nature of Bower's evidence, citation, structure and sources

The foundations of the book are the extensive interviews (more than one hundred and eighty, some followed up) undertaken by Bower with civil servants and others who helped to formulate, interpret, respond to, implement and at times change what were often confused and sometimes contradictory policy directives emanating from Blair. He was also able to draw upon written testimony given to various inquiries and refer to so much that has been written about Blair and New Labour including Blair's own book, ***A Journey (2010)***^{xii}.

I mention citation because I felt that, despite an extensive index, a good bibliography and very many numbered notes and sources, I would have benefited from being able to see corresponding numbers in the text. I would also have preferred a different structure for the chapters so that I was less surprised when particular topics re-occurred.

Bower explains that a few of his sources did not wish to be identified. This is often a feature of the work of both academics and journalists. I can accept Bower's use of what unidentified people said to him. The question to ask

authors such as Bower is, 'Can we trust how you report what unidentified sources have said to you?' I think we can and I recoil from the extreme opposite approach currently displayed by academics suffering from MCD (Mad Citation Disease), which is to load more references onto a sentence than it can carry. [\[Back\]](#)

The strength of Bower's evidence

How strong is the evidence Bower presents to his readers? Although they are often taken together strength is not the same as weight. We are told that the Chilcot Report will weigh in at over two million words (latest estimate 2.6 million). From what we know of the gentleness of questioning during the inquiry I suggest that Bower's few thousand words on the same subject are likely to be much stronger^{xiii}.

If, for example, we were to gather all the Green (there were fewer of them because they are intended to stimulate discussion) and White Papers on education produced by New Labour, place on top of them all the Bills and Acts plus the masses of material generated by the bewildering number of initiatives and working parties the weight would be considerable but what would all that demonstrate in terms of strength of evidence? It would, I suggest, be strong evidence of a government that mistook activity for progress.

The strength of Bower's evidence derives from the seriousness of his conversations with people who were in a position to closely observe, participate in, make sense of and respond to Blair's approach to government. When such witnesses provide evidence I believe it is reasonable to judge it to be strong and I see no sign that he had to twist arms in order to get people to speak. [\[Back\]](#)

The significance of Bower's evidence

I want to go back to strength and weight for a while. If you ask ten people would they like to have their workload halved and their wages doubled it might not surprise you if they responded with 'yes' to both those questions. Ask one hundred, one thousand, one million people the same two questions and what they have to say might not depart too often or too far from that said by the ten. In other words, it is not just the strength and certainly not the weight but rather the significance of responses about which we should be thinking. When the unexpected happens we should take note. Repetition of the expected can increase both strength and weight but it might tell us less than the unexpected. So often we choose strength and weight over significance. When someone tells us that they would like their workload to be doubled and their wages halved our interest should be awakened. What might it signify?

For me it is highly significant that civil servants and others working within our established form of government who for generations had kept their public service oath of omerta were so willing to speak very critically to Bower about Blair and New Labour. While it is not unknown for such people to reminisce

and self justify it is unusual for them to speak out so forthrightly. Quite possibly the civil servants and related professionals who had been able to swallow Margaret Thatcher's suspicion of and impatience with them found being contemptuously brushed to one side and managed by Blair Bouncers such as Jonathon Powell and Alastair Campbell^{xiv} too much to suffer in silence. Furthermore, I believe that their promptings when talking to Bower were also derived from uneasiness, even outrage, at the poor quality of decision-making by Blair administrations and their consequent willingness to openly attribute blame to the Great Leader himself. Generations of public servants mostly maintained omerta until they had to work under Tony Blair.

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Use and misuse of concepts and terminology

Politicians have scarcely ever been able resist the temptation to capture language and to use it to their advantage. Losing a battle is not necessarily a calamity if you are the first to get to the microphone or the presses to announce that you won it. This can mean twisting certain meanings so far that the world forgets that once upon a time these concepts and terms meant something quite different. Ignorance compounds this to the extent that when a politician insists, for example, upon everyone performing above average they do not realise how, to use a technical educational term, thick they are being^{xv}. Their own misuse of language and mathematics does not, however, prevent them accusing children of being illiterate and innumerate because they cannot 'pass' a test imposed upon them by said politicians, let alone all be simultaneously above average.

Tony Blair lived in a world of linguistic fantasy and worked hard to draw us into that world. Below I attempt to address at least some of this though I must admit he is not the only guilty party. Neither is this a complete list. It might, I hope, help us engage with what Tom Bower's book presents to us. They are, however, very much my personal views, especially on education.

1. Left, Right and Centre

The terms left wing and right wing derive from the beginning of the French Revolution when to sit on the right in the Assembly indicated a preference for absolute and exclusive government in the form of the king and to sit on the left indicated a preference for inclusive and consensual government no matter that it was ill defined: autocracy on the right and democracy on the left^{xvi}.

We have a tendency to ascribe a high value to centrism as though the centre is somehow a comfortable place that when occupied by politicians pleases most of the people most of the time and provides us with a relatively quiet life. Party members and supporters urge their leaders to capture the 'centre ground' because that is where they believe most votes are to be found. What and where is the 'centre ground'? Is it in the centre?

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher began to dismantle what had come to be known as the 'post war political consensus'^{xvii} and that centre ground moved rightwards towards a more absolutist form of government. This gave the impression that those continuing to advocate a more inclusive style of government and politics were extremists. Simon Jenkins sees Blair as a follower of Thatcher^{xviii}. He was unlikely to slide the 'centre' of the political spectrum back towards the left. We were wrong if we imagined politics to be a natural process in which when we swung a bit further than normal in one direction there would be a consequent re-balancing swing back in the other direction. 1979 was a crucial turning point. After Thatcher we did not swing back. Can we? Is absolutism now a governmental norm? Have we been conditioned to accept this?

What confuses our use of the terms 'left', 'right' and 'centre' is that we understandably associate them closely with the distribution of wealth, public service and private greed. It is true that Tony Blair was (still is) happy in the company of some very rich people and that his vision of public services was mostly as commodities to be sold on the market but, for me, what confirms him as right wing is that he saw government not as something to be done *with* the people but as something to be done *to* them. That included people in other lands who did not invite him to interfere in their lives.

Reading Bower's book I had to keep reminding myself that terms such as 'hard left' and 'far right' can be sprayed around as unthinking insults or instant labels so that someone like Jeremy Corbyn, whose ideas are far less revolutionary than those of most of Attlee's cabinet, is caricatured as a dangerous threat to democracy and whose abandonment of Blair's centre ground will lose elections. Gaining power is important but it is not the only thing that matters. I suggest that perhaps we might be wise to stop to think before applying labels such as left wing and right wing. It is not simply his commodification of public service and toleration, even encouragement, of greed and privilege that earns Blair the title of right-winger but his absolutist approach to government and politics. And, as Bower reveals, that absolutism did not mean competence.

2. The labels of Success, Failure, Improvement and Effectiveness

What is a successful hospital or school? What do their failing versions look like? What can you do to show that you have improved? How do you demonstrate effectiveness^{xix}? To demonstrate success has more and more become a game of finding the evidence to fit an official template: a template almost always constructed without professional participation: a received template: often, under Blair, a rapidly changing template.

I am uneasy when some people appear to accept too readily the application of these labels. What I think is happening is that because official definitions of success and failure change so do our notions of improvement and effectiveness. Professionals working in public service respond to the ever-changing imperatives of government by trying to find

acceptable evidence. This can create the impression of success (for a while). It also creates a basis for accusations of cheating and failing (gaming the system) when to be nasty serves the interests of politicians taking over from previous office holders^{xx}.

International league tables and comparisons are often made use of when these labels are used but context is also important. Schoolteachers across Europe and beyond are often chided for not achieving the results of their counterparts in, for example, Finland. This is to forget that Finnish society is different and that to hit professionals over the head will not change that^{xxi}. Blair's slogan of *Education, Education, Education* ought to have been *Society, Society, Society*.

3. Reform, de-form, the kidnapping of a concept and one of Blair's linguistic legacies

Remember all those school history lessons from which we learned that 'reform' meant the abolition of slavery, the extension of the franchise, the factory acts, national insurance, free schooling for all and much more including the NHS? That well respected 'R' word was captured by Blair and applied to almost everything that he wanted to make happen. His restructuring of the school system in England that gave us specialist schools, faith schools and academies was, if we remember and still hold firm to the values we internalised from those history lessons, a deformation of the system. And yet today when a government wishes to change anything it has no hesitation in referring to its new policy as a 'reform'. We slip very easily into acceptance of this new usage: one of Blair's linguistic legacies.

I recognise that in dictionary terms 'reform' simply means to alter the form of something. I cannot, however, help feeling that Blair and others altered what we might consider to be the cultural meaning of the word and, knowing that it prompted positive perceptions in our minds, used it to label change that he and they wanted us to accept without question. Our present government has gleefully followed his example and I can only hope that commentators upon current government and politics take note of this kidnapping of a concept. To *deform* is not the same as to *reform*.

4. Accountability stood on its head

At one time government and politics was a very popular subject studied in schools in the UK. From the 1980s it was in retreat and now it has been replaced by citizenship. Despite what it says on UK passports we are not citizens. We are subjects^{xxii}. In the last syllabus (they are now called specifications) for government and politics as studied by fourteen to sixteen year olds one quarter of the syllabus was devoted to 'Accountability'^{xxiii}. Authors of textbooks and teachers all understood that this meant learning how governments were held accountable to the people. Tony Blair, however, held the people accountable to the government.

If, for example, you read Blair guru Michael Barber's most famous book ***Instruction to Deliver***^{xxiv} it is impossible to avoid his theme of 'performance management' as a technique for holding to account those that were charged with delivering policy. I say more about Barber below in **Deliverology and meausurology or Blairism meets Barberism.**

It is clear from Bower's book that a question that constantly rattled around Blair's brain was how you did this business of government: how you got people to perform according to your vision. A brain that is preoccupied with such questions tends to quieten and control difference, disagreement and dissent. It does not, for example, wish to listen to disturbing voices saying that we should not invade Iraq and when things go wrong there is no thought of holding up both hands and saying, 'It's a fair cop gov.' When things go wrong it has to be the implementers, those that received their orders, that must be at fault. Truly, Tony Blair stood the concept of accountability on its head. He held many people and public institutions to account: we have yet to hold him to account.

5. Standards, Criteria, Norms, Expectations and Averages (This is a little long because so much of my professional life has been spent trying to cope with the issues raised by the use and misuse of these concepts. Perhaps it should have been an endnote.)

A feature of Bower's book is the extent to which members of Blair's government, interest groups and commentators were concerned with the rise and fall of standards of performance. In particular this applied to health and education. Discussion, dispute, argument and the construction of policy are, unfortunately too often, carried out and created fluently and confidently in a language that confuses and is easily misunderstood.

Except when they are flags standards are not standards if they rise or fall. Like yardsticks they are only standards if they and the grades carved upon them stay still. Many of us, me included, talk about standards in a very casual manner but when policy, pay scales, inspection, investment and the futures of patients, professionals, children and young people are linked to perceived performance we ought to think more carefully about how we use the concept of standards. There are times when pedantry can usefully concentrate the mind. It can also, as I have admitted, confuse.

The setting and defining of standards as yardsticks ought to be based upon good research and that cannot be done quickly. Governments, however, are forever altering standards without bothering to do any research. What they mean when they use the word 'standards' is actually expectations. And those expectations are so often linked to the desire of politicians to simultaneously deride their predecessors and boost their own reputations^{xxv}.

At one time the national average grade for a sixteen year old taking the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) was an E/F. Who said

that this was so? Government did. How do I know this? Because when, about twenty years earlier, the government introduced the Certificate for Secondary Education (CSE) we schoolteachers were told that Grade Four represented the attainment of the average sixteen year old. That Grade Four later equated to an E/F in GCSE^{xxvi} (the range of scales for the two examinations do not quite match so I have straddled the two that are closest). The big problem that no one wished to think about was that when government told us what the average was at sixteen almost eighty percent of young people left school at fifteen. Not only was there no research underpinning that assumption but no research could have been done. All of this is now mostly forgotten although when the original Grade 4 CSE assertion is remembered it can be used to demonstrate a totally unjustifiable claim for improvement. It also muddies the waters when arguments break out about grade inflation.

The expectation is now a Grade C for sixteen year olds. That grade equates to the pass mark (GCSE has no pass or fail grades despite what some politicians and commentators seem to think) for the old General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level examination (O-Level). That examination was designed to be taken by the so-called top twenty percent who had been selected at the age of eleven by means of an examination based upon dodgy research carried out by someone committed to the eugenics movement^{xxvii}.

It is out of all these 'standards' and questionable expectations that we construct normative curves. In other words, graphs, usually bell shaped, that we assume to reflect the natural range of performances across a given cohort. If the shape of that curve suddenly alters there has to be a reason for it^{xxviii}. Imagine schoolteachers working their socks off to help young people climb up that curve and achieve the kind of grade that government expects only for them to be shoved back down by those responsible for the maintenance of the curve's shape as evidence that standards were being maintained. Normative systems of assessment restrict the numbers permitted to obtain each grade irrespective of performance.

A better word than either standards or expectations is criteria. During the days of Thatcher, as preparation for the enshrining in law of the National Curriculum, groups of experts met to decide how to describe different levels of performance (attainment). Those descriptions were used in order to construct judgments. They were criteria. In order, however, to produce a really reliable normative curve we needed to have used those criteria over a period of years: criteria first, then collection and examination of evidence about their use, then established norms. Microwaving politicians do not like this^{xxix}. A problem is that should an entire cohort match the criterion for the highest grade then they ought to be awarded it irrespective of any normative curve; likewise, if all matched the criterion for the lowest grade. The outcry if either happened would be deafening. This is why time needs to be taken over establishing what it is reasonable to expect. Norms and criteria can work together but not if the expectations of politicians keep

interfering. And not if the structure of the public examination system also keeps changing to reflect what can only be described as the whims of politicians^{xxx}. The GCSE of today is nothing like it was when it began and yet we still talk about standards going up and down.

Possibly like me you encounter brilliant young people who carry on their shoulders the accusation of having had it easy compared to earlier generations^{xxxi}. They must obtain high grades but when they do they are told that everything is easier these days.

I have mentioned averages before. For now I simply ask how on earth a group of people, of hospitals, of schools or whatever can all be simultaneously above average? And yet that is what people such as Tony Blair expected from them or else^{xxxii}.

My reason for going on so much about all this is that for me Bower's book is at times bedevilled by the unchallenged assumptions of too many people making too many poorly supported assertions about the performances of public services such as health and education. Tony Blair often did government by measurement but he seemed not to know what to measure, where to place his tape or whether he should use inches or centimetres. The arms and the legs of a suit made by Blair the tailor would have been of different lengths, shapes, patterns and colours changing daily. Those that did not fit the suit on a given day could expect to be punished while the tailor expanded his business.

6. Politics, Penicillin, the Triumph Motorcycle Company and Gaffers

Politics is the inclusive public discussion of and the consensual arrival at public values^{xxxiii}. It is a process that precedes policy making. It is also a process that not only involves the possibility of losing arguments but also has the potential for the unexpected discovery of penicillin: political penicillin. This was not the Blair way. For him politics was so often a process of manipulating opinion to support what he had already decided.

The values of the political process do not have to be confined to making decisions about public health, education, defence and welfare. They are democratic values and can be observed (or not) in any decision making group. In the political process it is possible to discover unexpected evidence for unintended outcomes. We might think of this as political penicillin. And for this to happen as Doug Hele of Triumph Motorcycles, possibly the greatest motorcycle engineer of all time, said, there should be 'No gaffer at the meeting'. In other words, if you pull rank when discussing possibilities you might miss something good^{xxxiv}.

7. Democracy and Representation

'Democracy' is yet another of those words whose too casual use clogs up the filter of the intellect. Israel, for example, refers to itself as a democracy^{xxxv} and people such as Tony Blair, whose roles included his

incredibly pro Israel work (unpaid but lucrative) as a 'Peace Envoy', never challenge the presumption. Then again, it is not the word 'democracy' that features so frequently in Blair's book. It is 'leader' and 'leadership' to which he keeps drawing our attention. He is famous for being ignorant of history and I suggest it never occurs to him to study Fascism and the cult of the leader^{xxxvi}. One of Blair's educational legacies is the now prevalent cult of leadership and management and the neglect of inclusive approaches to the running of schools, colleges, hospitals and universities. Margaret Thatcher did so much to detach education from representative democracy, encouraging schools and colleges of further education to behave as small to medium sized enterprises. Blair took this further and paved the way for our present government's disdain for democracy, not just in education and health.

Looking at Blair's chosen closest friends we might remember that the framers of the Constitution of the USA were so opposed to democracy that they designed a system to suppress it. That has, however, never prevented the US going to war in order to promote and (usually unsuccessfully, perhaps cynically and often in alliance with the UK) impose upon others what it claims to regard as democratic forms of government. Internal democratic forces in the USA, however, soon broke through the fences erected by the somewhat aristocratically minded men who drew up the US Constitution as John Keane describes.^{xxxvii} Today, however, we see in the US a form of democracy in which the voice of organised labour can scarcely be heard; in which the concept of freedom has been hijacked by powerful and rapacious corporations; and in which politicians too often regard the electorate as ignorant, prejudiced, easily bought and of infinite manipulability. It is little wonder why some people speculate that it is in such a world that Tony Blair has found his most natural and strongest supporters.

When it comes to the concept of 'representation' I doubt if Tony Blair ever reflected that in 1951 the Labour Party polled more votes than the opposition from a turnout of 82% but, failing to win enough seats, lost the General Election and the power to implement the policies for which the majority had voted. In 2015 although the Conservative Party polled more of the votes cast it was supported by just 24.6% of the electorate from a turnout of 66.1%; and yet it won more seats at the General Election and so gained the power to implement policies supported by very few. How legitimate can policies be when endorsed by so small a percentage of the electorate? I suppose it depends who obtains the power to decide what is legitimate.

Tony Blair repeatedly reminds us that he won three general elections. He fails, however, to point out that his time in office saw a decline in both the number of people turning out to vote and those wishing to maintain their membership of the (New) Labour Party. There had been a time when Blair had shown interest in a more fair system of representation and the Jenkins Commission was the result.^{xxxviii} I totally understand the forces within the Labour Party, with a big win under their belts, being reluctant to change a

system that had given them so much and putting pressure on Blair to retain it. It is, however, clear from Blair's own book that he had no problem fighting his own party when it suited him over such issues as Clause Four, tuition fees and ignoring international law. Had he done so in this case his legacy might not have included David Cameron, George Osborne and company. Roy Jenkins took seriously his talks with Blair about improving the electoral system. Blair did not.

8. Participation, Exclusion, Consultation and Implementation

Early in 2009 I bumped into a former colleague with whom I had taught in the early 1980s and later worked with as an LEA advisor. He had just retired as a headteacher and had a story to tell. Before retiring he had been invited by government (post Blair but still New Labour) to stay at a posh hotel with a cross-section of other heads covering different phases and kinds of schools. The big question that they were asked when they got there was 'Do you agree with the idea of federated schools run by super heads?' My friend said that every headteacher present responded with a loud 'No'. After a while, however, he noticed that the person typing the notes of the meeting only became active whenever something was said that chimed in with government thinking; the fingers ceased to move when dissent was expressed.

This was also my experience when taking part in consultation exercises during the time of New Labour. Any questioning of the fundamentals of a policy we were being required to implement would be answered with the phrase, 'I am afraid that is a Government Given'. It was not possible to stand up and shout that the Emperor's policy was at best threadbare. We were not permitted to point that out. The participation of professional educators, those with the experience and expertise, was limited to the rolling up of sleeves to get the job, whatever it was that month, done.

I offer the following further examples because I was intimately involved and, with colleagues, worked hard to make government aware of the fruits of some of its educational initiatives. Yes, I remain frustrated and angry about privatisation, suppression of dissent and ignoring the voices of practising professionals. Even after Blair resigned as Prime Minister this continued to be the way that New Labour operated.

I used to be a member of the steering committee managing the training of learning mentors throughout England in, at first, primary and then also secondary schools; and sometimes I chaired it. The contract had been granted by the Department to a group of us comprising four universities and one large Local Education Authority (LEA) and there were links to LEAs throughout the country. At one of our regular meetings with the Department we pointed out that there was a considerable demand from trainee learning mentors for some form of accreditation and that we had ideas how to address this.

'Yes', said the representatives of the department, 'we are aware of this and are about to form a working party to address the issue'. Quick as a flash, drawing upon my background in studying, teaching and examining the subject of government and politics, I asked: 'What will be the terms of reference for the working party?' I thought that was a clever question; but after hearing the response I began to think that the points of my political science compass had unaccountably shifted. 'Well', said the Department, 'we are putting out to tender the task of formulating the terms of reference.' Believing that governments formulated their own terms of reference without having to sub-contract the task this was a shock to me; but it got worse.

Months later we were asked to attend a meeting at the Department. It turned out that Pricewaterhouse Cooper was in the chair. They had been awarded the contract to define the terms of reference for the accreditation working party and had produced a report. A problem with the report was that they had not talked to anyone who actually worked on the learning mentor programme. Inside the Department this seemed not to matter. Still, however, naively believing in the unassailable power of Sir Humphrey Appleby, I sought to spot the senior civil servant in the room in order to ensure that the one person who could gain the ear of the responsible minister heard things from the horse's mouth. There was one person there who spoke with clear authority so I approached her. After a while she interrupted me: 'But I am not a civil servant', she said. 'I am an advisor on a short term contract'. In fact, there were no civil servants in the room at all, in a policy-making meeting in a government department!

Perhaps this is the place to put into print my experience of making an after dinner speech at a conference on education. I intended to make fun of the short life cycle of New Labour education policies. I also thought no one would take offence at an old joke at the expense of David Miliband when he was Schools Minister. I told the tale of going to see him about something that led to my next example (P.17).

'After we came out', I said, 'we bumped into a little lad who asked us if we had been to see a government minister. We told him that yes we had.' 'When I grow up', said the little lad, 'I want to be a government minister.' 'Look lad', I said, 'you can't do both.' And there was a lot more like that.

But before the dinner I was told very forcibly by a government employee to say nothing about government policy '**or else**'. And just before I stood up to speak the message was repeated. I changed nothing, believing that poking fun at government was still permitted. The speech was certainly well received but I was to find out what was meant by '**or else**'. People who were hoping for government work distanced themselves from someone who made fun of government. Contracts were broken and work dried up. It was a time of social partnerships when those that signed up to the government's agenda were rewarded with a closer relationship. Dissenters were disabled by such means; and so to the next example.

Between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand schoolteachers in England registered each year for masters and doctorates in education throughout Blair's time and before and after. That is a lot. Probably the most wordy masters degrees in education require twenty thousand words per year for three years part time and the least fifteen thousand. Certainly some of those schoolteachers will not have completed their programmes or left at postgraduate certificate or diploma stages. Some of them will have had to re-sit and some may have submitted no work at all. But it represents a great amount of critical sense making and research carried out by schoolteachers examining their professional lives. If we add to that the work done by academics working alongside them the knowledge product is huge. Then we must add the annual impact evaluation reports completed by universities and other providers^{xxxix} and the annual overall impact reports on the reports carried out by the government's agent of that time, the Training and Development Agency for schools. The entire shooting match represents what must be the biggest, by far, collective professional sense-making exercise carried out by the teaching profession in England and, almost certainly, the world.

A question: name a single government minister who, before (or after) deciding or changing policy, has read any of it. This example is from education but I am sure that a similar silencing of professional voice could be found in health, welfare and other areas in which government wished its writ to run.

9. Progress and Modernisation

Bower uses the phrase 'modernisation without meaning'. It very aptly sums up so much of Blair's approach to government and politics. I have mentioned labels before but 'modernisation' and 'progress' were particular Blair favourites. He stuck them and similar others on anything of which he approved. Those two words happen to represent very important concepts. In their name radical social policies have been made and unmade. Wars have been fought using them as slogans and philosophers have written books about them. Although Blair was surrounded by people including Barber, Mulgin and Gould^{xi} who could probably have quoted from such philosophers the meaning that he gave those concepts was never more than shallow. I find it difficult to understand how experts with lots of knowledge who could confidently debate with other experts on the meanings of concepts such as modernisation and progress seem to lose their intellectual edge when they come into orbit round a leader such as Blair. I suppose there are lots of examples of this from history. Rulers hire the best people with the best knowledge to give them the best advice. Gradually, however, 'best' changes to mean what pleases the ruler. People who were once fiercely independent minded turn into courtiers. Or perhaps their extravagantly displayed scholarship always lacked a capacity for critical reflection that only became apparent when they took their ruler's shilling^{xii}.

Maybe it is the schoolteacher in me but while I have the highest respect for those that can express succinctly concepts such as progress and modernisation to see them turned into sound bites makes me despair.

10. Values

Some years ago a politician responded to my question about his policies^{xliii} by telling me that policy making was the easy part. Arriving at agreed values was, he said, the hard part. 'Get the values right and the policies follow'. To read not only Tony Blair but also his courtiers such as Campbell, Adonis, Gould, Barber, Mulgin and Powell is to be assaulted by that word 'values' but only in the sense of commodities for us to buy. This is not an open market for values. With an absolutist approach to government every time the market opens for business there is only one commodity on the stall. Below are a few value statements from Tony Blair.

I am a Socialist not through reading a textbook that has caught my intellectual fancy, nor through unthinking tradition, but because I believe that, at its best, Socialism corresponds most closely to an existence that is both rational and moral. It stands for co-operation, not confrontation; for fellowship, not fear. It stands for equality, not because it wants people to be the same but because only through equality in our economic circumstances can our individuality develop properly. (Blair's maiden speech in the House of Commons, July 1983)

I think most people who have dealt with me think I am a pretty straight sort of guy, and I am. (November 1997 in response to the Ecclestone affair)

And here he is on foreign policy not perhaps expressing his values but the vacuity from which they emerge.

Mine is the first generation able to contemplate the possibility that we may live our entire lives without going to war or sending our children to war. (May 1997)

In his foreword to Phillip Gould's book (2011) Blair tells us that that his most important value was 'choice'. I think this raises the question of who is empowered to make choices. [\[Back\]](#)

Pebbles and politics (psephology)

If economics is known as 'the dismal science' I sometimes wonder what we might call psephology. It was David Butler who popularised this word (borrowed from the ancient Greek word for the pebble used as the equivalent of a ballot paper) to describe the study of elections and, not being a member of the Electoral Train Spotting Tendency, I sometimes feel that it is the purpose of psephologists to rain on my political parade. It is, however, important to read the work of people such as Butler, Curtice, Kavanagh and

more^{xliii}. Perhaps they take the passion out of politics but they also provide perspective and bring us down to earth by not only presenting us with relatively reliable statistics but also sound judgments on the significance of the evidence they uncover about our views, perceptions and voting intentions. They take a risk when they predict results but that does not mean that we should discount all their surveys and studies of entrails. Nor should we overlook the salutary lessons they provide when, for example, we compare how Blair was regarded at the outset of his premiership and at the end^{xliiv}.

Political parties seem, however, to believe that it is more important for them to make use of what they learn from psephologists so that they can tailor their presentations to voters than it is for them to engage the electorate in a political process. Keeping an eye on polls and surveys can inhibit politicians. I suggest that Tony Blair did not depart from the political discourse of Thatcherism partly because New Labour was nervously concerned to look unthreatening and also because it shared so many values with Margaret Thatcher^{xliv}. Yes, the word 'New' was bandied around but we might remember how often advertisers have used that word in order to persuade us that a change of wrapping means a change of content. Compared with John Smith's Labour Party there was definitely a change of content but compared with the Conservative Party of Thatcher and Major it was only the wrapping that changed^{xlvi}. [\[Back\]](#)

Deliverology and Measurology or Blairism meets Barberism

To read Bower is to gain a sense of a bemused Blair, habitually relying on rhetoric and charisma, relieved to discover Michael Barber, the prince of the flow chart. The appointment of Barber as *Master of Delivery and Measurement* (Chief Advisor on School Standards, Chief Advisor on Delivery, reporting to Blair and finally Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit) brought government, especially civil servants, under attack from a hail of power point presentations. Bower has a lot to say about Barber and 'deliverology'. I believe his creed could equally have been described as 'measurology'. For evidence simply read Barber's own celebration of his role as 'the control freak's control freak'^{xlvii}. Hitting the target became the be-all and end-all of government and Barber's book contains pages of diagrams and timetables to be followed in order to hit the targets, measure the distances still to be travelled or work out how to 'close the gap'.

Blair now travels the world advising governments to set up versions of his Delivery Unit as it was when run by Barber. We might ask a single question: on what basis were those targets chosen? Efficiently hitting unwisely chosen targets does not indicate good government. It is, in fact, incompetence masquerading as effectiveness. Blair's instinct and practice was always to set targets on an exclusive basis. As Bower repeatedly shows, not even Blair's cabinets were part of an inclusive, consensual approach to policy making and target setting. They played a less significant part in government than did the late Phillip Gould's focus groups.^{xlviii} Whether using a carrot or a stick the combination of Blairism and Barberism meant that schools, hospitals, local government, the armed forces and more were pushed and pulled through the

'railings of reason'^{xlix} without being asked if they might have worthwhile ideas of their own about direction and how to proceed.

I hope that after those dictators Blair advises on 'delivery' have smiled, shaken his hand, paid his bill and waved him off to fly to yet another country they climb into their limousines, drive back to their palaces, shake their heads and resolve to try a bit of democracy for a change. [\[Back\]](#)

Children of Iraq, the War Crimes Tribunal and Blair the Peace Envoy

Remember Blair's award from the Save the Children Fund? We should not be surprised that people and organisations that are fully paid up members of and committed to humanitarian causes can be so detached from reality. Such misplaced awards have been given before. Obama was given the Nobel Peace prize for what the awarding body imagined he might do. His subsequent foreign policy could almost be summed up as 'Death by Drone' and despite his promise to close Guantanamo Bay that prison continues to exemplify the disdain of the USA for international law. Perhaps, however, the most outrageous insult to humanitarian values, to our intelligence and a challenge to our ability to tolerate hypocrisy was the Peace Prize awarded to Kissinger^l, the man who rationalised as diplomacy the blood letting of innocents.

If I have a concern about the framing of a charge against Blair it is that it may concentrate upon the illegality of the 2003 'war' in Iraq and have the effect of brushing under the carpet so much else for which he, his allies and his courtiers were responsible. The sheer amount of recorded evidence for and writings about the inhuman consequences of Tony Blair's policies, so many of which were known or predicted at the time, is huge and I propose to list and provide appropriate links to just some. I place them here with some short comments rather than in my endnotes. They should be allowed to speak for themselves and probably the most important point to make is that it is astonishing how out of sight and un-remarked upon are these crimes of inhumanity and the comments upon them.

A notable point made in the following link is that the word 'war' can be used unthinkingly.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-iraq-war-reader-a-history-of-war-crimes-and-genocide-the-unleashing-of-america-s-new-global-militarism/31067>

In this piece by Felicity Arbuthnot (mentioned in the previous link) I remembered that my mother's father (born 1859) used the word 'cant' to say what he thought of the words coming out of the mouths of politicians. It has a nice old-fashioned ring to it and is easier to spell than 'hypocrisy'.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/death-and-destruction-in-iraq-extensive-us-war-crimes-apocalypse-in-mosul-in-the-guise-of-bombing-isis/5522167>

Reading this memory including its description of gentle humanity I could not help thinking of what Churchill said about these people in 1919 when he was defending the use of chemical weapons in Iraq:

'I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes'.

<http://newint.org/features/2003/05/05/memory/>

I promised that I would keep my comments short and allow the content of these links to speak for themselves but I kept thinking here of Blair as 'The man who monetized peace making.'

<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2015/04/03/how-tony-blair-became-the-devils-advocate>

The link that follows provides an insight into the values of the gang Tony Blair was so anxious to join.

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article36270.htm>

Her Majesty's Government makes clear in the Civil Service Code that is totally opposed to torture and cruel and degrading treatment. Read on.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/12/22/imperial-arrogance-tony-blair-gaddafi-and-torture/>

If you go to the link below you might conclude that when it comes to war crimes Tony Blair and company cannot say they were not warned.

<http://www.apfn.net/messageboard/11-20-04/discussion.cgi.4.html>

Tony Blair is not mentioned in the following link. You may disagree with me but I believe that this is a world that he helped to create.

http://www.pravdareport.com/world/europe/19-01-2016/133095-britain_saudi_arabia_yemen-0/

My questions after reading the following link are: how long did this take and how much did it cost? As for Chilcot: 'Go Compare'.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/war-crimes-tribunal-finds-bush-and-blair-guilty/5478367>

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Samizdat media get under Blair's guard

The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) circulated an officially endorsed newspaper called Truth (Pravda). It recalls for me a book by an earlier Blair (Eric) who changed his name to George Orwell. In his **1984** the Ministry of Truth was responsible for the retrospective construction of truths to match what Big Brother needed us to believe at any given time. We might have believed that something happened in a particular way but when the historical knowledge prompting that belief became a problem for government it had to be altered. In the USSR one response to such thought control was the unofficial production and distribution of alternatives to official truths known by the name *samizdat*, creating an unsuppressable network challenging the official monopoly of the reporting of news by producing and circulating roughly and secretly printed articles, comments and news items.

I suggest that the Internet has made possible a form of samizdat via, for example, email, Facebook and Twitter and also made accessible a great number of news outlets that previously printed a few copies of newspapers and magazines seen by very few people. And today even those mainstream newspapers that have taken to the Internet often provide opportunity for comment that far exceeds the number, speed and reach of traditional letters to the editor although, like Facebook Groups, they do appoint moderating traffic wardens to protect readers from voices that might be too dissident.

As for Tony Blair there are a number of Facebook Groups that raise and discuss Blair related issues. If you are on Facebook and interested in issues such as equality, transparency, honesty, greed, democracy and humanity it is likely that at some time Tony Blair will be quoted, referred to, used as an example and discussed.

In the service of transparency I must declare myself to be one of the administrators of a Facebook Group devoted to holding Blair to account. It is called **IMPEACH TONY BLAIR** and just like any other group the postings sometimes stray off subject. They do, however, demonstrate the extent to which people can assemble evidence, argument, humour, poetry and song from different cultural contexts and perspectives in order to fulfil a purpose^{li}. In this case the purpose is to see in the dock someone who has not only caused physical harm to people and places but also moral harm to how we set about the business of government and politics.

The major point here is that until governments catch up the samizdat media is getting under the official guard. Some countries have managed to almost suppress social electronic media and some go so far as to pay young students to become official trolls. Governments possess enormous power when it comes to the transmission of news. We have embargoed press releases, official announcements, official denials, selectively leaked stories, non-attributable sources, the Official Secrets Act and many more means by which governments control what is allowed to become publicly known. And it is noticeable that in response to the Freedom of Information Act and the growth of electronically posted petitions to government civil servants tasked

with crafting replies to petitioners and requests for information have demonstrated an enviable mastery of the obfuscator's art.

For now, despite the urges of governments to dust off old laws of sedition and oil the rusty hinges on cell doors in the Tower of London, the samizdat army is on the march.

Meanwhile, we might keep an eye out for work carried out by Charlie Beckett of the London School of Economics and Greg Philo of the Glasgow Media Group.^{lii} They are among those that closely observe and study the media. Successive governments have belittled media studies as a subject worth finding a place on the school curriculum. If only the skills of de-constructing official narrative and how it is reported were imparted in schools we might be less susceptible to illusion and delusion.

I believe that it will become increasingly important for people who take seriously the use of Twitter, Facebook etc. to inform themselves of the work of academics seeking to make critical sense of these developments. I first became aware of the work of Greg Philo when my wife dragged me to a talk he was giving on the analysis by the Glasgow Media Group of how the Falklands War was reported. It was very instructive and today reminds me that Franks took six months to write his report on that war. Yes he did whitewash Margaret Thatcher but you could see through it. I wonder if Chilcot has read that report. [\[Back\]](#)

Brown and Blair, *What If and If Only*

We now have Bower on Blair but back in 2004 we were given Bower on Brown^{liii}. We might draw any number of conclusions from comparing the two elemental forces of New Labour. If, for example, you wished to choose a companion to watch the footy in the pub while downing a number of pints I guess you would choose Gordon. He liked this sort of thing. The exclusion of female company from this lads' event might, however, eventually strain your capacity to maintain a worn out masculine stereotype. If, on the other hand, making fun of the accents and attitudes of Old Labour stalwarts appealed you would choose Tony. He liked this sort of thing.

The fearsome rages of Gordon were definitely a feature of their relationship and no doubt a factor that inhibited the smooth running of government. Brown, a 'son of the manse', was also susceptible from time to time to the temptation to adjust truth. We do not have here a simple comparison between Old, Socialist Labour and New, Third Way, Aspirational Labour. Brown was a compliant member and part architect of the New Labour Project. I think we can assume a clash of egos. But compare Brown and Blair when each was presented with the opportunity to step upon a world stage with all the spotlights on them.

After 9/11 Blair chose to become an American Superhero embroiled in an unwinnable war against an abstract noun, terror. Thinking back to Orwell's **1984** this war has the hallmarks of having been chosen in order to maintain

politicians in office and serve the interests of what Eisenhower referred to as the Military Industrial Complex^{iv}. Blair portrays this as a war between good and evil: a never ending struggle that not only places him on the side of the angels but also justifies appalling behaviour by governments that seek to counter criticism of their crimes against humanity by asserting that because they are the 'goodies' they must not be blamed for 'collateral damage' even when it reaches previously unimaginable proportions.

Gordon Brown's moment in the spotlight was when the world's banking system collapsed. As William Keegan suggests in **"SAVING THE WORLD"? Gordon Brown Reconsidered (2012)** it was at this point that Brown's stubbornness, even bloody mindedness, combined with his braininess and experience to bully and cajole the world away from the financial precipice. It was as if that was the moment when the negatives of Brown's personal attributes suddenly turned into positives.

What If history can be a bit of tempting fun. We are, though, permitted to cry **If Only** because it is natural to tell ourselves that had, for example, John Smith not died so early things might have turned out better. We do not know this but my guess is that had Brown preceded Blair as prime minister and Blair become Home Secretary the compass needle of government would have pointed far more to domestic issues than to foreign adventures. For impatient prime ministers, however, domestic issues involve a lot of politics in the form of debate, discussion, losing arguments, drafting and re-drafting legislation and more. You have to do detail. To order the dropping of bombs and the pulling of triggers against a supposedly threatening (within 45 minutes) enemy is much easier. Once a target has been set, especially one that cannot answer back, government moves to what Lenin called 'unity of action'. I do not suggest that Brown was immune from wishing to do government by diktat but I do believe that he was far less susceptible to the excitement of sending out 'our gallant lads' to teach foreigners how to behave. At least Palmerston in the early nineteenth century had gunboats to send out to enforce Pax Britannica. Blair did not and so he hitched a lift with Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and company. The enforcers of Pax Americana had plenty of gunboats and they were happy to have Blair (on our behalf) on board. [\[Back\]](#)

Conclusion, self-reflection and remaining questions

Tom Bower has made a significant contribution not simply to the various campaigns for Blair to stand in the dock but also to the increasingly vocal efforts to remove his poison from politics and to carry out government in a manner that respects voters, international law and the rights of defenceless people. Blair and all that he stands for is not an issue confined to the UK. We are rightly enraged at what he did in our name but I suggest that having surrendered the seals of office Blair sought a greater (higher?) legitimacy than can be conferred by simply being elected as a representative.

Tony Blair has a faith foundation.^{iv} Faith is one of the theatrical props he uses as he circles and re-circles the globe advising people,

organisations and countries how they ought to behave. Alastair Campbell once told us that New Labour did not 'do God'. Back then Blair was an Anglican supposedly inspired by a man who, unlike our young leader, preferred charitable action to sanctimonious sermonising.^{lvi} Now Blair is a Catholic, indicating a wish not only to broaden his scope but also to reinforce his legitimacy. Today he 'does God' as part of his war on those two abstract nouns 'terrorism' and 'extremism'. To my mind Blair has recruited religion to serve his purpose. And his purpose is personal fulfilment no matter who or what might stand in his way. He so much loved himself as a leader that since stepping down as prime minister he has constantly sought the adrenalin rush of intravenous leadership injections. He must lead. He must show the way. He must have an attentive and uncritical audience.

I have a deep visceral loathing of Blair. By all means let us assemble evidence, construct a case and calmly present argument but if I were charged with doing all that I am afraid that my cool I could not keep.

In terms of **self-reflection** I need to say that in writing *Waiting for Chilcot* as a response to Tom Bower's book I had no plan. I knew that it would not be possible to be definitive or exhaustive. I also knew that both relevant information and expressions of opinion would emerge while I was writing and that I had little chance of digesting them. In writing like this there is no competition to win, no examination to be passed, no teacher to please. I had, however, a compulsion to confront and make sense of what I perceive to be our vulnerability when faced by political charlatans. Some of us took far too long to recognise that the elixir that we bought was actually snake oil. Possibly this is the most powerful message in Bower's book. I have written for myself. I hope that others might find some of it useful.

I think that our **remaining questions** include the following. I have limited myself to five. You might have more in mind.

1. If we claim to believe in democracy how might we agree what that means?
2. Do we need a written constitution and if so who might take part in drafting and approving it?
3. In 1829 Sir Robert Peel gave us nine principles for policing^{lvii}. His seventh said that *the police are the people and the people are the police*. If we like this idea and exchanged the word *government* for *police* how might we put that into practice?
4. How might international law and the United Nations become more respected by nation states that have the power to ignore them?
5. If Tony Blair and company were charged, stood trial and found guilty by the International Criminal Court what might be the

implications for the ways in which governments behave? If there are any good ones how could we make them stick?

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A note about the endnotes, further reading and various links

A few of my endnotes are adapted from earlier ones I have used elsewhere. Some of them, particularly when the subject is education, may appear to be only indirectly relevant. Overall, I think I am trying to make the point that we (not just the UK) are in need of a re-humanised approach to government and politics. Education is part of that. I am writing this after having finished my endnotes and added some further reading and links so I have that familiar feeling of having done a lot of writing to discover what it was I wished to write about. Thanks to Tom Bower for getting me going.

My suggestions for further reading are mostly within the endnotes and the links I have added are by no means all that could have been added.

i

The organisation was called The Politics Association. Most of its members were teachers of government and politics and at that time we were seeing that subject replace courses and examinations called 'Civics', 'Citizenship' and 'British Constitution'. For me at least they did not encourage participation but were intended to generate submissive respect for our institutions. I wanted to see the back of them.

ii

The following is a link to a paper I wrote to support critical conversations. I use it mostly to encourage engagement with my own writing. It also helps me to head off negative criticism. I add the link to most of the writing on my website.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebcriticalProfessionalConversation.doc>

iii

It might be useful to have a link to an explanation of inquiries. They are almost a secret part of government that voters are told little about. In particular number eleven in the list here should be of interest. The word 'establishment' comes to mind.

<http://www.fieldfisher.com/publications/2008/12/a-practical-guide-to-commissioning-and-conducting-investigations-and-inquiries#sthash.GCRCdr5K.dpbs>

iv

As a journalist and author of a number of books on government, politics and politicians Peter Osborne is always worth reading. In his *The Rise of Political Lying* (2005) he explains New Labour's use of narrative in the post-modern sense of a story devised to justify and convince us to accept a vision. Reality is mocked by these political storytellers.

v

This link provides a list of New Labour positives. My prejudices tell me that only by comparison with what went before and after are these to be celebrated. My experience tells me that the very best of New Labour's social initiatives suffered from not being

part of a coherent approach to constructing a more fair society in which privilege was not essential for fulfilment.

<https://kittysjones.wordpress.com/2013/06/11/labours-achievements-lest-we-forget/>

vi

I have written a lot on Social Fracking. It is the best phrase I could think of to describe the effects of recent governments upon our society. What follows is (most of) the abstract for one of my essays on the subject. It was what was happening to education that prompted me and I concentrate on the Coalition Government as heirs to Blair. There is much more on my website.

Social fracking

Abstract

Here I try to justify my use of the terms 'frack' and 'fracking' in social and educational contexts in order to explore what the Coalition Government has been doing. I believe that that using them helps to show up what is happening in a slightly different but useful light. And the words sound so good as well.

This is the most substantial part of my essay or series of essays. I suggest that we are ruled by politicians who do not understand or believe in proper politics; who do not like and are damaging democracy; who are not only unintellectual themselves but are having a de-intellectualising effect upon education and society; who pervert the potential of our education system to enable all children to be fulfilled in favour of fulfilling the few; who remove fairness from society; and who continue to get away with it.

One part of what follows on the subject of anti political politicians is about professional responses to poor policy making. For much of this I travel back to the introduction by Kenneth Baker of the National Curriculum and its accompanying Assessment Orders. This section reflects my enduring concern that the professional energies and ideals of teachers can be first perverted and then captured as they become conditioned to first respond to and then convert to official, orthodox educational religions. That is not the way to treat and respect hardworking, dedicated professional educators. And it is bad for society.

vii

In the last few years there have been a number of books appearing that argue in favour of a more fair and a less unequal society. At times the arguments are made on moral grounds: that it is simply wrong that people can be exploited while others are privileged. Powerful economic arguments in favour of fairness and equality are also made.

In 2012 Stewart Lansley published *The Cost of Inequality, why economic equality is essential for recovery*. Based upon considerable and very thorough research his point is that if we wish for a good economy we must narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. Concentrating mostly on the UK and the USA he shows the social, individual and economic damage that has been done in those countries since the end of the 70s when the gaps began to widen.

Joseph Stiglitz, concentrating mostly on the USA, makes very similar points in *The Price of Inequality* (2010).

Lansley quotes Wilkinson and Pickett's book of 2009, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*. The point being made here, supported by a great deal of evidence, is that not only does inequality increase illness and stress for

individuals but that society at large, including the presently rich and privileged, will enjoy more well-being in a more equal society.

Here is a relevant link.

<https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/about-inequality/spirit-level>

viii

Here is a review of Bob Marshall-Andrews' book by John Kampfner, author of *Blair's Wars* (2003) and yet another book we might go back to. Look at the year of publication for Kampfner's book. After the link to his review of Marshall-Andrews I have put the link to the review of Kampfner by Philippe Sands.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/12/antidote-humbug-bob-marshall-andrews>

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/sep/28/politicalbooks.politics>

ix

The relevant books by these authors are *The Myth of the Strong Leader* (2014) by Archie Brown; *The Blunders of our Governments* (2013) by Anthony King and Ivor Crewe; and *Who Governs Britain?* (2015) by Anthony King.

Brown's book ranges far and wide but with a title like that he simply had to include Blair who he does not flatter. King and Crewe manage to generate amusement and despair while providing much needed transparency. King's own book asks exactly the questions that should be asked post Blair (if we really are post Blair).

x

Among Osborne's books is *The Triumph of the Political Class* (2007). Here is a review of the book.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non_fictionreviews/3668231/Power-without-responsibility.html

xi

This is my review of *BLAIR INC* (2015) by Beckett, Hencke and Kochan.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/BlairInc.pdf>

xii

Here is my review of Blair's own book. It has been pointed out to me that I only needed to write the title. You may agree.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/bookReviewBlair.pdf>

xiii

Here is Peter Osborne again. Clearly waiting for Chilcot became too much for him. Since he wrote this more evidence has emerged that supports what he has to say. You might also find it interesting to look at the videos of Blair giving evidence to Chilcot via the last link on this page.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34658655>

xiv

Jonathon Powell was Blair's Chief of Staff and Alastair Campbell his Director of Communications and Strategy. Tom Bower makes clear not only how crucial they were to Blair's approach to government but also the extent to which they operated as gatekeepers. As Blair's Bouncers they were not alone. Experienced civil servants and members of the cabinet had to get past them and a few others. I did try to review one of Powell's books but managed only a sketch. Here, for what it is worth, is the attempt.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/DiaryApparatchik.pdf>

xv

During his time as Secretary of State for Education (not his exact title) my colleagues and I were absolutely sure that it was Keith Joseph who said that he would not rest until every child was above average. I am unable to find the reference and I notice the phrase being recently attributed to someone else. If I am wrong please forgive this example of the appropriateness of an attribution overpowering the need for careful research to verify it.

xvi

My prof, Fred Ridley, once made a nice conversational point about the difference between right and left. I paraphrase but it amounted to the following.

'It is easy to be right wing because all you need is prejudice and ignorance but it is hard to be left wing because you have to read lots of books with big words in them,'

xvii

'Post war political consensus' is a nice easy phrase but there is plenty of room for discussion of what it did, does and might mean. Perhaps this is a useful starting point for discussion and not only of that notion.

<http://www.britpolitics.co.uk/british-politics-post-war-consensus>

xviii

Here is a review of a relevant book by Simon Jenkins written by Douglas Hurd, a former member of Thatcher's government. Hurd clearly sees Blair as more absolutist than Margaret Thatcher and we might remember that John Major told the Leveson Inquiry that he regarded Blair as more right wing than he had been.

Perhaps this helps a little to understand the great efforts made by Blairites within the Labour Party to destroy Jeremy Corbyn who is unlikely to rush to Blair's defence when Chilcot emerges.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/oct/07/politics1>

xix

At one time it was academics such as Peter Mortimore that worked within the education profession to explore the meaning of concepts such as effectiveness and improvement. The power to define those concepts came into the hands of politicians who were not interested in consensual and inclusive discussion with the profession or other stakeholders. Below is an early paper on effectiveness by Peter Mortimore.

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED358560.pdf>

xx

I am sure that when he took over from Kenneth Clarke as Secretary of State for Education John Patten had no intention to belittle his predecessor or to be nasty. Clarke had decided on the basis of no research whatever (there was some research but he ignored it) that children undergoing testing at Key Stage 1 (approximately age

seven) would be assessed only within the range of the bottom three levels of the full range of ten then set for the National Curriculum. He thought that was what they could manage. Some of those children were banging their heads on the ceiling of Level Three but it was the highest level they could be awarded. Patten then allowed the ceiling to be made higher. Level Four became available. Some, as you would expect, achieved it. This, (my paraphrase) claimed Patten, demonstrates that after just one year the policies of government have produced an improvement.

Patten (now a member of the House of Lords) had previously been an academic. He was hardly an adornment to that profession. I think he believed his own ludicrous claim. He was an early measureologist.

xxi

In the summer of 2013 I attended an international education conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. There were educators there from across Europe and Turkey. I believe that not only was there general agreement that over the previous ten years governmental control over education had increased, there was more target setting and fewer resources made available but that they were always being told that they ought to be as good as Finland.

In that country children begin school at seven. They are encouraged to learn from playing. Every teacher has a masters degree. Non-state schools are almost unheard of. The approach to education is closely entwined with the values of Finnish society in which equal treatment is taken for granted. We wish to match Finland but have taken a totally different route to do so. Our route is a cul-de-sac down which are driven children, parents and teachers who are blamed when they fail to get out of a dead end.

I am afraid that both deliverology and measureology are now so embedded that when we wish to catch up to countries such as Finland they remain our only available weapons. Tony Blair is not the only guilty party but setting targets and blaming people who did not hit them was a feature of his approach to government.

xxii

Sometimes I wish we could expunge the word 'citizenship' from the UK lexicon. We really are subjects, not of the monarch but of those with the power to exercise monarchical powers. A prime minister with a reasonably big and well-disciplined majority in the House of Commons probably has more power than most monarchs since Henry VIII (I am ready for an argument on that!).

As my old prof Fred Ridley often said, 'It helps democracy to work if you know who to phone up when your dustbins aren't emptied.' But if we extend that into decisions to bomb innocent people, illegally invade other countries, cut welfare, close libraries and more it seems that even if we know the telephone numbers our calls are not answered or we are put on hold while the calming music is played so that we do not hear the prime minister shouting, 'Off with their heads.'

I cannot help thinking that empowered citizens would not have stood for the appalling Chilcot's appalling management of his probably also appalling when published Report but we, as subjects, have no choice. Grumbling seems to be our only power.

In order to be citizens we should be able to participate. A glance at voting turn out rates would indicate that a lot of people do not consider it worthwhile to exercise even our limited powers to participate.

xxiii

As the then Chief Examiner for GCSE Government and Politics I wrote the first draft of the syllabus (specification). I had no hesitation in making ACCOUNTABILITY a key concept to be studied. When I presented my draft to the group for editing there was no surprise. Writing questions and designing mark schemes under that heading was

straightforward as was standardising how examiners might assess the work of young people taking the examination. There were no raised eyebrows from teachers of the subject and plenty of textbooks were available dealing with accountability. We all, of course, meant the accountability of government to the people.

This may explain my puzzlement and slowness to realise that things had changed when I took part in New Labour consultations or attended government working parties. This really was a government that did things *to* the people, not *with* them and seldom *for* them.

xxiv

Here is Ken Follett's review of Michael Barber's most famous and influential book. In a brief exchange with the director of a New Labour government agency I once mentioned Barber but before I managed to say how damaging I thought Barber was not only to education but also to government and politics in general I was told, 'Michael Barber is my hero.'

As a supporter of Liverpool Football Club Barber recounts in his book how he wrote a letter of advice to the club. I have no idea what notice the club took of him so it may be only a coincidence that afterwards we did not win much.

Follett is writing (in hopes) just as Brown is about to take over from Blair.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/30/politics1>

For an antidote to Barber's book and an understanding of how governments, even when putting Michael Barber in charge of the delivery of policy, often do not work efficiently and often work extremely inefficiently, especially when they forget to do politics inclusively, it is useful to look at *The Blunders of our Governments* (2013) by Anthony King and Ivor Crewe. Although the majority of the blunders described and analysed took place in the UK their sections on Human Errors and System Failures are globally relevant. The recurring questions as you read the book are how on earth the devisers of disastrous policies managed a) to escape the blame and b) give all the difficult jobs to others. You might enjoy this review.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/04/blunders-government-king-crewe-review>

xxv

See xx above.

xxvi

The very first award of grades meeting for GCSE Government and Politics came to a crucial question: where shall we draw the boundaries between the grades? I remember saying that all we had to go on was that for many years we had worked on the assumption that Grade 4 CSE represented the national average for a sixteen year old. The nearest equivalent seemed to be a Grade F (E has also been suggested) so that was the foundation stone for our normative curve. Who knows if we got that right or wrong? Once you build upon a foundation it is not easy to pull it away. It is very likely that some subjects were unintentionally lenient and others unintentionally tough but once the decision has been taken you are stuck with it. If you change it the accusations of fiddling the books are professionally damaging.

xxvii

Cyril Burt did much of the research from which the assumption was made that approximately eighty percent of children were not worth educating beyond a basic level. Grammar schools were for the 'top' twenty percent and more money was spent on the children who it was decided had the general intelligence that entitled them to extra educational resources. Burt was a member of the eugenics movement.

In *The Morbid Age, Britain between the wars* (2009) Richard Overy includes a chapter on the eugenics movement. Knowing what we later came to know about death camps and euthanasia as practised by the Nazis we may, today, recoil from words such as 'retarded', 'backward', 'feeble-minded' and 'sub-normal', all in common use until at least the 1960s, and squirm at the thought of compulsory sterilisation of young women because it has been decided that if they breed they will damage the purity of our race. We sometimes forget that racism is not confined to us being prejudiced against people of another definable race: it has often included a drive to improving a race by promoting those specimens that are approved of and holding back those that are not.

It is interesting that Overy reminds us that Marie Stopes, who did so much to promote birth control before WWII, was greatly motivated by the wish to reduce the birth rate of the racially 'unfit'. Needless to say, such of those children as evaded birth control were not expected to go to grammar schools, let alone mix with the even more privileged children who were admitted to 'public schools'.

xxviii

Kathleen Tattersall was the chief executive of a number of examination boards for which I worked. I clearly remember that when I chaired meetings to decide where grade boundaries were to be drawn having to give her very good reasons for making decisions that altered the shape of the normative curve. In the suite of subjects for which I was responsible (Law, Welfare and Society and Government and Politics) I would argue that any significant change in the age of candidates had an effect in small entry subjects. If a large further education college dropped out and some schools with inexperienced staff came in it made a difference: older candidates were often more in tune with the kinds of issues raised by questions in the social sciences. This might be accepted as a good reason for moving the boundaries a little. A subject such as English, however, was entered by virtually every sixteen year old and year on year the normative curve would be consistent.

Before she died Kathleen wrote to the Guardian about forthcoming changes to our system of public examinations. Here is the link to her letter. I liked and admired her.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/sep/18/exam-define-failure-not-success?newsfeed=true>

xxix

Ken Clarke was a very impatient Secretary of State for Education. I have mentioned him in xx above. He seemed to me to be remarkably lazy. Not only did he ignore the work being done that might have allowed us to establish a reasonable expectation of the range of performances that could be attained by children around the age of seven but he told us that it was disgraceful that one third of the children first tested in English were below average and, therefore, illiterate. He was referring to the twenty eight per cent that were assessed as failing to reach Level Two in English out of the three levels he allocated to that Key Stage. Twenty-eight is not fifty and the level descriptor for Level One did not indicate illiteracy. His approach to measuring performance and labelling children was not changed under Blair administrations.

xxx

In 1991 John Major made a speech in which he complained about the original form of GCSE. As a consequence coursework was reduced and rather than open questions that enabled candidates to demonstrate what they knew, understood and could do so that they could be differentiated by outcome we ended up with tiered papers. This was all done in a hurry and was harmful to the chances of young people who had been prepared for the earlier form of the examination. Michael Gove recently followed Major's example of messing up the system while young people were being prepared.

Tony Blair is the main subject of *Waiting for Chilcot* but I want to say a bit more about this because interference without thinking was such a theme of governmental behaviour for him. I also think it is a good story.

Each of three tiered papers had to address equally the same assessment criteria and an equal range of grades. There also had to be a built in overlap. The business of designing such papers now seemed like three-dimensional chess and this was one reason why I resigned as chief examiner to give way to my deputy who was better at this sort of thing. I then became chair of examiners for three subjects including my own: ostensibly a more senior position but lacking direct involvement.

A particular school appealed its results. The head had very foolishly promised the parents that all the young people entered by the school would obtain top grades and so had entered them only for the highest tier. The gamble did not pay off. The head's appeal failed. The appeal went higher. That failed. Finally the appeal went to London where the chair was, we were told, a cousin of the Queen. The headquarters of the examination board was in Manchester so that gave the chair the opportunity to say how much she enjoyed her visits to that city because so many of the roads were named after members of her family.

I sat at one end of a long table and the chair at the other. For me there was definitely a feeling that the chair was at the top and that I was at the bottom awaiting interrogation. On my left were the head and staff of the school and on my right were the professional members of the examination board. The examination board staff were merely asked if they had proper quality assurance procedures and had they followed them. The answers were 'yes' to each. But I was asked, for example, why candidates who had clearly written lots of valid facts had not obtained more marks. This meant having to explain that there were only so many marks available for being able to recall facts and that having used them all up candidates were being examined on their ability to interpret and evaluate. Writing this now it seems an easy thing to explain but to a hostile school it wasn't and all the time I had to refrain from telling the school that it was at fault for failing to read the syllabus in which all of this was made clear. Pointing this out would not have helped.

It was the most nerve wracking professional event of my life. It was not just my reputation that was at stake. We won and I got drunk.

xxxix

Alan Spencer was the director of the research unit of the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB). Many years ago he produced a fascinating paper in which he plotted the changes over approximately seventy years in how questions were written in what today we would call Advanced Level Geography. The subject he chose was the formation of a valley by morainic action. I am writing this from memory but in the early days the question was short. The key words in such questions would usually be either 'describe' or 'explain'.

By the end of the period covered by Spencer's paper we were seeing much more use of stimulus material and an attempt to make the question accessible. I like and agree with both the use of stimulus material and the use of accessible language although they give rise to what I regard as unjustified accusations of dumbing down. In fact eventually this particular question ended up covering two pages with an enormous amount of information to be digested before a candidate could begin to respond. In my view that made the question more difficult but it demonstrates that we should be cautious about making judgments about the difficulty of questions simply on the basis of how they are presented to candidates.

xxxix

Blair made a number of speeches about schools and hospitals, education and health. Statistics were usually prominent and unless there was a journalist present with a

quick wit, ready knowledge and a relaxed deadline he would usually get away unchallenged and unscathed. I am tired of analysing the rubbish spouted by Blair in order to nail down his lies, half-truths, fallacious claims and downright calumnies.

It is, however, worth remembering the truth in the saying, 'Lies, damned lies and statistics.' Deliverology and measureology can be dodgy stuff. I know for a fact that at the age of nineteen I could run faster than when I was eleven. Providing no one questions my claim I have irrefutable evidence of improvement. We do not need to mention my subsequent athletic decline. Choose when you start and stop the measuring, decide what you would like to be measured and present your 'evidence' with your best 'trust me' facial expression and tone of voice and there you have it: The Blair Way.

Here is just one of many such speeches.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2004/jul/07/schools.uk3>

xxxiii

In 1962, when Bernard Crick published *In Defence of Politics*, his intention was to restore the meaning of politics: to remind us that it is about public values. Fifty years after Crick's book went on sale Michael Flinders, a successor of Crick's at the University of Sheffield, published *Defending Politics* with a similar intention. Why, we should ask, is it necessary from time to time for us to be reminded that politics is an inclusive public activity and not one exclusively limited to a few people making policy?

xxxiv

As a schoolteacher my last school (early 80s) was a newly reorganised comprehensive in an area of extremely high unemployment with a number of teachers who had not worked together before or in such an environment. There were tensions, stresses and uncertainties to resolve. It helped that the pupils were very positive and that, while large factories were being closed, the local people were planning what at the time was the largest housing co-operative in western Europe together with community businesses. The young people of the school were sometimes involved in community planning helping, for example, to make decisions about the number of bedrooms houses would need based upon demographic trends. Such activities were linked to official, though customized, programmes of accreditation for which I surprised myself by getting official governmental approval (for a while). Perhaps this took us too far from the mainstream. Officialdom was puzzled and curriculum creativity was to be stifled by the National Curriculum.

A key innovation for the school was what might be called the democratisation of its management so that all staff could be involved in decision-making. Its early traditionally hierarchical management had exacerbated the tensions. Recognition of this enabled the change to be made. To devise the new approach to school management I drew upon a centripetal political systems model so that although the arrow of decision-making pointed to the centre it emerged from discussion and debate outside the centre.

I also drew upon an article by the then Chief Designer of Triumph Motorcycles, Doug Hele, who described how technical decisions were taken in the company. From memory he called his article, 'No Gaffer at the Meeting'. He meant that no one attending a meeting who had an idea should have to defer to anyone else on the basis of any formal seniority.

My attempt to involve young people in this democratisation went well for a time but perhaps back then the power of traditional schooling culture was too much to overcome. It almost certainly is today.

xxxv

I learned the word 'ethnocracy' as a descriptor for Israel from Nurit Peled-Elhanen who is not only an Israeli academic but a campaigner for peace, justice and humanity. In my review of her book I make the mistake of believing that at the time Tony Blair had not visited Gaza. Apparently by then he had, once. I include a link to that review because I believe it helps form a picture of the values of Blair as a peacemaker.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/webNurit.pdf>

xxxvi

Fascism is a word that can be used very casually as an insult. It is worth a bit of research because not only does it force us to think about the cult of leadership but it also makes us aware of the dangers of creating an inclusive, consensual unitary state. I argue repeatedly in favour of inclusive and consensual politics. If, however, dissent and difference are suppressed in that political process the result is a state whose unity can be disastrous and devoted to the destruction of both citizens that do not fit in and other peoples and states that get in the way of a chosen destiny.

Among the many books on Fascist Italy it might be worth looking at *Fascist Voices, an intimate history of Mussolini's Italy* (2012) by Christopher Duggan.

xxxvii

John Keane wrote a very important book on the history of democracy and perhaps the best way to encounter it is via his website. The beach looks good.

<http://www.johnkeane.net/>

xxxviii

I am not suggesting that the recommendations of the Jenkins Report should have been accepted as they were but at least they could have been given more consideration. We do need to think about this.

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP98-112/RP98-112.pdf>

xxxix

Prior to the establishment of the Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD) programme the previous programme had been subject to an inspection lasting almost two years. Apart from the stress that this caused it also cost something like the equivalent of two university academic jobs for each university.

The story of how we managed to replace inspection with self-evaluation can be found in both of the links below and I managed to collect a number of university evaluations to go with the story.

IPDA stands for the International Professional Development Association.

<http://ipda.org.uk/resources/>

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/activities.html#masters>

xi

In Volume Three of his *Man and Society* (1963 and 1992) John Plamenatz provided us with an authoritative disquisition on the *idea* of progress: how at times it has been taken as a law governing history; how much it is associated with the growth of knowledge; and how much it has been associated with happiness. And more. Progress is not a straightforward concept. When, however, politicians hold its meaning captive they give the impression that it is.

In their writings Barber, Mulgin and Gould do not hesitate to display their familiarity with philosophy and philosophers and in his own book Blair tells us of his respect for intellectuals. For him an intellectual is someone who can focus their brain on a target. I think that from time to time an intellectual might ask if it were the right target.

xli

Geoff Mulgin, formerly Blair's Director of Strategy and Head of Policy wrote a book about power in which a prominent theme is 'trust'. His erudition and extensive scholarship are on display throughout. The book put me in mind of an extremely impressive essay by a brilliant undergraduate. It is real 'top of the class' stuff except for the somewhat strange failure to critically reflect upon the government in which he played such a crucial role. I could find only one sentence on Iraq and although it refers to collateral damage it conveys no sense of regret, shame or self-criticism.

The book confirms my view that the membrane of the bubble inside which Blair and his courtiers sat was so opaque that it prevented them from examining what they were doing. Inside their bubble they operated to a value system quite different from that of people outside the bubble who retained not only their critical faculties but a clear sense of what was morally acceptable. I think we might say the same about any of the books by members of Blair's court.

Below is a review of the book by John Gray for the Guardian.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/good-and-bad-power-the-ideals-and-betrayals-of-government-by-geoff-mulgan-479695.html>

xlii

This was my brother Trevor who was leader of the city council that employed me. Each time he lost power I was promoted.

xliii

David Butler, John Curtice and Dennis Kavanagh are just some of the names to watch out for when there is a need to understand voting behaviour and its significance.

xliv

John Bartle and Ivor Crewe have a chapter, *The Impact of Party Leaders in Britain: Strong Assumptions, Weak Evidence in Leaders' Personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections* (2002), edited by Anthony King. Among the evidence they present is a table (3.1) of evaluations of Blair in 1997 shortly after coming to power. Here is what they say.

'It can readily be seen that evaluations of the young Labour leader were almost uniformly positive. Over 80% rated him favourably in terms of strength, caring, decisiveness and the ability to listen to reason. The only slight question marks against him related to whether he stuck to his principles and would keep his promises.'

The authors also point out the huge lead Blair had over Major in terms of popularity.

Based upon their overall research, however, they conclude that Blair's favourable ratings were not key to Labour's win. In other words, we should beware placing all our bets on charisma and rhetoric. I believe that those of us who felt Blair misjudged the electorate were right. Thatcherism really was being rejected. He thought we were voting for him, his words, his smiles and his sound bites. He underestimated the public values of the electorate and their intelligence.

xlv

In 2002 Heath, Jowell and Curtice published a very serious minded analysis of a series of British Election Surveys called *THE RISE OF NEW LABOUR, Party Policies and Voter Choices*.

Perhaps, however, their cover told us what we most wanted to know. It is a picture with Margaret Thatcher at the top as the puppeteer dropping (from her left hand) John Major while raising up (with her right hand) Tony Blair.

xlvi

John Major's interference in the public examination system was disastrous but I cannot help liking him and what he has to say about Tony Blair stealing his clothes.

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/06/12/tony-blair-right-wing-says-john-major_n_1589295.html

xlvii

See xxiv above.

xlviii

Here is my review of Gould's book (second edition). Again, perhaps the title says it all.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/ErsatzPolitics.pdf>

xlix

The phrase is from a song by Neil Innes.

i

Kissinger continues to influence foreign policy. I think you would have to classify him as someone who has made a career out of rationalising imperialism.

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2096389_2096388_2096386,00.html

ii

NOT IN OUR NAME

Let us move to an artistic and creative dimension in which the truth of humanity gains colours, perspectives and depths that the recitation of facts and arguments might struggle to reveal. I believe we all have something to bring to the attempt to re-humanise politics. The link below is to an initiative that crosses national, cultural and age boundaries. It makes boundaries irrelevant. It reaches inside us to find something human worth sharing.

You may be into semi-colons or semi-quavers or prose or poetry; you may, like me, struggle to make sense of yesterday's electronic upgrades and, from time to time, seek respite in repeats of Dads' Army and Yes Minister; also like me you might groan and moan that fings ain't wot they used to be; and yet I am sure this CD will inspire and encourage you because it articulates differently what it means to stand for humanity when it is attacked by those that believe that their might endows them with the right to exercise unrestrained power in pursuit of what they wish to impose on the world.

Click on the link to find out more and to obtain a copy of the CD.

<http://notinournamecd.org/>

iii

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

And here is Charlie Beckett.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/Experts/profile.aspx?KeyValue=c.h.beckett@lse.ac.uk>

liii

Gordon Brown (second edition 2005) by Tom Bower. Perhaps more perspective can be gained by also reading William Keegan (2012).

liv

With the exception of Jimmy Carter I cannot imagine a speech such as this one by Eisenhower from any US President of recent years. And Carter only found his voice after leaving office.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y06NSBBRtY>

lv

No comment needed.

<http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/>

lvi

I rather liked this in the following obituary.

He worried that Blair was missing the crucial practical detail on the ground, and was surrounded by young advisers who had little or no practical experience of the real world. Government understood the shape of the forest but it had little idea what was going on under the trees, which he felt was a big mistake.

<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/jan/25/the-rev-peter-thomson-obituary>

lvii

The year was 1829, also the year of the Catholic Emancipation Act, three years before the Reform Act extending the franchise and five years before the establishment of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. The Tories were not in power for all of that time but it is interesting that they wished to be associated with what we used to refer to as 'reform'. Sir Robert Peel may not have drafted the principles listed in the link below but as a Tory Home Secretary he gave his name to them.

If we wish to re-humanise government and politics after Chilcot we might begin by looking at these principles from, at the time of writing, one hundred and eighty seven years ago.

https://www.durham.police.uk/About-Us/Documents/Peels_Principles_Of_Law_Enforcement.pdf

The following links might also be interesting and of use.

This is the Hutton Report.

<https://fas.org/irp/world/uk/huttonreport.pdf>

Here is the Butler Report.

http://www.factcheck.org/UploadedFiles/Butler_Report.pdf

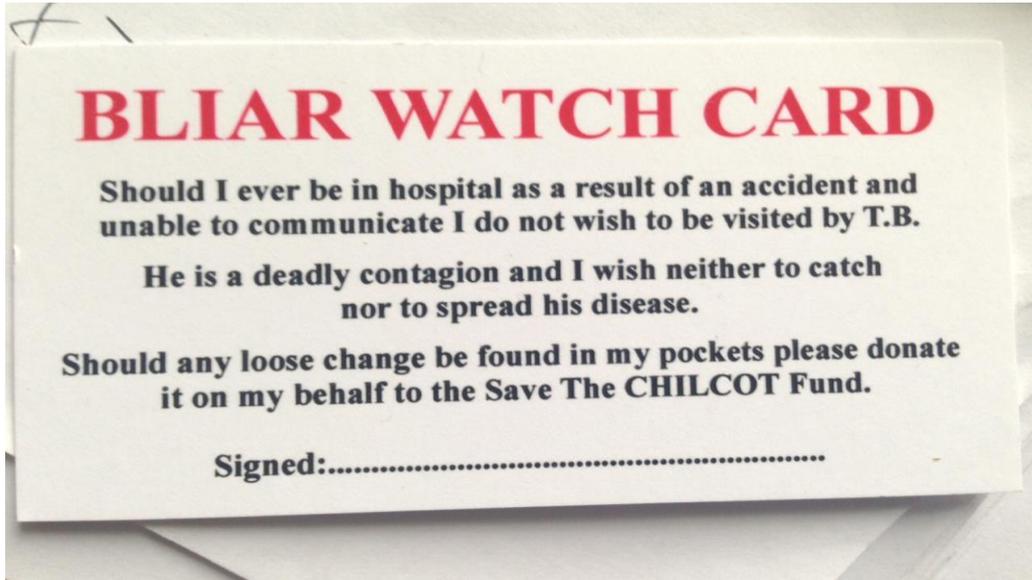
Here is some pertinent comment on the Butler report.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1467263/Butler-Report-on-WMD-was-watered-down-to-protect-Blair.html>

And here is the Chilcot Inquiry's own website. Do look at the two videos of Tony Blair being questioned.

<http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/about.aspx>

Finally, it might be useful to keep this card about you.



[\[Back\]](#)