

## Intellectualism and politicians

**If a politician only thinks of their policies as nice shiny commodities that can be sold to the electorate in exchange for votes then, I believe, whatever the size and power of their brains and whatever the amount of knowledge stuffed between their ears, they are not intellectual. But they need to be. Why? Because there is less chance of cock ups if they and their courtiers open their minds to different perspectives: to dissent, dispute and discussion.**

Two simple questions come to mind. Did anyone ask Tony Blair why, since he went on so much about inter faith initiatives, he spent so much time and money separating previously unseparated children in schools according to religion? Why did his army of intellectuals not point out to him the illogical potential damage of this policy? His rhetoric was about collectivism. His actions were about separatism.

Invading Iraq? Lots of questions there but perhaps just one will suffice for now: 'What could possibly go wrong?' Did any of his cabinet and his clever advisors ask that question?

I have already referred to *The Blunders of our Governments* (2013) by Anthony King and Ivor Crewe. While reading it one eye will be weeping with despair and the other eye with uncontrollable laughter. If you get the chance do read the section on the Poll Tax. The Millennium Dome also requires a box of tissues. Gordon Brown contributes to these tears with his cock up of the reconstruction of the London Underground.

By introducing intellectualism to this discussion I hope I was not seeming to endorse Plato's notion of the philosopher king. As Karl Popper pointed out<sup>1</sup>, this can lead to totalitarianism: the philosopher king dictates the culture and so controls our thoughts. My view is that the philosopher king hardly qualifies as an intellectual. The 'truth' of the philosopher king reminds me of a 'Blair truth'. It is a truth desired by the ruler and before which all must kneel.

Without intellectualism governments get by with (they even require) ignorance leavened with prejudice. We have seen the attempts of Nick Gibb the Schools Minister to hide feminism and women in general from the A-Level Politics syllabus. Instead of encouraging political literacy we have been given citizenship to study in school. No one in the UK is a citizen of the UK. We are subjects of the Crown whose powers are exercised by governments. It seems that we are not supposed to understand the implications of this. We use the word citizen as short hand to describe ourselves but really we should think about it.

In writing *DUMBING DOWN AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY, The Age of AMERICAN UNREASON* (2008) Susan Jacoby provides at least a partial

answer to the question: Why Trump? We might ask why Theresa May, why Boris, why Liam Fox, why David Davis, why Rees-Mogg and why Blair?

If we wish to make progress from the state of subject to the state of citizen intellect is essential. Trickle down wealth was once sold to some of us. If you bought that notion you bought a dud. We are unlikely to get any trickle down intellect from government. So what is the answer?

**We might try EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION.**

**Cliff Jones 15<sup>th</sup>. March 2018**

---

i

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/26/100-best-nonfiction-books-karl-popper-open-society-its-enemies>