

KEY COCK UP EVENTS on the road to postwar political illiteracy and our powerlessness in relation to government.

I used to begin with Thatcher in 1979. The year before the Working Party on Political Literacy had published its Report. Not her sort of thing. For her government was something that was done TO the people, not WITH them.

1997 brought us the hope that Thatcherism was to be expunged. We got Blair who stood the concept of Accountability on its head and made the people accountable for hitting targets, or else. He did government without politics.

Then I thought I should go back a few years, to 1968. I was 26 and just beginning as a schoolteacher of what we were starting to call Integrated Humanities and Environmental Studies. Team teaching was so exciting and I became Chief Moderator and Chief Examiner for public exams in Government and Politics. Wow! I can make things happen, I told myself.

What else happened in 1968? The suppression of the Prague Spring and more. Hold and express an opinion officially disapproved of and nasty things could happen to you. They increasingly do so today.

Back to 1956. Hungary. Oh that wonderful football team. All suppressed by the monolith of the USSR.

What else happened that year? Suez. Anthony Eden imagined he was Palmerston sending out a gunboat to show the 'natives' who was boss. The involvement of Israel was based entirely upon a lie, a LIE. How politically literate can you be if TRUTH is your enemy?

Can I go further back? 1950 gave us the totally useless Korean War. At that point we had free medical prescriptions, free glasses and free dentistry. We had voted for all that. But we had to pay for a so stupid war. Despite what we tell ourselves today about the NHS suddenly cash had to cross the counter. Nye Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman resigned on a matter of principle. Can we just reflect on those resignations?

There were three powerful, or potentially powerful, politicians identifying, I think, with US against THEM.

Today, please tell me which cabinet minister is intending to resign over the Owen Paterson scandal?

Can we leave it all in the hands of the Official Opposition?

Where did I put those blood pressure tablets?

Cliff Jones, 4th. November 2021

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