

## WHO DOES OUR THINKING?

**Socialists often come with labels derived from a phrase or two that they have used. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon shall always be associated with the phrase "Property is theft". There was, however, more to those three words than it might seem.**

And was he a socialist or an anarchist or a syndicalist or a mutualist? What is today's label? The problem is that we are trying to nail down definitions for people whose ideas were not only evolving during their lifetimes but went on evolving or being interpreted in the hands of their followers (and enemies) long after they had died.

Commenting upon some of the people that called themselves Marxists Karl was prompted to say that he was not a Marxist. In the hands of Engels his ideas developed after his death but I think we can accept the validity of what Engels wrote because they were such close collaborators.

Was Lenin a Marxist? Was Stalin? I think old Karl would have run a mile from them at high speed. And why do so many people immediately stick the label Communist upon Marx and Engels? They mostly analysed and wrote about Capitalism. We think today about The Communist Manifesto but it was published in 1848 and largely ignored until just after 1870.

Ah! 1870. That saw the end of Napoleon III. I wonder if Louis Napoleon had read what Marx wrote about him almost twenty years earlier in the 18th Brumaire.

"History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce."

During the Battle of Sedan that year Louis was mostly wandering around confused with no idea what to do. All was lost.

I think that Marx was predicting how Cameron was succeeded by Theresa and then by de Piffle. Led by our prime minister it looks like the UK will walk off with the European Corona Cup and set a standard for efficient government only exceeded by Lukashenko of Belarus, Ballsupanaro of Brazil and, the one and only, Trump himself.

Yes the virus is a huge problem, even for governments with a good record of responding to it, Our problem is that since Thatcher (There is no such thing as society) government has been something done TO the people. It is my guess, based mostly on how people vote, that approximately one third of the electorate cannot be bothered or tell themselves that there is no point, one third are only too willing to swallow what government feeds them, especially if it resonates with long-held beliefs and maybe one third are eager to engage with the issues and examine the evidence that lies behind what the media tell them.

Proudhon was not the first to associate certain kinds of property as having been stolen. Perhaps, however, the most consequential theft has been the theft of intellect.

Who thinks for us?

Government wishes to.

Cliff Jones, 6th May 2020, also published in The Word Newspaper

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