

## POUNDLAND BLAIR

**Peter Osborne is a natural conservative. As a journalist the Telegraph and the Mail feature prominently in his CV. When Corbyn resigned what did Osborne say? He said that Corbyn was right. Right on the important issues. And because he was right this 'visionary leader of the Labour Party' (Osborne's words) had to be attacked by the establishment.**

As I compose this even the birds in my garden are chuntering to each other about Cummings. I was tempted to title this piece BULLINGDON MAN meets THE DOMINATOR. For now, however, I want to leave the Tories to enjoy, during their political lockdown, what I believe is called 'a domestic'. If they want to throw frying pans and rolling pins at each other I shall not call the police any time soon.

Right now and, I fear, for some time to come, my greatest concern is that the Labour Party appears to have fallen into the hands of a Poundland Blair. We do not get the grin, the earnest expression, the pregnant pause followed by soundbite pretending profundity. He comes without an Alastair Campbell who, incidentally features in Osborne's book *The Rise of Political Lying*. He comes without a Philip Gould who was not only Blair's focus gruppmeister but might be said to have, with assistance, invented New Labour. And, most notably, he comes without a Peter Mandelson who, remember, was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich." Starmer is intensely relaxed about the illegal inhumanity of the likes of Netanyahu. Criticise apartheid, ethnic cleansing and the theft of houses, land, lives, history and culture and, even if you and your family can count in generations the extent and depth of your membership of the Labour Party, you may expect to be given the Black Spot.

From memory that is the first time I have ever quoted from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Actually the Black Spot was usually given to a leader who was about to be deposed so perhaps Bullingdon Man might take note. Maybe it should be written into the proceedings of the 1922 Committee.

We can, I do, enjoy singing Alex Glasgow's "As soon as this pub closes the revolution starts". The song makes fun of that propensity of socialists to match their rhetoric to their intake of alcohol as, becoming ever more revolutionary, they slide into oblivion. Is this how it must be? I can remember a succession of prominent Labour Party members who were able to engage in intellectual discussion about the changing shape and priorities of socialism. Anthony Crosland and Michael Foot, in particular, come to mind. To think as a socialist demanded that you woke up your intellect. Blair's intellectual was Adonis. Nuff said.

People will praise Starmer because he has 'taken control'. So often these days we equate concepts such as 'control' and 'power' with politics. In my professional field of education a famous professor asked, not long ago, if it were possible to talk about education these days for more than five minutes without uttering the words 'leader' or 'leadership'? If someone can do a spell check on Blair's book I believe those two words will come out top.

Politics is about values. That demands of us that, as inclusively as possible, we talk about the kind of society in which we wish to live. It also demands of us that we must put up with losing arguments. I fear that on some very serious issues Starmer does not accept that he might lose an argument. Please prove me wrong but it is beginning to look as though if you raise the wrong eyebrow you will be out.

**Cliff Jones 30th. May 2020**

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