

# **GOVERNMENT WITH OR WITHOUT POLITICS**

## **FIVE TESTS FOR**

### **GORDON BROWN AND FOR A FEW OTHERS**

#### **OR**

#### ***HOW DID WE GET INTO THIS MESS?***

#### **AND**

#### ***MIGHT WE EVER GET OUT OF IT?***

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## **PREFACE**

**This began as my attempt to respond to Gordon Brown's book. At a time when our current government seeks to prove that brains are not needed to do the job I believe that it is very useful, and salutary, to read the words of a political grown up, even, maybe especially, a flawed political grown up with a number of personal professional cock ups to his credit. Here I try to use Brown and his book as a prism to help me make sense of rather a lot. Prisms can, however, wobble in the hands of uncertain researchers attempting to focus upon governments as they grow in power at the expense of a diminishing political process and consequently, I believe, become incompetent. Since 1979 our governments have been consistently shifting rightwards while claiming to have stayed in a mythical middle. In my view to govern without genuine politics defines right wing politicians.**

A government that stands on the right has only one card to play in self-justification. It is the card marked COMPETENCE. Successive governments have downplayed, perverted and, at times, totally disregarded the political process. The consequences have not been pretty. We have now, I believe, reached a point at which too many of us have forgotten the knowledge, the skills and the habits required for political participation. We have allowed ourselves to be manipulated by governments that have clung to and hoarded power. This has not been in our general interests.

BREXIT was a fight for power within the Tory Party. Standing outside the shrinking gated community of that party is to experience the incompetence of yet another self-obsessed government. From what I can gauge from the outside looking in our present government does not, in the phrase used so often by Tony Blair in his book, 'get it'. But then, neither did he who also thought he could do government without politics.

**Near the end I shall place a link to something that I hope is an aid to criticising my writing. My purpose is to promote critical conversation. You may detect some unsupported assertions in what follows, also repetition. And what follows has become more and more a race between commentary and calamity. As I seek to describe, analyse and critique the actions of governments and politicians so I discover that often within the hour they have set a personal worst.**

## **A PERSONAL NOTE**

**I began to write this as my wife began what we did not know would be her last illness. I do not mean to pass this off as something with which she would totally agree. Neither do I seek to pretend that it represents an adequate tribute. I have, however, kept in mind her lived values while I have been writing.**

## INTRODUCTION

**Brown's Famous Five** were the tests he set to be passed before Britain would join the Euro. He was always good at tests. At school and at university he passed an awful lot of them at a very early age. In government he liked setting tests. I suggest that this overemphasised government by measurement, though there is more to Brown than simply that. Blair also depended upon government by measurement but the difference is that what Blair wanted measuring changed frequently and as long as he could get a useful sound bite out of a result TB, as friends and colleagues know him, seemed to be happy. They had different approaches to evidence and to detail but perhaps their public values created the clearest contrast: that and their personalities.

My five tests for Brown and for others arise from my reading of his book, *GORDON BROWN, My Life, Our Times* (2017). The tests are derived from a conceptual framework that I devised and have been using since 2010 and the establishment of our Coalition Government<sup>i</sup>. In that year we acquired<sup>ii</sup> a government that was openly committed to what I saw as **Social Fracking**. Perhaps the tests will help me make sense of far more than Brown.

Reflecting on that notion it seems to me that 1979 and Margaret Thatcher ('Where there is discord may we bring harmony') saw the real start of Social Fracking. It has long been accepted that Thatcher deliberately destroyed the post-war political consensus that stood on the foundations of the Attlee administrations from 1945 to 1951. By doing so she attacked what she famously declared did not exist: society<sup>iii</sup>. We in Britain are all, in one-way or another, the beneficiaries of Attlee and Bevan and Beveridge and, particularly when he was Minister for Housing, Harold Macmillan. The politicians I have mentioned represent three political parties: the consensus.

Let me emphasise again that I do not simply wish to review Brown's book. My intention here is to use the book to help me make critical sense of how the UK in particular has been making such a mess of government and politics. The mess is, I believe, huge and closely connected to our sacrifice of politics for the sake of government.

As the 'Chief Examiner' setting the five tests and assessing and evaluating not just Brown's performance I take responsibility for my definition of terms and shall try to explain myself, especially if my definitions seem to depart from normal usage.

**I wish to examine Gordon Brown and others on the following.**

- 1. Politics and Democracy.**
  - 2. Intellectualism.**
  - 3. Education.**
  - 4. Society.**
- And**

## 5. What he and others have left us.

Then I shall try to construct some conclusions and look for a way forward. Perhaps a too often repeated point that I make is that while we like what Robin Hood does for us we continue to vote for the Sheriff of Nottingham.

However, before the examination starts, I want to address the issue upon which almost every reviewer of the book seems to have concentrated. This will not be the last time that I refer to the rivalry between Brown and Blair nor endeavour to compare and contrast the two of them but two moments stand out for me. Possibly they deserve to be called 'defining moments'. I am not talking about the Granita Restaurant 'pact meeting' between the two of them or any subsequent row over the succession.

### TWIN PEAKS

I believe that 9/11 gave us **PEAK BLAIR**. It really was his Date with Destiny: Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man. What action did he choose to take? To whose voices did he listen? Whose voices did he choose not to hear? On what basis did he make his case for intervention?<sup>iv</sup> How much medium and long term planning did he undertake? Was truth the first casualty of his decision-making? Has truth ever been allowed to visit him?

We saw him on television alongside the President of the USA posing as the wise Greek counselling the inexperienced Roman. Soon he would be in front of the cameras again pictured against a backdrop of our 'gallant lads in khaki'. This was a fulfilled Blair. Once again he was the lead singer, not this time of The Ugly Rumours<sup>v</sup> but of the Ugly Alliance of Murderous Liars. He was where he always wanted to be: at the front; of what it did not matter. Neither did it matter who bore the bloody cost. Did such people have a vote? There were no New Labour focus groups for the people of Afghanistan and Iraq.

**PEAK BROWN** was very different. It was the 2009 G20 meeting in London, eighty years after the Wall Street Crash of 1929. In *Saving the World? Gordon Brown Reconsidered* (2013) by William Keegan the point is made that outside the UK Brown has a very high reputation based upon the actions he took on behalf of the entire world, rich and poor, to prevent 2009 repeating the mistakes of 1929. The point is also made that inside the UK his huge achievement hardly registered.

Brown bemoans what he sees as a personal failure to follow through his action to deal with the crisis by inducing a culture change in banking. His recognition of the need for this change came rather late but losing the General Election in 2010 put an end to any chance of such change especially when in George Osborne we acquired the worst Chancellor of the Exchequer since Churchill in the mid to late nineteen twenties.

Comparing Brown with his predecessor and successors as prime ministers can only enhance his reputation. Comparing him with Osborne as Chancellor is not worth the effort. Osborne was incompetent and Osborne was nasty.

**PEAK BLAIR and PEAK BROWN contrast in many ways. The greatest contrast is in their public values. They both intervened in the lives of others. Blair generated continuing death, destruction and displacement. It is his legacy. Everyone knows it. Brown prevented international financial and economic calamity. It is his legacy. No one remembers it.**

## TEST ONE

### POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY

**The Greeks, particularly the Athenians, gave us these words and because they pondered upon meaning so much we see them as concepts for us to define, re-define and again to re-define. The Athenians did not, however, invent discussion or all variants of group decision-making. We constrain ourselves if we imagine that in order to define Politics and Democracy our only reference point is ancient Athens. My question is: while we have been making free with the words Politics and Democracy have we allowed them to become empty concepts? While we ponder on the meaning of 'table' as opposed to the meaning of 'chair', as Aristotle might have us do, has our tea gone cold?**

Nevertheless, those Greek words have a gravitational pull and Aristotle, the great conceptualiser, refuses to leave the stage. In *Of The People By The People, A New History of Democracy* (2011) Richard Osborne alerts us to the tendency to conceptualise but by beginning his book with the Greeks he firmly plants in the mind the notion that we are dealing with a Greek/Athenian invention. John Keane in *The Life and Death of DEMOCRACY* (2009) also begins with the Greeks but provides a perspective on the development of democracy that allows us to take into account societies far beyond Greece.

I see **POLITICS** as the inclusive discussion of and consensual arrival at public values. In my opinion defining it as the struggle for or the games that people play to obtain power is to seriously undermine and devalue the meaning of politics. I find it disappointing that so many politicians and commentators upon the actions of politicians effectively see politics as a dirty game of manipulation. Reading Brown's book I found it necessary to stay alert to signs of what I regard as the misuse of both word and concept. It is the same with any book written by a politician. They tend to believe that politics is defined as what politicians do. Too often what they do is to hurt politics.

**DEMOCRACY** can be perceived in a number of ways. The Peasants Revolt of 1381, the Putney Debates of 1647, the French Revolution of 1789 are among many examples of people exerting a right to participate in governmental decision making. To sit on the far right in the French Assembly of 1789 indicated your preference for absolute government in the form of a

monarch. To sit on the far left indicated your preference for wide participation. I keep this in mind when I hear or read the words Right Wing and Left Wing used as labels for political behaviour. This, of course, places Tony Blair far to the right. And having worked in a local authority run by Militant Tendency it is also where I would place them.

We may find it comforting to tell ourselves that we live in a democracy but when we make our votive offerings to the Goddess Demokratia we seldom notice that after we have left the temple the Goddess Oligarkia has crept in to steal them. This, I believe, is as good a description of the referendum on membership of the EU as many.

Some reviewers of Brown's book judge him to have been a less effective prime minister than his predecessor. Making that judgment indicates to me a current belief that prime ministers must be on the absolutist side of the left/right spectrum. Brown describes his efforts to restore cabinet government and a proper relationship with the civil service. I see that as neither weak nor foolish, although he had previously done his bit to drastically reduce civil service numbers<sup>vi</sup>. In his book he makes use of Macmillan's famous reply when asked what could throw government off course: 'Events, dear boy, events.' He also makes use of Wilson's 'A week is a long time in politics.' This gives the impression of someone surprised by the job: by the lack of control he had compared with his role as Chancellor. Possibly he should have taken note of Mike Tyson, the boxer, who said that everyone has a plan till they get punched on the mouth.

'Overwhelmed' is the word used by some to describe Brown as prime minister, probably because, as he explains in his book, he came to believe that times had changed and prime ministers were now constantly 'in the thick of it'. Quite possibly his early developed sense of responsibility and attention to detail exacerbated the problem in his eyes, though he did try to spread power across his government. He was, of course, constantly under attack from, particularly, the Murdoch press<sup>vii</sup> who had previously supported Blair.

But it concerns me that we appear to have formed the notion that only the seeming to be strong (and stable) can be in charge. Theresa May has demonstrated the limitations of that belief, certainly as an empty electioneering war cry. Yes, Blair had a lot of control but it was based upon carefully crafted narratives (often lies) and the tendency to keep chucking short-term policies at the electorate rather than to think even medium term. His long term amounted to slogans such as 'aspiration' and 'choice' and 'modernisation.'

To put it in a different way, strength and stability can emerge from democracy. They do not have to reside only within autocracy. I would argue that part of Brown's problem as prime minister was that he tried to take some steps towards democracy (and politics) at a time when too many people had come to believe that effective government was autocratic government: government with little politics.

Both politics and democracy require truth. Lies pervert politics and damage democracy. The referendum on EU membership was neither politics nor was it democracy. It was manipulation<sup>viii</sup>.

**Did Brown do politics? Where might he have sat in the French Assembly? Is Jeremy Corbyn a threat to society because he sits slightly towards the left?**

Brown's book provides abundant evidence of early development of a social conscience together with the urge to do something to give effect to it. So much of his early life seemed to be spent writing, campaigning, organising, canvassing and, as ever with the Labour Party, in meetings. I think that was doing politics. Later on I am not so sure.

His 'pact' with Blair, if that is the right word, gave him enormous power over much domestic policy. But for two politicians to effectively say to each other,

**'You have that bit and I'll have this bit and after a while I shall stand down and you can have my bit',**

well, is that even close to my definition of politics? Does it fit any definition of democracy no matter how conceptualised? The Labour Party had (still has) properly established procedures for selecting its leaders. Yes, there have always been internal stitch-ups, punch-ups, deals and a little light back stabbing but my objection to this pact derives mostly from seeing the damage it did to politics and to democracy. They became about power: obtaining it, keeping it and seizing it.

**Later I hope to say something about the contribution of that 'pact' to allowing a relatively unhindered and unchallenged Blair to act on our behalf as a war criminal.**

### **Further Reflection One**

In terms of **Politics and Democracy** it is not easy to work out where to begin in order to make positive changes. This is only a small fragment of what can be said on the subject but, hoping to stimulate critical conversation, I suggest that we might go back to 1829 for guidance. It was an interesting time. The year before gave us the Catholic Emancipation Act and three years later during a time of attempted revolution in a number of European countries Britain began to expand its franchise. That came from the so-called 'Great' Reform Act. A year later we got the first Factory Act. It was a time when a number of prominent Tories perceived a need to put on liberal clothing. I begin, however, in 1951.

In that year Attlee's Labour Party won the popular vote but, because of our electoral system, lost power. As Brown points out in his book, at the general election of 2010 fifteen million people voted against austerity and only ten

million voted for it. We got austerity. There was a slight difference then because, having told the electorate that they were against austerity and, famously, tuition fees, the Liberal Democrats endorsed Tory policies when offered a role in the Coalition Government. The ability to rationalise away values for the possibility of power is, for so many politicians, an innate talent.

I believe that our parliamentary electoral system is anti democratic. In the run up to the 1997 election Tony Blair flirted outrageously with proponents of proportional representation, specifically with Roy Jenkins. His fear of only a tiny and insecure win drove him to consider the change. A thumping power-granting win changed his mind. Yes, it was almost certainly the case that newly elected Labour MPs had no wish for change but his own party was seldom allowed to impede Blair when he was set upon something that he wanted. It seems that he only wanted proportional representation if it led to power. The question is, how do we persuade politicians to give a higher value to representation than to power? 1964 was a very close run general election and 1974 provided two of them. They did not change the minds of power hungry politicians. What might?

I hope this is more than a fantasy but Jeremy Corbyn has, I believe, gone some way to opening up political discourse to accept concepts such as 'fairness'. But is he really a stick-in-the-mud party loyalist? How far might he go to make common purpose with the Greens, for example? They have only one MP but their political significance might be very widespread. The values for which they stand strike chords that can turn into votes. Those votes might be long lasting because so many young people appear to share those values. And not just young people: think of people campaigning against fracking. These are people frustrated when their voices are not heard by local government as it comes under pressure from central government, particularly a central government whose best friends are, too often, international corporations. I suspect that the political land between Labour and the Greens is underexplored. If I am right it needs to be: explored that is.

If we had a government that reversed the simple minded mantra of 'Private Good, Public Bad' I believe that we could make some progress. Since 1979 the basic assumption of our governments has been that things are better when companies compete for contracts to carry out public work. Not only do those contracts go to the lowest bidder who, as a consequence, must cut corners to make a profit, but also the commercial confidentiality card is played: unlike a local government committee the public cannot attend a board meeting or obtain easy access to minutes. We have a democratic disconnect.

What might turn my fantasy into a nightmare are those people inside the Labour Party who still yearn for Blair and those that appear to be obsessed with constructing false allegations of racism against supporters of the indigenous people of Palestine. In other words, to support the point I have repeatedly made about the referendum on membership of the EU, too much of what we are often fooled into thinking are political processes are actually battles for the control of a party. And, too many politicians court ignorance in order to comfort their prejudice.

**While Cameron, Boris and Gove were fighting for control of the Tory Party the interests of the country were hardly considered. Theresa May has only one priority: to remain as party leader. She will do a deal with the devil to keep her job. Some would say that she has. Does the Devil wear a sash?**

It often occurs to me that we might have unknowingly come close to a written constitution (or at least a suggestion for one) in 1829 when the Conservative Home Secretary of the time, Robert Peel, endorsed the following **Principles of Law Enforcement**. Their theme is policing by consent and Principle 7, in particular, just needs the substitution of the word 'government' for the word 'police' for us to envisage what it might mean if the notion that

***the government are the public and the public are the government***

became a basis for government and politics. Here is the full set of principles.

[https://www.durham.police.uk/About-Us/Documents/Peels\\_Principles\\_Of\\_Law\\_Enforcement.pdf](https://www.durham.police.uk/About-Us/Documents/Peels_Principles_Of_Law_Enforcement.pdf)

**Might they do service as the basis for discussion (very widespread and inclusive discussion) about the construction of a British Constitution supportive of inclusive decision making; or have we internalised the habits of subjects who tell themselves that moaning and voting from time to time means that they live in a democracy?**

### **Conclusion One**

On **Politics and Democracy** I possibly spent too much time on the contrast between Blair and Brown but overall I conclude that both politics and democracy have been increasingly sidelined since 1979. It is almost the case that the more often we hear the word 'democracy' from the mouth of a politician, the less we have of it. I frequently refer to the referendum on membership of the EU but it is a prominent case in point. Not only do I not see any democracy in it but I also believe it to have been anti democratic in four ways. It was not about 'we the people'. It was about control of the Tory Party. Second, it was an advisory referendum that, in order to increase his chances, David Cameron declared that he would regard as binding. He did not have the authority to do that but his words changed the game. Third, democracy requires truth. We were told huge lies and to vote on the basis of a deliberately manipulated misunderstanding invalidates a result. Four, over the years and especially since 1979, we have not only been getting rid of civil servants but also treating them as agents of ministers. Add to that the incapacity of the House of Commons to scrutinise what will be several Everests of legislation as a result of Brexit and we can see why Theresa May's first thought was to make use of a prime minister's monarchical powers. Possibly Capita, G4S and others are licking their lips at the thought of yet more contracts where they replace civil servants.

How great are our chances of restoring politics and democracy? Actually, 'restoring' might not be the best word. For a while after 1945 those twins seemed to have been given a boost and from 1951 to 1979 the Postwar Political Consensus possibly lulled us into believing that we were, despite disputes, differences and variable economic performance, on a pleasant plateau gradually making progress towards greater equality and happiness. In other words, politics and democracy as I defined them, have never reached a steady state and they have never transformed us into a naturally participative society. We remain subjects rather than citizens. So, to make progress do we have to chop off the head of the Queen?

We don't but we do need a written constitution. As John Keane points out, the constitution of the USA was designed by a few powerful people to suppress democracy. We can detect the rhetoric of Tom Paine in the US Constitution but its mechanics are quite different. It is a game of power to be played by those most able to pay their entrance fee to the casino. In 2002 Greg Palast's book used such a good title to express this, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*.

In 1975 Denis Lawton tried to encourage us to write a national curriculum. Key to writing it was to have been a thorough and widespread discussion of our social values. When England got a national curriculum in 1988 it was received from government, to be implemented by those denied the opportunity to construct it<sup>x</sup>

**What are the chances of us even beginning to organise meetings of people in towns and villages to start talking about a contemporary version of Peel's Principles: Principles for Politics and Democracy? In all the major parties I believe that smelling the chance of power via the existing system is enough for them to postpone radical thinking and action. If we avoid widespread participatory radical thinking and action on politics and democracy, we shall perpetuate unfairness, inequality and unhappiness. At present for most of the time most of us are disengaged from government. Has that been good for us? Do we prefer to be subjects rather than citizens?**

## **TEST TWO**

### **INTELLECTUALISM**

**I have made this into an 'ism' because it seems to me almost impossible to discuss government and politics without wading through lots and lots of 'isms'. Once, I seem to remember, there was an attempt to suppress the term 'Blairism' because it was being used disrespectfully. And, of course, since 1979 'Thatcherism' has dominated political discourse. Let me take a moment to explain what I believe Thatcherism to be. There are other ways of explaining it but none of them can make it look good.**

I was listening to Patrick Minford, a free market and now Brexit enthusiast, at a small seminar in the University of Liverpool and, just as I would be, was bemused and befuddled by the statistics. Then I realised that it was not about numbers; it was not even about a religious conversion to the beliefs of Austrian economists in Chicago; it was a deeply held conviction that productivity depends upon two things: stimulating already rich people to work harder by offering them the chance of yet more riches while simultaneously stimulating already poor people to work harder by threatening them with yet more poverty.

**Theresa May calls all this 'Christianity'.**

It is not essential to wear glasses to earn the label 'intellectual' and it is wise to bear in mind that the label is not always applied as a compliment but even as an insult the word suggests a critical thinker.

Tony Blair is very fond of the word and in his book uses it to denote what he wishes us to perceive to be the high brain power of so many of his advisers, particularly Andrew Adonis. Working for Blair were a number of people with high brainpower but were they intellectuals?

We might remind ourselves that under Blair there was huge effort to hit targets: to deliver policy no matter if this week's policy was replacing last week's policy without everybody being told. Doubting the wisdom of the policy was not encouraged. But doubt is the stock-in-trade of an intellectual. Andrew Adonis now doubts the wisdom of a policy he authored and pushed for even although it was against agreed party values. The damage done by the commodification of university learning has at last come home to him. Taking so long to have doubt is hardly what is expected of an intellectual.

Geoff Mulgan was Blair's Director of the Strategy Unit and Head of Policy in Number 10. He had previously worked for Gordon Brown. He wrote a real heavyweight of a book called, *GOOD AND BAD GOVERNMENT* (2006). His book is awash with references that demonstrate his wide reading and scholarship. I think he has caught the virus that has been spreading throughout academe for some years. I call it Mad Citation Disease (MCD). With Michael Barber he once lectured a group of experienced parliamentarians on how government was done these days: New Labour meant New Governance, to borrow a word from the title of Harold Wilson's book of 1976 while demonstrating what I hope is merely Mild Citation Disease<sup>x</sup>.

Underpinning all this is the notion that government is what you do *to* people. They only get involved at the implementation stage. And since the targets (really, Blair's idea of a policy) kept changing the people could only ever be reactive in one form or another. In fact we are looking at government without that untidy thing called politics.

Before I say more about Blair's army of intellectuals it might be useful to reflect on a few earlier politicians and their advisors who might wear that label.

Maynard Keynes ('When the facts change I change my mind. What do you do, sir?') was a member of the Liberal Party who, on those occasions when they were on speaking terms, worked closely with Lloyd George<sup>xi</sup>. William Beveridge (a Liberal MP) is famous for his Report but also wrote importantly on unemployment and a fair society<sup>xii</sup>. Harold Macmillan (a Conservative) also did a lot of deep thinking on the same subject, especially in the 1930s. Each could frame questions, research, analyse, reflect, assess and evaluate. Each was also willing to be questioned.

Writing a book does not automatically make you an intellectual. Reading a few political memoirs should be enough to establish that. Self-justification often masquerades as self-criticism and critical reflection. Yes, I am thinking of Blair's book<sup>xiii</sup>. Even writing within a conceptual framework is not enough, especially when authors are unaware of the framework within which they write or fail to critique the values it represents. Brown, for example, knows all about neo-liberalism and yet often uses its language without realising that he is doing so. 'Terrorism' is not a word to be used without raising questions about how careless deployment of an abstract noun can justify war. It is part of the language used by neo-liberals to obtain support for the greater concentration and application of power by governments and by Eisenhower's moneymaking military industrial complex<sup>xiv</sup>. And surely he should have raised a critical eyebrow when he saw Blair deploying 'reform', that beloved word of old school history lessons, as he *deformed* the English school system<sup>xv</sup>.

Twice a Lord, Hailsham (very Tory) wrote a lot, mostly in defence of a stratified society, and tried to present the preservation of an upper class as somehow a middle and reasonable position. In his memoir<sup>xvi</sup> he loudly declares his belief in elitism. The fact, however, that as a prefect at school, he fiercely beat a younger A.J. Ayer the philosopher gave him no rights to call himself an intellectual. The cane transmits pain, not brain.

Attending a public meeting addressed by, for example, Michael Foot or Tony Crosland in the run up to the 1964 general election could be an intellectual treat as you listened to people who did far more than simply sell you an idea as a nice shiny new policy proposal. Such people had done some very deep thinking and were prepared to have that thinking questioned.

But it is not just the depth of research or the width of the reading or even the cleverness of the questions that makes a politician an intellectual. Let me offer a perhaps surprising example, Charles Clarke. Clarke is a defender of Blair and yet when Mary Russell, as Chief Executive of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), wrote complaining that a speech of his demonstrated a woefully out-dated vision of universities, he agreed to a meeting.

On behalf of UCET I wrote the briefing paper. He had the sense to ensure that the last remaining civil servant in the department who knew what this was all about was present. On every point he admitted that he was wrong. And then, my paraphrase, he uttered what might be regarded as the intellectual creed:

***“I am learning so much from losing arguments that I need to have more such meetings.”***

We arranged to have them. He was then moved, to be replaced by Ruth Kelly who cancelled them all. Not any kind of intellectual was Ruth.

The Field Marshall of Blair’s intellectual army was probably Michael Barber known, to his own satisfaction, as Mr. Deliverology. Like me he is a supporter of Liverpool Football Club. He once wrote to the club telling them what they were doing wrong and how they should fix things. They did not win many trophies after the letter. Bill Shankly, remember, equated football with socialism. Winning was important but not as important as the values for which you stood.

Barber was/is known as ‘The Control Freak’s Control Freak.’ I am sure that some people must have an addiction to torture by flow chart and PowerPoint. If so then Barber is for you. Never question the wisdom of the chosen target; just hit it or else. This set the tone for New Labour’s New Governance.

Barber is now Chair of the new Office for Students<sup>xvii</sup>. It looks as though that Office shall be obsessed with data in order to gauge the value for money provided by universities. What they offer is very much perceived to be a commodity. That makes students customers. Education is no longer a public good. It is advertised, bought and sold.

It would have helped if the targets of Blair’s administrations had not changed so frequently and it would have helped even more if their philosophical underpinnings had amounted to something more substantial than ‘choice’ and ‘aspiration’ and ‘modernisation’. Blair loved words such as these. He used them as labels to apply to anything he fancied doing.

As for the late Philip Gould, Blair’s Focus Group Master, inventor of so many New Labour slogans, supposed Hegelian who married the Consciousness of the People to Marketing, whose book on New Labour (both editions) was devoured by the Cameroons (as was Blair’s book) well, I called my review of his book **Ersatz politics and deviant governance**<sup>xviii</sup>. It was a dispiriting discursion, though written enthusiastically. Blair wrote a long foreword to the second edition of Gould’s book. Perhaps he finally nails down something that can stand as his philosophy. He repeatedly says that New Labour was all about CHOICE. Who got to choose? The powerless have little chance to choose.

Another member of the intellectual army was John Birt. This former Director General of the BBC famously gave us the word ‘Birtism’ for his approach to management. Restructuring was what you had to cope with if you worked for him as well as constantly having to learn new words to describe old jobs. Blair made him his Blue Skies Thinker without seemingly any awareness that Private Eye had for years made merciless fun of him. I have often wondered if

the fact that he went to the boys school almost over the road from Cherie's girls school influenced the appointment.

Jonathon Powell is another. Among his books is *THE NEW MACHIAVELLI: How to Wield Power in the Modern World* (2011). I titled my review **The Diary of an Apparatchik**<sup>xix</sup>. It is a good read because of the political gossip it contains. Powell by the way gave Blair the slogan EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION.

Perhaps I should mention Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell but I think that Peter Osborne has said enough about them in his, *THE RISE OF POLITICAL LYING* (2005). They have never sued him I believe. Mandelson's grandfather, Herbert Morrison, harboured an ambition to replace Attlee. He did, however, write a book, *GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT, a survey from the inside* (1954, third edition 1964) that was so well thought of that it was required reading for my degree. I am not sure if that gets him the title of intellectual but his notion of government was rather different from that of New Labour. Yes Morrison was for getting things done but not by commodifying policies for sale and bypassing the civil service.

If agonising when presented with unexpected information is a sign of an intellectual then we might consider Keith Joseph. He once came to a Politics Association Conference. As a founder member of the Executive Committee for this association of teachers of government and politics I thought I had read most of what we had produced. In preparation for speaking to us Joseph had really done his homework. He had read stuff I had forgotten we had written. But he was startled to discover that political education might take place before the age of eleven. I believe he thought primary schools were all about children being prepared for secondary education: preparation for a series of selections up to university I suppose. To participate in political education he seemed to believe that it was necessary to have been gradually inducted into an approved set of social values and learning was the acquisition of knowledge. I was sitting next to my old prof who leaned over while Joseph was talking to mutter, 'Not very bright is he?'

Before leaving this topic I want to mention Edmund Burke's speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774. He reminded them and he reminds us that members of parliament are there to deliberate. They are not elected to follow, as though they were instructions, the momentary and changeable views of those that elected them. Faced with Brexit our current MPs, and in particular Theresa May, might do well to read that speech. So might Jeremy Corbyn.

Burke was one of few Conservatives to whom we might apply the word intellectual. Attempts have been made to add Ferdinand Mount to that list<sup>xx</sup>. Attempts have also been made to present Michael Gove as a Conservative intellectual<sup>xxi</sup>. The word 'risible' comes to mind.

**It is my view that when in 1997 we thought we had seen the back of Thatcherism with its dumbed down discourse of possessive individualism<sup>xxii</sup> New Labour further de-intellectualised government and**

**politics. Tony Blair and his courtiers, his intellectual army, must take the blame for this. Gordon Brown's late efforts as PM to add some politics to government were made more difficult because he had not challenged Blair much earlier. Having a row (they had a lot) is not enough. Blair was intellectually empty. Brown was not.**

### **Further Reflection**

In terms of **Intellectualism and politicians** here are my thoughts on some factors to be considered for their potential to achieve positive change.

**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 to illustrate a lack of intellectualism in government. 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. No one seems to have shouted this down his ear.

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? No they did not because to have done so would have been to excommunicate oneself.

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>xxiii</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.**

## **Conclusion Two**

On **Intellectualism** I formed the conclusion that, again particularly with Blair, the braininess of governmental courtiers not only did not amount to anything remotely intellectual but was actually anti-intellectual. Obsessed by the need to hit a target they failed to ask themselves how wisely chosen was that target. Thatcher famously asked of the men, seldom women, who were to be appointed to her collection of Quangos and Agencies, 'Is he one of us?' Michael Gove disparaged educational experts as 'The Blob'.

I see the general election of 1997 as a turning point; or, rather, a failing to turn back point: to turn back to a Labour Party capable of thinking beyond the values of the political market place in which personalities and shiny policies were sold in exchange for votes. Obtaining power was paramount. I do not suggest that prior to Blair every member of that party devoted their time to discussion of dialectical materialism but they did argue. And those arguments spread beyond party boundaries and throughout society. For me that was politics. Thatcher and Blair religionised their political faiths to the extent that to disagree, to go off-message, was to blaspheme. In the time of Attlee, Corbyn would have been middle of the road. Today he is labelled extremist. Attlee's Labour Party was full of thinkers who did far more than aim to hit a target. His cabinet was well informed and discussed policy. The party was large. What happened to Labour Party membership under Blair? It steadily went down. What point was there in membership of a party that discouraged argument?

For me absolute government needs not only de-intellectualised politicians but it also needs a de-intellectualised electorate. My old prof used to say that it was easy to be right wing because you only needed prejudice and ignorance. It was, however, hard to be left wing because you had to read books with big words in them.

**Particularly in England we have a school system that today overemphasises the learning and regurgitating of 'correct answers'. Our de-intellectualisation and anti-intellectualism start early. Who is responsible for that? I blame successive governments for initiating a public programme of dumbing down in which the media have colluded. Governments require data. They require last year's five percent to become this year's six percent. Of what it scarcely matters. I am not sure how to reverse this but it is urgent that we do so.**

### **An aside on Brown's chapters on Iraq and Afghanistan**

**"IRAQ: HOW WE WERE ALL MISLED."**

**This is the title of a chapter in Gordon Brown's book.**

**My questions are, "We"? "All"? Really?**

**I don't suppose any member of Blair's cabinet of the time has ever made a better constructed defence of how they came to agree to war: to war crime. As part of his personal case Brown willingly admits that he ought to have barged his way into meetings in order to find out more. The admission is welcome but, I believe, insufficient.**

It is true that evidence was withheld and it is also true that Blair did not run cabinets in the same way as, for example, Harold Wilson when, despite enormous pressure, the decision was taken not to join LBJ in Vietnam.

But Brown knew Blair better than most. Blair always looked for evidence to fit his chosen case. Whether you are teaching a child who is doing a project or supervising a PhD you are always on the look out for the tendency to only assemble evidence that "proves" what you want to be proved.

Millions of us could see this. Is Brown's real defence that he was too close and involved in government to have any decent sense of perspective? Had he been a backbencher, might he have seen things differently? Possibly. But this was a government packed full of clever advisors few of whom, I am afraid, had the intellectual strength of the little boy who shouted:

**"The Emperor Has No Clothes".**

Iraq was a consequence of how Blair did things big and small. On this occasion at least I wish Brown had put out of his head that supposed pact he had with Blair and really gone for him. It was a resigning matter. Robin Cook resigned. Had Brown done so I really believe it would not have harmed his chances of becoming prime minister. And it could have prevented war crime: a continuing war crime.

Harold Wilson resigned on a matter of principle (a doubling of military expenditure that damaged the young NHS so that we could join in the Korean War) but went on to become leader of the party, prime minister and to win more elections than Blair. It is not a bar to ambition<sup>xxiv</sup>.

I am afraid that Brown's argument in his chapter on Iraq simply will not do. On weapons of mass destruction and the capacity of Saddam Hussein to use them Blair and his government are often judged either to have lied or to have been too stupid to examine evidence properly. There is a 'Third Way' of looking at this. As I mentioned above Blair characteristically looked only for evidence that suited him. This infected the entire New Labour Project. In fact it poisoned government and politics. It still does.

Brown remarks upon the power of Robin Cook's resignation speech. I believe that on the issue of Iraq it was an unbeatable speech. Blair certainly did not have the capacity to respond to it. Had there been any flaws in that speech, Brown could have found and highlighted them. In fact, although impressed with the speech, he failed to engage with it.

That was, I believe, a fundamental failure committed by someone who once practised proper politics but whose ambition overrode his values. He tells us a lot about both Afghanistan and Iraq during his time as prime minister. We may applaud his gradual (though still today incomplete) disengagement from Iraq but we are still very much involved in Afghanistan after how many years? His explanation of how we got into such a mess rests on his belief that Blair always wished to stay close to the USA. Probably that was the case but I believe that it understates Blair's need to be the lead singer in the band. And Brown's introduction of later information about the UK being deceived about WMDs by the USA (the point of his chapter heading), although believable in itself, remains irrelevant.

Scott Ritter, the predecessor of Hans Blix, had made it very clear that he did not believe that Saddam Hussein possessed what we claimed that he did<sup>xxv</sup>. What Ritter had to say was on the bookshelves long before the invasion of Iraq. Brown makes no mention of it. Neither does Blair. And neither of them mentions that the government of Afghanistan twice offered to arrest Bin Laden if they were presented with evidence of his guilt for 9/11. The fact is that the government of the USA was itching to drop bombs and pull triggers and so was Blair. Brown wrote the cheques, lots of them, for the involvement of the UK. Yes, some of that money went to support a range of good causes, as was always the case with Brown, but most of it contributed to death, destruction and displacement. As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1956 Harold Macmillan pulled the rug from under Anthony Eden's Suez adventure<sup>xxvi</sup>. Brown could have but didn't do the same for Blair's similar adventures.

**There are no prizes for guessing the title of Brown's following chapter. It is,**

**“AFGHANISTAN: A WAR WITHOUT END?”**

To paraphrase the historian AJP Taylor,

**“Any fool can start a war but just try ending it.”**

**Blair was such a fool. Brown could have stopped him at the outset but at least he did his best to end some of the bloody nonsense.**

## **TEST THREE**

### **EDUCATION**

**I struggle to find political office holders that have ever had any kind of grasp on education. That includes David Blunket who is a qualified professional. I have mentioned Charles Clarke and shall make a big exception for Estelle Morris, a fellow member of my teachers union. Her misfortune as Secretary of State was probably that she believed in and did her best to implement agreed Labour Party policy. Blair did not want that. He wanted his policy, whatever it happened to be on a given day.**

*While writing this I received an email from the Commons Education Committee. They were responding to a petition on tuition fees by circulating a small survey. What is their key question? Do universities provide value for money? For them, you see, education is a commodity. They could have asked about the student experience. They could have classified universities as providers of a common good. But that is not how they see education. Universities now sell it. Students borrow money to buy it. Is it worth the asking price?*

In 1970 the Conservatives won the general election and Margaret Thatcher became Secretary of State for Education for four years. In terms of attainment no one comes close. She created more comprehensive schools than all other secretaries of state combined. She should have been proud of that. She was not. It was a time when professional educators felt able to display some autonomy: to be proactive rather than reactive. In 1971 the Politics Association began to encourage political education, also using the term ‘political literacy’. The comprehensive school movement generated widespread research, often sponsored by the now defunct National Council for the Study of the Comprehensive School. And there was lots more creativity and interest in what it was like to be a professional educator. Among many others Denis Lawton and Lawrence Stenhouse in particular were writing books and involved in activities that inspired what felt like professional fulfilment<sup>xxvii</sup>. From 1970 to 1974 we were, remember, still maintaining the post-war political consensus.

Thatcher was, in 1970, inexperienced in government. Her four years in charge of education implementing the policies of Labour’s Tony Crosland<sup>xxviii</sup> taught her to be wary of confident and knowledgeable civil servants. When she became prime minister she ensured that they were subservient to ministers. The professional educational autonomy of the sixties and seventies began to disappear by the late eighties. Lawton would say much earlier.

### **A last professional hurrah**

Being in at the start of the General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE) was enormously professionally fulfilling. It was probably the last hurrah from the profession. Previously there had been an emphasis, particularly for those children in grammar schools, on the recall of knowledge, requiring 'correct' answers. Examinations were designed to produce an easily understandable rank order. Now we tried to differentiate by outcome, asking more open questions that might generate unexpected but valid responses. Also there was lots of coursework that encouraged research and sustained learning. The examination was introduced in 1988 but the build up to it had taken a few years. For me it matched the move to comprehensive schools and signified both professional confidence and the humane treatment of young people. Now fewer eleven year olds were subjected to racial selection because the use of the eugenic 11-Plus examination was confined to a few backward looking local authorities. The expected social consequences looked good. Today I note that Theresa May would like to revive the eugenics movement and use secondary education to reinforce social stratification.

In 1991 John Major selected reverse gear. As a consequence of a speech that he made<sup>xxix</sup> the gradual reduction of coursework began and the nonsense of tiered papers was introduced. From being integral to learning the GCSE examination fell to being a mere instrument for the measurement of learning<sup>xxx</sup>. Having been involved in learning and teaching in every phase I have always been on the lookout for unexpected evidence for unintended but valid learning outcomes. The so-called bottom of the class kid can often surprise you while the so-called top of the class kid feels constrained to follow what it imagines to be the rules.

Policy-makers thirst for data. They need it in order to demonstrate that they are better than their predecessors, particularly if they belonged to a different political party. A description of learning that might include some conditionals and contextualising and some acknowledgement of unexpected evidence for unintended but valid learning outcomes is not what they want. Remember that for Blair hitting today's target was what mattered.

I offer this very short piece as an antidote to the effects of such an approach to policy.

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

Kenneth Clarke did untold damage to the National Curriculum when he ignored the research being carried out on assessment. He simply imposed his own un-researched norms for seven year olds telling everybody what levels he expected children to reach. His successor John Patten added an extra higher level in order to claim that he had produced an improved national score. Clarke also created an army of inspectors to apply sanctions to schools and teachers that failed to play the game of education according to his rules. There is more on Clarke below.

**I have already written what seems to be a lot on the ineptitude of government education policy makers so I propose to provide links with what I hope are helpful comments on my previous writing. There is some repetition and the term 'self-plagiarism' comes to mind (yet again).**

What follows is a short account of a time when I first began to realise that politicians responsible for education had no idea of the existence of normative curves or assessment criteria. I mention Kenneth Clarke who, like Brown, became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Neither of them seems to have had a clue about the meaning of the word 'average' or, even worse, how an average can be constructed from misleading figures.

The link includes another to a very much longer account of the impact upon education of Clarke and Balls. One reason for including it is that Ed Balls was very close to Gordon Brown. In his book Brown writes enthusiastically about visiting academies with Ed Balls when he was Secretary of State for Education without any sense that they were part of the privatisation and commodification of schools, a policy now clearly seen to have been disastrous. Many people predicted the disaster<sup>xxxix</sup>. He also conveys no understanding of league tables. This man so fond of footy seems to believe that a school can climb a ladder without any other school having to slide down a snake. The teams he supports only go up the league if other teams come down.

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

I was asked to contribute a chapter to a book, *Mental Health and Well-Being in the Learning and Teaching Environment* (2016). My chapter concentrated on how the makers of policy created stress. The stress makers do not, of course, confine themselves to education. By holding the people accountable to government these policyfiers remind us that we are subjects not citizens. Get hold of enough money and you can win the right to be a ruler. All you have to do is set up your stall in the market for false politics and engage in a little bribery: exchange a peerage for a million or three and a little bit of favourable legislation and it gives you power. And, yes, I do think cynicism is appropriate.

Here is the link to a version of the chapter. There is yet more on this in the first item of **FURTHER READING** much further below.

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

**Generally speaking I believe that, particularly in England, education has experienced a combination of instrumentalism and commodification. When GCSE was introduced it came with a video. There was a song.**

***It's a testing time, it's a testing time, it's a....testing time.***

Little did we know as we cheerily sang away to each other that what was meant as humour would become the stick with which all participants in education at any age would be beaten by politicians.

### Further Reflection Three

In terms of **Education** I propose the following.

**We need to attempt to expunge the old fashionedness of today and restore the modernity of the past. The proto-Thatcherite Keith Joseph once told a British professor of education that many of our problems came from John Dewey<sup>xxxii</sup>. For Dewey (born 1859) education connected to community, to society and no doubt today he would have added the word environment.**

Reading *Ecological Public Health: Reshaping the Conditions for Good Health* (2012) Geof Rayner and Tim Lang<sup>xxxiii</sup> reminded me to think again about restoring education to an active role in society. So does Stephen Kemmis with his colleagues<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Instead we concentrate on passing that test, that inspection and, hoping that others do badly, climbing up the league table.

Rayner and Lang make the point that if we are serious about public health we should not treat it in isolation. They even quote C.B. Mcpherson<sup>xxxv</sup>. Back in 1983 Kemmis et al made the same point about schools. They are socially critical.

In the UK, especially England, education is now a measurable commodity complete with labels of varying desirability. Try to avoid the label 'sub-standard'. It is as though education has become a thing apart and is seen as a preparation for later life. But it actually *is* life. Even the youngest of children interact with others. They are *in* society, not waiting to become members of society.

Has instrumentalism and the need to respond to the latest policy wheeze removed some fun? Has the long-term professional plan become 'getting through till Friday'? And how much encouragement do academics receive to go off piste? Is their professional life now confined to processing the maximum number of students to safeguard their wages while churning out the required numbers of published articles and cobbling together a PhD thesis that can later be divided into a number of points winning articles? That way your institution climbs up the league. Who in future will accidentally discover educational penicillin?

When I was a director in a university my patience sometimes wore thin when I thought about colleagues who seemingly assumed (this was some years ago) that their salaries were secure while they sat and pondered in the library. We needed income though I tried to obtain that by selling the excitement to be gained by exploration and fulfilment. Starting now I would have tried harder to emphasise that students were fellow members of a learning community. That

was the intention of a collective masters and doctoral research project that a colleague and I tried to put together. Among the factors making that project problematic was that, like all universities in England with masters and doctoral programmes for schoolteachers, we underwent an inspection spread across two academic years. That inspection cost universities a lot of money. Every time I opened a cupboard I was prepared for an inspector to fall out. It was suggested to me that the importance of doing well in the inspection was such that I might drop the PhD; so I did. The project was eventually closed under the pressure of similar short-term priorities.

### **Just one example of what we once tried**

**As a schoolteacher I taught for eleven years in an area of very high unemployment. Some of us formed a group to look at how we, as schoolteachers, should respond<sup>xxxvi</sup>. This was before the introduction of the National Curriculum and when we could be creative.**

One response was to form links with national organisations that shared our concerns. Here the Schools Curriculum Industry Partnership (SCIP) was hugely helpful. It was dissolved years ago but for a while it mingled educators and business people in a supportive network. This was nothing like the official concept of schools preparing young people to meet the needs of industry: needs that were often poorly defined or out of date.

Near my school was Commercial Road. It was full of factories employing thousands of people. One by one they closed like a series of candles being snuffed out in sequence and eventually the most iconic of them all closed down, Tate and Lyle's. Founded in Liverpool, sustained there by working class people and in the West Indies by the descendents of slaves (neither acknowledged in any Tate gallery I have visited) its closure meant more than an increase in the unemployed: it had a social psychological impact.

In response local people, with help, established what was then the largest housing co-operative in Western Europe. Attempts were also made to establish co-operative businesses. At that time the new public examination for sixteen year olds was being introduced, the General Certificate for Secondary Education (GCSE). With help from a colleague in an examinations board I designed a GCSE to support the work being done in the community. It meant that young people could step out of the classroom and take part in various committees examining demographic trends and characteristics; and, alongside architects, priests and parents, make decisions on, for example, the number of bedrooms houses would need in the foreseeable future. The GCSE was designed so that coursework and written examinations related closely to this kind of community activity. And while still working in the school I persuaded senior management and staff to change to a largely self-managed institution with specific links to the community.

The failure was not to convince those with their hands on the levers of power that all this was worth encouraging. Almost without noticing young people were gaining the skills, knowledge and understanding normally confined

inside what were usually timetabled as 'subjects'. Learning came with motivation. As an advisor in the Liverpool Education Authority working on alternative curriculum and assessment strategies I experienced a strong sense that what we were doing was only ever going to be considered peripheral: not orthodox: not mainstream.

That GCSE was closed down by Central Government and the school was closed down by the Catholic Church that preferred much more conventional and single-sex approaches to education. Although a Catholic school, it served an area in which the community was almost entirely Catholic and so was not divisive.

Now I would say that while the need for a creative community approach to education<sup>xxxvii</sup> is greater than ever, there are twin forces at work opposing it. One is that the system has been well and truly fracked and fragmented. It is disconnected from communities. The other is that the urge to measure and label has enforced a less creative approach to learning. Nudging an increasingly dysfunctional system is not enough. As Naomi Klein says in her response to Trump and Trumpism, we need to LEAP<sup>xxxviii</sup>.

My interpretation of her exhortation is that we cannot wait for those that choose where to place the political fulcrums, decide upon the lengths of the levers and exert the power. They control a system that now seldom works in the public interest. Writing about Standing Rock in her book *NO Is Not Enough, Defeating the New Shock Politics* (2017) Klein emphasises the educational theme of that gathering of disparate people working on a project that to the outside must have seemed to be focussed upon a single issue. The interest in education came about as a natural human desire: an activity both enjoyable and essential to society. Let me repeat: education should not be set apart from society; it has to be integral to it.

**Too many politicians have parcelled up education as a commodity to be advertised, weighed, priced and sold. Do that to education and those values come to dominate all other parts of society. So it is back to Blair's EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION but this time without the snake oil.**

### **Conclusion Three**

On **Education** England especially has been bedevilled by the target setting culture. A while ago I saw experienced headteachers with tears in their eyes listening to Angela Rayner, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education. Those were tears of hope that professional life might once again be devoted to the enablement of learning instead of what it has become: the infliction upon children not only of the target culture but also of officially approved methods, content and 'correct answers'.

At present education has become a contributor to stress. Why should that be? What does it achieve? Possibly in one short spell in office a Secretary of State can, just before being moved to another job, claim an improvement. If so, it

will very likely be a fiddled set of figures because most of the baseline statistics that we use came out of the heads of politicians. There was absolutely no research done to decide that a CSE Grade Four represented the national average for sixteen year olds but we were told that was the case. There was zero research done to establish that the average performance for seven year olds would be Level Two but, again, that is what we were told it would be.

Kids can enjoy a game of footy until they are told that they are not good enough. For me education, particularly in schools, has too much of a destructive force to it. Learning about kennings in Anglo-Saxon poetry a boy in my wife's class described school as a 'grading place'.

## TEST FOUR

### SOCIETY

**Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, talking to Women's Own magazine, October 31st 1987:**

"I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation."

A good place to start the **Society Test** do you think? For Thatcher society did not exist. Society requires regulations and laws. It seems easier to govern if you do not bother with too many of them: if you release the individual to be individualistic. That way true believers think there will be less for government to do. If things go wrong, the blame does not reach the government. It provided you with opportunity. If you cocked up, it is your fault.

In *THE PRIVATE ABUSE of the PUBLIC INTEREST Market Myths and Policy Muddles* (2008) Brown and Jacobs point out the contrary silliness of this<sup>xxxix</sup>. Privatising while continuing to maintain parallel publicly accountable services adds a layer of regulations and also regulators who have to be paid and trained. This increases cost and confusion and, I suggest, makes government both busy and incompetent. Society tends

to become dysfunctional if you do not know where to telephone when your dustbins are not emptied.

Tony Blair ought to have replied 'SOCIETY, SOCIETY, SOCIETY' when he was asked in 1997 to give us his priority. As a Son of Thatcher<sup>x</sup>he could not have said that. The often-frenetic activity of his administrations that held the people accountable to government by constantly setting targets to be hit (or else) may appear to be at odds with Thatcherite de-regulatory urges. It was, I believe, simply a more driven stripping out of those political and democratic processes, procedures and societal norms that once attempted to ensure that governments were accountable to the people. As I have pointed out, Blair did government without politics. Doing that damages society. Thatcher's preference was to pretend that it was not there while simultaneously making it respond to instruction and inspection. We may see her as a privatiser but she did, in fact, nationalise the school curriculum and made children, schools and teachers accountable to government.

Both Thatcher and Blair liked government because it offered control. Neither liked politics because it risked the loss of control: the losing of arguments. And Gordon Brown played a far bigger part in de-regulation than, in my view, he would like to admit. What he did with banks and the city encouraged irresponsibility. He did not cause the global crisis but, as I have hinted in **TWIN PEAKS** above, it took that crisis for him to realise how anti-social was the behaviour of our financial sector. Because it stands for the inclusive discussion of and consensual arrival at public values politics sensitises government: it counters the addiction to power, hence Blair's avoidance of politics.

Equality (with inequality) is an issue that has a huge impact upon society. As I write, the introduction of votes for women is being discussed and celebrated. The year was 1918. Equal voting rights did not actually arrive until 1949. The men with whom women were gradually becoming more equal in terms of the right to vote were themselves not equal until then. We may treat votes for women as a single issue to be studied in school, for example, but broaden the context and we can see more complex relationships between issues. Who now sees the 1970 Equal Pay Act as a single socially transformative action? The factors maintaining inequality are only partially susceptible to treatment by Acts of Parliament. We are back to values again: to public values. To discover why there continue to be gaps in pay between men and women we must search among those values, some of which are often hidden from view.

Perhaps the very concept of equality is troublesome for some. Had Bill Gates paid himself the same wage as his employees, he would not now be in a position to travel the world deciding which humanitarian projects he will support. Should he be praised for his generosity? Do our public values allow the greedy exploiters of both workers and customers to be lauded for their charitable works? In the UK he would now be Lord Gates, especially if he had slipped a few bob to the Tory Party.

(Sir) Richard Branson and Bill Gates and, I am afraid, many others obtain a fame that has its foundations upon inequality. Who benefits? Not even, it seems, those at the top of the pile benefit from living in an unequal society. They might, however, take a while to come to that conclusion.

The following link is to a review of a book written during the last New Labour administration. My question is why, given that so-called New Labour had been in power since 1997, it had to be written. The central point of the authors is that equality is good for all. Inequality does not simply bring harm to the unequal. It harms society: all of it.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/mar/13/the-spirit-level>

And this book was published one year after New Labour lost power. I ask the same question. The responses of our current government to the result of the EU referendum suggest that inequality will be a growing feature of our society. And that inequality will be measured not merely by money but also by health and happiness. Capitalism is not good for us.

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/book-review-the-cost-of-inequality-why-economic-equality-is-essential-for-recovery/>

**Supporters of New Labour will point to initiatives such as Sure Start as evidence of a commitment to socialist values. Comparison with what happened when the Coalition took over in 2010 helps to make that point. For me, however, there was no deep inhalation of Capstan Full Strength Socialism. What we got from New Labour was Silk Cut Extra Mild Socialism with a very long filter. Blair made it clear to Brown that he would not accept higher taxes on the rich, not even at the level that Thatcher considered acceptable. What was it that Peter Mandelson said?**

**We are intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich as long as they pay their taxes.**

**And those taxes were low.**

### **Further Reflection Four**

In terms of **society** here are my thoughts about possible improvement. I begin with an **ASIDE** written with Tony Blair in mind.

### **Tony Blair's contribution to the lumpenisation of politics and society**

### **A fragment, not a long piece**

**Have we been made lumpen by the powerful? Possibly 'lumpenisation' encapsulates the intentions and effects of people of power. Is society intended by the powerful to be a conglomeration of manipulable people to serve and respond as required? If you cannot position yourself to stand among the powerful then what are your choices? Tony Blair made it very clear that if one word summed up New Labour it was 'choice.'**

Who decides what can be chosen? Can we all choose the same thing? Are we sometimes persuaded to choose unwisely? Do we choose to empower those that disempower us? We enjoy the Welfare State and the NHS given to us by Robin Hood so why do we vote for the Sheriff of Nottingham?

**If we do not like our responses to the above set of questions what can we do about it?**

Control of language is very important to Blair and Blairites. Their influence remains strong in both major parties. We should always watch out for words such as **MODERATE** or **CENTRE** or **REFORM** or **CHOICE** or **MODERNISATION**. The purpose of capturing such labels is to ensure that they apply to the policies of those in power, thereby labelling as extremists those that think differently.

Another dangerous word is **CONTROVERSIAL**. Take a war crime for example. If you can successfully get people to refer to it as controversial, you take the sting out of it. You leave the impression that it is debatable, that there is a valid alternative interpretation.

In my view the BBC has been a bad misuser of language in pursuit of its notion of **BALANCE**. Too often this has meant that despite stark staring guilt, a denial of that guilt must be given equal treatment and, therefore, respect.

It is inside this linguistic landscape that Blair and his courtiers continue to operate. Too many of us fall at the first hurdle when a Blairite asks us: "Surely you are not against **REFORM**?" Naturally we say we are not. But once we agree, we have tacitly accepted a manipulated definition and so lost the argument. We have crossed the border into their landscape where all the signposts continue to carry the same names but now point to somewhere quite different.

Blair constructed a linguistic obstacle course that is still in use. Too many people waste energy coping with it. We should tell it like it is. There is no other way to nail him. And nailing him is what we must do, not merely for war crimes but also for his adaptation of Thatcher's notion that there is no such thing as society, only individuals. Although not expressed like Thatcher Blair's society was composed of those that were enabled to make choices and those that were not.

Aeron Davis' new book, *Reckless opportunists, Elites at the end of the Establishment* is now out (2018). The picture of Boris on the front might put you off. Pages 114-115 are on the Iraq adventure, though there is more

elsewhere. I would not say that he provides anything stunningly new on the illegal invasion of Iraq but, once again, we see the damage done to the shrinking civil service corporate memory and expertise as people are rotated and, very notable, the huge pressure upon Labour MPs to toe the line. They too were thought to be lumpen: the lumpen parliamentariat.

Having read what Gordon Brown has to say on the crucial vote in his book my belief that Brown was being disingenuous has been reinforced. According to Davis it seems that Blair threatened to resign and that many Labour MPs, Brown included, convinced themselves that if Blair lost the vote, the reputation of the government would be ruined. I do understand that obtaining and keeping power are important but does the price not matter? These were MPs unconvinced about WMDs, often totally disbelieving Blair. And yet, they gave him their votes.

When Britain submitted to US pressure to take part in the Korean War, funds were diverted from welfare and the NHS to double our spending on the military. Nye Bevan, John Freeman and Harold Wilson resigned because of this. It did their careers no harm at all, just the opposite. I often say that Blair poisoned politics. I am prepared to admit that he was not unaided. Nevertheless, even carrying with me history's pinch of salt, I do believe that when it comes to values politicians are not what they used to be.

Nailing Blair would make such a difference! He continues to contaminate the Labour Party and we saw how much influence he had upon Cameron, Gove and company who referred to him as 'the master'. Today Blair encourages Labour MPs to vote against Jeremy Corbyn on the issue of Brexit: this from the man who shoved tuition fees and Iraq down the political throats of his own party. He also shamelessly encourages the artificial accusations of anti-Semitism in the Party. Clearly he has not noticed the lengths a government run by Netanyahu will go to in order to prevent a supporter of the truly Semitic indigenous people of Palestine becoming prime minister. Blair was, remember, a Peace Envoy garlanded with weeds. As Peace Envoy he was top of the league: the Poisoned Ivy League.

**Back to the subject I began to write about: society.**

**I have used the term Social Fracking for years now. For me its appropriateness increases as every day passes. Brexit looms for Britain. It means more pressure upon society. Does anyone seriously believe that Boris, Fox, Gove, Rees-Mogg et al see this as an opportunity to widen political participation: to decrease inequality: to improve the quality of life for all: to open the gates of the communities of privilege: to restore the values of Beveridge and all those that helped us develop a discourse of humanity? Which is it to be, a society of supportive interaction or a society accountable to the powerful? If we manage to reverse Brexit, it has already done untold damage to our lack of social investment, to our financial strength and, possibly worst of all, to our social values.**

What follows was written in 2012 when it became more than ever apparent that the Coalition Government was set upon destroying the foundations of society. What remained of the Liberal Party, to whose social policies we owed so much, had already decided that the chance of power trumped its old values.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/Counterpoint%20to%20the%20current%20Coalition%20Government1.pdf>

To me, it is clear that despite the change in our passports identifying us as citizens rather than subjects it is subjects that we remain. The concept of the Crown in Parliament is not an object of everyday chat but when we moan about the Royal Family, it is important to remember that they exist merely to endorse the monarchical powers, some times weak and sometimes strong, exercised by prime ministers.

**Does this mean that I believe that we can only function as a democratic society and engage in real politics if we become a republic? Not quite. But I do believe that we must stop thinking of the Privy Council and the Royal Prerogative and much else as quaint items from a history book. The first thought of Theresa May after the EU referendum result became her responsibility was to reach for the Royal Prerogative: to use her monarchical powers. It is a delusion to imagine that the referendum had anything at all to do with democracy except to diminish it. The thought of Boris and company as Tribunes of the People is laughable.**

### **Conclusion Four**

**That word SOCIETY has stimulated countless books, articles, policies, lectures, theories and arguments. The question is: if we wish to live together, on what basis shall we do it? Other questions are: how shall we set about making such decisions, who shall take part in discussion? If the emphasis is upon our being subjects rather than being citizens then most key decisions about the shape and values of society shall be received from the already powerful.**

Our task will then be to implement decisions taken not on an inclusive basis but upon an exclusive one. A society in which the reactive majority responds to a proactive minority is intended to be tidy, especially when the majority is persuaded to behave within the rules and boundaries set for it. As I have asserted, a right wing absolutist government has only one card to play: the card of competence. Move to the left and you risk untidiness. Would that be worse? Would that automatically mean a loss of competence?

In 2019 it shall be forty years since the accession of Thatcher. How has our society fared since? I do not believe that it has had the benefit of competent governance; especially if competence is to be measured on the widespread nature of social benefit. We have massive evidence of

the reverse. Social stratification is embedded and the gaps between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, are now huge. My point has been that if the rich and powerful perceive this to be to their advantage, they are making a big mistake: a society that has been fracked benefits no one. Mostly, however, they shall be the last to suffer from their actions: their socially destructive actions.

Perhaps I could try harder to be optimistic but first it is necessary to re-state my understanding of those terms LEFT and RIGHT. For me they are crucial for an understanding of societal change or lack of change.

I believe that everyone recognises the 1789 French origin of the terms: right wing meaning support for absolute government and left wing support for more and wider participation in governmental decision making. It seems, however, to be the contemporary view that a simple spectrum like this is nostalgically obsolete. Apart from the point that someone can be, always could be, described as right wing on some things and leftwing on others, there is the often unresisted urge to classify and sub-classify till the cows come home. That process, in my mind, concentrates far too much on issues and policies. 'Where do you stand on X? On Y?' And so on. It means that we spend too much time using variants of 'left' and 'right' to make sense of an ever changing kaleidoscope. Instead we should be discussing values.

In *Left or Right-The Bogus Dilemma, a Demolition Of The Conventional Map of Politics* (1968) Samuel Brittan warns that thinking left-right results in a battle for the 'centre'. He also reminds us of a tendency to settle for a few years of 'left' followed by a few years of 'right'. Since 1979 it has been difficult to spot any 'left'. He is, I think, arguing for recognition that on many issues the arguments lose something by being too quickly labelled as owned by one side or another and that this diminishes discussion and the effectiveness of government.

My attachment to the original definition is, however, based upon my experience of coping with governments since 1979; directly this concentrated upon education. As Thatcher administrations seized control of both the school curriculum and assessment the attendance of 'minders' was noticeable when decisions were to be taken about what should be taught and how it should be assessed. I remember once we were admonished for using the term 'learning experience' instead of 'lessons'. And Thatcher much preferred tests to tasks<sup>xli</sup>.

Under Blair it was impermissible to ask fundamental questions. If you did, you would be told that you could not discuss the merits of a 'government given'. The consultation event that you were attending was only ever about how to implement policy you had taken no part in devising. Your experience and expertise only mattered in terms of how to do what you were told.

One reason for my attachment to a simple and original definition of the terms 'left' and 'right' is my belief that any trust we have placed in the ability of absolutist governments, such as those of Thatcher and Blair, and now, heaven help us, Theresa May, to deliver competent government has proven to have been totally misplaced.

**If to be left wing involves widening participation then it almost certainly multiplies the chances of misunderstanding and there are bound to be cock ups. It will be untidy but it will be politics and, I believe, those cock ups shall be more public, more open to examination and that we shall learn from them far more quickly than we learn from the hidden cock ups of absolute governments.**

## TEST FIVE

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

**In *THE TORTOISE AND THE HARES* (2008) by Giles Radice there is a description of the different approaches of Attlee and Churchill to chairing cabinet meetings during the war. If you have a hardback copy it is on page 115.**

When Attlee presided over the cabinet, everything changed. A member of the coalition government was asked about the contrast: 'When Attlee takes the chair, Cabinet meetings are business-like and efficient, we keep to the agenda, make decisions and get away in reasonable time. When Mr. Churchill presides, nothing is decided; we listen enthralled and go home, many hours later, feeling that we have been present at an historic occasion.'

And my point is? Even inside the officially most powerful governmental group political participation is important. Charisma sells but it does not get the government's ironing done. In 1945 the government led by Attlee demonstrated the dependent connection between democratic politics (discussion) and governmental competence (getting the job done). We are told by Blair's intellectual army (especially Barber and Mulgin and Powell, not forgetting Adonis) that times have changed. In his book Gordon Brown agrees. The connection is now between charisma and flow chart. Charisma tells us what target to hit. The flow chart tells us how to hit it. So who gets to ask if it was a wisely chosen target? How many bums got to sit on Blair's sofa?

It is my belief that despite the untidy uncertainty of wide political participation doing government without it and cranking up autocracy leads to Afghanistan, to Iraq, to commodified education, to knowing the price of health while ignoring its value, to, ultimately, a fracked society.

1997 could have changed all this. Blair's chosen political illiteracy was the reason that we did not. How long might he have lasted in an Attlee government? Silly question: he would never have got into one.

I called my review of Blair's book **From illusion to delusion** and ended with the following words.

I think that he certainly did have a towering ability to assert himself at certain times and in certain situations. The book, however, reads like an apologia from the hero of a Greek play who has yet to realise that he was taking part in a tragedy to which his own personality had contributed so much. He retains the ability to do all the same old conjuring tricks but he should no longer expect us to believe the illusion. His delusion is that he still does.

For me, Brown's tragedy is the greater. We know from *THE RISE OF NEW LABOUR* (2001) by Heath, Jowell and Curtice that having Blair as leader was not at all crucial to the result of the 1997 general election. Had Brown replaced John Smith as leader, Labour would have won comfortably. That would also have been the case, had Smith not died. We also know that Project New Labour<sup>xlii</sup> was not simply Blair and his mates. Gordon Brown signed up to it. My feeling is that Neil Kinnock's failure to defeat John Major reinforced the natural Thatcherites in the Labour Party. They seemed to believe that the political weather had permanently changed and that they must be driven by the prevailing wind. Some were only too happy being blown to the right. Brown was not a natural Thatcherite but like so many the urge to obtain power overrode the values that initially drew him into the Labour Party. Tony Blair had no such values. His tragedy is about loss of power. Brown's tragedy is about the erosion of his socialism. Too late, I believe, this began to dawn upon him.

I have one caveat: had Brown become prime minister in 1997, who would have become Chancellor of the Exchequer? The initials OMG could have been invented for the thought of Blair in that role. In fact Blair was totally unsuited for any kind of ministerial role. He did not do detail and I am reminded of Attlee's reply to a former minister who wanted to know why he had been sacked: 'Not up to it.'

Today we have a government that does not do politics, is incapable of doing the governmental ironing and focussed only upon the retention of power. At one time we could have said that the philosophy of the Conservative Party was a rationalisation of greed and privilege. I am sure that if given the space to relax and expound, the party would, once again, attempt to convince the peasantry to vote for the Sheriff of Nottingham.

"I am not a quitter" says Theresa May. Translated this means that she cannot bear to lose power. For now that is all that counts as Theresa May looks more and more bemused while the pillars and posts of governmental life are having fun bouncing her between them.

Anthony King<sup>xliii</sup> is not the only close observer of British governments to have noted their tendency to hoard power. Central governments of every persuasion have always been able to find reasons to take power from local government. Independent thought and action represent a threat to ministers wishing to see their policies implemented. As Secretary of State for the Environment (in effect local government in those days) in 1976 Peter Shore, I remember, would rail against local councils when they failed to fall into line. The usual method of disciplining them was to simply withhold funds: more to be spent at the centre.

Particularly in England the teaching profession that had for a while practised some autonomy with lots of co-operation between Local Education Authorities found itself sidestepped and powerless after the passing of the 1988 Education Act setting up the National Curriculum. We need to remember that this was an enabling act that placed enormous power into the hands of a secretary of state<sup>xliiv</sup>.

In 2010 Michael Gove as Secretary of State for Education imposed policy without proper scrutiny by using parliamentary procedures usually reserved for emergency legislation concerning, for example, terrorist threats<sup>xlv</sup>. The setting up of academies disconnected schools from democratically elected local government. That, of course, was Gove's intention. It was his terrorist threat: part of his contribution to the fracking of society.

What today, particularly in England, provides a form of cohesion for the school system is not a shared commitment to a local and possibly diverse community. It is inspection. These inspectors do not work to the professional values promoted by Lawrence Stenhouse in 1975<sup>xlvi</sup>. They have become the traffic wardens of education and many other aspects of public life. They serve government rather than provide a public service. As society is being fracked I question the purpose of inspection. I believe that as governments frack society the effect of inspectors examining our increasingly privatised public services is to make that fracking worse. We no longer co-operate to serve; we compete for contracts and the profits we hope they shall bring. Inspectors enforce a race to hit the target no matter how unwisely chosen that target might be. Government validates social fracking because it has the desire and the power to do so.

Our local Carnegie Library now wears a TO LET sign<sup>xlvii</sup>. In the time of David Cameron's Big Society the idea was that in the name of Localism volunteers would replace professionals to provide such a service. For years now that library has stood empty: a symbol of the deliberately chosen policy of austerity. The only question local councils must ask themselves at budget time is which service shall they cut?

I recently spent time in a hospital whose incomplete replacement building could be seen out of the window. No one was working to finish it. The private company holding the contract had finally crashed after being given a series of contracts by government hoping to stave off the evil day. When the money for Contract A ran out it was financed by the money for Contract B. That meant

an urgent need for Contract C to fund B. And so it went on until the crash. The idea was to bid for a range of government contracts in order to keep going. This is not, as we used to say, the way to run a navy. Government could have both financed and managed the building of that new hospital but, like its predecessors, it does not believe in that sort of thing anymore<sup>xlviii</sup>.

**Margaret Thatcher destroyed so much of our manufacturing industry and replaced it with a manufacturing industry.**

If I look back over the five tests I remain convinced of the usefulness of my conceptual framework. The very notion of social fracking seems to me to be a good description of what has been happening, certainly since 1979. Might I have found a different set of five tests, effectively component parts of the social fracking kit? I did say that I was writing to stimulate critical conversation so perhaps I can leave it to others to think of something better.

If, however, I have made a reasonable stab at uncovering some of the reasons for the state we're in<sup>xlix</sup> perhaps I can attempt to formulate some ideas that might make things better; or not!

**In the meantime here is a good old-fashioned examination question.**

**Politics is left wing while government is right wing. Discuss.**

### **Further Reflection Five**

**1848 across Europe and further afield there were outbursts of demand for democracy. We should be careful about using the term 'revolution' because they were largely suppressed. Blood was, however, spilled. Britain too gave vent to its inner Robespierre in the form of the peaceful Chartist Movement calling for what today we might see as some mild parliamentary reforms bringing to male working class people the benefits that had been granted to the male middle class by the mis-named 'Great Reform Act' of 1832.**

The intended march upon Parliament to present the Charter frightened our Establishment. Signing up as special constables to defend society against itself were Robert Peel who, in 1829 had endorsed the notion of policing by consent; William Gladstone who, in 1870, gave us universal free and compulsory schooling; and, wonder of wonders, Louis Napoleon the nephew of Bonaparte. He was on the first of his exiles in Britain.

1848 also gave us The Communist Manifesto. It had no significant impact upon the attempted revolutions of that year but it provided insights and analyses that made sense of what was happening. It was the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 bringing about the second exile of Louis Napoleon that saw a revival of interest in the Manifesto. From that time I believe that it is fair to say we have all been Marxists, at least in the sense of either being commodities to be priced and exchanged in the human market

place or being in a position to commodify others even when we did not realise we were doing so. Sometimes it is the commodified doing the commodifying. Schoolteachers are commodified according to how successfully they commodify children.

The Social Fracking that we are now experiencing was not unforeseen. Yes, the dialectic has its drawbacks, as I am sure Marx was aware, and yes, much damage was done by Lenin cranking the wheel of history so quickly that it crushed dissenters, but it is difficult to live outside an analysis that draws attention not only to how we can be alienated and commodified but also to the tendency of the greedy to create chaos and disharmony for the sake of short-term profit.

We do not have to confine ourselves to Marx and Engels in order to see what I call Social Fracking. Wilkinson and Pickett and Stewart Lansley<sup>l</sup> provide plenty of evidence and trustworthy analyses demonstrating the negative consequences for all of us of unequal societies. Focussing on the USA Daniel T. Rodgers' book *AGE OF FRACTURE* (2011) concentrates upon the change of ideas in order to demonstrate the uncertain nature of what were previously held to have been reliable certainties holding society together. Meanwhile, Yanis Varoufakis<sup>li</sup> pulls no punches when describing the impact upon probably unwise countries of the actions of short-sightedly selfish countries.

**How to change all this? The forces of reaction are very strong. They are embedded in: our approach to politics and democracy; our intellectual life; our divisive and commodified educational system; and in the culture of our society. We like what Robin Hood provides for us but we still vote for the Sheriff of Nottingham. As I have suggested, we need a different discourse: a discourse in which people such as Tony Blair are not allowed to squeeze out the old meanings of a concept such as REFORM in order to squeeze new and contrary meanings into them. As leader of the Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn offers us the opportunity to develop a humane discourse of public values. His leadership has also highlighted the stubbornness of too many within the party that have for many years resisted such a discourse. The Tory Party has, meanwhile, demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that pursuit of power and the avoidance of politics in order to protect privilege and greed lead to governmental incompetence.**

## Conclusion Five

**The word ESTABLISHMENT features very often in descriptions and analyses of how we are governed: governed, that is, behind and underneath what the textbooks have to tell us. Today the term 'deep state' is used a lot. I am not sure what that phrase contributes to a better understanding of where the fulcrums are placed, how long are the levers and whose hands are upon them. I remain fond of Anthony Sampson's use of the word ANATOMY<sup>lii</sup> to analyse all this. In recent years Will Hutton not only did much relevant work but also, for a brief while, seemed about to provide New Labour with a useful political conceptual**

**framework<sup>liii</sup>. Establishments change and, as Aeron Davis<sup>liv</sup> points out, often do not realise how they can work against their own self-interests. When Sampson was writing we might have assumed that hidden power worked to preserve a stability that sustained it. Even its changes seemed to be about doing just that. Today it looks as though that hidden power is creating instability. It is my social fracking point.**

Perhaps we should stand back and look at the big picture: a very big picture like the one given to us by Yuval Noah Harari<sup>lv</sup>. His two major books are big, well written, fascinating and, I believe, important. He provides us not only with perspectives on humanity but also with new language to make sense of what is happening to us and the stories we tell ourselves. The here and now, the short term, cannot, however, be made irrelevant. Harari lives on land stolen within living memory from indigenous people who were expelled to make way for his settlement (moshav). Are philosophical historians to be permitted to set such issues to one side while they do their deep thinking?

My mother was 11 in 1914. In 1915 as the eldest and a girl she was taken out of school to look after the kids while her mother went to work in a munitions factory. You could make good money working on munitions. My father was 13 in 1914 having left school the year before. In 1915 he went to sea: to war just like his one-year-older brother. Both trained to be gunners on merchant ships. Thomas Llewelyn, the brother, lost a leg fighting a submarine. He was 17. He died while recovering. What was I doing at such an age? I was playing footy.

One of the costs of standing against this madness was borne by the young men in my wife's family whose objection to the killing of young German men was rewarded by imprisonment. They got up and walked out of their chapel when, war having just been declared, their minister told them to join the army.

**Yes this is personal but I can't think how else to say what I want to say.**

World War Part One was followed by World War Part Two and, as George Orwell's Winston Smith<sup>lvi</sup> could tell us, has never ended. War is good for business. You may want to adjust your dress, as men used to be told upon leaving the gents, before kneeling at the altar to receive Holy Communion because those soaring profits that you receive from your shares in the armaments business need to be dressed up as peacekeeping or some such.

We have been told by our government to promote and to follow 'British Values'. Does that mean anything? We make far more than just a few bob out of selling arms. But on the deficit side of the ledger are the deaths, the displacement and the destruction of the innocent.

Theresa May carries the national rubber stamp that endorses the profit her husband makes from this. So that is all right then. At election time make sure you vote Tory if you believe that profit beats everything. It certainly beats that prophet, what was his name? Oh yes, Jesus the asylum seeker with the wrong coloured skin. "Get thee to a camp in Calais."

### **So how useful has Brown's book been?**

Towards the end he makes the point that when out of office it is normal to return to basic beliefs. He also outlines, with the enormous experience and expertise that he has stored in his head, sensible global ways forward. Again I had a sense of if only we would all pass the ball to Gordon he would score the goals for us. I do not make that point to disparage him: he really does possess enormous talent. To stay with footy Blair is the ineffectual show off who fails to score because he has more than one eye on the supporters he tries to impress: a good dribbler but neither a passer nor a scorer. 'Look at me', he shouts to the stands.

Brown is now aware of the need for widened participation in governmental decision-making. For me this represents a leftward shift: a shift from the frenetic governmentalism of Blair towards a more considered and inclusive politics. If you are in power the exclusion of 'others', particularly opponents, seems sensible. When you lose power inclusion is, it seems, to be advocated. He refers to a current degree of political homelessness, meaning that our political parties can no longer count upon instinctive loyalty. Maybe he is right about this but I believe that he still sees politics as a game in which it is the best presented shiny new policies that will be bought in exchange for votes.

In this case inclusion does not extend beyond the political market place. 'Buy my policy, it is shinier than their policy' has not proven to have been good for governments and certainly not good for us. I wish he could slough off the snakeskin of New Labour Blairism. He cannot quite do that. Every so often in his book he has to say something nice about Blair. I keep shouting: 'Come on Gordon, kick him in his Weapon of Mass Reproduction.' But he won't.

He seems not to have realised the extent to which Neo-Liberalism framed his governmental decision-making. Neither does he seem to realise that we might need more than energetic re-adjustments in order to introduce values such as fairness and equality, those so easily problematised values that are often presented to us as unattainable ideals. 'Yes', we are told, 'they are fine ideals but we live in the real world so stop thinking of them as attainable.' If we fail to make progress towards them our social fracking will get worse.

Gordon Brown also emphasises his support for education. For him, however, this is learning that can be measured: learning in order to be measured. He brings to mind that appalling word used by Americans and Michael Barber: 'instruction'. Its meaning is the antithesis of the word 'education'.

### **Has Brown been a good prism?**

I think he has because although he became embroiled in the anti political New Labour movement; although he swallowed far too much neo-liberalism; although he has too much measurology in him; and although he still cannot bring himself to condemn Blair's war crimes his moral tortures are those of a politician who began as a socialist but, while adjusting to a world made

Thatcher, became contaminated. For me that is very typical of so many: too many. It makes him a useful prism.

I admire his abilities and regret his too late arrival as prime minister. Earlier he could have taken over a party and a government less poisoned by Blair. Very imperfect he just might have had the potential to have been our best prime minister since 1979. Coming top of that league table would not have been difficult.

He was often too late to spot the damage caused by the loss of a socialist political compass and he could be panicked, as he was when he postponed a general election that he would easily have won. I began by saying that he was flawed but a political grown up. Blair never had the potential to grow up as a politician. Listening to or reading the wisdom of Blair today is to encounter someone who never left his political playschool. Over the years he has learned many big words. The meanings he ascribes to those big words remain in his political playschool.

Should we judge politicians by their faces? Of course not! Definitely not! And yet I cannot resist it. Brown's face I rather like. It tells me that even when having a disagreement we could go and have a pint afterwards and talk about the footy; Blair's face? It has been tortured from the inside. Imagine having constantly to rehearse your script for the next public appearance. It goes:

**'Well of course mistakes were made,' pausing to let it sink in that those mistakes were made by others, 'and, yes, a few innocent people lost their homes, their livelihoods and their lives but I am convinced that one day they shall thank me for it.'**

What face could utter such words without displaying the corrosive effects of inner torture?

It is probably an over simplification to blame individual politicians and prime ministers for the mess we are in: a mess that May inherited from Cameron, the prime minister for Oxfordshire, and, as prime minister for the Anglican Home Counties, went on to make worse. I shall, nevertheless, single out two that must shoulder much of the blame.

First is Thatcher who squeezed from the Conservative Party its ability from time to time to ensure that the down were not too heavily trodden underfoot. Her party no longer rationalised greed and privilege so that they became acceptable: the party now proclaimed them to be what it was all about. To be upwardly socially mobile you were encouraged to adopt the creed of greed. If you were left behind it was your own fault. She used North Sea oil revenues to fund a huge increase in unemployment, making sure to keep changing how the unemployed were counted to knock perhaps a couple of million off the figures. In effect she disinvested in Britain. Or should that be divested from Britain?

In 1997 we were fed up with all this. We voted to be shut of Thatcherism. We got Blair. I have not quite lost sight of my declared intention to look for ways out of our current mess but it seems that if I ever manage that the words of Thomas Hardy come to mind,

**If way to the better there be, it extracts a full look at the worst.**

And Blair was the worst. He represents a de-humanising approach to government. And it was a government formed by a party that claimed to have socialist values. We tell each other that we must accept that politicians lie to us. 'They are all the same' is a phrase spoken in pubs and shops and by taxi drivers. They are, however, very definitely not all the same.

Back to the inescapable comparison: imagine you have a set of old fashioned weighing scales. Into one you put the intellect of Blair and you put Brown's into the other. Then you do the same with their morality, their attention to detail, their knowledge of history, their greediness. What would be the results each time you weighed them?

Had Brown been perfect he would have been useless as a prism. For me he demonstrates or illustrates what can happen when, in order to obtain power, you tell yourself that you must temper your values so that they are closer to what you have convinced yourself are those that prevail in society. This is why Simon Jenkins classified Brown as a Son of Thatcher.

A theme since 1979 has been the advancement of government at the expense of politics. More and more ways have been tried of making government effective, hitting its targets. We receive our orders from government. At best we are the implementers of policies that we have played no part in devising. Once they obtain power our politicians seek to push policy, to try to avoid, or at least hide, cock-ups and, in the process, to stand a concept such as accountability on its head so that it is always others that are held to account.

Particularly since THAT referendum I seem to be encountering people wishing to cut short discussion by referring to it as part of a democratic process. Pointing out that it was merely advisory, that for a decision to be regarded as democratic truth should outweigh falsehood, that we the voters were the extras in a Tory soap opera, that Parliament does not have the capacity to scrutinise the forthcoming mountain of legislation, that our civil service is but a subservient rump compared to the days of Sir Humphrey Appleby, that our opinion forming pro Leave mass media is dominated by non tax paying and non domiciled owners caring nothing for our welfare, that as a lone global player we shall punch below our weight, that our national mind is shrinking and becoming racist and that the days of Empire and Imperial Preference only appear as footnotes in history books, well, few such points even register.

Too many of us have become what for too long governments have wanted us to be: unthinking people who only respond to prods to our prejudices. We love the freedom to travel across the EU with a common currency while

complaining that our sovereignty is infringed. More people from the UK live and work all over the EU than from any other country and yet because in an advisory referendum 37% of the electorate registered their preference for leaving such life choices shall be restricted.

What was the issue that caused the resignation of Amber Rudd as Home Secretary? It was immigration. When such an issue gains energy few pause to distinguish between different classifications of immigrants and seekers of asylum whose desperation we caused. As a very long serving Home Secretary Theresa May had powers to manage immigration, including from the EU, in a humane manner. That was not her preference. She, the inventor of the phrase 'Nasty Party' to describe the Tories chose nastiness. And it was a nastiness that, as was intended, got publicity and votes. I cannot believe that this chosen nastiness had no impact upon the result of THAT referendum.

We might congratulate ourselves that the nastiness has backfired but it has only backfired upon Amber Rudd. The author of the nastiness continues to hold the seals of office; and, of course, to attend church every Sunday.

**I have mentioned my belief that not only are we in need of a written constitution but that it should emerge from the most widespread and inclusive discussion. The result is likely to be imperfect but at least it will be our imperfection and if we get into the habit of being inclusive we have the chance to make changes. At present we suffer the imperfections visited upon us and can do little about them except to moan. I also believe that concepts such as 'reform' require restorative work so that when we use them we do not reflect Tony Blair and Michael Gove deforming reform but instead recall the abolition of slavery, the extension of the franchise, the factory acts and more of the same. My question is as follows.**

**Can reformers run faster than frackers?**

### **Critiquing the Document**

**I add the link below to a lot of my writing. My intention is that what I write encourages critical conversation. Given the subjects upon which I choose to write it is seldom possible to make a claim for being definitive or exhaustive and rather than striving to be objective I prefer to do my best to make clear my subjectivity. That is why I wrote the following. You might also discern a sneaky contrivance to cover up mistakes with the excuse that I did invite readers to critique my writing.**

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

## FURTHER READING

**There will always be a lot left out. At times writers may be able to clam a rationale for their choices of further reading. I make no such claim. Most of what follows is personal preference. And much of it is my own writing.**

**Decades ago people such as Anthony Sampson** used to dissect for us what we learned to refer to as The Establishment, that tiny group of people who seemingly with neither effort nor publicity took or influenced the decisions that we might have thought we took and influenced as members of a democracy.

Reading Caroline Kennedy's book (with Phillip Knightley) on how The English Establishment protected itself by stitching up (my phrase) Stephen Ward<sup>lvii</sup> I kept thinking about the chameleon capacity of the Establishment. Now Aeron Davis shows us a much further evolution of the chameleon. Was the ascent of Cameron and Osborne a last Bullingdonian spasm? Was Boris's Leave Bus a forlorn flat out attempt to prevent the Sun setting on the Empire?

Whose hidden hands are now on the levers of power? Where do they place the fulcrum? Do we know these people? Did we go to school with them? Shall we see them down the pub, at the match, in the chippy, queuing at the Co-op?

This is Aeron Davis writing about his own book, *Reckless opportunists, Elites at the end of the Establishment*. Published in 2018 and concentrating upon a number of different elites he comes to a conclusion not, I like to think, so different from my notion of social fracking. The book is a good read.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/27/is-the-british-establishment-finally-finished>

**The title of this piece is *FROM STABILITY TO CHAOS*.** In it I try to describe seven phases through which education, particularly in England, has passed since 1945. At the end is a link to a longer version. It is my view that policy makers have usually had a negative effect upon education. In *Mental Health and Well-Being in the Learning and Teaching Environment* (2016) my chapter seeks to demonstrate how policy makers have contributed to stress. I might have added, to social fracking.

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

**This is short, on the privatisation of policy making in education.** Having repeatedly made the point that government has increasingly become something done *to* us it is worthwhile remembering that the agents of central government are often private companies working on short-term contracts.

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

**In 2009, the House of Lords Select Committee On The Constitution** heard and read a lot of evidence.

Very little of it was about politics. It was mostly about how governments do things to us, though I doubt if the committee saw it quite like that. As you might expect the committee considered Tony Blair and his approach. In his evidence Peter Hennessy referred to Thatcher and Blair as 'Destiny prime ministers.' Here is an extract from the report.

*A number of witnesses reflected upon the experience of the Blair government. Lord Butler, who was Cabinet Secretary in 1997, told us that "it was part of the explicit purpose of Mr Blair to strengthen the centre, and... to make the Cabinet Office a part of the Prime Minister's Department".*

*(Q 121) Dr Heffernan told us that Tony Blair "thought his problem as Prime Minister was not that he was too powerful: he was not powerful enough ... he thought that he did not have enough control over government. That is why he built up, incrementally ... [the] central capacity of Downing Street".*

Looking again at what the Select Committee has to say and at the evidence given to it, especially by Blair's close advisors, drives home to me that Blair only ever wanted his chosen targets to be hit. The very idea that the wisdom of those targets might be questioned was not part of his approach to government.

You might think that Iraq would have caused Blair's advisors to pause and reflect. It seems not to have done: just a little error perhaps?

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconst/30/30.pdf>

**Here are twelve points and twelve questions on Blair and education.** Not long.

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

**Naomi Klein's latest book confronts Trump.** Here is my response, not a review. Thomas Hardy appears once again.

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

**This is very long.** You might think that given the title *The Values of New Labour* it would be short. Again I call upon my experience of that time,

especially in education, to make sense of what was going on. It is, however, possible to skip through the document by clicking on items in the contents.

[http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/The\\_Values\\_of\\_New\\_Labour.pdf](http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/The_Values_of_New_Labour.pdf)

**Hiding a point in a joke**, this was an attempt to explain, yet again, that bad politics drives out good politics.

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

**Concentrating on Michael Gove** here is another attempt to draw attention to the work of social frackers.

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

**Brown on Brexit**

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

**Here I try once again to** say something about government and politics.

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

**Cliff Jones 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

## ENDNOTES

i

Although I have written a lot on social fracking here I try to summarise. I do, however, include lots of links some of which are repeated in other places in this document.

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

ii

Gordon Brown makes the point in his book that in the general election of 2010 fifteen million people voted for parties opposed to austerity and only ten million voted for the party proposing it. This is why I used the word 'acquired' to describe how we got the government that we did. The connection between what the electorate wanted and what it got was broken when, having acquired their votes on one basis, the Liberal Democrats decided to acquire power on a different basis.

iii

I refer elsewhere to the interview in which Margaret Thatcher told us that there was no such thing as society. But I think it is worth making the general point here that when expounding what we might call her philosophy she tended to prefer being questioned gently by disc jockeys. Jimmy Young was her favourite. He claimed that when interviewing honey worked better than vinegar but it allowed her to hide her assault upon communities with a coating of reasonableness. Fourteen times she appeared on his radio show.

iv

Lawrence Freedman provided a draft paper used by Tony Blair as the basis for his 1999 Chicago speech on military intervention in other countries. Freedman is aware that for some this disqualified him from being a member of the Chilcot Inquiry. I believe that it did and that his role should have been that of a witness who could have been questioned.

Last year Freedman wrote about all this. A longer version is available. My impression is of a slightly bemused academic coming to terms with the urges of a politician to construct a narrative by means of punchy headlines that were later used to justify the unjustifiable. It also reinforces for me the belief that Blair de-intellectualised government. He wanted certainty even if, sometimes especially if, it had no foundation.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/middle-east/2017/04/kosovo-may-doctrine-when-it-just-go-war>

v

Mick Jagger as prime minister: I particularly like the EM Forster reference near the end.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/jan/06/popandrock>

vi

When you see the word 'efficiency' or 'reform' or the phrases 'operational efficiency' or 'frontline services' or 'modernising the back office' or even worse 'savings' used about cuts to the civil service you can be pretty sure that things are going to get worse. Gordon Brown hit his target of a 31% reduction in civil service numbers. At the same time Tony Blair was following Thatcher by increasing the subservience of civil servants.

In 2005 at the time of the Gershon Report that followed the Lyons Report that concentrated on 're-location' (another of those words) I remember using the phrase 'No consultation but lots of consultants'. The Public and Commercial Services Union was particularly exercised about the lack of consultation. And I remember attending policy-informing meetings inside government departments in which the role of civil servant was now being played by a consultant on a short-term contract.

Given the mountain of legislation that Brexit brings this is seriously not good.

vii

The contrast between Tony Blair's effective courtship of Rupert Murdoch and the way that Gordon Brown was treated is clearly revealed in the report of the Leveson Inquiry.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122144906/http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>

viii

(Now Sir) Craig Oliver was Cameron's spin-doctor. Here is my response to his book on THAT referendum.

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

ix

At the time when Denis Lawton was encouraging us to work collaboratively on a national curriculum he was also a member of the Politics Association that had been set up to support and encourage the teaching of politics. The Association often used the phrase 'political literacy'.

x

Here is the report of the House of Lords Committee.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconst/30/30.pdf>

xi

To put Jeremy Corbyn into perspective I find it useful to look back at the Liberal Party of the late 1920s. He does not deserve his caricature as an extremist revolutionary. I think that the following links help to make that point.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/09/lloyd-george-british-coalition>

<http://www.liberalhistory.org.uk/history/the-1929-general-election/>

xii

As an example of the skills, knowledge and values of William Beveridge I recommend his *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944).

xiii

I was not popular taking Blair's book on holiday. 'Do I have to keep seeing that face?' Here is my review of his book. It has been suggested that I only needed to write the title.

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

xiv

Who heeded this warning? Who today holding a similar position to Eisenhower would or could make such a warning?

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

xv

The use of the word 'reform' to apply to almost any change made by government is now commonplace. Under Blair we acquired an array of different kinds of schools disconnected in varying degrees from a unifying local democracy. The notion of a good local school for all the children of a community was not what Blair wanted and instead the school system has been used to fracture communities.

xvi

Two books count as Hailsham autobiographies: *The Door Wherin I Went* (1975) and *A Sparrow's Flight: Memoirs* (1990).

xvii

Here is the Office for Students. Not my cup of tea, especially with Michael Barber involved.

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

xviii

The influence of the late Philip Gould remains powerful not just inside the Labour Party. The fact that he was never a household name may have increased that influence.

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

xix

'Review' is too grand a word to describe what I have written about this book by Jonathon Powell. Good to read because of its gossip.

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

xx

Mount once reviewed Archie Brown's book, *THE MYTH OF THE STRONG LEADER* (2014) in Prospect Magazine. The review was not only a piece of nasty writing but also, to me, incoherent. Mount was in Thatcher's government and is the cousin of Cameron's mother. It is well known how much Cameron admired and attempted to follow the example of Blair, 'the master'. He even had his own war in Libya and helped to create a huge refugee problem that his government did so little to alleviate.

Mount's main objection to Archie Brown's book was its failure to appreciate Blair's great qualities. If, to be admitted to the club of political intellectuals you must, like Cameron and others, follow a master then I believe there will be few applicants. I certainly hope so.

Archie Brown's book, by the way, is currently being translated for sale in many countries with a revised foreword. I am not an admirer of Bill Gates, the latest convert to socialism, but him singling out Archie's book as a favourite has boosted sales.

xxi

Here are my thoughts on Gove the intellectual.

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

xxii

See also xxxv below.

xxiii

For a good short book on Popper try Bryan Magee's *Popper* (1973).

xxiv

Here is the latest book on Harold Wilson.

<https://www.bitebackpublishing.com/books/harold-wilson>

xxv

Here is what Scott Ritter, Hans Blix's predecessor, had to say before we invaded Iraq. He said it in plenty of time for us to have avoided the calamity.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/19/iraq.features11>

xxvi

Harold Macmillan's action as Chancellor of the Exchequer to pull the rug from under Eden's Suez Adventure ought not to be represented as the action of a noble statesman with high public values. When Eden subsequently resigned as Prime Minister Macmillan got his job. There was also pressure from the USA effectively telling HM Government to only fight people it wanted us to fight.

xxvii

I particularly mention Lawton and Stenhouse because it seemed to me that their influence upon education spread widely at all levels and spurred professional creativity. They both connected the curriculum to the community. By 1980 Lawton could see that the positives were turning into negatives. His book of that year *The Politics of the School Curriculum* makes that point. He was happy for the book to be referred to as polemic.

xxviii

Circular 10-65 deserves a Bank Holiday for celebrations.

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/des/circular10-65.html>

xxix

In 1991 John Major knocked differentiation by outcome on the head. He gave a speech in which he made clear his dislike of coursework and open, single tier papers for which chief examiners took care to construct questions that were accessible for all. As a result all over the country recently printed new syllabuses had to be scrapped and hastily replaced. We had to devise tiered papers of graduated difficulty. GCSE had been integral to learning. Now it was a means of measuring and certain grades became inaccessible to certain students.

xxx

My greatest professional compliment was when a schoolteacher told me of the reaction of his kids after they came out of a GCSE examination paper I had set on Government and Politics.

'Hey sir, that was a really interesting exam.'

More than anything I wanted to stimulate engagement. Unfortunately, being one mark above a grade boundary gets jobs and access to universities that are denied to a candidate one mark below. Ideally I would have liked to have waited twenty years

before awarding a grade based on the extent and quality of their engagement since they took the exam.

xxxi

*The Great City Academy Fraud* by Francis Beckett (2007) laid bare this educational scam that has since only become worse while distancing schools further and further from democracy.

xxxii

Dewey wrote a lot and a lot has been written about him but the following might serve as an introduction.

<https://www.thepositiveencourager.global/john-deweys-approach-to-doing-positive-work/>

xxxiii

Ignore the five lines that precede this review. They are a reference to something else. The reviewer has the perspective of an historian.

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/students/retrospectives/issues/sophie-a-greenway.pdf>

xxxiv

See xxxv below.

xxxv

Looking at Macpherson's work today I cannot help asking myself who now reads him? Possessive individualism is evident in our political language and, since the time of Thatcher, scarcely questioned. The following might help to gauge the significance of a socially damaging concept.

<https://understandingsociety.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/possessive-individualism.html>

xxxvi

Frank Field is now known as an MP. In 1977 he was known for the Child Poverty Action Group and the Low Pay Unit. In that year as editor he published *Education and the Urban Crisis*. A contributor to the book was Eric Midwinter whose time as Principal of the Liverpool Teachers Centre had been so inspiring and encouraging for those of us attempting to link schools with communities. If only he had become Director of Education the relatively small scale but widespread and professionally fulfilling co-operative creativity might have become embedded with the the senior officers of the Authority and more headteachers.

Ten years after Midwinter left a few of us formed a totally unofficial group to see what teachers could do to adapt the curriculum in order to respond to high levels of unemployment. There was support from the then Director Ken Antcliffe who, I felt, did not quite connect with senior officers and some politicians. The disconnect illustrated, I believe, a split between those that perceive education as a competitive struggle to climb a ladder (we cannot all be at the top at the same time) and those that perceive education in more social terms.

xxxvii

This link is a story but I hope it helps to make the point that schools are not preparation factories but part of society. The final link within the link is a link to the great Kemmis book.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/At50.pdf>

[www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk](http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk)

xxxviii

Here is the link to the Canadian initiative closely associated with Naomi Klein but, as she is keen to point out, representative of the work of so many people.

I hope my thoughts on education are clear when looking at the link. Her description of how and why the Manifesto was constructed reminds me of a range of loosely connected educational, community and business initiatives in the UK that were brushed to one side when the Thatcher administrations decided that education, particularly in schools, had to be narrow, subject-based, officially approved, constantly measured and inspected with dire consequences for those judged to have failed. And, yes, that was accompanied by the detachment of further and higher education from local, democratically accountable, authorities. Curricular constraint came with commodification and a competing market.

<https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/>

xxxix

The silliness of Big Society, Small Government (BSSG) was shown up some years ago by Brown and Jacobs. Here is my review of their book.

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

xl

Simon Jenkins is hardly a left wing firebrand. He rather admires Thatcher for her attack upon unions that simultaneously destroyed industries and communities. He also makes the point about her hoarding of power at the centre and is, I believe, right to present Major, Blair and Brown as her sons in that respect.

The book is *THATCHER & SONS A revolution in Three Acts* (2006). It needs to be pointed out that at the time Brown had yet to become Prime minister.

xli

For those that imagine policy is born of an immaculate conception this might be interesting. Out?

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

xlii

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/aug/06/society.labour>

xliii

Here is Andy Beckett's review of Anthony King's last book.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/08/who-governs-britain-anthony-king-review-politics>

xliv

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/programmes/unit-award-scheme/a-brief-history-of-the-aqa-unit-award-scheme-uas>

xlv

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-10664722>

xlvi

In 1975 Lawrence Stenhouse produced *An Introduction To Curriculum Research And Development*. It was an Open University set book. The Times Educational Supplement called it 'a profoundly important book' and predicted that it would be read widely. That was a time when thinking and experimenting about what and how to teach and what and how to assess were regarded as proper activities for professional educators and when universities appointed professors of curriculum development: a time when at least some educational policy was made on the ground.

Although he began and did much of his work in Scotland it was in England at a time when the Teaching Council was dominated by educators that he became part of, and a force for, professional research activity. He even saw school inspectors as collaborators with and enablers of schoolteachers undertaking research. We have moved far away from that position and now, monitored by inspectors, must hit targets set up by others.

Stenhouse must have been so pleased to have been external examiner for my masters degree! I am and still boast of it.

xlvi

The urge of the community to organise and campaign was strong. My wife was heavily involved. But connecting that keenness to a system of local government constrained by a central government hell bent on social fracking becomes frustrating. Who owns the priorities of society?

xlvi

That uncompleted hospital was the last physical evidence that my wife could see from the window of her room of what had happened to the social values into which she had been born.

xlix

A review that may help to understand how Hutton's writing of that time just might have helped to fill the philosophical vacuum of New Labour.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-book-review-the-state-were-in-will-hutton-cape-1631699-1569982.html>

i

See the two links on page 27.

ii

Here is John Kamphner's review of the relevant book by Yanis Varoufakis.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/15/adults-in-room-battle-europes-deep-establishment-yanis-varoufakis-review>

iii

Rather than concentrate upon Sampson's anatomical work it might be more interesting to read an obituary that provides more context.

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/dec/21/pressandpublishing.boksobituaries>

liii

See xlix above.

liv

See Pages 29 and 42.

iv

**As I have been somewhat disparaging about him living on land from which indigenous people were expelled and as so many friends place hope in him perhaps I should provide this link to his website.**

**<http://www.ynharari.com/about/>**

lvi

**Apparently the election of Donald Trump boosted sales of George Orwell's 1984.**

lvii

**What follows is my review of the book by Kennedy and Knightly.**

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