

# FREE LIFE

A Journal of Classical Liberal and Libertarian Thought

Number 32

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## Getting Ready for that Advertising Ban!



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# Free Life

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Potential contributors are urged to write to the Editor for a "style Sheet and Guidance for LA Writers" - though it is worth adding that nobody ever has asked for one, and the Editor has not seen one since November 1991.

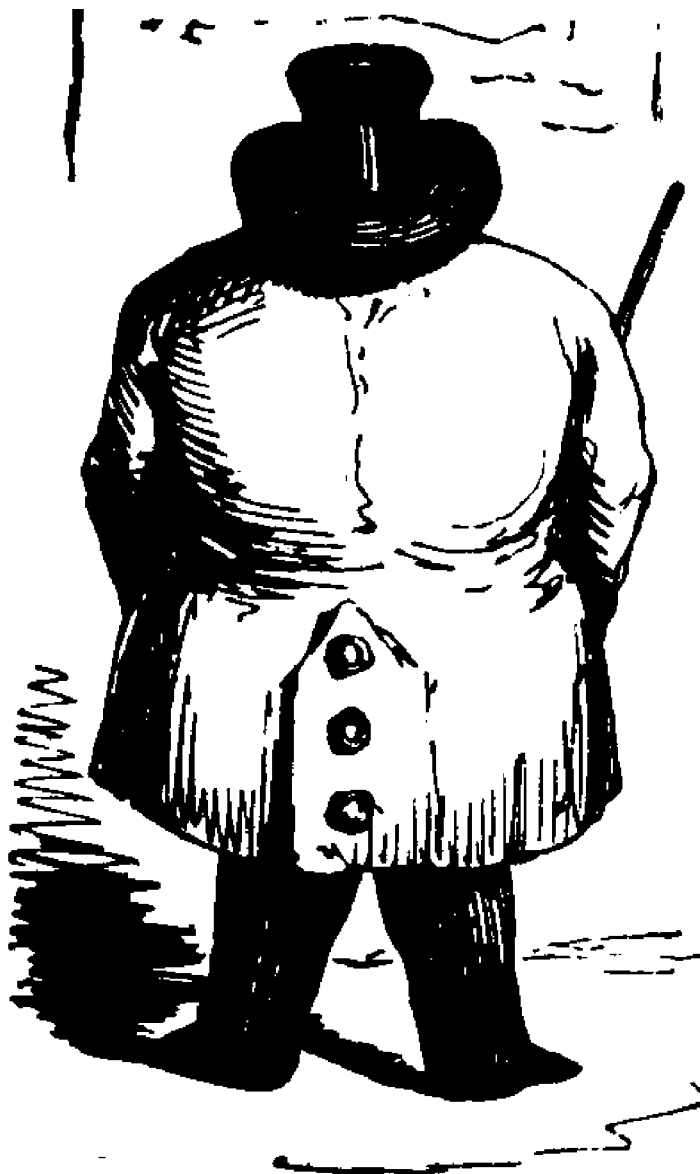
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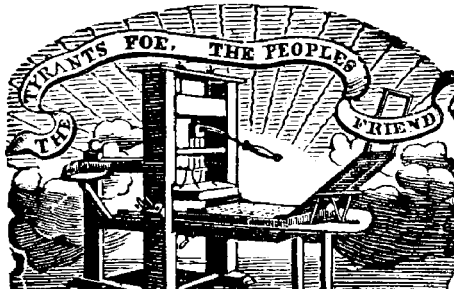
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## The Water Will Close Over Our Heads

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It would have been nice for once to write a triumphant Editorial. After all, three UK Independence Party Members were returned in the European elections last month, and the shock of this has led Mr Blair to think twice about abolishing the Pound. But on a fuller view of events, this is no time for rejoicing. What the European elections showed above all is that the Conservatives are in no danger of being replaced as our main opposition party. Yet the Eddisbury bye-election of last week showed equally well that they are still in no position even to hope for victory in the next general election. We are therefore stuck far into the future with Tony Blair and New Labour.

It is inappropriate to say that Mr Blair is the bad head of a bad government. That invites comparisons with past governments, and assumes that he will be followed by other Prime Ministers who may be better or worse judged by the standards of a stable constitutional system. He should be seen much rather as the director of a revolution. There is no precedent in our history for what he is doing - the nearest I can find is in the reign of Charles I after 1629. What he is doing is to establish what may be called Fascism with a Human Face. Its beneficiaries will be a coalition of big business interests, bureaucrats, and lying intellectuals. Power and privilege will be hidden behind a facade of liberal democracy. There will be elections, and there will be markets. But the elections will not allow more than a formal calling to account, and the markets will be regulated in ways that determine the outcome of competition.

This is the purpose of the changes now taking place around us. For the alleged sake of a "war" against crimes that were created by earlier bad laws, our ancient liberties are being abolished one after the other. Trial by Jury has nearly gone. Forfeiture of property without trial is being smuggled into law. Imprisonment for life on the word of a Minister is being proposed. We are spied on in the street and on the roads. Our homes are not safe from hidden surveillance cameras. We have tax laws and "consumer protection" laws that allow officials to destroy any self-employed person they or their allies come to dislike. We have been disarmed - not to prevent us from harming each other - but to make us look to the authorities for protection of what little life and property they allow us to keep. We have a "war" against racism that has already matched the Inquisitions of the past in its ferocity of language, and that is being used to destroy freedom of speech and association.

At the same time, our historic institutions are under attack. The language of the law has been changed, so that only antiquarians will soon be able to understand an old judgment. The House of Lords is being effectively abolished. The Monarchy is being

encouraged to commit suicide. Scotland and Wales have been fitted out with synthetic institutions to express a synthetic national identity. England has been broken up into regions, and synthetic regional identities are being imposed on children in the schools. What little national identity of the old kind can survive this process is being attacked by our increasing absorption into the European Union. None of this formal transfer of powers weakens the real power of the new fascist establishment - which has its counterparts in all the other EU countries - but it does confuse and disturb any opposition. Everything that may connect the minds of the present generation to a more liberal past - the recollection of which may encourage resistance to modern despotism - is being systematically destroyed.

Opposing this we have a Conservative Party led by William Hague. Neither he nor anyone else in the Shadow Cabinet seems to understand what is happening. Indeed, while these people were in government, they allowed the present revolution to begin - it is not something that started in May 1997, but was gathering pace all through the 1980s. To some extent, they even began the revolution, with their assault on freedom and their European policy. Nor is there reason to think that a Conservative Government somehow elected two years from now would so much as slow what is happening. William Hague will not consider relegalising drugs, and supported Mr Blair's war of military aggression in the Balkans. Anne Widdecombe thinks identity cards are a good idea, and wants to ban fox hunting. Sir George Young is a confirmed health fascist who even in opposition has managed to regulate the London taxi market in favour of its largest interests. The others are equally bad.

No wonder so few electors are inclined to vote these people back into office. But enough electors retain the habit of voting for them to prevent any alternative opposition from emerging. Given time, an alternative would emerge. The problem is that we have no time. Already, the destructive achievements of the revolution cannot be reversed. Its positive agenda will be complete before 2010.

And so it seems that we have lost for the moment. The water will close over our heads. The United Kingdom is going. England will go. The freedom and glory of our civilisation will be extinguished. All we can do now is to make sure - as the few genuine dissidents of the Soviet Empire tried to do and variously succeeded in doing - that the new order of things will never hold undisputed sway over the English mind, and that eventually it may be replaced. *Pravda Vitezi*.

**Sean Gabb**

# George Staunton: First Martyr of the Anti-EU Movement

## Sean Gabb

George Staunton is a 78-year old veteran of the Second World War who lives in Liverpool. Early in the morning of last 9th June, which was polling day in the elections to the European Parliament, he admits to having gone out to encourage support for the United Kingdom Independence Party, which believes in withdrawal from the European Union. He put up several UKIP posters, and on the wall of a derelict commercial property painted the words: "Don't forget the 1945 War" and "Free Speech for England".

Just as he was finishing his display, Mr Staunton was arrested by the Merseyside Police. The cost of repairing his criminal damage is estimated at £80 - not a large sum, and the wall painted on is soon to be demolished. Bearing also in mind his age and previous good character, one might think he would have been sent home and advised to keep his political high spirits under better control in future. Instead, he was charged with racially-aggravated criminal damage under section 30 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The maximum penalty for this offence is 14 years imprisonment or unlimited fine or both.

Mr Staunton's solicitor is confident that he can get the charges dropped. Probably he can. The case has attracted enough publicity for the authorities not to want still greater embarrassment than they have already suffered. Besides, there is no evidence of any sort that Mr Staunton is a "racist": indeed, his solicitor is described in one report as "a well-known advocate of black and ethnic minority organisations in Liverpool"; and he fully supports Mr Staunton. Nevertheless, this is more than just another case of police stupidity. I have no doubt the officers directly involved were stupid in going after Mr Staunton rather than somebody else. But this is not an isolated act of power. It is the start of a persecution of the anti-EU movement.

The case for British membership of a federal Europe has never been argued in this country. This is because there is no case. By history, by political culture, by economic structure, and by every other test but geographic proximity and ethnic similarity, we are not suited to membership of such a federation. We can only be fitted in at the cost of giving up everything that makes us distinct as a nation. There are no beneficiaries except an *élite* of politicians, bureaucrats and big business interests. Sadly, these interests are so committed to membership that they will do everything to stop an open, rational debate of its merits - a debate that they cannot hope to win.

For the first twenty years of our membership, it was enough for our masters to lie to us. "This is not a political federation" they said in scornful unison whenever a sceptical voice was raised loudly enough to be heard. "It is a free trade association. Anyone against our membership is either a protectionist or paranoid". After the Maastricht Treaty was rammed through Parliament - a treaty promising "ever closer union" and creating a European citizenship - this line had to be subtly changed. It was now admitted that some Europeans thought the European Union was an embryonic federal state; but we were assured that these were an unimportant minority, and that in any event we could trust our politicians and diplomats to stand up for British interests. Then our fishing industry was shut down, and the Royal Navy was sent to protect Spanish poacher vessels from the Cornishmen from whose traditional waters they were sucking everything with gills. Then our beef industry was shut down. Then nearly all the European politicians began insisting - and in English - that they did want full political union,

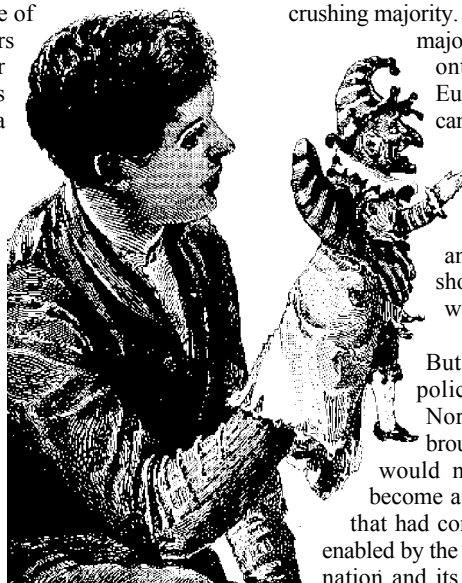
and that a common currency was the prelude to this. By the mid-1990s, a large and growing movement had emerged hostile in various ways to the direction of European policy.

It was now that the Quisling Right was sent into action. These are people and institutions whose purpose it is to prevent opposition to the established order. They are persuasive. They are well-connected. They are well-funded. They attract trust and money and publicity away from the real opposition. And they do nothing. They take up a campaign, and do just enough with it to keep ordinary people happy that something is being done, but make sure never to deliver. What they say is carefully phrased opposition. What they do is naked collaboration. *The Daily Telegraph* is one of the central institutions of the Quisling Right. So is the Conservative Party. Both are filled with second rate apparatchiks forever declaring their own patriotism, while keeping patriots out of office or out of print. They had already done a fine job "resisting" socialism and welfarism, and "defending" freedom and the rule of law. They now transformed themselves into Eurosceptics.

This worked for a few years longer. We have to admire the professionalism of the Quislings over the Amsterdam Treaty in 1998. There is no reason to suppose that men like Michael Howard or Francis Maude would have negotiated a different treaty had they been in office. But they set up an almost convincing clamour against Labour for having sold out the country's interests. They resisted the Ratification Bill all the way through the House of Commons, where the Government has a crushing majority. Then in the Lords, where the Conservatives have a majority of their own, the Bill was quietly allowed to slide onto the statute book. Or look at their strategy in the European elections. I have their leaflet beside me. I can count four repetitions of the mantra "in Europe, not ruled by Europe". A casual read suggests that this is the manifesto of an anti-EU party, utterly committed to opposing the single currency. In fact, the Conservatives do not oppose the single currency on any principled grounds, but only insist that no decision should be taken until the election after next, by when we may know if entry is "in our interests".

But the European elections saw the failure of this last policy. The debate on Europe could not be suppressed. Nor could it be taken over and lost. The Internet had brought thousands of activists together where once each would never have known the others existed. They had become a genteel British equivalent of the militia movement that had come together a few years earlier in America - again enabled by the Internet, and with the same motivation, to save their nation and its liberties from an Establishment stuffed with New World Order traitors. And they had a political manifestation in UKIP. For the first time in generations, we had a non-racist alternative to the Conservative Party. Not only this, but the change to proportional representation for the European elections meant that UKIP would nearly certainly win seats. This would mean the beginning at last of a meaningful debate on our membership - inevitably to be followed by withdrawal. Crude lying had failed. Subtle lying had failed. The Quisling Right had failed. What more could be done?

The answer is accusations of racism. That is how the American Establishment smashed the militia movement. The reality was that Americans of all races and creeds had come together to make their protest - and to demand justice for the martyrs of Waco, many of whom were black. The propaganda beat from Washington and New York was of deranged white supremacists letting off bombs and planning a civil war. It worked. The militia leaders are now either in prison or cowed into silence and inactivity. The same is being tried here against the



patriotic movement.

As the election results flowed in last month, and the scale of opposition to Europe became apparent - three UKIP seats and a good showing all over England - the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties set up an instant drone about "right wing nationalism". This was taken up in the media. It has now been confirmed by Gerry Gable, the Editor of a magazine called *Searchlight*. This is a sinister publication, notorious for its lies and its provocations to violence and murder. Though seemingly run by Marxists and committed to "the fight against racism and fascism", *Searchlight* is actually a creature of the security services, and exists to smear conservatives, libertarians, socialist libertarians, and anyone else the Establishment happens to hate or fear. It is more than of passing interest, then, that Mr Gable has claimed in the July issue that the "defining characteristic" of fascism in modern Britain is Euro-scepticism. The fact that Oswald Mosley wanted a European Union, and that Hitler briefly created one, the fact that the British anti-EU movement contains many Jews and black and Asian people - these facts are ignored. Mr Gable has been set on the anti-EU movement because the British Establishment has decided to play the racist card. Let us all be smeared as racists, and the debate comes to another halt. Just imagine the forest of questions and insinuations about motive that any anti-European will have to face if this lie is allowed to stick. Just imagine the sanctimonious horror of the federalists whenever anyone accuses them of treason, if such accusations can be somehow associated with a desire to pack women and children into gas chambers.

This is the significance of the George Staunton case. He is the first to suffer persecution for his views about the European Union. As said, he



will not suffer very much. But his persecution is to be the precedent for ours.

Our obvious course of action is to shout the word "persecution" as loudly as we can - and the Internet allows words to carry a long way. We must expose this shabby conspiracy and frighten its projectors into retreating from it. We cannot put them off altogether, but I do think we can stop

them from walking all over us in the manner they are hoping to. I suggest letters of protest to the following persons:

Norman Bettison  
Chief Constable  
Merseyside Police Authority  
Liverpool  
E-mailing form available at  
<<http://www.merseyside.police.uk/feedback.htm>>

Letters from Britain outside Liverpool and from all over the world will be helpful. Mr Bettison should be told that his arresting policy is being watched by an international audience. He should also be asked if Liverpool is so safe from thieves and murderers that he can spare officers for investigations into allegations of criminal damage against derelict buildings by old age pensioners.

The Customer Service Unit  
The Crown Prosecution Service  
50 Ludgate Hill  
London EC4M 7EX  
E-mail: [complaints@cps.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@cps.gov.uk)

The CPS is the body responsible in England and Wales for deciding whether criminal charges should be brought against alleged offenders, and if so which charges. The same points should be made as above.

George Staunton  
c/o Messrs Broudie  
Solicitors  
1-3 Sir Thomas St  
Liverpool L1 8BW

Tel: 0151 227 1429

Mr Staunton needs letters of support from everyone who cares about his case. Also, though his legal costs are being paid by the State, I am sure the occasional financial contribution will not be unwelcome.

I repeat - this is a matter of importance far beyond the specific incidents and personalities involved. It is the beginning of what may be a vicious persecution. Through the Internet, we have been able to come together as a movement. Let us now use the Internet to act as a movement and tell these people what we think.\*

## The Conservative Party and One Libertarian: The Story Of An Estrangement Nigel Meek

Tim Evan's excellent book, *Conservative Radicalism* (Evans, 1996), has always evoked a sense of regret in me ever since I first read it. Whilst by focusing on the Conservative Party's "youth structures", including their campus activities, it may give to the outsider an exaggerated picture of the influence of libertarianism on the Conservative Party as a whole throughout the 1970s and 1980s, nonetheless it does recall a time when libertarianism was a meaningful element of the Party's internal deliberations, no matter how diluted, corrupted, or simply ignored that this may have become by the time that it reached the Party's leadership.

My first regret is that, as I suggest below, this libertarian element is either no longer present, or, if it is, is now actively scorned. The second, and more personal, regret is that I could have played some part in this more optimistic era but did not: instead it was the early to mid 1990s before I took my first steps into both proper libertarianism and university life, by which time the moment was long gone.

### Attachment To The Party

At the time of writing this essay (July 1999) I remain a member of the Conservative Party, a party which I formally joined in 1987 but for which I had campaigned in elections prior to this.

Coming from a middle-class suburban background, in the late 1970s I started actively supporting the Party, and to some degree Margaret Thatcher personally, largely both because of my fear of militant socialist industrial labour, and also the belief that important sections of the Labour Party, the only other likely party of government, were at best "soft" in their attitude towards the Soviet Union. During the early period of my membership, up to 1992 at the latest, I was not a libertarian: indeed I doubt that I knew that the term existed. On many matters it is true that I held views compatible with libertarianism, but on others, notably on what might be called "industrial policy", so strong was my anti-socialism that I was, paradoxically, rather interventionist.

As I became more convinced of the rightness of libertarianism, I became equally aware, indeed I would have been remarkably stupid had I not, that the Conservative Party was an uneasy place for me to be, and so I have never viewed the Party as a serious vehicle for wholehearted libertarianism. Nonetheless, I continued to be a member of the Party, and to promote the cause of libertarianism within it, for at least three reasons.

First, it appeared to be little or no worse than the other major parties when it came to its attitude on social and personal matters, and rather better, at least by way of rhetoric (Meek, 1998 [1]: 1-2), on economic ones. The reason why I held this to be of importance was the view that, whilst parliament could and does change the law regarding matters of a personal behavioural nature by a stroke of the legislative pen, no parliament could pass a successful law ordaining an immediately prosperous economy. (However, now that for the moment all the major parties seem to have agreed on allowing a fairly prosperous and stable mixed economy, non-economic matters have, I think, taken on an increased importance.)

Second, my belief that prospects were poor for a genuinely libertarian party in this country (Meek, 1998 [2]). This view has since elicited a very robust response from Antoine Clarke, the Independent Libertarian Party's (ILP) founder (Clarke, 1999). I should note that I am also a paid-up member of the Libertarian Party of the USA (LP/USA).

Third, and not the least important, has been my personal friendship with a number of members of the local Conservative Party.

### Estrangement From The Party

However, just as there have been a number of reasons for remaining in the Party, others have amassed to suggest the opposite action.

First, the cumulative effect of several years of attending party meetings and having to listen to views which are not just "not libertarian" but which are positively anti-libertarian. For example: prices and incomes policies; massive welfare spending; equally massive state intervention in industry (to a much greater extent than anything that I may once have envisaged); anti-free-trade protectionism; racism; homophobia; social authoritarianism; and the *ad hoc* policy making and campaign platforms which, especially since losing power at national and local levels, have often been little more than shamelessly opportunistic oppositionalism. Indeed, it says a good deal about my wishful thinking and lack of perceived alternatives that I have remained a member at all. The final straw in this regard was the now infamous speech by Peter Lilley, the man who I had supported for the party leadership following the resignation of John Major 1997, in which he seemed to repudiate any notion that the Conservative Party was unashamedly wedded to free-

market or other non-state economics (see Sean Gabb's review of his speech and its implications (Gabb, 1999 [1])).

The second and third reasons are more specific and recent. Over the years I have been a member of my Association's Executive Committee and Political Forum, and have sat on *ab initio* candidate selection boards for a number of elections including the 1997 general election; I was also for some years a member of the local European Constituency Council. One of my humbler roles has been that of my sub-ward branch's subscription registrar, a role only of any note because the branch has until recently been one of only two within the Association which collects its own subscriptions rather than having this done via the Association itself. In June this year, as previously, I essayed a few thoughts to go with a basic renewal letter. In it I noted that there was a need for a party that:

1. Rejects the notion of "the state" as an active force for social change, viewing it at best as having various emergency or safety-net roles.
2. Robustly asserts the moral and material superiority of free-market and other voluntary means of "production, distribution, and exchange" over those of the state-owned or state-controlled sectors, most definitely not excluding health, welfare, and education.
3. Retains a strong "enlightenment" view of material progress, taking the lead in demonstrating that much "green" and "environmentalist" thinking is based on a mixture of socialism-by-the-back-door, pseudo-mystical irrationalism, and outright misanthropy.

At a Branch Committee meeting held on the 21st June (a rearranged meeting which I was therefore unable to attend due to work commitments) the contents of the letter – and the preceding three bullet points are a verbatim extract from my submitted draft - were rejected on the grounds that they might not be conducive to retaining some of the members that we already had. Obviously, I disagree with anyone who disagrees with what I wrote, but the more profound issue is that it is just not possible to have a political organisation whose members consciously and sincerely embrace opposing views on these matters: these are not minor issues but key ones concerning the role (or not) of government and even the nature of our (i.e. humankind's) relationship with the non-sentient or sentient-but-non-reasoning world. This is not indicative of a "broad church" but of a cynical vote-gathering enterprise devoid of ideals or integrity.

Third, which in fact happened a little before the preceding, was the Euro-election held on the 10th June. Despite everything, including re-reading a powerful article by Dr Gabb offering his thoughts about the election (Gabb, 1999 [2]), I was minded, albeit just about and with a very heavy heart, to vote Conservative that day. However, that morning I received through the post a flyer for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) along with a brief hand-written appeal from a gentleman who I admire and whose name would be known to many readers of this present essay. And so, having thought about it further, that afternoon I voted UKIP.

(I should explain that my opposition to the EU is not due to any crude nationalism, but for other reasons including: the utter insanity of a one-size-fits-all economic and monetary policy across an heterogeneous Europe; that the EU is a corporatist's dream, being in its effective workings wholly immune from public scrutiny and devoted to bureaucratic or quasi-bureaucratic control (see the entry for "Corporatism" in Bealey, 1999: 89-90); that its proposed criminal justice system seems to strip away the last vestiges of protection for the individual against the state; and that, especially in this country, its leading supporters have felt obliged and very willing to prosecute their cause by means of deception.)

I am now in my mid thirties, and this was the first time since I have been able to vote that I have done so for a party other than the Conservative Party. (I abstained at the previous Euro-election, held under first-past-the-post rules, at least in part due to an intense personal dislike of the Conservative candidate. An unpleasant individual even

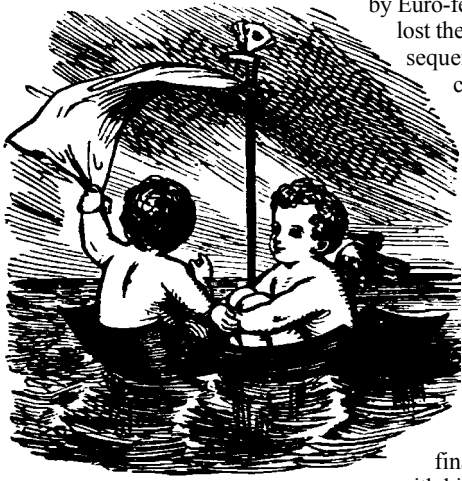
## For Sale

- One pound of salt - £0.50
- A piece of wood four feet in length - £2.50
- One English gallon (160 fl oz) of tap water - £1
- Twelve ounces of apples (wrapped) - £0.75
- One Troy ounce of silver - £8
- One scruple of vitamin C - £0.30

Interested persons may apply in writing to the Editor of *Free Life*.

Following a series of European Union Directives - one of these assented to by Francis Maude, who now fancies himself as the next Leader of the Conservative Party - all enacted into the laws of this country, it is a criminal offence to offer goods for sale in English weights and measurements. The maximum penalty for disobedience is six months imprisonment.

There are some laws that it is our public duty to disobey. Compulsory metrication is one of them.



by Euro-federalist standards, he lost the election and has subsequently found a more congenial home with the Liberal Democrats.)

To many readers this will seem a trivial matter, but to me it meant a profound split with the political actions, if not thoughts, of my entire adult life. I felt perhaps a little like a sincere communist finally forced to break with his party after the Hun-

garian Uprising: an analogy made stronger by conveying the idea of someone who, year after year previously, had gritted his teeth and kept up the support even in the knowledge of what the Party was really doing.

### What Now?

A good question indeed. The reader may well enquire why I do not simply resign from the Party or let my membership lapse when it comes up for renewal next year. Perhaps I shall, although one of the reasons for staying in it noted above, personal friendship, still exercises a power that possibly it should not. I think too that I want the Party to have to go to the trouble of actually expelling me: to say actively and publicly that there is no place within it anymore for libertarianism, and that Dr Evans was writing about foolish dreams long forgotten in the pursuit of power and an efficiently despotic state. Or maybe, taking into consideration my now publicly admitted recent voting behaviour, I'll be expelled for that reason.

But where, if anywhere, would I go? Despite Mr Clarke's trenchant remarks, I remain dubious about the prospects for the ILP. But then I belong to the LP/USA, not out of any belief in its imminent electoral success, but both out of solidarity with other libertarians and also simply because it makes me feel good. Or perhaps I should just give up on party-politics altogether?

In any event, what I do know is this: whatever connection there may

have been in the past, there is not now any "proper" relationship between the Conservative Party and libertarianism correctly stated. And let me hear nothing about "changing the Party from within": statist authoritarianism and lack of integrity are not malign elements within the modern Conservative Party: they *are* the Party. Paul Johnson (1999) was surely correct when recently he noted that party leader William Hague had "... turned intellectual bankruptcy into a principle of action ..." and that "when the vision fades ... for each party member the organising principle becomes: what's in it for yours truly?"

The Conservative Party may still be better than a New Labour Party which, in its 1997 general election manifesto (p2), made the terrifying assertion that it was "... the political arm of none other than the British people as a whole", or it may still be better than the flatulent populism of the Liberal Democrats, but there comes a point when such relativism will not do. That point, for me at least, finally came this summer.

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## Electronic Voting? The Old Ways Are the Best

### Rodney Howlett

I heard on the radio news today that electronic voting is being proposed for the election of the Mayor of London.

This is Nirvana to all tyrants. I am sure the EU can't wait to have a harmonised electronic voting system. When you press that button you have no idea whether it is connected to anything, or if it is, whether or not after it disappears into some computer, if it counts for anything at all. Though of course you can be sure that "THEY know who you are" - sadly, a reason given to me on occasions by people who declined to sign petitions.

The reality of electronic voting was brought home to me about 18 months ago when I was part of the audience for a Channel 4 TV programme, *The Trial of Enoch Powell*. It rapidly became clear that the producers intended Powell to be found guilty of the charge of being a racist. Unfortunately for them, it was also clear that the audience predominantly held the opposite view.

At the conclusion of the "trial", we duly cast our vote by pressing our electronic voting buttons. The screen showed a 64 per cent not guilty, 36 per cent guilty verdict. The presenter, Trevor Phillips, then bounced on stage and announced that Mr Powell had been found GUILTY! There was a stunned silence from the audience, then uproar. It had clearly never entered the producers minds that they would get anything other than a guilty verdict. Chaos ensued. Lots of conferring by the producers. Then we are told that the screens don't show the real result because they don't want it leaking to the press prior to broadcast, so the display is meaningless. More uproar. Shouts of "Show of hands" and threats to go to the press. More conferring. They eventually agree that Mr Powell is not guilty and film the conclusion on that basis. It occurred to me that they had perfectly good film of Trevor Phillips standing in front of an audience announcing both verdicts, so either could have been broadcast. I waited for the eventual broadcast with interest.

What was shown was the 64 per cent not guilty verdict as displayed to

us, though from watching the programme any viewer would have thought it an extraordinary verdict as the editing clearly showed an audience overwhelmingly in favour of a guilty verdict, wholly unlike the real audience response. To add insult to injury as the credits rolled up on conclusion of the programme there was a succession of film snippets in the bottom quarter of the screen, every one was a clear indictment of Mr Powell, designed to put him in a wholly racist light, despite the not guilty verdict. The undiscerning viewer would have come away with the impression that Mr Powell was a racist, despite the vote. This demonstrated two things to me:

1. Don't believe anything you see or hear on the TV, it is just too easy to be manipulated by skilful editing.

2. Electronic voting is wholly unacceptable. I will only believe physical pieces of paper put into sealed boxes, free to be watched every step of the way by any interested party, and counted in public.

Electronic voting is a tool of tyrants, to be fought against every step of the way.\*

## A Victory for Mr Milosevic? Robert Henderson

Now that the big boys toys have been put back in the cupboard and Mr Jamie Shea is returning to run his wheel stall in the Mile End Road, we really do need to ask what was this bizarre act of aggression by NATO was about because it has profound implications for Britain. What was it all about? Well, we all know that, don't we? To put the Albanians back into Kosovo, stupid!. Wrong! The war started because Mr Milosevic would not accept the NATO proposals drawn up at Rambouillet, which was scarcely surprising for they might have been designed to ensure their refusal.

Not only did the Rambouillet Proposals give foreign soldiers the right to enter any part of Yugoslavia, they provided for a referendum on independence for the Kossovan population. Add to that the demand that Serb troops withdraw from Kosovo and the refusal to allow Russian troops to be part of a peacekeeping force, and it is all too easy to see why Mr Milosevic refused them. Moreover, the Rambouillet proposals were not put forward as a basis for negotiation, but as a fait accompli which eventually became the subject of a naked ultimatum issued effectively by the US in the egregious person of Madeleine Albright.

The Rambouillet proposals would have reduced Yugoslavia to the status of a dependent territory, with the virtual guarantee that the land (Kosovo) which had the greatest emotional significance for the majority Serb population would be lost to the hated Albanian minority. Moreover, they had the knowledge that the loss of Kosovo through a referendum would almost certainly result in the expulsion of the two hundred thousand Serbs normally resident in Kosovo, assuming that they had not already left after the withdrawal of Serbian troops. Mr Milosevic was offered the prospect of tremendous humiliation and nothing else. If NATO had wished to ensure a war they could scarcely have done better. As Henry Kissinger remarked in an interview with Boris Johnson of *The Daily Telegraph* (28th June 1999,) Rambouillet was a provocation.

But the Rambouillet proposals were only the immediate cause of the conflict. The war was really about the imposition of Liberal Internationalist ideals. Since 1945, the Liberal Internationalist cause have been growing in strength until it has become the ostensible ideology of the ruling *élites* throughout the West. During the Cold War the territorial ambitions of the Liberal Internationalists were considerably constrained. Since 1989 those constraints have been removed. The result has been an unhappy sequence of interventions, covered by the fig leaf of UN colours, which have demonstrated the utter impotence of the Liberal Internationalist creed by invariably creating situations the exact opposite of those intended by the interveners: Somalia is a mess of anarchy, Bosnia a UN protectorate with the warring ethnic groups largely segregated and future conflict just waiting to happen. The war against Serbia marked a new stage in Liberal Internationalist ambitions: naked aggression was undertaken without even the indecent cover of the UN fig leaf.

The persistent failure of international intervention has not deterred the Liberal Internationalists because, like all fanatic ideologues, the Liberal Internationalist is incapable of admitting that his creed is plain wrong

no matter how often events prove it to be so. For the Liberal Internationalist any failure is simply the result of insufficient resources and time, a spur to behave in an ever more totalitarian manner; from peacekeeping through outright war to de facto colonial occupation. Consequently those with the power in the West continue to intervene ineptly in conflicts inherently irresolvable in liberal Internationalist terms. Their response to failure or the contrary evidence of events is to embark on ever more intervention regardless of the havoc caused or the long term consequences.

What the war was not about was morality, despite Messrs Blair and Clinton's inordinate and deeply risible posturing. (In fact war is never about morality. It is always about territory, aggrandisement, the removal of competitors and the imposition of the victor's will.) The nations attacking Yugoslavia had stood by during many greater man made horrors such as the massacres in Rwanda. Most pertinently, the West had not merely stood by while hundreds of thousands of Serbs were expelled from Croatia, but in the guise of the UN had actively assisted in that expulsion by providing arms and air power to support the Croat military. Most tellingly, and most repellently, because it was utterly predictable, NATO has not meaningfully protected the Kosovan Serbs since the end of the war. Nor could they have had any reasonable expectation of doing so, for the size of even the projected peace keeping force (50,000 - which numbers have not been met) was obviously inadequate to mount a general police action against an Albania population of nearly two million in which there were plentiful arms. A cynic might think that NATO's aims were from the beginning to produce a Kosovo ethnically cleansed of Serbs.

The course of the war laid bare the stupidity, incomprehension, incompetence and amorality of the NATO members' leaders. The objective facts say that the conflict has greatly worsened a naturally fraught situation. Before the war, the vast majority of the Albanian population of Kosovo was in Kosovo living in their homes. Since the war began the vast majority have either left the country or remain in Kosovo having been driven from their homes. Thus, just as the Second World War signalled the beginning of the Holocaust, so NATO's action signalled that of the Albanian tragedy. Without the war, it is improbable to the point of certainty that the greatest movement of a population in Europe since 1945 would have occurred.

To the tragedy of the Albanians must be added that of the Serbs whose fate is to be the pariah nation of the West. The attitude of the Western *élites* towards Serbs illustrates their double standards. Where is the morality in imposing sanctions against a state which does not threaten any outside its borders? Where is the morality of reducing a state to penury? Where is the morality of bombing defenceless civilians.

The hypocrisy of the whole business was graphically demonstrated in the NATO members' attitude towards the refugees. The public posturing on the need to provide for the refugees was all too clearly balanced by the fear that any large scale import of refugees to NATO countries outside the Balkans would arouse considerable dissent in those countries. Amongst many stomach heaving moments, Clare

Short's protestations that Britain did not want to move the refugees away from the Balkans simply because Britain did not wish unwillingly to assist Mr Milosevic rank very high. The double standards, both amongst politicians and the media have continued with the end of the war, as the Liberal Ascendency quietly tolerates ethnic cleansing of the Kosovo Serbs and the gross acts of revenge taken by the Kosovo Albanians.

What if there had been no war? Judged by what had gone before, there would have been continued harassment of Kosovo Albanians by Serb paramilitaries and some action by the regular Serb forces, the latter primarily directed against the KLA. One simple fact alone gives the lie to NATO's claims that wholesale ethnic cleansing would have occurred regardless of NATO intervention. Prior to the war, Mr Milosevic had ten years to undertake the task and did not attempt it. Fine ideals are not fine at all if they are so out of keeping with reality that they produce evil ends.

Who won the war? Well, let us follow the Dragnet example and just look at the facts. Mr Milosevic remains in control of Yugoslavia minus Kosovo. Two of the prime demands of the Rambouillet proposals - that the Kosovo population be given a referendum on independence within three years and the right of peacekeeping troops to go anywhere in Yugoslavia - have been dropped. There is also to be no referendum and the peacekeeping force will operate only within Kosovo. In addition, Russian troops are involved in the peacekeeping force, a token Serb presence will be allowed in Kosovo and there are signs that the force may eventually come under UN not NATO auspices. Those are very significant political gains for Mr Milosevic.

To the formal concessions granted to Mr Milosevic may be added the new facts on the ground. Northern Kosovo has almost certainly been shorn of Albanians. Much of the rest of Kosovo has been, if the refugees' stories are given credence, made uninhabitable through the destruction of buildings and the despoliation of farming land. Hundreds of thousands of Albanians are refugees outside Kosovo. As many or more are homeless within southern Kosovo and remain within the region simply because they have been unable to leave. How many will return is still uncertain. Nor even if the majority do return is it clear how long they will require outside assistance simply to live. The omens are not auspicious.

Let us make the assumptions which most favour NATO. That the agreement which was reached between Mr Milosevic and NATO was not ambiguous. That Mr Milosevic will keep his word. That the peace keeping force will be NATO led under a unified command. That the Russians involved in the peace keeping will not subvert the process on the ground. That money will be forthcoming in sufficient amounts to rebuild Kosovo. That the KLA will allow themselves to be disarmed. A collection of pretty improbable occurrences. But no matter, let us grant them. What then?

Even under such propitious and unlikely circumstances, it is highly improbable that Kosovo will be quickly returned to normality. The destruction of housing and the spoliation of farm land alone make that immensely difficult, but given the will and the money, the material damage might be repaired. But material renaissance is not the heart of the problem. That lies in the all too simple fact of the existence of two incompatible ethnic groups occupying the same territory, both sides replete with ancestral hatreds and recent hurts. In such circumstances a peaceful multicultural

Kosovo is a fantasy.

We have the example of Bosnia before us. Stripped of all cant, it is now a good old fashioned League of Nations Protectorate, a mandated territory. It has the experience of several years of UN control. Yet the vast majority of the displaced populations in Bosnia have not returned to their homes and the various ethnic groups there lead largely segregated lives.

But the post bombing situation in Kosovo is unlikely to be anything like so favourable as I have described. Mr Milosevic can reasonably claim that he cannot control Serb irregulars in Kosovo. The KLA show no more willingness to disarm than the IRA. The agreement which was reached is not unambiguous. Mr Milosevic cannot be relied to keep his part of the bargain. The Russians have shown that they are not willing to accept NATO command unconditionally. Money in the quantities suggested as needed for rebuilding (anything between £15-25 billion) may well prove to be too great a hurdle for politicians to sell to their publics who are being told of the need for cuts in welfare - The USA and Europe are already squabbling over who should bear the cost of rebuilding Kosovo.

Mr Milosevic also has one great general political advantage; he knows that political life amongst the NATO powers is ephemeral. While he may be in power in five years time, the majority of his opponents will not. He can afford to sit and wait until a propitious moment comes to regain all or part of Kosovo. Mr Milosevic's position is not as strong as that of Saddam Hussain in purely authoritarian terms, but he has a vital quality which Saddam does not, namely his authority does not rely entirely on force.

What is the most likely outcome of the western led occupation of Kosovo? At best we can expect to be a replica of Bosnia. At worst the western disregard shown for the welfare of ordinary Serbs elsewhere in the Balkans will be repeated and the peacekeeping force stand idly by whilst Kosovo is cleansed of Serbs by the KLA and their associates. We shall probably get something in between the two with the Serbs holding the northernmost part of Kosovo in fact if not in name, and the Albanians the rest, which it should be noted is what Mr Milosevic most probably wanted. Perhaps no one has won the war, but that is often the way of wars. The real question is who has suffered the most damage. At

the moment it may look like Mr Milosevic, not least because the NATO countries in truth had nothing material to gain and everything to lose from the War. Yet Mr Milosevic has reduced the Rambouillet demands, probably tightened his control on Yugoslav politics and large parts of Kosovo has been ethnically cleansed. The NATO countries have made significant concessions and committed themselves to massive expenditure and the deployment of troops indefinitely. This will both take money from their own electorates and influence their future foreign policies. It is a strange sort of victory if victory it be for NATO.

For Britain there is much about which to be ashamed and worried. We have bombed defenceless targets which plainly were not in any meaningful sense military. This places us in an impossible moral position in dealing with terrorist action. What moral argument could we have against Serb reprisal bombs in Britain? That it is wrong to bomb innocent civilians?

More worryingly, Mr Blair has shown himself to be an unashamed warmonger. I would like to believe that his public words were simply a cynical manipulation of the public to promote his reputation and were made in



the certain knowledge that Mr Clinton would not commit troops to a land war. Unfortunately I think that Mr Blair was anything but cynical in his belligerence. Given the opportunity I am certain that he would have committed the majority of Britain's armed forces to a land war regardless of the cost, deaths and injuries. The danger remains that he will find another adventure which does result in a land war. Over Kosovo, he behaved like a reckless adolescent and nearly came a fatal political cropper. Yet this government appears to have learnt nothing from the experience, *vide* the unpleasant and malicious fanaticism in Messrs Blair and Cook's declarations of their intent both to unseat Mr Milosevic from power and to bring him before an international court, *vide* the humiliation of Russia, *vide* the ever more absurd declarations of internationalist intent since hostilities ceased. That adolescent idealists' mind set could lead Britain down a very dark path indeed. It is also incompatible with a foreign policy that supposedly encourages elected governments (however imperfect they are) over dictatorships.

What other lessons does this war teach us? It shows above all the utter powerlessness of the democratic process and the sham of international law. In the two countries which have taken the lead, US and Britain, parliamentary support was not formally sought nor given, funds voted or a declaration of war sanctioned. The other members of NATO have been impotent bystanders.

The American Constitution was designed to prevent aggressive acts of war without congressional approval. That constitutional guarantee has been severely tested since 1945, but perhaps never so emphatically as in the past months. If an American president can commit such considerable forces to a war regardless of Congressional approval, it seriously brings into question the value of the constitutional restraint. Where exactly would the line be drawn in the Constitutional sand?

As for Britain, the matter has been debated at the Government's convenience but at no one else's. Incredibly, many will think, support

for the war was never put to a vote in the Commons.

As for international law, that has been shown in the most unambiguous manner to be a sham. The war was fought without a declaration of war, in contravention of the UN Charter and in a manner guaranteed to cause significant civilian casualties. Yet Judge Arbour at the War Crimes Tribunal does not indict the likes of Messrs Clinton and Blair, only Mr Milosevic. Law which is not equally applied is no law, but merely a tool of the powerful against the weak. Moreover, there does not appear to be any illegality at which the US would draw the line. Apart from incitements to murder Mr Milosevic, there have been newspaper reports of attempts by the CIA illegally to enter Mr Milosevic's bank accounts and drain them of funds (we honest folks call that theft). If governments do not obey the core moral and legal commandments of their own societies, law does not effectively exist.

Balkan history tells a single story: any of its peoples which become possessed of the advantage of numbers, wealth or arms will oppress as a matter of course any other of its peoples. If the Albanians gain control of Kosovo, rest assured that they will behave as abominably towards the Serbs as the Serbs have behaved towards them. The disputed territory is Serb by history and Albanian by present settlement. There is no absolute right on either side.

What can be done to minimize ethnic conflict? The starting point must be human nature. This is what Liberal Internationalism ignores, because it treats individuals as atoms outside any social context. Human beings are designed by Nature to live in small bands. Genuine nations are an extension of this fact. What human beings do not find easy or natural is life in circumstances where they have no fixed social context. That should be the starting point for the international solution of any ethnic conflict. Liberal Internationalism is a fantasy held with religious intensity and because of this its imposition will necessarily be both grossly oppressive and immensely harmful.\*

## Letters to the Editor

Sir,

I read your article about the Serbian War [*Free Life* No. 29, April 1999], and it is a really excellent analysis of the situation. Let me add only a few thoughts:

First, NATO broke international law and rules.

Second, pan-Slavism is alive again (I estimate that about 60 per cent of the population in Slovakia declare the war as an aggression).

Third, people are losing belief in democracy because of events in last few months and are comparing the situation with the rest of the regions (long term problems in Turkey, North Ireland, Israel, China, Korea). As an example: bombing Lebanon last week.

Ten years after the "Velvet Revolution", we are asking if we have not jumped out of the Soviet frying pan into a Western fire.

Your sincerely,  
**Pavol Zaloudok**  
zaloudok@mail.eurotel.sk

Dear Sir

The editorial "A Vote for Independence" [*Free Life* No. 29, June 1999] assumes that there is still an independent State, the United Kingdom, to vote for the independence of. Technically there still is [at the time of writing], but it is in a state of dissolution.

The term "United Kingdom" refers to the United Kingdoms of Great

Britain and Ireland, truncated after the secession of twenty six counties in 1921 to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The thirty-two counties voted against secession in the 1918 General Election but twenty-six were off-loaded anyway. Now the remaining six are being shunted off.

That leaves Great Britain. Scotland now has its own Parliament, which will have as its main business the manufacture of grievances against the English. It seems highly likely that the Scots will secede, sooner or later. Which leaves England and Wales, and I am not sure about the Welsh. They will probably remain but there is always the possibility that they will develop a sufficient sense of grievance about the English for them to secede too, though I admit the chances are much less of Welsh secession than of Scottish secession.

We could be left with "England Alone" or "England & Wales Alone". The implications of this for Libertarians are not good if we pull out of the European Union. At present we have the right to live and work anywhere within the Union. This freedom would be an obvious casualty of withdrawal, limiting our rights of residence to England & Wales, an area with probably the highest population density in Europe. We would end up like the Singaporeans with no escape from their island home.

England is becoming more overcrowded, more proletarian, and more unpleasant in numerous ways, from the dominance of pop and football culture to the ugliness of its architecture. We pay more in taxes, have lower wages, work longer hours, and have fewer holidays than our European neighbours. We need the Europeans to begin a process of re-civilising the English.

Mrs Thatcher and others advocate that we should join NAFTA. There is a big problem with the NAFTA idea - the Americans will not have us

at any price.

Many of the features of the European Union that we dislike are the result of our failure to get in earlier and shape the Union more to our liking. Instead of grousing and whingeing from the sidelines we should take a full part in developing the EU in more congenial directions. This includes joining the Euro as soon as possible. The Pound is too closely tied to the dollar. The Dow Jones and the dollar are radically overheated and will collapse in the near future, taking sterling down with them. The Euro will soon be the safe currency haven.

Yours sincerely,  
**Paul Rowlandson**  
P.Rowlandson@ulst.ac.uk

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## Reviews

### *The Future and Its Enemies*

Virginia Postrel

The Free Press, New York, 1998, 265 pp., \$25.00 (hbk)

(ISBN 0 684 82760 3)

It has often been said that there are two types of people in the world - those who divide human beings into two types and those who do not. Virginia Postrel, editor of *Reason* magazine, in her brilliant, bold, and compelling new work, *The Future and Its Enemies*, defies conventional political boundaries of left and right and liberal and conservative to divide the world into stasists and dynamists. The book's thesis is that the most useful and pertinent intellectual vision is about those who want to stop, turn back, or regulate change and those who welcome the future. Ms Postrel's division is reminiscent of Thomas Sowell's unconstrained and constrained visions as thoroughly discussed in his *Conflict of Visions* and *The Vision of the Anointed*. Ms Postrel, herself a dynamist, is proposing a new political dividing line based on how one views and approaches the idea of change.

Stasists have an aversion to change and either abhor progress or want to control it according to their own vision. Stasists include those who long for the good old days, technophobes, technocrats, supporters of big government programs, and individuals whose investments or jobs are in jeopardy due to some specific innovation. They may come from the left (unionists, environmentalists, Luddites, etc.) or from the right (religious traditionalists, nativists, etc.). Stasists on the left want to regulate the market and the development of technology. Those on the right loathe change and have protectionist economic leanings.

Various types of stasists such as Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, Ralph Nader, the Unabomber, unionists, and environmentalists have joined to advocate the restriction of immigration and to oppose global trade. Ms Postrel observes that although stasis supporters are numerous, their visions of the ideal future are varied and incompatible making their alliances fragile and temporary.

Stasists want a regulated, engineered world - the future must be managed. Stasists are into social engineering as exemplified in Bill Clinton's bridge to the 21st century and Al Gore's information superhighway. They want to control and limit change. Ms Postrel notes that the growth of government is making it easier for stasists to get their way. Bureaucratic regulations enable stasists to prevent, delay, or control innovations and changes.

Scorning the idea of nested rules based on the diversity of human bonds, stasists believe they know the one, best way and demand that

everyone live by their ideas. Not only do they want their detailed rules to apply to everyone, they also want specific rules and institutions to govern each new situation and keep things under control. They crave certainty and expect specific outcomes, knowable in advance, rather than general patterns and an open future. Politically-imposed statist plans tend to be very specific - they admit no unarticulated and tacit x-factors and no feedback and learning. Stasists prefer knowledge that can be articulated and easily shared. In addition, they strongly value and support the views of an articulate *élite* - someone needs to take control and make things right.

Stasists portray the market either as an impersonal machine or as a small cabal of powerful men. They tend to detest commercial bonds since a dynamic marketplace erodes the ability of political *élites* to enforce collective decisions.

Imagining life out of time, stasists want to simplify life and to hold it still. In addition, they take existing conditions as a fixed scratch line, considering neither how we got where we are nor how things might evolve.

Ms Postrel describes two types of stasists - reactionaries, whose central value is stability and technocrats whose central value is control. Whereas reactionaries wish to reverse change, restoring the past and holding it in place, technocrats desire to manage change, centrally directing progress according to a predictable plan. Reactionaries often ally themselves with technocrats - they unite in hostility against capitalism, the consumer culture, and globalism.

Reactionaries fear the infinite series - an open-ended progression of invention, learning, adaptation, and change. Some seek rules that would ban change. Others, such as Pat Buchanan, Jeremy Rifkin, and Kirkpatrick Sale, want to return to some imagined, more stable past. The power of reactionaries lies in their ability to alter the values enforced through technocratic structures or to create new technocratic agencies devoted to reactionary purposes.

Technocrats worry about the inability of the state to control dynamists and about a future that may be unpredictable and beyond the control of the elite. Technocracy is the ideology of the one best way. It follows that technocrats are for the future, but only if someone is in charge of making it turn out according to their plan. Technocrats want rules that will control outcomes. They establish standards and impose a single set of values on the future. They prefer setting goals once and for all and talk about comprehensive systems and national standards. They do not tolerate diversity and decentralised trial and error.

Technocrats celebrate their knowledge and expertise and exude an air of omniscience. Seeking predictability and order, they see

themselves as social engineers who formulate rational solutions to public problems. Political arguments tend to take place between technocrats advocating competing overarching schemes. Technocrats like to locate the spirit of America in national greatness achieved through bold federal projects.

Technocrats know how to stop things. Technocratic regulations stifle innovation and diversity, deprive people of the benefit of their own knowledge, and create roadblocks in the form of new rules to master, or anticipate, before acting.

Ms Postrel is at her best when she is describing the dynamist perspective - a world view in which she fervently believes. Dynamists prefer an open-minded society where creativity and enterprise, operating under general and predictable rules, generate progress in unpredictable ways. Dynamists appreciate evolutionary processes such as market competition, playful experimentation, scientific inquiry, and technological innovation. A dynamist is one who works creatively across barriers and obstacles and in areas once thought to be disparate to construct combinations based on the free play of imagination and discovery. Dynamists seek progress, rather than perfection, through trial and error, feedback loops, incremental improvement, diversity, and choice. They are learners, experimenters, risk takers, and entrepreneurs who understand the importance of local knowledge and evolved solutions to complex problems. Not surprisingly, dynamists are frequently attracted to biological metaphors as symbols of unpredictable change and growth, variety, experimentation, feedback, and adaptation.

The author explains that dynamism is for people who like process and pattern and an order that is unpredictable, spontaneous, and ever-shifting. Dynamists appreciate dispersed, even tacit, knowledge and recognise the limits of the human mind at the same time that they celebrate learning. They also prefer competing nested rule sets and want to limit universal rule-making to broadly applicable and rarely changed principles. Dynamists also permit many visions and accept competing dreams. To work together, they do not have to agree on metaphysical principles or what the future should look like.

Ms Postrel states that the central organising principle of dynamism is an open-ended process and that its central value is learning. Unconscious evolution can sometimes develop better solutions than can the best engineers. Dynamists, members of what Ms Postrel calls the party of life, look for solutions to emerge from the interaction of all the individuals. They share beliefs in spontaneous order, experiments and feedback, unintended consequences, an infinite series of evolved solutions to complex problems, the limits of centralised knowledge, and the possibility of progress. Dynamists care about protecting the processes that permit an open-ended future to unfold.

Dynamists learn from choice, competition, and criticism. Both new ideas and criticism are part of the process of trial and error learning. Dynamists also understand that cultures learn from experience.

Dynamists appreciate and accept the variety of human life and value the joys and possibilities of human life that can occur when people are free to experiment and learn. The dynamist moral vision emphasises individual flourishing and responsibility - it sees human nature fulfilled in learning, creating, and adapting to the world. Dynamists believe in the capacity of human beings, gradually and voluntarily, by trial and error, to improve their lives.

Ms Postrel discusses dynamists' attraction to systemic, process-oriented approaches and their appreciation for how simple units and simple rules can form complex orders without design and produce countless combinations. Patterns are shaped by decentralised actions, feedback, and responses. For example, dynamists see the market as a process, a decentralised system for discovering and sharing knowledge and for trading and expressing value.

Dynamism sees the past and the future as inextricably connected and progress as incremental - knowledge and experience are cumulative. Dynamists believe that we live in a world of options constrained by

decisions already made and actions already taken - many before we were even born. They attempt to refine and improve our inherited ideas and determine more precisely the limits to their applicability. Dynamists view cultural trends as part of a decentralised, undirected process of experiment, feedback, and learning.

Progress, for the dynamist, is an infinite series - a process, rather than a product. For them, an opportunity is a problem no one has solved, addressed, or considered. Innovations are based on coming up with new combinations of ideas, testing them, finding their deficiencies, trying possibly better combinations, etc. Technological progress thus is a series of stages involving experimentation, competition, mistakes, and feedback.

A trial and error process invests no one with decision power, assumes no one is omniscient, acknowledges human differences, and permits diverse approaches. This process recognises the human condition including both the limits and potential of the human mind.

An infinite series of progress allows for learning, diffused expertise, and the search for x-factors - the unarticulated knowledge that can only be elicited by experience and experiment. So-called tacit knowledge is expressed in relationships and habits transmitted through webs of economic and social connections. Tacit knowledge, a special case of local knowledge, is embedded, in the things, customs, services, and routines we encounter daily. Tacit knowledge sometimes only travels through apprenticeship. The paucity of articulated knowledge increases the value of turning local (including tacit) knowledge into easily shared information or products. Local knowledge is dynamic, constantly adjusting to new ideas, information, and events. It exists as dispersed bits of incomplete and sometimes contradictory knowledge which all separate individuals possess. Prices are an important signal of changes in local conditions.

Ms Postrel argues that dynamist systems, ranging from a solitary organisation to an entire civilisation, requires rules that are compatible with knowledge, learning, and surprise. Dynamists look for rules that let people forge new bonds, invent new institutions, and find better ways of doing things. According to the author, dynamist rules: (1) allow individuals (including groups of individuals) to act on their own knowledge; (2) apply to simple, generic units and allow them to combine in many different ways; (3) permit credible, understandable, enduring, and enforceable commitments; (4) protect criticism, competition, and feedback, and (5) establish a framework within which people can create nested, competing frameworks of more specific rules.

A dynamist vision thus calls for general rules on which actors can depend - a reliable foundation on which to build complex, ever-adapting structures that incorporate local knowledge. New schemes of rules will be voluntarily subscribed to, allowed to evolve, and able to incorporate detailed knowledge of the particulars. These new schemes of rules will operate as separate nested systems within the general rules.

Ms Postrel explains that contracts treat individuals as free and equal generic units, creating their own bonds. Only by treating individuals in this manner can overarching rules allow people to take advantage of their own ideas. Contracts allow people to incur reciprocal responsibilities and commitments, to make promises others can rely on, and to establish reasonable expectations for future actions. When people cannot make binding, enforceable commitments, dynamic progress is severely hampered.

Well-functioning legal systems are especially important when strangers interact in commercial and other situations. The goal of contract law is not to inspire legal disputes but to settle or avoid them. The idea of contract fosters dynamic progress by encouraging specialisation and allowing an extended order to develop.

The author notes that rules should protect criticism, competition, and feedback by allowing the freedom to challenge established ideas and to offer alternatives. Nested rules recognise the diversity of human bonds by permitting individuals to choose the specific rules under which they

prefer to be governed.

Ms Postrel and other dynamists view nature as a dynamic process, not as an end. An evolving, open-ended nature may impose practical constraints, but it cannot dictate eternal standards. She explains that stasis is neither natural nor desirable and that there is no static standard for the natural. If nature doesn't define its own purposes, and if even *natural* states may incorporate human artifice, then nature cannot be a guide even to its own moral and proper destiny, much less to human life. Change and self-transformation are among the truest expressions of our enduring human nature.

Dynamists celebrate the pleasures of achievement - work that is its own reward. According to Ms Postrel, play is what we do for its own sake. It is how we try new things, how we learn, and how we create new combinations. Freedom is an essential aspect of play. So are rules. All games have rules that require us to stretch our minds and bodies. Whereas play depends on some kind of underlying order, fun stems from finding originality within constraints. If combinations explain the near endless supply of new ideas, play explains where those combinations come from. Play is a spur to our most creative and significant work. The progress of civilisations depend on people who make play out of work -- they create the variations that become the source of progress and the discoveries that drive the infinite series.

A dynamist society imposes no single order beyond the basic rules that allow for plentitude and experimentation. A dynamist system enables people to create their own corner of the universe - their own pockets of stability and nested rules within the broader dynamic world. Dynamist social systems recognise the human need for voluntary association and community and thus allow for people to continually invent ways to provide themselves with stability amidst change.

Ms Postrel discusses a fascinating range of cases to illustrate how free individuals have formulated solutions and found opportunities that never would have been thought of by technocratic planners or reactionary thinkers. These examples include post-it notes, the Internet, computers, shampoo, fashion, medicine, contact lenses, fisheries, movies, etc. In all these areas she demonstrates how and why open-ended and unplanned trial and error is the key to human progress.

Dynamist thought draws from many intellectual disciplines including: classical liberal philosophy and legal theory, free-market economics, political science and public administration, the study of organisations and business strategy, information systems, decision theory, cognitive psychology, human information processing, science, technology, ecology and evolutionary biology, etc. Notable dynamist thinkers include Friedrich Hayek, Herbert Simon, Aaron Wildasky, Daniel Botkin, and many others.

Dynamist thinkers like Ms Postrel will probably like the new movie, *Pleasantville*, that tells the story of twins (a brother and sister) who are magically transported via a TV remote control out of their dysfunctional '90s home into a monochromatic fantasy world of a '50s-type sitcom called *Pleasantville* that reminds one of *Leave It to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best* and *Ozzie and Harriett*. These teen-aged visitors bring spontaneity to this ordered little world thereby changing the sitcom's universe from black and white to colour in more ways than one. As feelings are felt for the first time by the *Pleasantville* characters, strange but beautiful splashes of colour begin to appear apparently randomly (since we don't know the underlying interacting factors) in their black-and-white world. As the townspeople are introduced to passionate emotions and new ideas, colour starts to enter their world. The teen-agers awaken new ideas in the citizens, making them question things that they had taken for granted. Some embrace the new vision and colour scheme, while others fear its influence. There is a split between those who want to retreat from change, knowledge, and human responsibility and those who want to embrace them. By the finale, all traces of black-and-white along with the 50's utopian and sanitised values have been replaced with a functional community with its full range of social concerns and citizens who are colourful, liberated people with free wills.

Dynamists thinkers should also like the 1991 film *Mindwalk* - a philosophical, socio-political, and scientific dynamist conversation between a physicist, a poet, and a politician. The scientist is an idealist (and a dynamist), the poet is a romantic, and the politician is a pragmatist. The three discuss the systematic makeup of the universe. The physicist argues against mechanistic solutions and convinces the others of the interconnectedness of all things - there are world within worlds, organisms within organisms, systems within systems, etc.

Some readers of this review (and Ms Postrel's book) may balk at her seemingly purely material conception of progress. After all, man's most profound questions and problems are existential, moral, and spiritual. As such, true progress would be oriented toward the right ordering and perfection of the soul. Perhaps Ms Postrel should have spent some time explaining that by making life easier, safer, and more prosperous, progress and technology permit persons to spend more time to pursue higher level concerns such as character development, love, religion, and the perfection of one's soul in order to achieve union with God in an eternal community of insight and love.

Ms Postrel's vision of dynamism presupposes a libertarian institutional framework that guarantees man the freedom to seek his material and moral well being and happiness as long as he does not trample the equivalent rights of others. Only then will a person be able to use his rationality and free will to choose, create, and integrate all the values, virtues, and goods that can lead to his moral well-being. This, of course, includes the rational assessment, choice, and use of technology itself.

One *caveat* needs to be made. Ms Postrel fails to emphasise that the world is not conveniently divided into stasists and dynamist. The ability to accept and embrace change is one trait among many and is normally distributed throughout the population. In addition, individuals may tend to be more stasist or more dynamists, but do not totally reject change or accept change in all aspects of their lives - no one is purely or consistently a stasist or a dynamist. Change acceptance varies across a continuum and situationally. Nevertheless, her distinction does demonstrate the relative ability of each vision to promote human flourishing in the real world.

This well-written, readable, and insightful work defies conventional political boundaries by arguing that a more politically relevant categorisation is achieved by defining how individuals and groups view the future. Ms Postrel's book is a must-read for anyone interested in commerce, technology, public policy, and the search for truth in a dynamic world.

**Edward W. Younkings**



*The Jew of Linz: Wittgenstein, Hitler  
and their Secret Battle for the Mind*

Kimberley Cornish

Arrow, London, 1998, 298 pp, £7.99 (pbk)

(ISBN 0 09 926995 3)

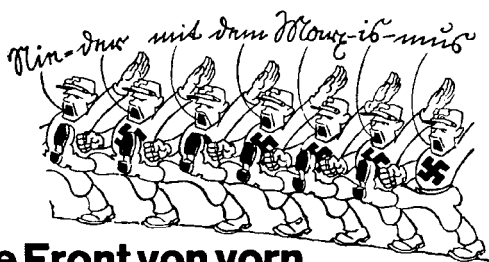
It has been known since the last days of the journal *Encounter* that Adolf Hitler and Ludwig Wittgenstein were for a short time fellow pupils in the *Realschule* in Linz. In his first chapter, Mr Cornish deploys evidence suggesting that “the Jew” of *Mein Kampf* was originally none other than this particular contemporary. Certainly the two boys had a quite unusual amount in common. For they shared not only an intense interest in and remarkable knowledge of music but also a commitment to the peculiar ideas of the philosopher Schopenhauer. Both retained this interest and this commitment throughout the rest of their lives.

Chapter 2 concerns “The Spies of Trinity” (College, Cambridge). Mr Cornish opens by pressing a question never previously asked: “What is the explanation for the fact that Wittgenstein was in 1935 offered the Chair of Philosophy in the University of Kazan?” An explanation is needed since Wittgenstein was very far from being a Marxist philosopher. And the Great Terror, which had been signalled by the assassination of S.M. Kirov in late 1934, was during 1935 in full swing. Mr Cornish contends that the reason why the government of the USSR treated Wittgenstein with such peculiar generosity was that he had been the recruiter of all the Cambridge spies.

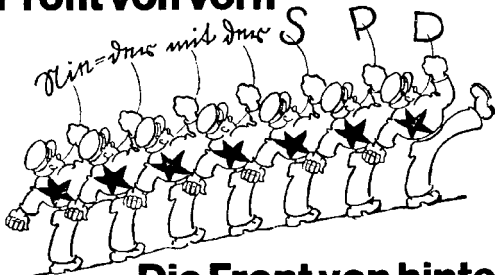
The question whether or not this hypothesis is true or false can be definitively settled only if and when the relevant Soviet archives are examined. But I am myself as confident as without such knock-down decisive verification it is possible to be that Mr Cornish is right. For people who during the crucial years between Wittgenstein’s return to Cambridge in 1929 and that 1935 offer were attending his classes and/or enjoying other personal contacts with him have given me accounts both of the extraordinary and overwhelming force of Wittgenstein’s personality and of the absoluteness in those years of his Stalinist commitment.

Chapters 1 and 2 constitute an historical Part I. Parts II and III are more ideological. The former begins with an attempt to show that Wagner’s anti-semitism and Hitler’s anti-semitism

were not simply parallel hates, directed at Jews in general, but rather a single entangled web of hatred woven together around a single . . . family, whose characteristics were taken



**Die Front von vorn**



**Die Front von hinten**

to be typical of Jews generally.

The next chapter brings in Schopenhauer, who constituted for both Hitler and Wittgenstein the crucial formative influence. The titles of the remaining three chapters of Part II are “Mystical Experience and the Self”, “Schopenhauer, Rosenberg and Race Theory”, and “Magic, Sorcery and Hitler”.

The whole of this Part II constitutes essential reading for students of National Socialist ideology. If any such there still are I can only wish them joy of learning such things as that

the early Aryans in India attained to metaphysical insights through knowledge of the Atman/Brahman identity.

Such revelations remind me of the confession which Gilbert Ryle once made as Supervisor of my graduate studies:

Some of my colleagues think I’m prejudiced. But in my opinion there is nothing which rises in the East except the Sun.

It is in Part III that we find the most thorough discussion of the fundamental metaphysical doctrine apparently shared by both Hitler and Wittgenstein. On the very first page of Part III, Mr Cornish explains that the essence of this doctrine

was expressed by Emerson in his restatement of the original Aryan doctrine of consciousness: ‘. . . the act of seeing and the thing seen, the see-er and the spectacle, the subject and the object is one’.

I confess, not very shamefacedly, that confronted with such doctrines I want to quote Groucho Marx: “It appears absurd. But don’t be misled. It is absurd.” On the first page of the next chapter the same unbelievable doctrine is recycled as a Zen revelation:

I came to realise clearly that Mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth the sun and the moon and stars.

From such unbelievable not to say absurd premises we are supposed to be able, indeed required, to draw the equally unbelievable not to say equally absurd conclusion that there is *really* only one mind; and that the occurrences of consciousness of every kind in the minds of everyone are really occurrences in that single universal mind.

This bizarre doctrine can, according to Mr Cornish, be attractive to both National and International Socialists. For it might seem to show that and how, come the revolution, everyone might agree to abandon the supposed illusion of individuality and live solely in and for the collective whole.

Antony Flew

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*Keeping Patients in the Dark:  
Should Prescription Medicines be  
Advertised Direct to Consumers?*

Peter Cardy, Harry Cayton, Brian Edwards, Harold Gay

Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1999, 45pp, £5 (pbk)

(ISBN 0 255 36454 7)

According to this book, the laws and regulations which prevent patients from receiving information about drugs are “absurd and unhelpful” (p.42) in an information age when the rights of the consumer are supposed to be paramount.

In *Keeping Patients in the Dark* four authors contrast the rigid controls on the advertising of drugs, both prescription-only and over-the-counter medicines, with the increasing freedom of information in all other areas, which is the necessary basis for empowered consumer choice.

The controls on advertising, maintained by European and UK law as well as regulatory codes policed by industry watchdogs, have traditionally been justified on the grounds that patients cannot be expected to know enough about their conditions to make informed choices, and the assumption that the doctor will always act on his own clinical judgement, in the best interests of the patient. Neither of these assumptions is tenable now.

Health issues are widely discussed in the media, and patients are better informed than ever before from a variety of sources, including the Internet. Peter Cardy, who ran the Motor Neurone Disease Association at the end of the 1980s (and now runs the Multiple Sclerosis Society), describes how, even when the Internet was in its infancy, it enabled an informed patient group to become thoroughly familiar with the research:

Unpublished performance data from companies might reach us before it reached Wall Street; medical journal articles on clinical trials would be on our desks before reviewers had replied to the editor; questions were suggested to us that might be put to researchers whose work showed therapeutic promise (p.25).

We are now in the absurd situation that some websites have sections headed: "Information on this site for US citizens only".

British net-surfers presumably pass on before their minds are influenced by forbidden knowledge (p.39).

Harry Cayton, who runs the Alzheimer's Disease Society, shows how the control of information regarding pharmaceuticals specifically excludes patients by defining the doctor, rather than the patient, as the consumer. The Code of Practice which governs the industry is drawn up by industry representatives and medical professionals. "Patients are conspicuous by their absence". Even the Consumers' Association "seems to connive with the definition of doctors as consumers by publishing the Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin, written for doctors by doctors, with not a patient in sight" (p.37).

The assumption that doctors act only in the best interests of their patients is unconvincing in a cash-strapped NHS in which rationing is increasingly obvious and "financial rather than clinical criteria are applied" (p.35). As Professor Brian Edwards, one of the architects of the Patients' Charter, points out:

The laws preventing ... advertising were created when doctors in publicly financed systems had little, if any, financial accountability and could therefore discharge their Hippocratic oath unencumbered.... They now have budgets to manage, books to balance and managers to answer to (p. 17).

Under these circumstances, the well-informed patient who requests a particular new and perhaps expensive drug is "a mixed blessing to the doctor" (p. 13). Even within a cost conscious NHS, a case can be made for increasing drug expenditures if it keeps patients out of hospital and prevents surgery, but new drugs are coming on to the market for conditions previously regarded as untreatable. In these cases, the NHS has no mechanism to determine priorities:

The effect is that new treatments are judged on much stricter criteria of effectiveness than existing ones and that political a media priorities influence decisions more than they should. It is much easier to resist the introduction of a new treatment for dementia in old people, for instance, than a drug for cancer in children (p.36).

As David Green explains in his foreword, the paternalism which

restricts the free flow of information on drugs has had an ulterior motive:

All post-war governments have... anticipated that well-informed patients would demand the best, inevitably increasing the pressure on limited NHS budgets. Instead of asking whether 'free' medicine made sense, successive governments have preferred to restrict access to information in the hope that badly-informed patients would more willingly accept their lot. The time has come for a mature debate about widening the availability of information and increasing personal payment for medicines (p.vii).

It would be better if the authors followed their argument to its logical conclusion, and insisted on our right to self-medication. In a free society, a prescription becomes nothing more than a letter of advice from a doctor to a pharmacist. If patients know what they want they will go and buy it for themselves regardless of what a doctor thinks. Give us the right not just to know what medicines are, but also to buy them direct - that means the right of any adult to walk into an unlicensed pharmacy, and buy whatever drugs take his or her fancy, and for any purpose. That means not more than 16 aspirin. It means unlimited amounts of heroin, cocaine, vitamin E, and laetrile. That would be an improvement.

Even so, this book is worth reading so far as it goes.

**Iti Saflaia**

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*Eat the Rich*

**P.J. O'Rourke**

**Picador, London, 1998, 246pp., £6.99 (pbk)**

**(ISBN 0 330 35328 4)**

In one respect this is classic P.J. O'Rourke, irreverent, funny and trenchantly conservative. If his style irritates you, this book will not soothe; nor will fans be disappointed.

But as with all his books (except *A Guide to Bachelor Living*) there is a serious intent, this time less hidden than usual, to explain economics to the non-economist. To many this is a noble but doomed cause for which too many trees have already perished in vain. But this book manages to explain economics far better than any other book I have read (including my 'A' Level textbooks).

Does it simplify? Of course it does. Is it biased? I would challenge any person to read this book and understand Keynesian theory any better than when they first picked the book up. The same however could be said until recently about university textbooks and Monetarism, Public Choice Theory and the Austrian School; and the textbooks don't even make you laugh.

However the book does succeed in explaining economics in the common sense terms that the dismal science should never have left behind. It does this by going around the world to different economies (for example "good capitalism" - Wall Street - and "bad capitalism" - Albania) and looking at what makes these places tick - or otherwise. In between insulting the cooking and making jokes about local manners, he makes some surprisingly sharp points about economics. A health warning for all the Anarcho-Capitalist readers, this man may believe in a smaller state, but he is fairly insistent that this state should firmly carry out it's responsibilities, however small.

This is definitely a better bet for an entertaining read than a book on the history of free banking systems.

**James Spencer**

# Final Jottings

## Brian Micklethwait

### One

I pontificate therefore I am. Few things cheer me up like being on the radio or the TV, and the other day I was on something called *Look North*, a BBC TV show in the north of Watford region. In Halifax, a developer is building an estate for child haters, in which no persons between the ages of four and eighteen may live. Hows about that then?? Good, said I. Not good, said Janet Something of the Association of Something-Or-Other. More choice in the type of neighbourhood you can live in, said I. Where will it end?, said she. Other estates may soon be built with children particularly in mind, said I. What is the world coming to?, said she.

It was an odd experience. I was welcomed at Broadcasting House by a team of security guards who searched me for bombs, and one of them then conducted me to a self-operating studio and left me to it. I did my performance and let myself out of the studio, at which point I apparently had the run of Broadcasting House. I blundered into a brightly lit room full of food and food preparation objects, seeking guidance as to how to get out, but it contained no one, and in general, the building seemed very thin on actual people, aside from security guards. I suppose they all now live out in the far west of our metropolis, poor things.

I like the BBC. I know I'm not supposed to, what with it being a nationalised industry. But I love the adversarial principle in its genetic coding - opinions may only be presented if argued about - because that lets in educatedly argumentative people like me. Our Editor is such an energetic presence on the Internet that he IS the media, and he likes to sneer and rage at all the other media for being tools of tyranny, as they are of course. Me, I am content to supply the (other) media with my opinions, politely. For Our Editor, the world is ruled by institutions and customs. Mere ideas don't count, except in the heads of idea freaks like me, until someone plants them as traditions and encodes them in ongoing institutions and practices. For me, ideas are everything. We're both right. I infect the world with libertarianism. He clobbers the world with it. Good cop, bad cop. Whatever works.

### Two

There is an exception to my rule about being polite on the radio and the TV. I try to be rude to politicians. Not custard-pie-in-the-face rude, just not as respectful as they would like. An essential part of achieving the triumph of the voluntary way of doing things over the compulsory (political) way of doing things is to knock the stuffing out of politicians, to treat them as superfluous blunderers whose only important impacts on civilisation are now negative. A year or so ago I was on a BBC Scotland talk show hosted by Colin Bell. Also present were Colin Ward, a noted leftist anarchist, and a Scottish liberal democrat politician. We were discussing "community", what a fine thing that is, and how to get more of it. The politician equated "community" with her and her friends getting bigger budgets to splash around. The two Colins and I mobbed her, Colin W and me because we did, and Colin B because she kept failing to answer our objection to her, which the BBC doesn't like. So in effect it was three against one. Colin W and I were saying that the way to make better communities is for people to go ahead and make them. Madam Politics ignored our challenge not because she was frightened of it or angry about it, but because she literally did not understand it. She did not get it. To her making communities, niceness, and so forth, meant doing politics, and politics

could only be done the way she and her mates did politics. You want a nice community, you gather a bunch of politicians into a Nice Communities Committee and give them X hundred thousand quid. Yet here were these two maniac anarchists trashing her mercilessly. We did not now and never would want anything from her, or from her political friends, or from her political friends' political friends, and so felt no need to soften our contempt for her and for everything she stood for. And since this was the BBC we were rude without using rude words, which is often the rudest of all.

This kind of thing gets to you. When you tell yourself that you're tremendously important but when others treat you gently but firmly as pond scum you lose your will to power. This is what happened to the old Soviet *élite*. People stopped fearing them and started to pity them. This is what we must do to our political *élite*. If we denounce them as evil geniuses, we actually keep them in power, because we make them feel important. If, on the other hand, we tell them to their faces that they are fools whose only importance is the scale of the confusion and the waste that they preside over, then we just might see them off.

A friend of mine organises dinners every few weeks, at which I and another libbo plus various media and New Labour types sit around trying to impress each other. At the last one, the dominant theme emerged as the loss of enthusiasm not for any particular brand of politics, but for politics as such. The brightest and the best are not doing it any more. Now that the shine is wearing off Blairism, even being a Blairite cabinet minister is revealing itself as deeply unglamorous drudgery. After all, not far beneath the surface of Blairite triumphalism and all-night political partying lies a deep disillusionment with what politics can actually achieve. If you actually want something, say the New Labourites, go shopping.

Another symptom of the same process is the way that they're drafting comedians onto *Question Time*. After all, if politics achieves nothing but foolishness, then the only point of *Question Time* is if it's fun, which it can't possibly be if the only people on it are politicians. Another symptom of this process is the way that the vox pop TV has dumped "issues" and instead switched to "my boyfriend's having a gay affair - my mother's a stripper" stuff. The other night I channel hopped into a TV "debate" about the merit or lack of it of the new *Star Wars* movie. A couple of years ago it would have been fox hunting or drug legalisation. This suits me well, because I no longer get asked to be on vox pop TV shows about drug legalisation. These shows were a huge waste of time. They'd get you there hours in advance and give you nothing to do except get drunk, which is what they wanted because the real agenda of these shows became proving that people like me, who have opinions about issues, are idiots.

In the short run, we libertarians are probably suffering from this downgrading of politics. As an Argentinian customs officer once said to a self-proclaimed anti-Communist friend of mine: "I don't care what kind of Communist you are!" But if they consider all politicians to be idiots, then the public may eventually become bored with their present political indifference and switch instead to whichever ideology rationalises their anti-political prejudices, and go berserk. In other words, they might become berserk libertarians. The ideologically torpid 1950s were followed by the ideologically manic 1960s, so things like this can happen. The best will be filled with passionate intensity and the worst will lack all conviction.

Lovely.