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- Are we being bamboozled by the men and women in lab coats?

PLACING TOO MUCH FAITH IN OTHERS

Those readers with a connection to the Libertarian Alliance will be aware of the untimely death of Richard Garner, a frequent contributor to both the SIF and the LA, at the age of just 33. I will not add anything to my LA remembrance of him republished in this issue of *The Individual* except to reiterate that this is a great loss both to the British libertarian movement and to me as a friend.

Turning to my other article, the one about the police, consider this: during the ongoing “phone hacking” scandal, which has been the worst revelation? That tabloid journalists have the morals of crack whores? That rich and powerful men enjoy wielding their wealth and power over others? That politicians desperate for good press coverage will ingratiate themselves with almost anyone, however ethically compromised? We knew all of that already. The real revelation has been the shedding of a little light onto the arrogance, incompetence and corruption of the police.

Although it seems a long time ago now, Mr Maunnter’s review of the 2010 general election still has the power to inform. This is particularly true in his analysis of the background of contemporary politicians. They are often rather posh and, far more importantly, have almost no experience of life outside of politics. Truly, they live in a “Westminster bubble”.

SIF member Edward Goodman was not the only reader to contact me about Peter Richards’ article broadly – but not wholly – praising the British Empire that appeared in the June issue of this journal. Perhaps the least that one can say about it is that, given that throughout history conquest and empire have arisen from notions of racial or religious superiority or a desire for plunder, then the British Empire was *at least in part* high-minded, sincere and sometimes successful in its self-appointed civilising mission.

I have insufficient background in the natural sciences to comment on the detail of Dr Dunning-Davies’ article. We find him taking us out of our “comfort zone”, and no bad thing too! However, that is his general point. The taxpayer is throwing bucket-loads of money at, and placing a good deal of faith in, people whose workings are an utter mystery to most of us. To take one of the most pressing areas where science meets public policy: “climate change”. If, as many suspect, the Establishment view about the reality and severity of anthropogenic (man-made) global warming (AGW) is much exaggerated or just plain wrong, then we are in the process of spending colossal sums of money on a process that will only lead to blackouts.

Mind you, a bit of AGW might not come amiss. Did I blink and miss the Summer of 2011?!

Dr Nigel Gervas Meek

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SCIENCE AND ITS PUBLIC FUNDING

Dr Jeremy Dunning-Davies

Introduction

Using its own words, “the SIF is a classical liberal organisation that believes in the economic and personal freedom of the individual, subject only to the equal freedom of others”. However, in any society, whether democratic or not, the individual must necessarily have certain bounds placed on his economic freedom by the obvious necessity of the prevailing government to raise taxes to pay for the various services we and the country need. In most cases, although the individual may not know the precise details of the way in which collected revenue is spent in particular areas, he will have some rough idea of the need for some expenses.

Although some might disagree, most would see a need to spend money on defence; most would agree with funding education in general terms; most would agree to spending on health and social requirements; and so on. In each case mentioned, there could well be arguments over the amounts spent in specific areas and on specific projects but, in general terms, any government would have broad agreement to spend in these areas.

Of course, each of these mentioned areas and others which have not been cited benefit from the fact that all have a direct effect on all individuals in the state and all feel, rightly or wrongly, that they know something about these areas. Hence, all are able to form opinions on whether or not a particular piece of expenditure is correct. The individual will base his view on information gathered in the main from various branches of the media, together with possibly a little background reading and discussions with friends and colleagues. The view expressed finally may not be truly well informed but at least the individual feels he can have a sensible say.

However, is this the position when one comes to discuss the funding of science? This is undoubtedly a much bigger question than many realise and is becoming increasingly important in these days when so many hugely expensive science projects are being proposed and funded.

The views expressed by the scientific laymen are formed once again by interaction with the various arms of the media. These days the brilliantly produced science programmes on television are hard to resist and the message they send even harder. Technology is used to great effect and one can well understand how the young and the scientifically uninitiated are left impressed and, more im-

portant, convinced by the arguments they’ve had thrust upon them in their living rooms.

However, are these members of the public given the true overall picture? Are they made aware of conflicting views, if such exist? Are they made aware of alternative theories, again if such exist? The answer to all these questions is ‘No’ and this is a grave concern for many people in the know, both scientists and non-scientists. Further it is worrying to realise that it is quite possible that those in the position to make the final decision on the allocation of scientific research funding are also not necessarily in possession of all the facts when they have to make specific decisions.

The above is a serious allegation to make but is supported by an extremely strong body of evidence, but evidence of a type that will only be viewed sympathetically, let alone accepted, by people with open minds willing to question authority in a mild, nonaggressive manner. The cases to be used to illustrate this assertion will be taken from the general area of physics in the main but are all examples well-known to the lay public due to their constant coverage in the media and in so many popular science books.

Einstein’s theories of relativity

In the nineteenth century, the existence of a material medium, the æther, pervading all space was a generally accepted concept. The supposed mechanical vibrations of this medium were used to explain the wave propagation of light. One great challenge facing experimentalists, therefore, was to detect the actual presence of this medium. At the time, optical experiments were the most accurate available. Easily the best known was that performed by Michelson and Morley in the 1880’s.

It is well recorded that this experiment failed to detect the physical existence of the æther. In the history of the development of special relativity, this is the first juncture where questions should be raised. Was it actually true that the experiment did fail to detect the physical existence of an æther? The controversy surrounding this straightforward question continued throughout the twentieth century and is not resolved even today. It is claimed in the vast majority of, if not all, textbooks that no absolute motion was detected but, in truth, the published data revealed a speed of 8km/s. However, this made use of Newtonian theory to calibrate the equipment and was a figure much less than the 30km/s orbital speed of the

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earth. It was purely due to this second point that the detected speed was less than the orbital speed of the earth that a null result was claimed. It is now claimed by some that modern analysis leads to a different calibration for the equipment and that this, in turn, leads to a speed in excess of 300km/s. The claim is then that the experiment both detected absolute motion and the breakdown of Newtonian theory. This first supposed detection of absolute motion has supposedly been confirmed by other experiments.

However, it quickly became accepted generally that the Michelson and Morley experiment did, in fact, fail to detect the existence of an æther and there then resulted a major challenge to the theoreticians to explain this null result. After much preliminary work by such as Lorentz and Poincaré, Einstein's special theory of relativity emerged as the accepted explanation although it should be realised that most of the results had been produced by Poincaré up to eight years earlier.

Also, that most famous of equations, $E = mc^2$, had been known and used for several years before Einstein's work was published. As one example to support this assertion, this particular result was mentioned in Thomson's book *Electricity and Matter*, which appeared in 1904 but was actually the text of lectures delivered at Yale University in 1903, but the result's history goes back much further than that. However, be that as it may, since those early years of the twentieth century, there has been much discussion of the results of the Michelson-Morley experiment; it being claimed on many occasions that the experiment did not, in fact, produce a null result. The controversy still exists.

It should never be forgotten that Einstein also thought very deeply about the problem of gravitation. Whether or not he turned his attention to this because of a problem with the orbit of the planet Mercury is not really important, although it does provide a convenient starting point for any discussion of what is now known as Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. The name merely indicates a follow-on from his special theory but, in fact, it is really a theory of gravitation although, like all other theories of gravitation, it doesn't explain exactly what the force of gravity really is. The final point is not at all surprising since no-one really understands what a force is, merely what it does!

It is often pointed out that people such as Poincaré and Lorentz contributed greatly to the special theory of relativity but, where the general theory is concerned, the tremendous intellectual achievement was Einstein's own. True he made use of the mathematical results of such as Riemann, Bianchi and Ricci, but the final physical theory was entirely the work of Einstein himself; he

merely made use of known results in differential geometry in the same way as others utilised known results in algebra or calculus. As well as explaining the problem associated with the orbit of Mercury, the theory also made predictions concerning the bending of light rays as they passed a massive body such as the sun. This offered almost immediate scope for scientists to test this revolutionary new theory. The eclipse of 1919 provided the perfect opportunity. The observations made of this eclipse by Eddington were used to herald the almost complete vindication of this theory, although subsequently doubts have been cast over the actual information obtained at that time. Incidentally, according to Herbert Dingle, as recorded in his book *Science at the Crossroads*,¹ it was only after Eddington's apparent vindication of his General Theory of Relativity that Einstein's Special Theory assumed precedence over the earlier theory advanced by Poincaré, – a theory which, incidentally, incorporated an æther.

Hence both Einstein's theories of relativity, while forming the basis for so much modern research in physics and astronomy, still have genuine question marks hanging over their validity. However, while many people have heard of Einstein's theories, not many have real knowledge of them. That is not the case with two topics which have arisen out of those theories and have been very much brought to the public's attention via the media in its various forms. These topics are the idea of a Big Bang as the origin of our Universe and the notion of black holes. Both topics have been covered in great detail in serious television science programmes, in many popular science books as well as in numerous science fiction books aimed at people of all ages. The result is that many people feel they really do know something about these two topics, but do they?

The Big Bang

The whole idea of the Big Bang as the starting point for our Universe goes back to the theoretical work of Alexander Friedmann and Georges Lemaître in the earlier years of the last century following publication of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. Its movement to a position of prominence, if not pre-eminence, in cosmology might be felt to have been brought about by its eloquent advocacy at the hands of George Gamow in the mid and late 1940's, ably supported by such as J. Robert Oppenheimer. Of course, if anyone dares ask the seemingly childlike question 'What went bang?', confusion tends to follow.

However, the Big Bang as a valid model of the Universe has been under close scrutiny almost since it was proposed and many of the queries concerning it remain. These queries tend to be 'swept under the carpet' but in a rather subtle way. The rise of popular science books has provided a means whereby the general public is per-

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sueded to believe in the ideas accepted as founding ‘conventional wisdom’. The ‘solutions’ to various problems are presented as indisputable facts; the notion that other possible explanations exist is carefully suppressed. One notable exception to this observation, although it probably wouldn’t be considered a ‘popular’ science book, is the *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Astronomy*, which appeared in 1977. This book provides an excellent example of a book which, while apparently supporting the commonly accepted view of things, nevertheless obviously leaves the door open for other explanations of observed phenomena. In many ways, it provides an object lesson in open-minded, unbiased writing of a scientific text – popular or otherwise.

However, almost from the beginning, a problem faced by the adherents to the theory was, and still is, the seemingly constant need to add to the basic theory in order to overcome problems. Obvious examples of this are the introduction of the ideas of inflation, dark matter and even dark energy, more abstract notions with which most are only too familiar if only by name. It is not, I think, without interest to realise that additions to the Big Bang theory such as those mentioned are accepted unerringly. Seemingly, no questions are raised when these new notions are introduced in attempts to preserve this theory as the only acceptable explanation for our universe as we see it.

Unfortunately, it is only too true that, at the end of their undergraduate days, many students emerge totally convinced that the Big Bang theory correctly describes the beginnings of our universe and also many of its subsequently developed properties. They believe it to be the only theory which explains the cosmic microwave background radiation; they believe it to be the only theory to explain the mass fraction of helium. This, and much more, has all been learnt in undergraduate courses as being absolutely sacrosanct. Further, these beliefs are vigorously supported by so many popular science books, such as Simon Singh’s *Big Bang*, and by many popular science lectures. The popular science lecture on the Big Bang by Simon Singh, which has received quite widespread publicity, is an excellent example. This lecture is beautifully constructed and presented, as one might expect from an experienced member of the BBC personnel able to call on the resources of that organisation if necessary. The personality presenting the talk is friendly and engaging; a young audience, in particular, is rapidly enthralled. The use of power point to deliver the message, and message it is, is very professional. Everything about the talk from a delivery point of view is beyond reproach, and that is where the danger lies.

Young people with impressionable minds will leave such a talk totally convinced that they have just been exposed to an enunciation of the com-

plete truth regarding the birth of our universe. But have they? They will have been told, amongst other things, that the cosmic background radiation was discovered by Penzias and Wilson in 1965; the actual published discovery in 1941 by McKellar will have been ignored. The Steady State theory will have been dismissed totally with hardly a glance in its direction and no mention will have been made of the newer modified theory. The constant need to add to, and modify, the original Big Bang theory will have been glossed over. However, in the lecture being highlighted here, the presentation will have been so slick and professional that these points will not have sunk in to members of the audience. Many of the enthralled youngsters will probably leave the lecture theatre remembering more that Simon Singh would like to be admired by Cameron Diaz in the same way that Einstein was apparently admired by Tallulah Bankhead, than that they have just heard details of *one theory* for the beginning of our universe.

Superficial gloss will have prevailed. As stated previously, herein lies the danger. The scientists of tomorrow are not being trained to have open questioning minds. Rather they are having their minds programmed to be closed to all thoughts which might possibly conflict with ‘conventional wisdom’. The message often appears to be delivered with what amounts to an almost religious fervour, – what might be termed scientific evangelism.

Comment must be made at this juncture about the latest addition to this field of scientific indoctrination. Following last year’s successful series *Wonders of the Solar System*, the nation is to be treated to the same presenter pontificating on the *Wonders of the Universe*, and this by a person who is not an astronomer or astrophysicist. This latter point is important because it means the material being presented will be prepared by someone else and one can almost guarantee it will be biased in favour of the prevailing status quo. I have little doubt the programmes will be good television and will attract good audience figures but I also fear for the content. Once again many of those in the audience will be highly impressionable youngsters ripe for glamorous indoctrination and that, I strongly suspect, is what will happen. Of course, many older people will also fall for the ‘boyish charm’ and be hoodwinked into believing that they are hearing the actual facts of the situation.

Few will realise they are simply hearing about one theory and one with many questions hanging over it – questions which I fear will go unmentioned and definitely unanswered. These questions range from ‘Why the need to attach so many additions to the original theory?’ to ‘Are the alleged predictions of the theory peculiar to this one theory?’ In truth, the answer to the first question is that these additions are necessary to rescue the theory

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from total rejection. The answer to the second question is, quite simply, No! For example, the temperature of the so-called cosmic background radiation is found quite accurately by several other theories, including the Steady State theory and it must always be remembered that the so-called cosmic background radiation itself admits several explanations for its existence. Hence, the question of the validity of the Big Bang theory remains an open one.

Black holes

Much the same story holds true for black holes, those peculiar stellar bodies so beloved of science fiction writers. Popularly, a black hole is taken to be a body so dense that one would need to move at a speed equal to, or greater than, that of light in order to escape from it. A body with this particular property was discussed in 1784 by an Englishman named John Michell using ordinary Newtonian methods and the type of body he was considering could exist theoretically. However, the modern notion of a black hole is somewhat different and results from an attempt to give a physical explanation to a mathematical singularity which crops up in general relativity. For the uninitiated, a mathematical singularity is a point where a quantity takes on an infinite value. Years ago such a point used to be thought a point at which the theory under consideration broke down but nowadays some people adopt a different stance. Over the years, a great many objections have been raised to this concept. Many focus on the mathematics involved and indicate where incorrect steps appear to have been taken. Nevertheless, popular opinion demands the possible existence of such bodies and we are informed quite regularly that yet another black hole has been found or that all galaxies have at least one black hole at their centre. In fact, as yet, no object has been identified as a black hole beyond reasonable doubt.

However, the myth remains and it seems that, in the public eye, because of the information given to members of that public and the manner in which such information has been disseminated, black holes are not mythical in any way; they are real!

Deductions following

The above are simply three examples of scientific theories which have been presented to the general public in a very popular, highly biased way. They have, however, been presented virtually as accepted fact, rather than as mere theories whose actual validity is far from established. The end result of this is that, when applications for large sums of money to fund research projects such as the Large Hadron Collider, LISA and LIGO are presented, because they are said to rely on Einstein's theories, may help establish the big bang

model even more firmly, and may even produce some mini black holes, in general the public has few qualms over such expenditure.

Further, the uninitiated probably feel that everything has been through the so-called peer review process and so the whole procedure must be completely satisfactory. However, just how true is this? How reliable is this peer review system?

Peer review

Firstly one must ask the obvious question of what is peer review precisely? Somewhat surprisingly this is not a straightforward question to answer even though it is a process at the very heart of the operation of academic journals and of grant awarding. Clearly it has to do with some third party reviewing an article prior to possible publication or reviewing a grant application for the awarding body. Normally, it would be expected that the reviewer would be an expert in the field covered by the article or grant application but, particularly in highly specialised cases, this may not always be so. Hence, it may be wondered as to the meaning of the word 'peer' here. Again, people may wonder how many reviewers there should be in any particular case; they may wonder whether the authors' names should be withheld from the reviewer, although this is rarely the case; they may wonder if the reviewer should be anonymous as is usually the case.

These are just a few of the questions which may be raised in connection with this process which is seemingly at the heart of so much in science and can have such a dramatic effect on the lives and careers of the researchers involved as well as a serious, if indirect, effect on everyone. This final remark relates in particular to the area of medical research where, if someone makes an incorrect choice or decision, it can lead to human tragedy. However, in other areas of science, it can also lead to effects which have dire consequences – often financial – for the general public.

Over the years many have speculated on both the effectiveness and fairness of this system which almost seems to be a part of the foundations of scientific research. Whether or not detailed examinations have taken place in other fields, it is certainly the case that there has been much work examining this topic in medicine and the results are worrying if not truly unexpected. One editor of an eminent medical journal wrote that 'if peer review was a drug it would never be allowed onto the market' because 'we have no convincing evidence of its benefits but a lot of evidence of its flaws'.

Of course, here attention is restricted to the peer review process utilised to accept/reject articles for publication or to decide on who does and does not receive research funding. Once an article

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appears in print or on the internet, it is subject to detailed scrutiny by all who read it and, to many, this is felt a far more rigorous and fair form of peer review; rigorous because the work is examined by far more people; fair because people are, at that stage, not involved with protecting their own, or friends', reputations.

Here, unfortunately, it has to be realised that science is no pure search for scientific truth; there is a huge amount of protection of personal position and of what might be termed 'conventional wisdom'. The three topics in physics mentioned earlier all fall into this category of conventional wisdom. No-one dare publicly challenge the validity of Einstein's theories of relativity; the big bang model for the beginning and development of our Universe is almost sacrosanct; and the actual presence of black holes is readily asserted with no fear of rejection even though the theoretical evidence from which their presence is deduced is dubious to say the least and no such object has been identified beyond all reasonable doubt – contrary to so many printed reports. Hence, a review method which many in medicine have found to be seriously flawed is still in place in all science and is undoubtedly holding back advance. This is, quite simply, because, as pointed out with the three instances above, certain topics are simply not open to investigation; the 'gods' ruling science have decreed for reasons best known to themselves, but probably connected with self-aggrandisement, that such topics are now closed for discussion and further examination.

Of course, it is easy to criticise but less so to offer a viable acceptable alternative which is also an improvement on the present system. As far as the assessment of academic articles is concerned, it has been suggested quite seriously that all peer review could, and possibly should, be abolished and each individual piece of work examined and rated by the entire scientific community. This would not have been practical in the days when only paper journals were available but nowadays, with the internet it does become a viable alternative. It has been tried with a number of freely available sites but with varying degrees of success. It has to be admitted that people have begun to impose restrictions on some of these sites when they've been operating for a short while. The problem with this is that the restrictions have usually been introduced to prevent the appearance of some points of view since, obviously, the amount of space available is not a problem with an online publication. This is what has happened with the arxiv site administered by Cornell University. This site set out to be freely available to all to post articles, but restrictions have been imposed more and more in recent years and it has now reached the stage where experts are being denied the right to respond to criticisms of well-established theory in their field by relatively un-

known people. The end result of this, though, may be beneficial to science in the long run in that it has led to the establishment of alternative on-line sites, such as vixra, to combat this censorship being imposed by a seemingly self-appointed clique. However, if an online journal starts out by being available to all, so long as it remains completely open, it seems to offer a possible solution to one problem with peer review. However, what of the problem where grant applications are involved?

Here the problem is entirely different and it is one which assumes added importance with the announcement that the present dire economic conditions require a further concentration of research funding on top-rated work. However, what is top-rated work and who defines it? It must be realised that most work that is truly top-rate can become classified as such only *after* its completion. Again, whenever, money is involved, people always have pet projects which they feel must be funded before all else. For example, whenever there is talk of cutting science research funding, some body of people will immediately start proclaiming the vital importance of their work for mankind and claiming that, although they recognise the need for saving, their area must remain virtually untouched because of the possible benefits for all that could result from their work.

While such an argument may have some merit in some fields of medical, or medically related, research for example, the devastating benefits for mankind arising out of a new telescope or particle accelerator being built somewhere are not so immediately obvious. Nevertheless, for this second example cited, how is a fair and just decision reached? Until now, peer review has provided the answer but how fair and just has it been? It must be acknowledged that no human system will ever be perfect but, in this area, the system developed does seem far less than perfect. The individuals acting to review applications are human beings and, as such, susceptible to the failings of all human beings. Many would feel that members of these review panels favour not just their own disciplines but their own particular speciality within that discipline. Is this a fair point? Possibly not in some cases but, over the years, the system has produced so much discontent that feelings of injustice abound. The stories from colleagues are legion but, to give just one example to illustrate the point, it cannot be acceptable to totally reject a proposal purely because the applicants haven't published in the precise field of the application before. This, however, can be the case.

Here though abandoning peer review is not so easy. One point that is forgotten often is that, where grant applications are concerned, there will only be a finite amount of money available and so some applications will necessarily be successful, others not. How, therefore, is the available

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money to be apportioned? It seems that a version of the present peer review system must remain but, from what has happened in more recent times at least, it seems that some safeguards must be introduced.

Here it seems that the availability of more and fairer knowledge of what is going on in science might provide a good starting point. Apart from the professionals who carry out the peer review, the process will necessarily involve input from non-scientists, for example, of some civil servants. It might be useful if these people were more aware of the real truth of some areas of science. Here the three topics to which I alluded earlier provide excellent examples of areas where the public has been hoodwinked, at least to some extent. People have been placed on academic pedestals and, once that has happened, from that moment on they and their work simply cannot be challenged. True science should involve a genuine search for the truth about a topic or area and, as such, views and ideas may well change over the course of time as instrumentation becomes more and more accurate and as new instrumentation becomes available. Science cannot, by its very nature, stand still.

The validity of Einstein's theories of relativity has been challenged almost since they were first enunciated. Alternative solutions to the various problems those theories were supposedly developed to examine have been proposed on numerous occasions but have been rejected, not because they were proved incorrect but because they were thought to challenge the validity of relativity. In truth, all most of these pieces of work did was offer an alternative solution to a problem. No more, no less!

The Big Bang is simply a theory of how our Universe came into being and developed but that is all it is – a theory! As such, it should be challenged and any challenge should be taken seriously, not dismissed simply because it queries conventional wisdom. Black holes are merely theoretical constructs but the public has been led to believe the existence of such objects is established fact. On the other hand, the public is largely unaware of alternative explanations in existence for these phenomena.

Many might have heard of the so-called Steady State theory for explaining our universe. However, most feel it has been successfully discredited, but has it? The answer to this question is definitely 'No'. True, there are problems with this theory as with all theories but, in its present form, it can describe accurately the phenomena concerned at least as well as the big bang theory. However, both these theories rely totally on the force of gravity to explain things.

Most of the matter in our Universe is electrically charged, being in the form of plasma, and the electromagnetic force is 39 orders of magnitude greater than the force of gravity; that is, you multiply the magnitude of the force of gravity by one followed by 39 zeros to find the corresponding magnitude of the electromagnetic force. Plasma has been studied in laboratories for in excess of one hundred years and the scientists concerned, including Nobel Prize Winners, have produced effects reminiscent of astronomical phenomena on numerous occasions; for example, an effect similar to the aurora borealis has been produced. Bringing the effects of electricity and magnetism to the fore, as plasma physicists have attempted to do, has produced many new – experimentally backed – explanations for many astronomical phenomena. These are not always welcome developments though since they have been accompanied on occasions by new ideas about some of the heavenly bodies. Looking at things from the plasma point of view brings different models of the stars into the picture. However, where our Sun is concerned, this has meant the emergence of explanations for phenomena which had, and still are, puzzling many astronomers. No; these alternative ideas have not been accepted; rather they have been ignored!

This then is the background to the very real worries expressed about the huge expenditure of public money on some of these vastly expensive projects such as the large hadron collider. If money was not a problem, no-one could really harbour objections to projects such as these but, especially in these days of belt tightening for the man in the street, should some privileged scientists be allowed these excessively expensive toys?

Conclusion

A large proportion of the funding for scientific research in the West ultimately comes from the public purse. The ordinary man-in-the-street is the one who, in the final analysis, pays for much of this research through the taxes collected. At present, although he may wonder at the reasons for some areas of investigation, when it comes to many of the hugely expensive projects, he has been lulled into thinking financial support is being given to some really worthwhile fundamental work based on solid theoretical foundations. This is not the precise language that might be used to describe the situation but it does convey the precise sentiment involved. Unfortunately, this is not an accurate picture of the situation facing the public.

Today, with the advances in all forms of communication, cult status has been seen to have been afforded to so many who, in a bygone age, might well have remained in deserved obscurity. Such people are deemed to possess charisma. As mentioned earlier in connection with the so-called Big

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Bang theory, George Gamow's eloquent advocacy of this theory earned him a type of cult status which, as a theoretical scientist, he might not have obtained otherwise. Here is seen an early example of the public being fascinated by a piece of abstract scientific theory and the purveyor of this information gaining publicity probably beyond his wildest dreams.

However, here, Gamow was a genuine advocate of a theory on which he was working and to which he was producing original contributions. Nowadays it seems the purveyors are, in reality, professional purveyors of information; most are not scientists who are themselves working at the boundaries of knowledge. These people are, though, totally professional in their job and, as such, might be complimented. However, they are usually purveying ideas communicated to them by interested parties. By interested parties is meant parties whose overriding interest is in their own ideas and beliefs being afforded as much positive publicity as possible. This, in itself, virtually guarantees a balanced view of a topic being ruled out. An added point here is that, nowadays, attracting money to a university is often a far more important factor affecting a person's promotion than what is actually achieved research-wise with that money. It used to be said that 'money is the root of all evil' and, in present day science that seems an accurate statement.

(As a small aside, it's interesting how so many of these old sayings appear to have disappeared from our everyday language. In so many ways that is a great pity because so many are so apt and so accurate on so many occasions.)

However, to return to the public funding of science; it has surely been noted by most people that the financial demands of the science sector, both inside and outside our universities, are steadily becoming greater and greater. Whenever restraint is urged, as in our present dire financial times, everyone seems to agree that such restraint is necessary but, unfortunately, everyone also seems to agree that such restraint cannot possibly occur in their particular sector. However, even if there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, more true accountability when it comes to funding scientific research should be involved. Too often nowadays people openly say that results have been obtained because they were necessary to ensure continued funding. It has been said on numerous occasions that, in applying for a particular research grant, it was implied that certain results would emerge and so such results had to be obtained to ensure continued credibility for those involved and, hence, continued funding.

Are these stories merely apocryphal? Who knows? However, to a great extent, the truth or otherwise of these stories is immaterial. The terrible truth is that they exist at all. The origin of

such stories cannot be simply put down to 'sour grapes'. At least some feel them to be true and that only casts doubt on scientific claims in general. Added to this, the public has heard of the well-publicised cases of scientific fraud where researchers have claimed results that were simply not true but have had the dubious work accepted for publication in prestigious peer-reviewed journals long before the fraud was exposed. There have also been cases where referees have prevented publication of an article, only to steal the results and try to publish them themselves. One classic case is mentioned in the important article on peer review in medicine by Richard Smith,² but one wonders if any similar cases have slipped through undetected. It might be noted that the case mentioned came to light simply because the final article was sent for refereeing to someone in the same department as the author of the original rejected article. Hence, depending on your point of view, it came to light purely because of a lucky/unlucky coincidence.

However, one would strongly suspect this final example a rare occurrence, especially when compared with a personal need to preserve a reputation and position. Very often, unfortunately, people have built extremely successful careers by selling their souls to a particular theory. In many ways, this is entirely understandable but it does demonstrate a mind totally closed when it comes to self-advancement.

Here three theories associated with physics have been highlighted as examples over which many have sold their souls but these are merely three examples out of a huge number across all branches of science. The status quo truly reigns and disturbing conventional wisdom is, to some, more reprehensible than high treason. However, where the public's hard earned money is concerned, members of that public should know just how flimsy some of the foundations of modern science truly are. Only then should these people be even asked to contemplate funding these very expensive toys with which some very highly privileged scientists can play!

Notes

(1) Herbert Dingle, *Science at the Crossroads*, London, Martin Brian & O'Keefe, 1972.

(2) Richard Smith, 'Classical peer review: an empty gun', *Breast Cancer Research*, 20th December 2010, retrieved 25th March 2011, <http://breast-cancer-research.com/content/12/S4/S13>.

About the author

Dr Jeremy Dunning-Davies was born in 1941 in Glamorgan, the son of a primary school headmaster. His mother and wife were also teachers before their respective marriages and this teaching

"Too often nowadays people openly say that results have been obtained because they were necessary to ensure continued funding."

background has given Jeremy an abiding interest in education at all levels. He was appointed to the Applied Mathematics Department of Hull University in 1966, becoming a senior lecturer in 1981. In 2002, he transferred to the Physics Department at Hull.

Works include: *Mathematical Methods for Mathematicians, Physical Scientists and Engineers* (Ellis Hor-

wood, 1982); *Concise Thermodynamics* (Albion Publishing, 1996, 2007); *Exploding a Myth* (Horwood Publishing, 2007); and about 150 articles mainly on thermodynamics and its applications, particularly in astrophysics but including previous articles that appeared in November 1996, January 2010 and February 2011 issues of *The Individual*.

“It is terrifying to think that the world is overflowing with regimented worker-ants clinging on to meaningless jobs. We are mired in administrative systems that feeds itself on more and more bureaucracy. The great question is, not how can we tame this machine, but how we oppose this life in order to keep a portion of human spirit free from this purely bureaucratic way of life and work.”

The Cunningham Amendment, 9th June 2011, Vol. 12, No. 3.

THE BRITISH EMPIRE: NOT A FORCE FOR LIBERTY

Edward Goodman

Nine points refuted

In his article in the June 2011 (pp. 8-16) issue of *The Individual*, Peter Richards lists nine features that he claims that the British Empire disseminated. He is wrong!

(1) The English language is spoken by only a minority of the inhabitants of what was the British Empire. A visit to India, for instance, reveals that the great majority there speak and only speak Hindi (the National Language of India). Similarly, Swahili is the National Language in Kenya and Tanzania.

(2) English forms of land tenure apply in some-but not all former British territories.

(3) Scottish and English banking has been absorbed into international, universal banking.

(4) The common law was (as Richards acknowledges) replaced in India by the Civil and Criminal Codes introduced by Macaulay in the 19th century. Nigeria has a penal code. Common law was merged with Roman Law in Quebec, Scotland, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

(5) Only a minority of the inhabitants of former British territories are Protestant-especially in Asia. No former British colony has an Established religion.

(6) Team sports are universal, not confined to the former Empire. English “Futeball” is almost a national religion in Latin America.

(7) The limited “night watchmen” state has been abolished in some parts of what was the Empire. Countries such as Myanmar (Burma), Uganda and Zimbabwe, for instance, are now police states.

(8) Representative assemblies (even if selected by rigged election) are universal, not British inspired.

(9) Liberty does not exist in many former parts of the Empire.

Further thoughts

Peter Richards refers to the longevity of the British Empire, i.e. 500 years. That, however, is the normal span of empire e.g. the Roman Empire (27 BCE to 476 CE).

Richards further states that Britain did not benefit economically from her Empire. Wrong again ! British India, for instance, was prevented from imposing tariffs to protect its clothing production from Lancashire imports. That is why Gandhi organized boycotts of British goods and why independent India immediately imposed high protective tariffs to protect home industries (which it still maintains). Tying the Empire into the Sterling Area made the pound sterling the major trading currency. Protecting the Empire was not a

“Tying the Empire into the Sterling Area made the pound sterling the major trading currency.”

“British Imperialists were sadistic and proud of it. They considered themselves superior to the undisciplined “unflogged” French and Italians. Only the Germans matched them in Teutonic brutality.”

great burden. Unlike continental countries with land frontiers protected by huge conscript armies, the United Kingdom maintained only a small volunteer army. Its colonial garrison duty was assisted by native levies (e.g. the Indian Army). The Dominions took responsibility for their own defence from an early date. The huge British Navy was to protect Britain’s trade routes, not the Empire.

Richards alleges that Britain stopped child marriage. Untrue! It was not prohibited in India until 1955 (after independence) by the *Hindu Marriages Act*. It was likewise not prohibited (along with polygamy) in Israel until 1950. British rule in India and Palestine had allowed each religious community there to retain its own marriage laws. Similarly in Africa “Native Law and Custom” (allowing child marriage as well as polygamy) was respected and is still in force.

Finally, Richards completely ignores the brutalizing effect of British rule. (James Joyce dubbed it the “British Empire” and the Boers called the Union Jack “the Butcher’s Apron”). The basic British control mechanism was corporal punishment (“*Le Vice Anglais*” as the French called it). Other colonial powers, like France, Italy and Por-

tugal did not practice corporal punishment anywhere (even in schools). The British, by contrast, relied on the cane “the Rod of Empire”. Corporal punishment was used in schools and on adults throughout the British Empire. One of the former Mau Mau detainees, now (in 2011) claiming damages in the High Court, was subjected to over one hundred strokes of the cane. That is why former British territories are now among the only countries in the worlds still inflicting judicial floggings (e.g. in schools in Nigeria and also for adults in Singapore). British Imperialists were sadistic and proud of it. They considered themselves superior to the undisciplined “unflogged” French and Italians. Only the Germans matched them in Teutonic brutality. The avoidable Great Famine in Ireland and the South African concentration camps for Boer women and children were precursors of the Nazi death camps.

About the author

Edward Goodman is a solicitor, former Labour borough councillor and current Chair of the Campaign Against Censorship. He is a long-time supporter of the SIF having written previously for *The Individual* and spoken at SIF public meetings.

RICHARD GARNER REMEMBERED

Dr Nigel Gervas Meek

Author’s note

This article was originally written – hence the references to “the essay below” and so on – as the preface to Richard Garner’s pamphlet, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Capitalism*, that was published by the Libertarian Alliance just days after Richard’s death. Some readers of *The Individual* will have already read it. To them, I apologise for the duplication.

To those who have not read the pamphlet, I strongly recommend that you do. It is available in both text and PDF form free from the LA’s new website at <http://tinyurl.com/3e29qm9> or start at www2.libertarian.co.uk and navigate from there. Considering the current worldwide economic “difficulties”, Richard’s piece is particularly apposite in its citing of leading advocates of radical free-market economics warning against the reality of “actually existing business”: a world of intermeshing transnational corporations and the state.

Richard Garner remembered

The sudden death of Richard Anthony Garner in June 2011 at the age of 33 is a tragic loss to the libertarian movement.

I started to publish his work in 2003 for both the Libertarian Alliance and the Society for Individual Freedom through its journal, *The Individual*. His interests ranged widely. As well as the more obvious topics such as philosophy and economics – with a particular interest in addressing fears often raised about what libertarianism in practice would mean – he also wrote on matters such as gun control, drug prohibition and development in Africa.

He was throughout a staunch advocate of anarchist libertarianism. One of his earliest works – and the first that I read – published in 1999, was *What is Mutualism?* published by the Canadian anarchist Larry Gambone’s Red Lion Press. Whilst he shifted his views over time to a more capitalist position, he never confused “capitalism” with “actually existing business” as the essay below robustly demonstrates.

Elsewhere, for example, he published a major paper, ‘Minarchy Considered’, an anarchist critique of an even minimal state position, in a 2009 issue of *Libertarian Papers*. He also wrote articles – the first as far back as 1998 and which indicates his ideological development – for the evolutionary anarchist journal *Total Liberty* edited by Jonathan Simcock (<http://tinyurl.com/6kldcac>) as well as recording a video interview for Jonathan on anarcho-capitalism a decade later in 2008.

In addition to his formal works, he ran two blogs: the original one at richardgarner.blogspot.com and a later one at richardgarnerlib.blogspot.com. At the time of writing, both of these are still live and I hope that they will provide “new” material for publication. He was also a frequent contributor to other blogs and social networking websites. Only the day before he died, he was writing on Facebook a critique of the NHS and state healthcare.

Along with this current essay – which is a revised and expanded version of one that was originally published in the December 2009, June 2010 and December 2010 issues of *Anchorage Anarchy*, a journal edited by our friend and individualist anarchist Joe Peacott (<http://www.bad-press.net>) – I hope that at least one major and original work of Richard’s will still see the light of day. In between working in a bookshop and lecturing, in 2010 Richard completed at the University of Nottingham an MPhil with the title *Towards a Property Rights Based Account of Libertarianism*. With the help of Richard’s family and the University’s authorities, I hope to see this published.

That he had already embarked on a PhD researching arguments for political legitimacy highlights the intellectual loss caused by his death. Both the LA and SIF have lost a number of important and still active people in recent years: most obviously the Founder of the LA, Dr Chris Tame, in 2006, and the President of the SIF, Lord (John) Monson, earlier this year. However, even in these cases, whatever *ongoing* good work they would still have achieved, I had a sense that their *original* contributions were behind them. Richard Garner was just starting out. As the LA’s current Director, Dr Sean Gabb, noted to me just a few days after Richard had died, he had long since realised Richard’s growing importance in the libertarian movement and had intended to invite him to take up a more formal position within the LA.

However, this is only half the story. As well as being an intelligent, erudite and – however provoked – always-courteous writer and debater, he was also my friend. And I mean a “real world” friend, not just an “Internet” one.

In a milieu containing many individuals who range from “polished” to “buttoned down”, Richard stood out. He was rather shy and physically

large – many of his later Facebook postings were about his dieting – with an unruly mop of thinning, ginger hair and a dress sense that matched his affinity for extreme heavy metal. (Other than the “ginger” part, he and I had much in common... That said, both my political and musical tastes were more “moderate” than his were. I would sometimes listen to YouTube links of bands that he liked and wonder when the tune was going to start...)

I had known him for many years. We first met when Chris Tame and Joe Peacott – who was making one of his regular visits to the UK from the USA – and I visited the annual London Anarchist Bookfair – whence I would be ejected some years later – and Richard was manning a stall. In later years, Richard stayed with me on a number of occasions when he came down from Nottingham to attend the LA’s annual conference. We’d also meet for lunch in central London if he was in London on other business. Because of our work, academic and family commitments we saw less of each other during the last couple of years. The last time that we actually met was at the LA’s 2009 conference.

It is the “form” on these occasions to end on an upbeat note. But I cannot find it in me to do so. As already noted, this current essay started as a three-part serialisation in *Anchorage Anarchy*. I had said at the time to both Richard and Joe Peacott that I wanted the LA to republish it as a unified piece. Richard sent a revised and expanded version to me in March this year. After an initial read through, I suggested some amendments – more to do with style than content, although I hope that the slightly imperfect nature of the notes section at the end will be forgiven under the circumstances – and I received the latest version at the start of June. On Wednesday the 8th and finally Friday the 10th of June there was an exchange of emails between us about various matters. That weekend he died. On Tuesday the 14th, I sat down in a coffee bar in Chislehurst to start a final proofreading of the essay before typesetting it. It was one of the most unbearably sad experiences of my life. A young man had died just as he was coming into his own. The libertarian movement had lost a rising star. And I had lost a friend.

On behalf of Dr Sean Gabb, the Director of the LA, Michael Plumbe, the Chairman of the SIF’s Executive Committee, and the rest of the LA and SIF, I wish to extend our sympathies to Richard’s parents, Jenny and Andy, and to all his other relations and friends who will miss him.

About the author

Dr Nigel Meek is the editor and/or membership secretary of the SIF, the Libertarian Alliance and the Campaign Against Censorship

“... the LA’s current Director, Dr Sean Gabb, noted to me ... [that] he had long since realised Richard’s growing importance in the libertarian movement and had intended to invite him to take up a more formal position within the LA.”

BELATED THOUGHTS ON THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

G. Maunnter

Misleading

It was incorrect that the Liberals would come second with a third of the vote. In fact their share of the vote only increased by 1% and they lost two seats.

It was also incorrect that the Labour Party would suffer meltdown. In fact the Labour vote held its core of 28%, made up of its 'client state', i.e. the eight million benefit recipients, plus the tribal Scots and Welsh vote, together with most of the ethnics. The benefit recipients are numerous. The United Kingdom has by far the highest number of people receiving sickness benefit of any Western country. It is thirteen times higher than in Germany and costs 11% of British public spending (see: OECD Report of 24th November 2010). The ethnics are also numerous. One in ten people living in Britain was born abroad (Office of National Statistics, December 2010). 40% of London's school pupils speak English as a second language (Report by Institute of Education, December 2010).

These beneficiaries of the Labour government's immigration policy became loyal Labour voters. Thus, although Labour is a Zionist party, most British Muslims vote for it. Labour cultivates immigrants and benefit recipients. Thus in 2011, Harriet Harman, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, informed her Peckham constituents that immigrant benefit recipients who sent part of their income to support relatives in Africa were heroes.

Labour was pleasantly surprised by the General Election result as it held many seats it expected to lose, especially in Scotland and Northern England. Only in Southern England did it suffer meltdown, i.e. a mere 16% of the vote outside Inner London.

Irrelevance of expenses scandal

Only in marginals did abusers of expenses lose their seats, e.g. Ann Keen in Brentford & Isleworth, Tony McNulty in Harrow, Jackie Smith etc. (This would have happened anyway because of the national swing against Labour.) In safe seats, however, abusers held their seats e.g. John Bercow the Speaker (who was opposed as a house flipper by UKIP and other non-mainstream candidates), Hazel Blears, Nadine Dorries, and Gerald Kaufman. The post-election disqualification of Philip Woolas for using dishonest election literature shows that the behaviour of a Labour

Parliamentary Candidate can be despicable and yet he was elected. Labour then held the seat with a greatly increased majority in the subsequent by-election in 2011. It also held Barnsley Central, whose Labour MP was imprisoned for fraudulent expenses in 2011. It failed to hold Swindon North, where its Labour MP (Michael Wills) published his monthly expenses.

Marginalisation of Harriet Harman

The Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and her anti-male Puritanism were marginalised. She managed to parachute her husband, Jack Dromey, into a safe seat but she was however silenced by Mandelson in the General Election campaign and was defeated in her effort to include in the Labour Party manifesto a commitment to criminalise advertisements for massage parlours (as has been done in the Republic of Ireland). In addition her sidekick, the militant feminist Labour Solicitor-General Vera Baird QC lost her seat in the General Election. Harman and Baird had fought for the criminalisation of men who pay for sex. The attack on massage parlours seems to have been their last gasp. Harman decided not to run for the leadership of the Labour Party after the General Election.

The Tories and Lib Dems, by contrast, are tolerant. Teresa May, the new Home Secretary, bears the same name as a well-known British porn actress. When informed of this she expressed her best wishes to what she described as a fellow professional woman. No Labour politician would say such a thing! The Liberals have allowed the Union of Sex Workers to affiliate.

The new government by contrast to Labour is anti-authoritarian. It is committed to stop identity cards, biometric passports, retention of DNA of innocent people, detention without charge of suspected terrorists etc. It plans a Freedom Act repealing authoritarian laws.

History repeats itself

Patriotic people rallied to the National Government (1931-1945) during the last great recession. They will do likewise to the new Coalition. The Labour opposition will be discredited by being reduced to condemning cuts and policies that it would itself have made if re-elected. Before the General Election Labour was planning to privatise the Post Office, a policy it now condemns. Labour introduced university tuition fees and has refused to promise to reverse their in-

"These beneficiaries of the Labour government's immigration policy became loyal Labour voters."

crease by the Coalition. Despite the cuts made by the Coalition Government, Labour has still not greatly overtaken it in the opinion polls. It made only moderate gains in the 2011 local elections, while the Tory vote held. (The losers were the Liberals.)

Ageism and elitism

All mainstream parties now insist on a youthful leader in his forties with an attractive trophy wife and with short parliamentary and little or no ministerial experience. The required career path for party leaders and members of parliament for safe seats is an Oxbridge degree, usually in PPE (Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) and then work as a researcher or SPAD (special adviser) to a Minister or a Shadow Minister e.g. Ed Balls, Andy Burnham, David Cameron, Nick Clegg, Zac Goldsmith, William Hague, Charles Kennedy, the Miliband brothers, George Osborne, and Rushanara Ali (the new Bethnal Green Labour MP). Non-Oxbridge graduates, still less working-class people, need not apply!

Such career politicians have no hinterland or experience of life outside the Westminster bubble. They have never worked elsewhere, still less served an apprenticeship as a local Councillor (as used to happen). They are thus shallow lightweight. Many are the offspring of former Members of Parliament, e.g. Hilary Benn, Luciana Berger (great-niece of Manny Shinwell), John Cryer, Ben Sumner, Nicholas Hurd (fourth generation MP), Jo Johnson, Francis Maude, Laura Sandys, Nicholas Soames and Robin Walker.

Their fathers were Oxbridge and they in turn send their sons there, creating a hereditary governing class. That's why Dianne Abbot, the left-wing Labour MP, sent her son to private school, so he, like her, would qualify for an Oxbridge education, the passport to power in England! In other words, a fraction of less than 1% of the population (i.e. PPE Oxbridge graduates) now form a hereditary governing class. Its members include the leaders of all three mainstream parties and each of the five candidates for the leadership of the Labour Party in 2010.

Ordinary people, who get a real job after leaving full-time education, thus miss the boat. Only those who have worked in nothing but politics get the window of opportunity (and ministerial help) to enter Parliament in their thirties as obedient party poodles in safe seats, and become leading players in their forties. Alan Johnson, ex-shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer (a former postman) has therefore stated that the Labour Party must have a new leader in his forties. This is a recent development. The only youthful 19th century Prime Minister was Lord Liverpool, who unexpectedly obtained the job in 1812 when the incumbent, Spencer Percival (a former practising

barrister), was assassinated. National politics in Britain is now just as much a profession as accountancy, law, medicine, etc. Career politicians have replaced idealists. They are in it for the money and perks. Most put their spouses on the public payroll as personal assistants. This is a reversal of the mid-19th century civil service reforms which outlawed nepotism.

The lack of a real working background means that when they cease to hold ministerial office, 'revolving door' politicians hire themselves out as lobbyists, which is an imprisonable offence for members of legislatures in other Western countries. Four (Stephen Byers, Richard Caborn, Patricia Hewitt and Geoff Hoon) were condemned by the House of Commons Standard and Privilege Committee in December 2010. Ex-cabinet ministers normally proceed to the House of Lords, the highly paid retirement home for politicians. It has nearly a thousand members. They hold office for life and earn £300 (non-taxable) daily attendance allowance, usually doubled by expenses.

Ordinary people are excluded and alienated. By 2005 total membership of all political parties in the United Kingdom had declined to 1% of the electorate. In other European Union countries the average is 5%. Only a handful of people attend each monthly Constituency Party meeting in Britain. The disjunct between rulers and ruled is as great as it was in 18th England. This is reinforced by the social class system. The United Kingdom has the most unequal distribution of wealth in the European Union and it is getting wider, as there is no redistributive taxation, so the rich get richer.

Parading the smiling trophy wife

This is an American import. It started there with President Kennedy in the 1960s to appeal to television audiences. It has now even spread to France (President Sarkozy and Carla Bruni). When the man ceases to be party leader, however, the trophy wife may leave him, e.g. Charles Kennedy the ex-Liberal leader. British female politicians, by contrast, wisely keep their non-telegenic, wimp, pussy-whipped house-husbands hidden, e.g. Hazel Blears, Ruth Kelly (now a member of the House of Lords). They do, however, put them on the state payroll. Jackie Smith's husband was her personal assistant (on £40K a year) when she was Home Secretary.

The trophy wife system does not, however, apply to local politicians. They can keep their sexual partners out of the media, as is demonstrated by the Mayors of Greater London. Ken Livingstone has five children by three women. Boris Johnson has six also by three women. This illustrates that the trophy wife is a system created by national politicians, not the media. The nadir was

"Such career politicians have no hinterland or experience of life outside the Westminster bubble. They have never worked elsewhere..."

plumbed by Gordon Brown. He married a public relations consultant and had her making speeches saying how wonderful he was! In 2011, she published a book with the same message. Like other former leading politicians he is now on the international lecture circuit, with her (for an extra fee) delivering the warm-up speech. Yuk!

Fringe candidates

Apart from a Green in Brighton (an atypical constituency), none was elected, e.g. BNP, Respect, UKIP and Esther Rantzen (independent anti-sleaze). The traditional, tribal British political loyalties held firm, except for floating voters changing support from one existing national party to another, and thereby changing representation in constituencies which were anyway marginal.

Tolerance

Cameron forced 60 'squirearchy' backbencher MPs to stand down (because of their excessive expense claims) to make way for 'modern' candidates. (Brown, by contrast, only had four Labour MPs deselected for expenses abuse).

Several openly gay candidates were selected and elected, even in true-blood traditional Tory heartlands e.g. East Surrey, where the successful Conservative was black as well as gay! This contrasts with the situation in 1992 when the Tories fielded a black candidate in Cheltenham (John Taylor) with such a disastrous result that the experiment was not repeated until Cameron's recent modernisation drive. (Taylor was made a Tory peer and in 2011 was imprisoned for a fake expense claim.)

Both main parties seek to impose candidates on constituency parties. Cameron replaced the squirearchy, old male 'bed-blocker' MPs and forced them to stand down over expenses. He then made their constituency parties replace them by females, ethnics and/or gays. All such favoured A-listers were, however, privately-educated Oxford graduates, i.e. a mirror-image of the traditional white grandee males they were replacing.

Similarly, Labour imposed favoured candidates. Sitting MPs were encouraged to stand down shortly before the General Election. This brought into play the rule whereby the National

Executive Committee of the Labour Party imposes a shortlist on the grounds that time does not allow a normal selection. In such a way Lord Mandelson got his friend, Dr Tristram Hunt, elected in Stoke-on-Trent. The latter is, needless to say, another Oxford graduate. Labour is just as elitist as the Tories. In addition, half of vacancies for candidates in winnable Labour seats have all-women shortlists. Nearly all females so selected are in the usual mould, i.e. Oxford graduates who each then became a researcher for a sitting Labour MP. They are thus a mirror image of male MPs. The alienated underclass (one third of the total population receiving means-tested state benefits) are totally excluded and as a result do not vote. They cannot identify with the toffs of the political class (often Labour and Liberal as well as Tory).

End result

The United Kingdom is governed by a self-perpetuating (largely hereditary) tiny Oxford elite of career politicians completely divorced from the people they rule. It is a closed shop. Entrance is through Oxbridge followed by being a researcher for a Member of Parliament or better still a SPAD (special adviser) to a Minister or Shadow Minister. The politician employer will in due course later assist in the parachuting of the researcher or SPAD into a safe parliamentary seat, just as James Purnell and John (now Lord) Reid did in 2010. Members of Parliament in safe seats (the great majority of the total number) can thus select their successors just like the 18th century rotten boroughs. Ed Miliband, now Leader of the Labour Party, started his career as a researcher (i.e. office boy) to Harriet Harman MP, who recalled in 2010 that he made very good tea! This is how modern British MPs train, instead of working in a proper profession.

This class rule is just as rigid as the aristocratic governments of 18th and early 19th century Britain. They too were exclusively recruited from a tiny gene pool. The 20th century phase of a wider catchment area has ended (non-graduate Prime Ministers such as Lloyd George, Ramsey MacDonald, James Callaghan and John Major).

About the author

G. Maunnter is a long-time member of the SIF.

"The United Kingdom is governed by a self-perpetuating (largely hereditary) tiny Oxford elite of career politicians completely divorced from the people they rule."

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SERVANTS OR MASTERS? SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE POLICE

Dr Nigel Gervas Meek

So that there is no misunderstanding

I shall repeat this below in various ways, but before we start, I want explicitly to note two things.

First, as a libertarian who believes in life, liberty and justly acquired property, I take a hard line with those who would deprive people of the same. However, equally as a libertarian, I believe that “the law” should be the codification of *trespasses against* life, liberty and the use of justly acquired property and not instead unjustified *restrictions* upon them.

Second, I have no unreasoning hatred for “the police” *in principle*. I do not have “ACAB” – I shall let the reader to look it up – tattooed on my knuckles. However, my thesis is that *in practice*:

- the police – and similar agencies, although they are less commonly encountered – already have too much power over individuals;
- some of this power is illegitimate from a libertarian perspective;
- legitimate or not, they do not always exercise that power in an appropriate manner;
- they are keen to acquire and use more power; therefore they need to be closely monitored, held to account and sometimes opposed.

Embarking upon a life of crime

On a bright, dry day at the end of May 2011, stone-cold sober, in possession of a clean driving license for almost three decades, driving a taxed, insured and MOTed car in a safe manner along a wide and straight road a few hundred yards from where I have lived in suburban Bromley for 45 years, I was stopped at a radar trap manned by armed police.

“Armed”? You try walking the streets equipped with a metal baton, CS spray and body armour. It is a long time since our police resembled civilian police rather than a paramilitary gendarmerie who sally forth from time-to-time from their fortified compounds.

My alleged crime was that I had been recorded as driving at 35 mph in a 30 mph zone. I say “alleged”, for I was shown no proof and an apparent assertion made later to her superiors by the radar-wielding officer was “mistaken”.

Only obeying orders

Afterwards, I wrote to the local chief superintendent. What I did *not* mention was that whilst the police have at their disposal usable laws concerning dangerous driving and so on, they rather choose to focus on arbitrary but oh-so-easy-to-implement-and-to-collect-the-money instant penalties for allegedly breaching speed limits.

There is a fundamental issue here. The police are happy indeed to enforce laws that are laws because ... they are laws. The notion that the law ought to be a predictable codification of actions that cause real harm or are meaningfully likely to do so is absent from their way of thinking. The police have been and are happy to enforce laws wholly incompatible with the individual liberty for which the SIF stands. Within living memory, the police persecuted homosexuals because homosexuality was illegal. Now, they are equally happy to persecute Christians of a dotty but utterly harmless kind who stand on street corners preaching that homosexuality is a sin. What do they care? A “collar”, as they say, is a “collar”. (Strangely, they do not seem so keen to do the same to *those* Muslims – not *all* Muslims, of course – who say the same thing but in more robust terms.)

I have no doubt that if opposition to multiculturalism was to be formally declared a crime of xenophobia or racial hatred, then the police would with alacrity come knocking on the door of many a reader of *The Individual*...

In any case, speed does not kill. Bad driving kills. Speed is not *inherently* but *can be* a factor in bad driving.

I also did not mention the issue of the very notion of individuals being able to dole out administrative fines, penalties and other punishments on their own say-so.

Community policing or policing communities?

However, a busy chief superintendent has only so much time. Instead, I raised two issues. The first was the waste of resources expended – at least in my case – in detaining someone for doing no more than reaching the police national guideline of 10% of the limit plus 2 mph. There were present three officers and at least two Police Com-

“the law” should be the codification of trespasses against life, liberty and the use of justly acquired property...”

munity Support Officers (PCSOs).

The police “screen out” – do not investigate, in plain language – 30% to 40% of all *reported* crime (*Telegraph*, 1st June 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/3eludfe>). Nevertheless, they are able to spare officers and PCSOs and the associated logistic and bureaucratic backup to man speed traps, detaining and punishing people who, in most cases, have done nothing more than fall foul of arbitrary laws without actually causing or being likely to cause real harm to real people or property. (See below for a thought about the August 2011 mass lootings. Keep in mind the reality of how the police use their resources on a daily basis when they next complain about “cuts”).

However, I have not told the whole story. My more serious complaint concerned what happened next. A little way down the road stood a group of schoolchildren accompanied by at least one PCSO and other adults who I presume were teachers or parents. I was strongly invited to talk to these children about my driving. I was told that this was for “community safety”.

Nonsense! It was an exercise in public humiliation in which I was expected both to confess my sins and to acknowledge who has the whip hand in the police/civilian relationship. I refused to take part in this pantomime, something that met with incredulity and a change in atmosphere when repeated requests from the police received the same polite but firm response.

After a while, I was allowed to go on my way, albeit with no indication of whether any further action would be taken against me.

“Think of the kiddies...”

Having got the matter off my chest, except as to the uncertainty as to what would happen next, I thought little more about it. I was surprised when, a couple of weeks later, I received telephone calls from the sergeant in charge of the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team. He was eager to arrange a meeting. He even offered to visit my home. A week later, we met at one of the part-time police “shops” that have sprung up throughout Greater London. I found that I now had my own file that, amongst other things, contained a copy of my letter – which he had not fully read – covered in copious amounts of highlighter.

The meeting got off to a bad start when the sergeant made disingenuous claims about the number of police personnel involved – he did not count the PCSOs – and when he incorrectly asserted that I had been shown my speed on the radar gun. And there was the same atmosphere. Not exactly confrontational, but still unsettling.

The sergeant noted that the purpose of the radar trap exercise had been to help the schoolchildren obtain answers to a questionnaire, the last item on which was something like, “How would you have felt if you’d knocked me down?” *This is obscenely manipulative “think of the kiddies” emoting with no connection to any likely, let alone actual, harm done.*

The sergeant also claimed that of the 36 drivers who were offered the same invitation to talk to the children, I was the only one who refused. The only one! What pitiful sheep have our countrymen turned into!

This explained the strange atmosphere and why the sergeant kept saying how “sorry” he was. The purpose of the meeting was to give me another chance to admit that I was in the wrong by refusing to do whatever the police requested. The sergeant was only “sorry” that I would not see the error of my ways and assume an attitude of grovelling servility.

Interestingly, during the meeting, the sergeant made it implicitly clear that such exercises are in part “fishing expeditions”. Driving 1 mph over the speed limit gives them the ability to have a good look through one’s car windows, if nothing else. This is not a trivial point. Look at any normal suburban road or motorway and see how many people are *safely* driving more than 30 mph or 70 mph respectively. Every day, many thousands of otherwise law-abiding people doing no objectively real harm are potentially criminalised and open to police detention because of arbitrary speed limits.

The authoritarian personality

When the police stick to fighting crime against person and property they deserve support and understanding for doing a job that exposes them to the very worst in human behaviour. However, that is part of the problem. Even assuming that they are in the police force with good intentions – ignoring, if one can, the proven cases of indolence, incompetence, corruption and brutality – their experiences must tend to degrade them. Coupled with a tendency towards a personality type favourable towards hierarchy and subordination, they often abandon the Peelian principle that “the police are the public and the public are the police”. Instead, they treat all of us at best as naughty children or at worse as a subject population.

Let me say this very clearly. The UK is *not yet* East Germany and the British police are *not yet* the Stasi. I would hardly have dared to write to the local chief superintendent or written this article if that was the case! However, I fear that many of them have a taste for power and exult in using it. The police possess unique powers over us. They must not be allowed to act upon their own, extra-

“The meeting got off to a bad start when the sergeant made disingenuous claims...”

judicial and often authoritarian notions of “the public good” or to expect us to kow-tow to their whims. We must actively safeguard our liberties from encroaching authoritarianism, whether it comes at a slither or an onrush from kneejerk reactions to dramatic events.

The decline in middle class support for the police

Suburban, middle-class people usually have relatively little contact with the police. When we do, the experience tends to lodge in the mind. Most of this article recounts one minor episode. I also cite another one some years ago, when I and another SIF officer, unfamiliar with the premises, were trying to locate the correct entrance at the House of Lords for an SIF luncheon hosted by the late Lord Monson. It is hardly possible to get much more “Establishment” than that! Yet we were treated with sneering sarcasm by the police officer from whom we politely asked directions. In addition, long-time readers of *The Individual* (February 2005, pp. 18-19) may recall SIF chairman Michael Plumbe – surely the most reliable of witnesses – reporting back from the demonstration opposing the *Hunting Bill* in 2004:

“I was quite near the Police group which rained blows on a small section of the crowd. It was frightening to be there and to watch.”

It is perhaps no wonder that middle-class support for the police has declined. As always, Dr Richard North, writing on the excellent *EU Referendum* blog during the recent lootings (10th August 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/4452qy3>), says it better than I can:

“The police enthusiasm for chasing the motorist, the plague of the speed camera, the use of parking as a revenue generator – and the relentless efforts on enforcing fine payments – contrast sharply with their complete lack of enthusiasm for protecting my home and property, and their inability ever to trace any of the offenders who have stolen property from me and mine. Add to that, the arrogant, cocky attitude of so many of the police that one meets, their reported incompetence and corruption, their violence and aggression, and you have a situation where the police have lost the trust and respect of the communities they serve. From being friends and allies, the police have become the class enemy – the enemy of the middle class. What you then get is the trickle-down effect. The middle classes do not riot and loot ... not yet. But the general loss of respect and mutual support creates an atmosphere of distrust and

indifference to the police, which reflects in those most prone to violent disorder.”

A brief caveat here. The reader may have noticed that the incidents cited here concerning Michael Plumbe or me involved officers from the Metropolitan Police or took place within their bailiwick. A friend of mine with much professional experience of the police suggests that not all forces are the same. He notes relatively favourably the general behaviour of officers from one particular Home Counties force when compared with the Met.

Changes in me

First, I should note that I have been informed that I will *not* be receiving any form of penalty arising from the incident in May. There’s no need to spray-paint “Free the Bromley One” on railway bridges!

However, my experiences have had two immediate consequences. As I noted above, even during my two brief encounters with the police arising from what was, in the great scheme of things, an utterly trivial event, they were prepared to offer up “incorrect” or “misleading” information as a first response. To put it at its simplest, if I was sitting on a jury then I would now be extraordinarily reluctant to accept the testimony of a police officer that was uncorroborated by testimony from independent civilians. As Richard Littlejohn once wrote in the *Daily Mail* (3rd November 2010, <http://tinyurl.com/2vg2jnc>):

“Proper coppers remember the days when young bobbies were told to treat every member of the public as a potential juror and accord them due respect in order to earn their goodwill. Stroppy, over-zealous plods were branded ‘jury nobblers’.”

Moreover, the most perverse result of all is that I have become a less safe driver. Every now and then, I realise just how much time I am spending looking at the speedometer and not the road. But why should I be surprised? Are the police *primarily* interested in stopping middle-aged, sober, taxed, *et cetera* drivers from running down a crocodile of infants? Or is it just an excuse to throw their weight around?

Afterthought 1: Listening to the police

One of the most widely read blogs – with many thousands of hits per day – written by a serving police officer is *Inspector Gadget* (inspectorgadget.wordpress.com). This is the pen name of a former soldier and now police inspector serving in an English police force outside of London. He is a skilful and – when he wants to be – witty writer. He is clearly no “plod”.

“I would now be extraordinarily reluctant to accept the testimony of a police officer...”

Having read his blog for some time, a number of recurring themes emerge. He describes in graphic detail the vile, squalid lives of the “underclass” which to the average reader of *The Individual* are alien and, indeed, incomprehensible. His descriptions accord with those of other commentators perhaps better known to readers of this journal. Here is Theodore Dalrymple writing in *The Spectator* (13th August 2011, p. 13) following the August 2011 looting:

“How anyone could have missed the aggressive malignity inscribed in the faces and manner of so many young men in Britain is a mystery to me... The vulpine lope or swagger, the face that regards eye contact with a stranger as a challenge to be met, the adoption of fashions that are known to signify aggression and dangerousness, the grotesquely inflated self-esteem combined with a total incapacity for doing anything constructive: all could and should have sounded an alarm in our politicians.”

Inspector Gadget also reflects the despair of frontline police officers at the leniency that the courts and other agencies show towards those convicted of even repeated offences of acquisitive crime and violence.

He also reflects the despair of frontline police officers at the manoeuvrings of both out-of-touch politicians and greasy-pole-climbing senior police commanders, all with their obsessions about “initiatives” and “targets”. Indeed, given that he is a serving police officer with pips on his shoulder, I am surprised by how explicit he is in condemning his political and operational superiors. I have often wondered if “the higher ups” have decided that he is a useful safety valve and allow him to operate as a forum for licensed dissent.

So far, I have nothing but sympathy for him. However, there is a darker side to *Inspector Gadget*. Two other themes emerge. He does not deny that there are rotten apples within the police. However, his general position seems to be that police are above and superior to the public and should be, except in the most extreme cases, immune from criticism or even scrutiny from civilians, the media or elected politicians. He seems to view the police as an almost feudal warrior elite who graciously allow the taxpayer to keep them in employment.

In fact, they are little or no better than we are. A *Freedom of Information Act* request initiated by the Liberal Democrats revealed that in 2009 (*Guardian*, 11th March 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/cz8og4>) over a thousand *serving* police officers – 1063, to be precise – in England and Wales had criminal records including convictions for assault, theft, dishonesty, battery, fraud, forgery and per-

verting the course of justice. This from a body of men for whom probity should be an absolute prerequisite!

(It is clear that the number of police officers who commit crimes but who are never charged let alone convicted is much higher. Their actions during large-scale public order situations, particularly demonstrations and football matches, can be heinous.)

An even more (implicitly) revealing document can be found on the website (2010, <http://tinyurl.com/3ro8t3f>) of Kent police, whose bailiwick starts just a few miles down the road from where I live. In response to another *FOI* request, this time in June 2010, they acknowledged that between 2005 and 2010, 33 officers and PCSOs of various ranks had received criminal convictions. Some of these were for offences such as assault and criminal damage, although the majority were for motoring-related offences, particularly for drink-driving and – *schadenfreude* is a wonderful thing! – speeding. (In fairness, the police seem to have little compunction in arresting their colleagues.) Kent police also note whether the officers were still serving at the time of the *FOI* request. Of the 33 convicts, 11 were still serving officers, whereas the other two-thirds were not, and all but two of the latter had resigned or been dismissed seemingly directly because of the conviction. Now think again about the 1063 *serving* police officers nationwide with criminal convictions as of 2009. How many hundreds or even thousands have been convicted of often serious criminal offences committed whilst serving as police officers? Ponder that question if you feel tempted to “give the police a free hand”.

The other theme, which is related to the preceding one and which might go some way further to explain the police’s fervour in chasing down the notionally errant motorist, is *Inspector Gadget*’s marked chippiness towards the public in general and the middle class in particular. Let me indulge here in a little amateur psychologising. Over the years, I have had some contact with the three main emergency services. (Let us ignore for now any libertarian arguments about denationalisation and so on. We are where we are.) For family reasons, I have had most dealings with the ambulance service. To date, I have always been impressed by their intelligence, expertise and – vital when dealing with people in distress – situationally-appropriate attitude. (The problems start when one gets to the hospital.) I have had least experience with the fire brigade. Now, despite attempts at reform, they may well still be Bolshie, inefficiently organised and a living monument to 1970s public-sector working practices. However, when they swing into action, I get the impression of people of real competence. Compared to the other two services, the *typical* constable seems to me to be of “modest” intelligence, education and

“... over a thousand serving police officers ... had criminal records including convictions for assault, theft, dishonesty, battery, fraud, forgery and perverting the course of justice...”

even common sense. I have already mentioned the authoritarian personality type. In no other occupation could such people exercise such overt, day-to-day power over others. I wonder whether the defensive chippiness is born out of a realisation that we know this and that they know that we know...

Afterthought 2: The August 2011 lootings

Much of this article was written before the mass lootings – I refuse to dignify them with the term “riots” – that took place in parts of London and elsewhere in August 2011. The conditions that fermented the events have been endlessly discussed and were the result of many things that have built up over many years as well as what actually happened in August. They include, in no particular order:

- mass immigration coupled with the doctrine of multiculturalism that has led to ghettoised cities, with alien and sometimes hostile cultures taking root. (That said, London’s reputation for mob violence predates by centuries the arrival from Jamaica of the MV *Empire Windrush* in 1948.);
- an unchecked gang culture with its ethos of hyper-machismo violence and extreme short-range hedonism;
- unconditional state welfare and the subsiding of reproductive fecklessness leading to the absence of positive male role-models;
- a tax and welfare regime that penalises low-paid but proper work and instead which fosters and even rewards poverty;
- the decline in the availability of unskilled employment, and the mopping up of much of what is left by low-paid economic immigrants who send much of the money outside of the UK;
- a national malaise where “top people” in the public sector including politicians at all levels, quangocrats, civil servants and the police are happy to loot – I use the word deliberately – the public purse to a level that in simple material terms vastly exceeds anything stolen in August;
- a corresponding malaise in areas of the so-called private, but actually state-protected corporate, sector, particularly in the loftier reaches of financial services, where remuneration seems to be largely in the control of a coterie who reward each other with fantastic sums of money just because they can;
- state-protected big business that has turned countless thousands into employee-drones rather than people with a personal stake in the economic well-being of their neighbourhoods;
- a rotten state education system – largely due to a Marxist-inspired, politically correct, white, cultural elite – that pretends that all individuals are equal and which particularly fails non-whites by filling their heads with a toxic combination of unjustified entitlement and grievance;
- the deliberate manipulation of the situation on the ground by intelligent and imaginative criminals following the police’s – probably justified – shooting of Mark Duggan, a man with a criminal background and whose death is no great loss;
- the inability of a morally and physically disarmed public – much due to the insistence of the police – to defend themselves, their property and public order in general;
- choices freely made by the bandits who engaged in the looting and the sheer animalistic “buzz” of nihilistic violence and the surrender to mob impulses. (This may not be so different from the irrationality seen on the stock market...);

- and – which is where I have the strongest sympathy with those in the police and elsewhere trying to do a good job – years of risible prosecution, remand and sentencing policies towards those justly accused and then convicted of real crimes against person and property. This is at least in part due to an attempt to bring the number of prison places in the UK down to the EU average, despite the UK being one of the most lawless countries in Western Europe (*Daily Mail*, 3rd July 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/nvqbm>).

The police were slow to respond to this dacoity – as the Indians might say – and only seemed to get going when stung by criticism and, at least as important, they felt that groups of local residents – or “vigilantes” as they were sneeringly called – threatened their monopoly on security and sanctioned violence. In any event, riotous collective rushes of blood to the head usually fizzle out at the first sight of rain, although that is of little comfort to those who have suffered grievously in the meantime. Whatever criticism can be directed at them, the police cannot be blamed for the troubles in the first instance.

It is clear that the police are over-reliant on surveillance technology such as CCTV and that this makes their “actions” in fact reactive and after-the-event. Moreover, the efficacy in cutting crime of the UK’s huge CCTV network is debatable (*Telegraph*, 22nd August 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/3rm456x>). There are also libertarian concerns about our Big Brother state. Again, however, we are where we are. I would imagine that readers of *The Individual* would support the police as they trawl through CCTV recordings carrying out their legitimate job of identifying and arresting real criminals, which they have now done by the many hundreds. However, even here there is a problem. Given the screening-out figures noted above, it would seem that such an effort is expended only when “the ruling class” feels threatened rather than for everyday burglaries and muggings that affect the individual citizen. It is also to be hoped that this CCTV trawl is not to the detriment of preventing and detecting ongoing but “unspectacular” crime.

In the days during and immediately after the lootings, politicians, the mainstream media, blogs, social media and elsewhere were alive with the sound of “hang ‘em and flog ‘em”. (This was not UKIP leader Nigel Farage’s *Finest Hour* with his call for military intervention (9th August 2011, <http://tinyurl.com/3d8gvas>.) However, those police that so many wanted to see crack some heads – which in some cases they had a good go at doing – were the same police who, in the weeks and months leading up to August 2011, featured so prominently in the news with tales of their corruption, incompetence, mendacity, violence and incivility. Be careful what you wish for. As I suggested above, one day they might turn a baleful eye on *you*...

About the author

Dr Nigel Meek is the editor and/or membership secretary of the SIF, the Libertarian Alliance and the Campaign Against Censorship. Thanks are given to Mr G. Maunnter for his comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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The SIF's Aim:

“To promote responsible individual freedom”

Founded in the 1940s, the SIF is a classical liberal organisation that believes in the economic and personal freedom of the individual, subject only to the equal freedom of others.

The SIF promotes...

- ✓ The freedom, importance and personal responsibility of the individual.
- ✓ The sovereignty of Parliament and its effective control over the Executive.
- ✓ The rule of law and the independence of the Judicature.
- ✓ Free enterprise.

SIF Activities

The SIF organises public meetings featuring speakers of note, holds occasional luncheons at the Houses of Parliament, publishes this journal to which contributions are welcome, and has its own website. The SIF also has two associated campaigns: Tell-IT, that seeks to make information on outcomes of drugs and medical treatments more widely known and available to doctors and patients alike, and Choice in Personal Safety (CIPS), that opposes seatbelt compulsion and similar measures.

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*“Every man has freedom to do all that he wills,
provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man.”*

Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*, 1851