

In this issue:

- A journey into the historical roots of libertarianism
- A journey into the Kafkaesque world of the Welfare State
- A journey into the degraded world of the British education system
- A journey into the politics and money of the "Climate Change" lobby
- ... and drugs!

THERE ARE THREATS ... AND THEN THERE ARE *THREATS*...

Belated greetings for 2010. This is the first issue of *The Individual* for a year. I apologise for this lack out of output. We hope that in 2010 we can take a fresh look at things and ponder "Whither the SIF?"

Meanwhile we approach the 2010 UK general election where we have the opportunity to change our government. Except, of course, that we don't. In reality "our government" is the EU and the leadership of all of our major parties are solidly behind the UK's membership of the EU. And please don't bother me with tales of how some want to "reform" the EU. This is the "barking cat" syndrome: an attempt to turn one thing into another thing that genetically it cannot be. No, what Messrs Brown, Cameron and Clegg are fighting over is the dubious privilege of being a mere regional governor with all of the pomp but increasingly little of the circumstance of the position of Prime Minister.

But close-to-home events over the Christmas and New Year period should remind us that, whatever its faults, there are causes much worse than that of the EU and which are wholly irreconcilable not just with libertarianism but everything that we understand to be Western pluralism. In December 2009 there was the attempt by the Nigerian-born Muslim

Umar Abdulmutallab to destroy an airliner in mid-air. (Why was I unsurprised to learn that during his time in the UK he'd been president of a UK university's Islamic Society?)

And in Denmark in January 2010 there was an attempt on the life of Kurt Westergaard, a cartoonist whose less-than-flattering depiction of "the Prophet Muhammad" published in *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 led to world-wide violence and death threats. The axe-wielding assailant was a Somali-born Muslim.

Of course, not all Muslims are like this. And it needs to be acknowledged that many have plenty to be angry about as they live under corrupt and despotic governments. (Although Abdulmutallab was the son of privilege...) But it is not enough to be against something. Just as legitimate anger against the injustices of Tsarist Russia led to Bolshevik evil and legitimate anger against the injustices of Versailles led to Nazi evil, so it is clear that the injustices in many parts of our world today are leading people even further away from what we in the SIF believe and instead towards a nihilistic death cult. *We must keep our faith in individual freedom too.*

Nigel Gervas Meek

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THE WELFARE STATE IS A RIP-OFF!

Richard Garner

The Scale of State Welfare

How much of government expenditure goes on Social Security? According to one source¹ 30% of government expenditure went on Social Security in 2000. According to another basic source² in 2001 spending on social security was almost 28% of expenditure or £103 billion.

And according to Wikipedia³ no less, “social protection” formed 27% (£169 billion) of the total public expenditure of approximately £619 billion in the UK in 2007 to 2008. This was by far the largest component of public expenditure, with “health” second at 18% (£111 billion) and “education” third at 13% (£82 billion). There was then a long drop to “defence” and “public order and safety” at 5% each (£33 billion each).

So, it can be agreed that 27%-30% of government expenditure goes on Social Security *and* that this is the largest component of government expenditure *and* that the amount is increasing.

Welcome to the Wacky World of Social Security

When I was made redundant at the end of January 2009 I didn't apply for any state benefits but found work as a teaching assistant in the University of Nottingham. Unfortunately, by its nature, that was temporary, only lasting as long as the semester, so towards the end, full of regrets, I embarked on the process of claiming Jobseekers Allowance (I was marking on my own time, then, and so was available for work) and Housing benefit.

I had been in work for ten years previous to this, working an average of 30 hours a week at minimum wage (it varied, sometimes less, sometimes more, and sometimes at higher pay as I occupied a higher position), and I had not claimed any benefits since I was 17. The computers at the Jobcentre still had me on record from then and they said that the lowest pay I was looking for was £3.70—minimum wage then, illegal now! When I started my claims I told the benefit people that I was doing casual

work marking for the University and told them how much I was being paid. They said, “OK, you are getting too much to qualify for assistance now, but as your work is temporary we will keep your claim open. Just bring us your final pay-check, and we will determine how much you are entitled to after that.”

Anyway, the marking stopped at the end of June, and I got my last pay-check, and brought it in as requested. Nothing happened. Half way through August my 13-week interview came up and I told them, “Look, I've not actually received any money yet.” They said “None?” I responded, “Yes, you should know this!” I was told to see my claims advisor, so I did next time I signed on. The claims advisor told me to wait until the next Friday after my 13-week interview and see whether anything came then. I did. Nothing came. In the meantime, no Housing Benefit was arriving either.

The next time I signed on, now 15 weeks after I made the original claim, I said, “Look, I've not had any money yet.” Again, they seemed surprised, as if they didn't actually know my circumstances. Checking my records they said, “Ah, it's because you are doing casual work and receiving too much in pay.” I said, “I am doing no work and receiving nothing in pay. You know this because you told me to bring my final pay-check in when my work finished, and that you would start giving me money then.” Then my claims advisor said that this was not his department, so I should phone the benefits people. I did this, and they told me that I should have brought them a P45. I said, “Well in that case you should have told me to bring a P45 when my work finished, not a sodding final pay-check.” I brought the P45 and still nothing happened. So I got on the phone again and said I had brought my P45, the Jobcentre had made a copy, and nothing is being done. The benefits guy said, “Oh, they haven't made the changes to the records yet.”

Finally the Jobcentre sorted their act out and paid me backdated Jobseekers Allowance of £270. The irony being that they did this in the week just before I started a new job, so

“Finally the Jobcentre ... paid me backdated Jobseekers Allowance of £270. The irony being that they did this in the week just before I started a new job...”

throughout my whole period of unemployment they pay me nothing, but only pay me after I have found employment!

But ... still no Housing benefit. I went to their offices and they said, "Ah, it's because your income is too high." I said "I have no bloody income!" They asked what I have been living on—and I will get back to that—and I said "Help from my family whilst you guys get your act together." I told them "You know I have been getting no income because you told me to bring to you my final pay-check after which you knew I would be receiving no more income." It turns out that they had used that final pay-check to decide that I was earning too much and so was not entitled to any more support ... and that, again, I should have brought them a P45 I was not told to bring, not the pay-check I was told to bring them. They then said I would have to reapply for Housing Benefit from scratch, but that I can ask for it to be backdated. The trouble is that I didn't know whether to bother. You have to notify them a month in advance of any change of circumstances. As I was due to start work in a week, that would be impossible.

But I Thought That You Were a Libertarian?

What is the point of all this? Why should I, as a libertarian, whine about not getting state welfare benefits? The answer to that is that the state has been robbing me for the last 10 years. It has been stealing an average of 20% of my income for 10 years, taking it without my permission, and claiming that it would have a right to throw me in prison if I resisted, or do similarly to my employer if my employer refused to assist in this theft. If you or I went around taxing people as the state does the state itself would correctly arrest us for robbery and extortion, but apparently these things are OK when the state does them.

But when libertarians talk about taxation this way, the most frequent comeback is "If people don't have to pay taxes, how would the welfare state function? Who would look after the poor? If redistributing wealth by taxation is unjust, then that would mean no welfare for

the poor" blah, blah, blah. Well, here am I. Poor. I have lived on less than £10,000 a year for most of my working life. The only time it rose above that was to £13,000 before taxes, and that was for six months, just before losing my job. I am poor. Yet the state still robbed me. And when I went to utilise this "service," this great theft-excusing "benefit" by which bleeding hearts attempt to justify my being robbed, what did I get? Nothing. The state took 20% of my income for ten years. Assuming a balanced budget, it then spent 27% or more of that 20% on social security, on the pretence that such social security would be there whenever I or anybody else needed it. Was it? Was it hell!



When I was made redundant I received £1,500 in redundancy payment which I spent on paying off an overdraft I used to

pay for my MA. I also had in the bank £2,000. This I sent to my parents to hide, knowing that I could not claim benefits if I had savings. Since the teaching ended it has been that £2,000 I have been living on. Now, if the government had not been stealing my money, and had not been forcing me to put 27% or more of 20% of my income (about 6 pence in every pound) aside for "social security," but had instead let me keep that money and allowed me to put 27% of 20% of my annual income in a bank account paying 5% interest,⁴ then when I left work when I was made redundant I would have saved in that account £6,564, which, added to the £2,000 I had anyway, would have given me £8,564 to live on, instead of the £2,000 I was living on and the bummer-all I received of the money that the state stole from me on the pretence that it would give some back when I needed it!

I could have accessed this money whenever I thought I needed it, without having to jump through bureaucratic hoops, and place faith in the messed-up chaos of some welfare official in some office somewhere. When I told my family that I would have been better off had the state not stolen so much of my income but instead had let me keep and save it they didn't believe me. But I think that a person with £8,564 to live on is better off than a person with £2,000 to live on, so I suspect that I may have been correct. In the mean time, nothing

"... the state has been robbing me for the last 10 years."

has more solidified my belief that the welfare state is the biggest rip-off of all time. After the bank bailouts, maybe!

Relating this anecdote to a family member, it was pointed out to me that what I am arguing for is that I should not have to pay National Insurance. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Certainly I was arguing that if I had had the choice, I may have been better off not doing so. And what is wrong with that? What is wrong with suggesting that people should be free to choose not to purchase "social security" from the state, but to turn to an alternative supplier? Is the flip-side of such a position not, after all, that they should be free to choose to purchase it from the state, should they trust the state's services more than one of those alternatives? If so, then opponents of my position are surely saying that whether or not you think that state's services are worth having, you must have them, to the exclusion of possible alternatives that they may prefer.

And, beyond this, how do they ignore the obvious "gun in the room" when they are asked to answer the question, "So, you want to have some sort of social security insurance scheme provided by the government, under which I am covered; but what do you think

should happen to me if I don't want to participate? What should be done to me?" It is obvious that defenders of this statism are those who believe that prisons should be for thieves, murderers, rapists ... and people that choose not to buy a particular insurance policy from a particular provider!

Notes

(1) 'Government Expenditure - Explanation', Institute for Fiscal Studies website, 2009, retrieved 14th December 2009, <http://www.bized.co.uk/virtual/economy/policy/tools/government/gexpex.htm>.

(2) 'Government spending in the UK', S-cool Revision website, 2000, retrieved 14th December 2009, <http://www.s-cool.co.uk/alevel/economics/taxation-and-government-spending/government-spending-in-the-uk.html>.

(3) 'United Kingdom budget', Wikipedia, 6th December 2009, retrieved 14th December 2009, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_budget.

(4) Interest rates have changed over the years!

About the Author

Richard Garner is a libertarian living in Nottingham. He runs his own blog at <http://richardgarnerlib.blogspot.com>.

"The constant diminution of our personal freedom by needless laws means that there is still a strong need for a society such as ours."

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SIF'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Michael Plumbe

I am sorry for the inactivity over the last several months. This has mainly happened because our Editor and Meetings Organiser, Nigel Meek, has been involved in family commitments and academic work. Also our enthusiastic Secretary, Jenny Wakley, has had to stand down and we have been unable so far to fill the post.

We hope we can resume more normal activities in 2010. With luck, we shall be organising our first meeting in the late spring. This will have a speaker and will also cover the proceedings for the two Annual General Meetings we have missed. There is also a good chance that

we shall be able to have a Luncheon in the House of Lords although setting a date for this is difficult with an election looming.

The constant diminution of our personal freedom by needless laws means that there is still a strong need for a society such as ours. So if you can offer your support in any way, we shall be pleased to hear. In particular we need more people—provided that they are libertarians or classical liberals—to join our committee. We also need to identify activities where our small group can effectively act to preserve precious freedom.

PRESENT DAY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

Dr Jeremy Dunning-Davies

How Things Were

Relatively few years ago, the English educational system seemed to be running quite satisfactorily; the majority of pupils left school able to read reasonably well, write acceptable English, and carry out simple everyday arithmetical calculations accurately. Those with genuine academic inclinations proceeded to university; some entered training colleges where they were given education specific to the needs of being an infant or junior school teacher; those with more practical abilities undertook lengthy but worthwhile apprenticeships. All of this was supported by the 1944 *Education Act* which attempted to ensure that each child was educated as appropriate to his/her needs and abilities.

It would be foolish to seem to claim there were no problems but the system worked sufficiently well for it to be apparent that those problems could be rectified by introducing minor modifications to the existing system. There was no need for any drastic changes to be contemplated, let alone implemented. However, true to form, those in positions of power and authority in education—a group which has, for a great many years, been politically left-wing orientated regardless of the colour of the political party in power—embarked on a policy of destruction of the entire English educational system.

It is amazing to realise that this course of destruction was embarked on openly. It is certainly not a route undertaken subversively. For those who haven't viewed all the steps, this seems an odd thing to claim but most of the individual moves have been made cleverly so that the mass of people didn't realise precisely what was happening. This is well illustrated by noting what was behind the removal of corporal punishment from schools. A small, numerically insignificant, teachers' union had as its main aim the abolishment of corporal punishment. It gained widespread support for its stance by claiming that 'good teachers had no need to have recourse to corporal punishment'. No-one wants openly to admit to being anything other than a good teacher and so, by this very simple ploy, the

case was effectively won but no-one followed up by suggesting what should replace corporal punishment. The related issues of punishment and, by implication at least, discipline were ignored and are major factors leading to the present situation of disciplinary chaos in so many English schools.

The Purpose of the University

Similar ploys have been utilised in other areas where the favourite emotive word used to create unrest has been the word 'élite'. Élitism has, over the years, been the word used to arouse envy and disquiet among so many. However, while all can recognise excesses practiced over the centuries by many groups who regarded themselves as élite, educationally what is wrong with establishing an élite provided, of course, that all have an equal chance of admittance to that group? It is undoubtedly the case that, if universities are to be truly institutions of high academic scholarship and, after all, that is what they were originally intended to be, they can only admit as students people intellectually capable of benefiting from such an education as they offer. It must be emphasised that such an education would be essentially academic, not vocational, in nature. Many of the subjects introduced into so many of our modern so-called universities do not conform to this requirement. However, what should a true university be?

For many years now, this question has been requiring a public answer, but that answer has not been forthcoming—not even from the leaders of our individual universities. The need for an answer became even more important on the gross proliferation of universities in this country towards the end of the last century. The expansion raised major new problems with the obvious immediate increase in cost to the taxpayer and with the introduction of so many new subjects apparently viable for the award of degrees. The increase in cost must have been one factor in the revised form of funding for universities and the introduction of, and eventual increase in, student fees. Now, apparently, the country is faced with funding problems in several of its universities. However, the answer to the problems un-

“... what is wrong with establishing an élite provided, of course, that all have an equal chance of admittance to that group?”

doubtedly lies in the answer to that seemingly innocuous question, 'What should a university be?'

Universities are supposed to be places of academic learning and research. This does not make them élite in any way; simply different from other establishments of higher education. However, the differences are crucial and cannot be ignored if this country is to continue to benefit from what true universities can provide. True universities concentrate on academic subjects and, with a few honourable exceptions such as law, medicine, veterinary science and engineering, do not concentrate on vocational subjects and, even in these mentioned subjects, the emphasis should be on academic, rather than vocational, aspects. Hence, medical students at universities such as Cambridge concentrate, in their third year, on a purely academic subject which earns them their actual university degree.

This emphasis on academic pursuits indicates why the study of subjects such as Classics is so important. While the topic may not seem immediately relevant, its study provides a superb training for the mind. That is what universities should be about, training minds to think; that thinking should be open minded, unfettered by restrictions imposed by conventional wisdom or the need to please someone in authority. It is even more important that this attitude extend into research. In any subject, research must be allowed without the imposition of external constraints but, unfortunately, that is not entirely the case in this 21st century world.

As far as undergraduates are concerned, in a true university most of their time should be spent studying academic subjects and, in reality, studying them for their own sake. One of the major aims, as stated previously, would be to train the minds of the students so that, having graduated, they could go out into the world and apply their newly trained minds to problems in a wide variety of areas. Such a programme would leave spare time which could be spent on extra-curricula activities such as sport, drama and music but these should be indulged in for pleasure, not to gain extra module points towards a degree. It might be remembered that this was how universities used to be. Of course, one factor working against this is the need to attract more and more students, regardless of quality or aptitude, in order to bring in more money. In all this, it has been totally forgotten by the

authorities that, although universities need to balance the financial books, they are not and, if they are true universities, should not simply be businesses!

Funding and the Decline of True Research

The same financial problem is effectively ruining true research in our universities also. Instead of the emphasis being on seeking the correct answers to problems, be it in physics or history, all the drive is towards members of staff bringing in outside funding. Since most money comes from established bodies, the result is that only research projects likely to support the status quo in that discipline are funded. Some of these projects can be very expensive and are, from the outset, of highly questionable validity. Examples of this abound in the area of astrophysics and cosmology. However, the acquisition of funding is now a major factor affecting promotion, so many feel forced to comply and the standard of research will soon begin to decline. In fact, I personally know of a case where an excellent academic was told by one of his university's 'senior management team'—a term I feel totally inappropriate for a true university—that he 'did not pay him to think'. When you consider for a moment the true meaning of what real research is, this must count as an amazingly non-academic statement for a senior member of staff of a university to utter and mean!

The picture for our universities is indeed bleak unless this overall attitude is altered. The governing bodies in our universities must place more emphasis on scholarship and less on finance. Also, there are now too many universities. There should be a return to something of the order of forty true universities and all the other establishments should return to providing the vitally important vocational training wanted and needed by many. The pseudo-snobbery associated with the degree qualification should not be used any longer by those who seem to have as their main aim the total destruction of our educational system. Degrees should be reserved for purely academic achievement. Other qualifications should be devised for vocational achievements and these should be recognised as the equivalent of, but different from, degrees. This would be extremely difficult to achieve, changing people's way of thinking always is, but it must be achieved for the sake of education in this country.

"Instead of the emphasis being on seeking the correct answers to problems ... all the drive is towards members of staff bringing in outside funding."

The Decline of Discipline and Examination

Unfortunately, this overall anti-educational attitude that has brought about the potential demise of the English university system has also caused extreme damage to all other areas of the educational system. There is now less and less emphasis on academic subjects, but an increased presence for wishy-washy topics.

Although England is an avowed Christian country, it seems to be paying lip-service to Christianity in its schools with teachers being forced more and more to teach details of other religions with which they are not well acquainted and with less emphasis on traditional Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. The moral teaching of Christianity which is the basis for both British society and law is now relegated to a minor position for fear of offending someone.

All this has led, together with the removal of corporal punishment, to a major decline in standards of discipline in many English schools. The dictum of 'children never lie', which has been foisted surreptitiously on society, now seems almost enshrined in law and has contributed greatly to the decline in standards. Teachers who attempt to impose discipline are almost routinely accused of some offence and immediately suspended. An horrendous period then follows which, in some cases, ends up with a court case—even though, in some instances, absolutely no credible evidence is brought forward in support of the allegation—and the unfortunate teacher, whether found guilty or innocent, is left broken and with no career to which they wish to return. The notion of 'innocent until proven guilty' is totally ignored or forgotten in such cases. Hence, discipline in the schools declines to the extent that many are effectively ruled by the pupils. Under these conditions few will succeed academically.

On top of the discipline issue, or maybe because of it, the standards in the public examinations have declined. Of this there can be little doubt. Someone has only to look at examination papers separated by, let's say, fifty years. Not only are the papers easier now, the syllabus is also. Again, in subjects like mathematics and physics which are essentially sequential in nature, much of the fundamental material has not been covered by the time the students come up to university. This fact is readily brought home when one looks through sets of sixth form physics notes dating from

the late fifties and, foolishly, this is an activity in which I have indulged recently and I confess it has caused me great sadness. True, modern physics students may have encountered some quantum mechanics and relativity and have a passing acquaintance with basic astrophysics and cosmology, but they will not have a good grasp of the basics which make a real understanding of those popular subjects possible. In over forty years as a university lecturer, first in mathematics and latterly in physics, I personally witnessed this decline in standards of both knowledge and attainment of new undergraduates. In many cases the students concerned were eager to learn and a great number achieved academic success but this was not due to the preparation they had received before coming up to university.

This is not to criticise teachers or the teaching those students had received but rather the system imposed from above. The system is undoubtedly at fault but, until those in positions of authority have the courage and will to speak out publicly, the situation will not improve.

Britain being an island might make others feel many here would be interested in studying modern languages but such is not the case. A brief reflection on this makes one remember that to study a modern language effectively, discipline is needed. As noted already, that is sadly lacking in many of our schools. It goes without saying almost, therefore, that study of that truly worthwhile academic subject Classics is now relegated to near-oblivion. Again how many would have the self discipline to really pursue study in such an area?

By Accident or Design?

This returns the discussion to that most important of points raised earlier. Discipline! Corporal punishment as such has no particular merit but the issue was raised to point out that, when it was abolished, nothing effective was introduced to replace it. Now teachers who try to impose discipline by other means and feel effective teaching only takes place in an orderly classroom are under fire from disruptive pupils who know they rule because of society's attitude of 'children never lie'!

Until this basic issue is addressed and the influence of the left-wing educationalists who've masterminded this chaos removed, English education will not improve substantially. The whole situation is so dire, it leaves one wondering if it's all been absolutely deliberate by

"Someone has only to look at examination papers separated by ... fifty years. Not only are the papers easier now, the syllabus is also."

an educated left-wing élite? After all, if the populace is effectively uneducated, it means it's so much easier for the remaining educated few to rule as they please.

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 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 and Senior Lecturer in 1981.

Works include: *Mathematical Methods for Mathematicians, Physical Scientists and Engineers* (Ellis Horwood, 1982); *Concise Thermodynamics* (Albion Publishing, 1996); and about 75 articles—mainly on thermodynamics and its applications, particularly in astrophysics—including a previous article on education that appeared in the November 1996 issue of *The Individual*.

“CLIMATE CHANGE”: A FIRST VICTORY FOR THE INTERNET?

Nigel Gervas Meek

The Internet as a Refuge

Long-time readers may recall that I wrote an article in the September 2003 issue of *The Individual* titled ‘The Rise of Blogging!’ It is certainly true that the Internet has given refuge to those who, for good or for ill, fall outside the bounds of “establishment thinking” and some minor victories¹ have been achieved in recent years.

The Alchemists of the Revolution (Again)

But I've been sceptical about the Internet's impact on the overall intellectual climate. Too many libertarians have viewed the Internet as another “quick fix” to square the circle that there just aren't that many libertarians out there.

Karl Marx—hardly a frequent visitor to these pages, at least not in a sympathetic light—had such people exactly right when, writing in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in April 1850s, he described them as “alchemists of the revolution”.²

It is precisely their business to anticipate the process of revolutionary development, to bring it artificially to crisis-point, to launch a

revolution on the spur of the moment, without the conditions for a revolution... They are the alchemists of the revolution... They leap at inventions which are supposed to work revolutionary miracles: incendiary bombs, destructive devices of magic effect, revolts which are expected to be all the more miraculous and astonishing in effect as their basis is less rational. Occupied with such scheming, they have no other purpose than the most immediate one of overthrowing the existing government and have the profoundest contempt for the more theoretical enlightenment of the proletariat about their class interests.

Ignoring Marx's particular ideological position, his analysis is spot on.

“AGW”

It is no secret that many libertarians and classical liberals are “climate change sceptics”. Not in the sense that we deny that the climate changes. We all recall tales of woolly mammoths lumbering across Europe from our

(Continued on page 18)

“It is no secret that many libertarians and classical liberals are ‘climate change sceptics’.”

THE ANTI-CORN LAW LEAGUE, THE MANCHESTER SCHOOL AND GLADSTONIAN LIBERALISM: NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH PRECURSORS TO MODERN LIBERTARIANISM

Peter Richards

Introduction

The Parliamentary expenses scandal of the spring of 2009 shamed the political class of the United Kingdom and discredited the system that allowed it to occur. In daily instalments from May the 8th onwards, the *Daily Telegraph* published all manner of transgressions, from the trivial to the potentially criminal. A duck house, dog food, pay-per-view adult movies and moat maintenance all featured in the long list of inappropriate claims. These abuses were widely reported in the British media and MP resignations, de-selections and early retirement announcements quickly followed. The public was furious: "How dare they help themselves to our money? How dare they fiddle their expenses? If we did that we would be sacked." Sentiments of disgust like these were commonly expressed up and down the country.

But this is not the first time British MPs have feathered their own nests. If we go back almost 200 years we find that parliament, which at that time was largely made-up of members of the land-owning aristocracy, passed a law effectively preventing cheap imports of corn in order to ensure the sale of home grown grain, thus protecting its own members' profits. The resulting high price of bread threatened to bring starvation and misery to the working classes. The public was furious:

*"The formidable London mob came into action, rough-handling MPs, smashing windows, attacking the houses of Banks and other prominent supporters of the legislation, and generally arousing so much fear that infantry and cavalry were brought in to surround Parliament while the debates took place. It was one of the decisive moments in the alienation of public opinion from the traditional ruling class of the 'Old Society'."*¹

Public outrage was eventually followed by a

campaign to bring an end to this damaging law and within half a century of the *Bill's* enactment, a seismic change occurred in British politics, bringing to power a new political party, the Liberal Party, which was guided predominately by libertarian principles. This essay gives a brief history of these events, focusing in particular on the main characters involved.

The Corn Law

The *Importation Act* of 1815, more commonly known as the Corn Law, which imposed restrictions on grain imports, was introduced by the Earl of Liverpool's Tory government at the end of the Napoleonic wars, at a time when the opportunity to buy low price foreign corn became a real threat to landlords' potential profits.

Pickering and Tyrrell report the details:

*"In conditions of post-war economic depression the new Corn Law of 1815 set down what were seen as unacceptably high prices per quarter beneath which no imports of foreign grains could take place: twenty-seven shillings for oats; forty shillings for barley, beer and bigg; fifty-three shillings for rye, peas and beans; and, most hated of all, eighty shillings for wheat."*²

The first major reform of the Corn Law was in 1928, when the Duke of Wellington's Tory government allowed duty free grain imports if the domestic price of corn reached 73 shillings per quarter or above, and introduced a sliding scale of tariffs for when the domestic price was below that figure (the lower the price of British grain—the higher the duty on imports). But this was not enough to appease public anger.

The great *Reform Act* of 1832 had the effect of strengthening the rebellion because as well as

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taking parliamentary seats away from the 'rotten boroughs' (i.e. constituencies with low populations such as Old Sarum in Wiltshire which only had 7 voters) it also extended the franchise to include many in the merchant classes who favoured the abolition of the Corn Laws.

The Anti-Corn Law League

Opposition to the Corn Laws was strongest in Manchester, the centre of the world's textile manufacturing industry, where the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association was first established in 1838 to campaign locally on the issue. Richard Cobden, a British manufacturer and staunch advocate of free trade, decided that what was needed was a national organisation and founded the Anti-Corn Law League (ACLL) in 1839 in association with like-minded individuals such as John Bright, who was a Quaker, mill owner and gifted orator. Their purpose was to campaign throughout the country for the abolition of the Corn Laws in order to put an end to the high cost of food, and of bread in particular, which had devastating consequences for the urban working class and British manufacturers alike.

Cobden and Bright were the leading lights of the League and the site known as Newall's Buildings in Market Street, Manchester was the hub of the League's activities. As well being the venue for regular meetings, and "according to one observer there could be as many as ten or twelve League committees meeting at the one time"³, it was also the League's literature distribution centre. It is estimated that more than 9 million items had been despatched from Newall's Buildings in the year up to September 1843. The League's newspapers, the fortnightly *Anti-Corn Law Circular* (1839-41), the fortnightly *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* (1841-3) which became a weekly in December 1842, and the weekly *League* (1843-6), were all printed at Newall's Buildings.

As well as printing and distributing Anti-Corn Law literature, the League actively promoted the sale of merchandise in the furtherance of its cause.

Following and building upon the precedent of the anti-Slavery movement, Leaguers could take tea in Anti-Corn Law crockery, and could adorn their table with cloths bearing representations of Cobden and Bright.⁴ They could sew with Anti-Corn Law thimbles; use free-

trade handkerchiefs and wear Anti-Corn Law scarves and waistcoats. 'No free trader who has regard for his personal appearance,' warned the advertisement for an Anti-Corn Law razor, 'should be without it'.⁵ Thus it was not surprising that when Christmas came around the depot offered to supply free-trade Christmas presents in the form of repeal tracts in an engraved envelope.⁶

Winston Churchill recorded how the League operated:

*"The movement was strongly supported. There were large subscriptions to its funds. The new penny postage, introduced by Sir Rowland Hill in 1840, carried circulars and pamphlets cheaply all over the country. Meetings were held throughout the land. The propaganda was effective and novel; a few simple ideas hammered into the minds of audiences by picked lecturers and speakers. Never had there been such a shrewdly conducted agitation."*⁷

Another weapon in the League's armoury was the petition, of which literally thousands were presented to the House of Commons calling for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The Anti-Corn Law League regarded free trade as an issue of liberty no less than as a matter of economic practicality. Edward Baines, a prominent spokesman for the ACLL and editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, linked free trade and liberty in *The League* when he declared:

"Free Trade' means perfect freedom for every kind of industry; and it includes liberty to every man to employ his money or his labour in the way he himself thinks most advantageous, and to buy and sell wherever he can do so with the greatest profit.

This freedom is man's natural right. Of course it ought not to be invaded in society, unless such invasion can be shown to be necessary for the general good of the community... It is obvious that this must be the general rule and practice in every community... And upon this rule all Governments do and must act in 999 out

"... the League actively promoted the sale of merchandise in the furtherance of its cause."

*of 1000 cases. This rule of Freedom of Industry—which contains in it, when practically applied, an admirable self-regulating and self-adjusting principle—determines how many men shall engage in each particular employment, so as to keep the wants of the community duly supplied.*⁸

The ACLL eventually achieved its objective with the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846. This was no doubt assisted by the advent of famine in Ireland which applied additional pressure in favour of abolition but much credit is due to the League's dedicated and able leaders, namely Richard Cobden and John Bright.

Richard Cobden

Richard Cobden was born in Heyshott, Sussex, in 1804 and achieved business success as a calico printer in Manchester before moving on to become involved in public life as a committed campaigner for peace and free trade. He became known as the "Apostle of Free Trade" during his lifetime and after his death a number of places around the world adopted his surname. Cobden Bridge in my home town of Southampton, England was also named after him. He was elected to parliament as the MP for Stockport in the general election of 1841 and continued to represent this constituency until 1847. In 1859 he resumed his parliamentary career as MP for Rochdale, where he retained his seat until 1865. One of his greatest achievements during this period was the negotiation, with the French economist Michel Chevalier, of a 10-year Anglo-French commercial treaty, known as the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty, which he was instrumental in persuading the two nations to agree and sign up to in 1860.

On 24th February 1842, Cobden delivered a powerful speech to the House of Commons, in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws. During this speech he declared:

*"To have a useful and a prosperous people, we must take care that they are well fed."*⁹

He continued by saying:

"I perfectly agree with the right hon. Baronet [Sir Robert Peel, the Conservative Prime Minister], that corn ought only to be admitted free

of all restrictions when it is 'wanted'. That is, the particular moment or crisis when it is desirable to open our ports for the admission of foreign corn.

But I would ask the House and the Government of the country, who are to decide when the corn is wanted? Is it those who need food and are starving, or those who fare sumptuously every day and roll in all the luxuries of life? What right has the Right Hon. Baronet to attempt to gauge the appetite of the people? It is an inordinate assumption of power to do so. Such a thing cannot be tolerated under the most monstrous system of despotism which the imagination of man has ever conceived. Do we sit here for the purpose of deciding when the people of this country want food? What do the Members of this House know of want? It is not for them to say when the starving people of this country ought to have food doled out to them. The people are the best judges upon that point."

And he concluded with:

"I will say a word to the noble Lord and his Right Hon. associates on this (the Opposition) side of the House, who, whilst advocating generally Free-trade principles, have manifested a squeamishness in supporting the motion for a total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. With all deference to them, that shows too great sympathy with the few and too little with the many who are suffering."

Cobden was defeated on this occasion, but Peel—a free trader by instinct—did alter the tariff scale on imported corn to help keep down the price of bread.¹⁰

This modified Corn Law was not well received as the Revd J.W. Massie made clear on 22nd March 1842 when he addressed a meeting at the Manchester Corn Exchange holding a copy of the bill in his hand:

"What then shall we do with this bill?" he had asked his audience

"... who are to decide when the corn is wanted? Is it those who need food and are starving, or those who fare sumptuously every day and roll in all the luxuries of life?"

*which consisted of members of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association, the Operative Anti-Corn Law Association and the Young Men's Anti-Monopoly Association. On cue they responded 'Burn it, Burn it.' After a brief discussion with the chairman Massie was allowed to proceed. Reaching out to the gas lights in the hall, he held the paper aloft as it burst into flames. Then, scattering the ashes among the audience which trampled them underfoot, he proclaimed the death of Peel's legislation: 'So perish all the laws that would interfere with the food of the people!'"*¹¹

John Bright

John Bright, who was born in Rochdale in 1811, was returned as the candidate for Durham on a Free Trade platform in 1843 at a by-election. In 1847 he was elected as MP for Manchester and again in the election of 1852. He campaigned for electoral reform and religious freedom as well as free trade. In 1857 he lost his seat in Manchester due to his opposition to the Crimean War but within months was elected as MP for Birmingham where he continued to serve for more than thirty years.

John Bright of Rochdale, as he was popularly known, was the man who coined the famous phrase "England is the Mother of Parliaments". He was an acclaimed public speaker and proved to be a great asset to the Anti-Corn Law League.

The Marquess of Salisbury said of him, and it sums up his character as a public man:

*"He was the greatest master of English oratory that this generation—they say several generations—has seen. At a time when much speaking has depressed, has almost exterminated eloquence, he maintained that robust, powerful and vigorous style in which he gave fitting expression to the burning and noble thoughts he desired to utter."*¹²

During a speech he made to Rochdale Working Men's Club on January 2nd 1877,¹³ Bright referred back to the time of the Corn Laws and described their effects:

"People that were well off had their tables as well furnished as now. Their loaf never dwindled and became less. They were always well fed, plump in the cheeks, living many of them sufficiently and most of them luxuriously. The suffering was amongst the wages class. Misery most abject, a permanent condition of starvation, all the consequences of this dreadful system, pressed with more and more weight as it came more and more down to the very humblest and very poorest of the people.

Well, what was it all done for? It was done under the pretence that it was necessary for the protection of all our great agricultural interests. They did not say much about the rents of landlords, because the landlords had passed the law, but the landlords' rents were the first consideration. The second was the prosperity of the farmers. These Corn Laws were necessary in order that they might be able to pay good rents. And sometimes they even ventured to speak about the agricultural labourer, although it was well known then and is well known now that the agricultural labourer, under the influence of this law, was in the most miserable condition of any of the various classes of labourers into which the working-class population of the country can be divided.

But the law destroyed your trade. You could not receive corn from abroad, and your foreign customers, therefore, could not buy from you..."

But the law destroyed your trade. You could not receive corn from abroad, and your foreign customers, therefore, could not buy from you, and whilst it raised the price of your food it diminished the demand for your labour, and, as a matter of course, lessened the wages you received for your labour. Now I venture to say here—and one may say it thirty years after the event; one may now say things which would have been probably hurtful to the feelings of some of those who supported that law—in my opinion there is not on the record of any other people at any time, much less of any civilized and professedly Christian people, so

"But the law destroyed your trade. You could not receive corn from abroad, and your foreign customers, therefore, could not buy from you..."

astounding a crime against the security of the Government itself, and against the population it was called upon to rule, as the Corn Law of 1815, passed by the Imperial Parliament of this country. If you turn back to a year of abundant harvests and low prices, like 1836, and then turn to the years 1840 and 1841, when the harvests had been bad, and when food was dear, you would find three things that would appal you. First of all, that as prices were rising, as the harvest failed, pauperism throughout the whole of the country—amongst the manufacturing population, among the farm labourers—was constantly and steadily increasing, and not only that, but that crime, and every kind of crime, was increasing just about at the same rate.”

Bright continued by drawing his listeners' attention to an Anti-Corn Law poem written by a popular poet of the time:

“Strong men and women were stricken down by the law, but the aged and little children were its constant and most numerous victims.”

“It was in these times that Ebenezer Elliott, the Sheffield poet—the Corn-law Rhymmer—wrote his burning and scathing condemnation of this law. Many of you here are no doubt weavers employed in the cotton or woollen trade of this town, and have read the touching lines in which he is showing how the Corn Law is striking here and there almost everybody, blasting his prosperity and his hopes, and condemning him and his family to daily suffering. He turns at last to the weaver, and he says:

*‘Bread-taxed weaver, all may see
What that tax hath done for thee,
And thy children vilely led,
Singing hymns for shameful bread,
Till the stones of every street
Know their little naked feet.’*

And then looking upon the growth of crime, the conspiracies that were constantly afloat, the insurrections which were looked towards by people as a relief, he then addresses the ancient monarchy of his country.

He says:

*‘What shall bread tax do for thee,
Venerable monarchy?
Dreams of evil spare my sight;
Let the horror rest in night.’*

He knew, and everybody knew who comprehended the character and operation of that law, that if it should continue to afflict the people as it did through thirty years of its existence, there is no institution in this country, not even its venerable monarchy, that could stand the strain that that law would bring to bear upon it. But there was another fact shown by the figures of that time—that not only pauperism increased, and crime increased, but mortality increased. Strong men and women were stricken down by the law, but the aged and little children were its constant and most numerous victims.”

Bright went on to relate what happened after the Corn Law was repealed.

“Under the Government of Sir Robert Peel, in 1846, the law was repealed, and three years afterwards—in 1849—all the duties on these articles were taken off, except a shilling per quarter, which has been more recently abolished.

Since this happened there has been no fall of rents throughout the kingdom. In point of fact the prosperity of the country has been so increased that the rent of land throughout the country is now higher than it was when Corn Law was in existence, and the farmers, who were always complaining during the existence of that law, have scarcely ever been heard to complain in the least since it was abolished. They complained for a year or two because they had been greatly frightened, but there has never been, I will say, within the last hundred years a period when the farmers of this country have made less complaint to the public or to Parliament than they have during the last thirty years since the law for their protection was

abolished.

And what happened to the labourer? The wages of farm-labourers have risen on the whole much more, I believe, than 50 per cent, throughout the whole country; and in some counties and districts, I believe, the farm-labourer at this moment is receiving double the wages he was when this law in existence.

We ought to learn from this what a grand thing it is to establish our laws upon a basis of freedom and justice. It blesses him who gives and him who takes. It has blessed all our manufacturing districts with a steadiness of employment and an abundance they never knew before, and it has blessed not less the very class who in their dark error and blindness thought they could have profited by that which was so unjust, so cruel to the bulk of their countrymen."

A Brief History of the League

I think this is a good point to look at a summary of the Anti-Corn Law League's story. A brief history of the League published in 1847 gives a contemporary version of events:

"It was at a public dinner given to Dr Bowring, in Manchester, in 1838, that the persons present agreed to form themselves into an association for promoting the principles of free trade. This was the origin of the Anti-Corn Law League, an association which was destined to effect a revolution in the commercial policy not only of this but of surrounding nations. Sneered at and derided at first, it grew and grew until its shadow darkened the land, and until it had enlisted beneath its banners nearly the whole mass of the intelligence and patriotism of the realm.

By the aid of the press, of an activity which knew no pause, of unlimited capital, and by the persuasive eloquence of its leaders, it ran a triumphant course of seven years, during which it bore down all op-

position, and having first convinced the nation of the truth and value of its principles, finished by converting the prime minister to the faith he had formally ridiculed, and by receiving at his hands the consummation of its final success.

*It is to Richard Cobden that the nation owes its convictions of the fallacy of restrictive systems; and it is to the eternal honour of Sir Robert Peel that, receiving such convictions himself, he had the manliness to carry them out in practice by abolishing the corn-laws. The League, when it had done its work, was dissolved in 1846."*¹⁴

In 1843 John Easby wrote:

*So long as British history is written, the League will never be forgotten. It will form one of the most brilliant pages of the historian's pen of the nineteenth century."*¹⁵

The Manchester School

Benjamin Disraeli, the celebrated Conservative statesman and arch rival of William Gladstone, first coined the phrase 'Manchester School' in 1848 to describe the Free Trade movement of Great Britain. The movement was founded by those Manchester radicals who had supported the repeal of the Corn Laws and who believed in the principles of free trade and anti-protectionism. Opposition to imperialism and interventionist wars, as well as support for laissez-faire economics, were ideas associated with this school of thought, sometimes alternatively known as 'Manchester Liberalism'. The writings of Adam Smith, David Hume and Jean-Baptiste Say formed the foundation of their ideas which were to dominate the Liberal Party in the nineteenth century.

The Liberal Party

Although the term 'Liberal Party', originally coined by Lord John Russell, had been in use for some years before hand, The Liberal Party itself was not officially so-named until 6th June 1859 at the time of Viscount Palmerston's second government. Palmerston was followed in 1865 by the new leader of the Liberal Party, Earl (formerly Lord John) Russell, whose sec-

"Opposition to imperialism and interventionist wars, as well as support for laissez-faire economics were ideas associated with this school of thought..."

ond ministry lasted until 1866. In 1868 William Gladstone became Prime Minister after a landslide victory for the Liberal Party, which was made up of a coalition of Whigs, Radicals and Peelites (anti-protectionist Tories). These early Liberals were much influenced by the Manchester School, and believed in free trade, low taxation, limited government as well as individual liberty; they also believed that the free exchange of goods would promote peace between nations. They have been dubbed Gladstonian Liberals after their leader. Gladstonian liberalism, as the beliefs associated with the early Liberal governments have been called, is more usually known in current parlance as classical liberalism.

William Gladstone

William Ewart Gladstone or G.O.M. (Grand Old Man) as he was fondly known became the prime minister four times: 1868-74; 1880-85; 1886; 1892-94. He also acquired the nickname "The People's William" because he introduced many popular reforms amongst which were the abolition of the purchase of commissions in the British Army and the replacement of patronage in the civil service with exams so that advancement could be based on ability and merit rather than money and connections.

Other popular reforms included the disestablishment of the Protestant Church of Ireland, the opening up of universities to religious dissenters and Nonconformists, and the introduction of the secret ballot to prevent intimidation during general elections.

Gladstone, a merchant's son, was born in Liverpool in 1809 and was first elected to parliament as MP for Newark-on-Trent in 1832. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852 with the Earl of Aberdeen's coalition government and then again in 1859 when Viscount Palmerston became Prime Minister of the first government formed by the new Liberal Party. The *Reform Bill* of 1867 extended the franchise to all adult male householders living in a borough constituency and soon afterwards in the election 1868 a Liberal government gained power with Gladstone at its head. Liberals under his leadership wanted more individual freedom and less taxation. Gladstone was in favour of Home Rule for

Ireland. He was at his country estate felling trees when a messenger had informed him of Queen Victoria's request that he form a government in 1868 and he famously remarked, "my mission is to pacify Ireland".

A brief summary of Gladstone's policy objectives confirms their emphasis on liberty:

In the 1860s and 1870s, Gladstonian Liberalism was characterised by a number of policies intended to improve individual liberty and loosen political and economic restraints. First was the minimisation of public expenditure on the premise that the economy and society were best helped by allowing people to spend as they saw fit. Second, his foreign policy aimed at promoting peace to help reduce expenditures and taxation and enhance trade. Third, laws that prevented people from acting freely to improve themselves were reformed.¹⁶

It is clear that Gladstone's Liberal government owed much to the Manchester School that came before it.

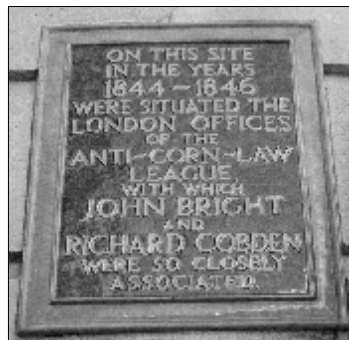
From the Manchester School to Libertarianism

The Manchester School should be respectfully remembered for ushering in a period of classical liberalism. Unfortunately this era was short lived as by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the values of Liberals were already changing towards a new liberalism, one that could be called social liberalism, which focused on positive rights as well as the negative rights normally associated with classical liberalism. However, the theory of classical liberalism has lived on in its own right as well becoming encompassed in the broader church of modern libertarianism. So we can now see that there is direct linear descent from The Anti-Corn Law League, the Manchester School and Gladstonian Liberalism of the 19th century right through to the libertarianism of the 21st century. The Anti-Corn Law League and the Manchester School, as well as Gladstonian Liberalism should therefore take their hallowed place in the history of libertarianism.

Closing Remarks

As members of the Anti-Corn Law League were concerned about working class poverty and starvation, and as this organisation can be

"These early Liberals ... believed in free trade, low taxation, limited government as well as individual liberty; ..."



seen as a precursor to modern day libertarianism, I think it is true to say that the actions of the League nail the lie that libertarians don't care about the poor.

The ideas of libertarianism today are like spores waiting for the right conditions to germinate. That is why it is so important to cherish our libertarian heritage because one day it will regain its significance—come the revolution.

So to go back to where I started to the recent political expenses scandal, I see it in a positive light from a libertarian perspective. Why? Because as Murray Rothbard said:

*"For the success of liberty, the most vital condition is the desanctification, the delegitimation of government in the eyes of the public..."*¹⁷

Notes

- (1) W.D. Jones, *'Prosperity' Robinson: The Life of Viscount Goderich, 1782-1859*, London, 1967, pp. 60-3 cited in Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League*, Leicester University Press, London, 2000, p. 10. The name 'Banks' referred to in this passage is Robert Banks Jenkinson, 2nd Earl of Liverpool who was Prime Minister at the time.
- (2) Donald Barnes, *A History of the English Corn Laws*, pp. 135-48 cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
- (3) Pickering & Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- (4) *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular*, 5th May 1841; *National Anti-Corn Law League Bazaar Gazette*, no. 2, p. 7 cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
- (5) *Manchester Times*, 28th January 1843; 27th January 1844; 22nd May 1846; *League*, 10th August 1844; *National Anti-Corn Law League Bazaar Gazette*, no. 2, p. 7 cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
- (6) *Anti-Corn Law Circular*, 28th January 1841; *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular*, 17th January 1843 cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
- (7) Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking*

Peoples, Cassell and Company Ltd, London, 1958, Vol. IV, pp. 46-7.

(8) 'To the Right Honourable The Earl of Harewood, President of the Yorkshire Society', *The League*, 16th March 1844 cited in Richard F.Spall, Jr., 'Landlordism and Liberty: Aristocratic Misrule and the Anti-Corn Law League', *The Journal of Libertarian studies*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Summer 1987, p. 214, accessed from http://mises.org/journals/jls/8_2/8_2_3.pdf on 26th July 2009.

(9) Peter Kellner, *Democracy: 1000 Years in Pursuit of British Liberty*, Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 304.

(10) *Ibid*, pp. 304-5.

(11) *Manchester Times*, 26th March 1842, cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, p.1.

(12) Accessed from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bright on 26th July 2009.

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(14) Charles Knight (ed.), *Old England: A Pictorial Museum of Regal, Ecclesiastical, Municipal, Baronial, and Popular Antiquities*, Bracken Books, Portland House, New York, 1987 p. 379 (originally published by James Sangster & Co, London, 1847).

(15) J. Easby, *Repeal! Or Sketches of the League, Its leaders, Its Members and Its Foes!*, London, 1843, p. iv, cited in Pickering & Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, p.11.

(16) Accessed from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Gladstone on 26th July 2009.

(17) Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, New York University Press, New York, 2002, p. 273.

About the Author

Peter Richards is a Hampshire businessman and writer. Besides being a contributor to the SIF, he is a life member of the Rationalist Association and a supporter of the Libertarian Alliance and the Freedom Association. He has also contributed to *The Freethinker* and *Right Now!*

“... the actions of the League nail the lie that libertarians don't care about the poor.”

.....



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THE HYPOCRITICAL WAR ON SOME DRUGS

Richard Garner

Author's Note: A version of this article was originally written for publication in my local newspaper, Nottingham's Evening Post. Needless to say, they never published it!

The Pub: A Place Where They Sell Drugs

Skimming through my local paper, I was able to read with amusement a report¹ of three arrests after drugs were found ... *in a pub!* A pub is, of course, a place where the sale and consumption of drugs is normal practice—the only difference being that alcohol and tobacco and caffeine are legal drugs. Nothing else could demonstrate the hypocrisy of the state's "War on Drugs" better than arresting people for having illegal drugs in a place where legal drugs are regularly sold and consumed. Or should that be the "War on *Some* Drugs"?

The "War on Drugs": A Failure In Its Own Terms

This War on Drugs is a war that has provided the government with an ever greater pretext for invading the liberty of the British people, and yet seems to be a war with very few victories. If the goal of the War on Drugs is to reduce drug use then it has been an abject failure. In 1955 *The Times* reported² that there were only 317 addicts to "manufactured" drugs in the whole of Britain, and that only 15% were dependent on heroin. That is a national total of just 47.5 heroin addicts! Yet after more than 50 years and billions of taxpayers' pounds, last year the Serious Organised Crime Agency reported³ that there are 74,000 "problem drug users" in London alone—one person in every 100 people has a drug problem in the capital—and an estimated million users of cocaine alone in the whole country. The War on Drugs has not reduced drug usage and therefore not reduced drug dealing. On the contrary, these things occur more than ever. Criminalisation has been a total failure.

As a libertarian I believe that adults should be at liberty to do as they choose with their per-

son and property, or that of consenting others. The only legitimate role that the government has, if any at all, is to protect this liberty by enforcing laws against force, fraud and theft. It is not the government's job to prosecute people for crimes in which the only victim is the criminal himself. So, for example, the Libertarian Party of the United Kingdom⁴ would decriminalise drugs so they can be provided on the same basis as alcohol now is.

Prohibition Costs Lives

Before labelling this policy ridiculous, let me leave you with a thought on Nottingham's recent history. Last year, over the May bank holiday weekend, a father of two was shot dead in an alley in the Lace Market. The victim⁵ was Bernard Langton, aged 27. According to *Hoods*⁶ author Carl Fellstrom, criminal gangs seem to think of pubs and clubs in the Lace Market almost as their own offices. Bernard Langton, Fellstrom⁷ tells us in Nottingham magazine *LeftLion*, was originally from Liverpool, but moved to Nottingham "some years ago where he had become involved in the highly profitable distribution of drugs across the city." Sometime in the first couple of hours of the 26th May he entered a club. A fight broke out. Gunshots rang out. The gunmen pursued him down the Lace Market streets. And shot him in the back.

The relevance of this? Well, just ask yourselves, would gangs be using Lace Market pubs and clubs as offices, would Bernard Langton have been lying,

dying in an alley at two in the morning, would his children be orphans, if becoming "involved in the highly profitable distribution of drugs across the city" meant getting a job on the counters at Boots, a company that was selling heroin legally in the early years of the last century?

"Criminalisation has been a total failure."



As a libertarian I believe that adults should be at liberty to do as they choose with their per-

Notes

- (1) Nottingham *Evening Post*, 17th September 2009, p6.
- (2) Jonathan Duffy, 'When heroin was legal', *BBC News Magazine*, 25th January 2006, retrieved 19th December 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4647018.stm>.
- (3) Jack Doyle, 'UK cocaine market is the largest in Europe', *The Independent*, 24th June 2009, retrieved 19th December 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/l2xvwg>.
- (4) Libertarian Party, 'Law and Order', Libertarian Party website, 2009, retrieved 19th December 2009, <http://lpuk.org/pages/manifesto/law-and-order.php>.
- (5) *This Is Nottingham*, 'Fourth man in court over Bernard Langton murder', *This Is Nottingham*, 10th December 2009, retrieved 19th December 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/ye7j8an>.
- (6) Carl Fellstrom, *Hoods: The Gangs of Nottingham*, Milo Books, Preston, 2008.
- (7) Carl Fellstrom, 'The Way of the Gun', *LeftLion*, 2009, retrieved 19th December 2009, <http://www.leftlion.co.uk/articles.cfm/id/2627>.

(Continued from page 8)

school days. No, what I'm referring to is the apocalyptic claims made by many of those who insist on the reality of anthropogenic—man-made, to you and me—global warming (AGW).

We've been suspicious for a number of reasons. Those of us who've been around for a while can remember at least as far back as the 1970s a succession of environmentally-based "the end is nigh" scares none of which came true. Remember: in the 1970s it was being seriously predicated that by the end of the 20th century—10 years ago—millions would be dying of famine in *North America*.³

We've also noticed that many of those making apocalyptic claims are "watermelons": an ostensible "green" concern for the environment conceals a "red" socialist desire for massive state intervention.⁴

And then there's the facts. For example, despite years of relentless propaganda from governments and NGOs worldwide—which have usually been echoed uncritically by the mainstream media (MSM)—there has been no statistically significant global warming since 1995.⁵

But all of this has gone under the radar or been actively suppressed⁶ by the MSM. Until now?

A Real Victory?

Keeping the above in mind, as a propagandising tool, as something to foster the "theoretical enlightenment" that Marx described, has the Internet in recent months scored its first major victory?

First, of course, was the "Climategate" scandal of the hacked or leaked emails obtained from the University of East Anglia's Climate Re-

search Unit (CRU) which maintains the repository for temperature measurements used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).⁷ These indicated that pro-AGW researchers had, amongst other things, manipulated evidence to favour their cause, had suppressed evidence contrary to their cause and had concealed their own doubts about AGW. Whilst it is true that it was only when taken up (in a limited fashion) by the MSM that the story really broke, it is unlikely that without blogs such as *Watts Up With That?*, *EU Referendum* and *Devil's Kitchen*⁸ that the scandal would ever have received a public airing at all.

Second, again heavily featured on blogs, particularly again the estimable *EU Referendum* but also others such as *Devil's Kitchen*,⁹ and then latterly reproduced by the few available outlets in the MSM, were the growing revelations that behind all the husky-hugging "protecting the environment" blather has been ... huge sums of money.

This has been of at least two identifiable types. First, that national governments and supra-national bodies are doling out vast sums of money—taxpayers' money, of course—to various individuals and NGOs by way of conferences, top class flights and accommodation, wages, research grants and so on. "Environmentalism" is an industry with employees many of whom are doing very nicely thank you. The other is the more complex issue of the trading in carbon credits.¹⁰ Put simply, credits allocated to industrial concerns for their carbon emissions but which are unused can be bought and sold via a specialised market. This "business" is now worth in excess of \$100 billion a year. This "business" was a product of the *Kyoto Protocol* of the late 1990s. And this aspect of it—this business worth so many billions of dollars—is due to

"... there has been no statistically significant global warming since 1995."

fall in 2012. Which brings us to...

Third, this all coalesced at the time of the UN climate summit held in Copenhagen in December 2009. The usual squads of politicians, bureaucrats, NGO-wallahs, posturing pop stars, media sycophants and assorted hangers-on arrived. And nothing very much happened. Lots of “establishment” reasons¹¹ for this “failure” were put forward, many holding at least some truth.

But there was something else. With the likes of—to name just two of the most socially exalted—Lord (Nigel) Lawson and Lord (Christopher) Monckton¹² allowed an airing on the broadcast arm of the MSM and even some of the largest mainstream scientific organisations making tentative announcements¹³ along the lines of “perhaps we’d just better check”, a to-date heretical thought has escaped from the blogosphere and is beginning to seep into the public consciousness and which *might* in turn seep into policy decisions...

“Have we been conned?” “Who by?” “And why?”

Update

Dale Amon, writing on the *Samizdata* blog,¹⁴ discusses Climategate more specifically in terms of it as a scientific scandal.

Notes

- (1) Dave Eberhart, ‘How the Blogs Torpedoed Dan Rather’, *Newsmax*, 31st January 2005, retrieved 27th December 2009, <http://archive.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2005/1/28/172943.shtml>.
- (2) Karl Marx, originally in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, April 1850, republished at the *Marxists Internet Archive*, retrieved 26th December 2009, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/03/chenu.htm>.
- (3) Ronald Bailey, ‘Earth Day, Then and Now’, *Reason*, May 2000, retrieved 26th December 2009, <http://reason.com/archives/2000/05/01/earth-day-then-and-now>.
- (4) David Weigel, ‘Climate Change Skeptics Oust Jones With ‘Green Socialist’ Attacks’, *Washington Independent*, 6th September 2009, retrieved 26th December 2009. That said, I suspect that socialists of Marx’s ilk would have despised the Gaia-worshipping hippies of the modern “green” movement.
- (5) Luboš Motl, ‘No statistically significant warming since 1995: a quick mathematical proof’, *Watts Up With That?* blog, 26th December 2009, retrieved 27th December 2009, <http://wattsupwiththat.com/2009/12/26/no-statistically-significant-warming-since-1995-a-quick-mathematical-proof/>.

(6) Robin Horbury, ‘BBC editor is climate change activist’, *Biased BBC* blog, 28th December 2009, retrieved 29th December 2009, <http://biased-bbc.blogspot.com/2009/12/bbc-editor-is-climate-change-activist.html>.

(7) James Delingpole, ‘Climategate: the final nail in the coffin of ‘Anthropogenic Global Warming?’’, *The Telegraph*, 20th November 2009, retrieved 27th November 2009, <http://tinyurl.com/yhx9juw>.

(8) Found at <http://wattsupwiththat.com>, <http://eureferendum.blogspot.com> and <http://www.devilskitchen.me.uk> respectively. These are just amongst the more popular examples.

(9) Various articles focusing on the interesting financial arrangements of Dr Rajendra Pachauri by way of example, *EU Referendum* blog, various dates, retrieved 27th December 2009, <http://eureferendum.blogspot.com/search?q=Pachauri>; various articles on “Big Carbon”, *Devil’s Kitchen* blog, various dates, retrieved 27th December 2008, <http://www.devilskitchen.me.uk/search/label/Big%20Carbon>.

(10) Nadene Ghouri, ‘The great carbon credit con: Why are we paying the Third World to poison its environment?’, *Daily Mail*, 1st June 2009, retrieved 27th December 2009; various articles on “Big Carbon”, *EU Referendum* blog, various dates, retrieved 27th December 2009, <http://eureferendum.blogspot.com/search?q=big+carbon>.

(11) *BBC News*, ‘Why did Copenhagen fail to deliver a climate deal?’, *BBC News*, 22nd December 2009, retrieved 28th December 2009.

(12) Christopher Monckton, ‘Lord Monckton on Climategate’, Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow website, 7th December 2009, retrieved 28th December 2009, <http://www.cfact.tv/2009/12/07/lord-monckton-on-climategate-at-the-2nd-international-climate-conference/>. This is a link to a video of a near-contemporaneous presentation by Monckton about the Climategate scandal but during which he also analyzes much of the environmentalist scaremongering.

(13) American Physical Society, ‘APS Comments on Stolen CRU Climate Files’, American Physical Society website, 10th December 2009, retrieved 29th December 2009, <http://www.aps.org/about/pressreleases/cru09.cfm>.

(14) Dale Amon, ‘A few thoughts on Climategate’, *Samizdata* blog, 28th December 2009, retrieved 29th December 2009, http://www.samizdata.net/blog/archives/2009/12/a_few_thoughts.html.

About the Author

Nigel Gervas Meek is the Editor and Membership Secretary (or something similar) of the SIF, the Libertarian Alliance and the Campaign Against Censorship.

(And yes, the perceptive reader will note that I wrote much of this article in dribs and drabs over the festive season. If I ever see another piece of stollen I will not be held responsible for my actions...)

“Have we been
conned? Who By?
And why?”

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The SIF's Aim:

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Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*, 1851