

In this issue:

- The SIF's Beliefs updated and restated.
- A pessimistic view of the future of the UK.
- An atheist responds to the May 2004 issue!
- What to do about healthcare.
- And a scattering of libertarian wit and wisdom.

ALIVE AND KICKING

Despite being a smallish organisation these days, the SIF continues to attract writers and speakers of the highest calibre. This can be seen both in the major essay in this issue of *The Individual* by Professor David Marsland—who, since his essay was typeset, has been appointed Professor of Sociology at the University of Buckingham—and the guest speaker at our public meeting in October 2004, Professor David Myddelton. Details about Professor Myddelton's recent book which formed the basis of his talk can be found elsewhere in this issue.

At an Executive Meeting of the SIF earlier meeting in the year, I was taken to task by Paul Anderton, my predecessor as editor of *The Individual*, for being "too soft on religion" in the May 2004 issue. Here, Paul responds!



The SIF AGM on the 27th October 2004 went well. There hasn't been time between now and then, but hopefully the next issue of *The Individual* will carry the AGM report.



Readers will notice on page 17 a restatement of the SIF's beliefs. Following a flurry of telephone calls, emails, and letters, this revised ver-

sion was formally approved at the meeting of the Executive Committee that also took place on the 27th October 2004. They are largely based on the previous set—which in turn had been largely based on the set before that—but have been slightly updated and tidied up.

These beliefs set out very clearly the SIF's position as a classical liberal or libertarian conservative organisation. It needs to be restated: the SIF is neither a "traditionalist conservative" organisation seeking the restoration of a "green and pleasant land" pre-industrial fantasy-world of benevolent squires and forelock-tugging yokels, nor is it some sort of open-forum debating society. Our corporate views are very clear indeed.

Although this task needed to be done anyway, the trigger for it was the design of a new trifold brochure to act as a general introduction to and membership application form for the SIF. More later!



Finally, since this will be the last issue in 2004, I shall take the opportunity to wish all members of the SIF and other readers of *The Individual* a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Nigel Meek

DISCLAIMER & PUBLISHING DETAILS

Views expressed in *The Individual* are not necessarily those of the Editor or the SIF and its members, but are presented as a contribution to debate.

Only policies or opinions that have been approved by the SIF Management Committee, and are noted as such, can be taken as having formal SIF approval. This also applies to editorial comments in this journal.

Edited by Nigel Meek and published by the Society for Individual Freedom. Contact details can be found on the back page.

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AN END TO PATERNALISM IN HEALTHCARE

Professor David Marsland

Note: This essay is based on a talk delivered at the King's Fund (www.kingsfund.org.uk) seminar 'From Nanny State to Personal Responsibility' on the 26th May 2004. Professor Marsland's fellow speakers were the Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, and Mr Will Hutton, journalist, author, and Chief Executive of The Work Foundation.



"We thought it was best for him."
Character in the horror film *Beast in the Cellar* (1970), explaining why her brother has been bricked up for thirty years and turned into a sub-human monster.

It is not difficult to argue—from a libertarian perspective—that the modern liberal democratic state is intolerably intrusive and authoritarian. Its tendencies towards political correction and oppressive nannying, not least in the sphere of health, are manifest. Nor is it, however, much more difficult to argue—from a socialist perspective—that the state is nervously timorous in the use of its legitimate power to address fundamental health needs and urgent healthcare problems. The anxious paralysis of the British Government—in healthcare and across the board—in the face of perceived pressures by big business, the media and the electorate is evident.

It is easiest of all to argue—from the pragmatic perspective of the Establishment—that the state is, after all, doing the best that can be managed in difficult circumstances with its complex, arbitrarily shifting balancing-act in the face of contradictory and cross-cutting pressures: between liberty and efficiency, localism and centralism, consumers and producers, long-term and short term, realism and dreaming. Do let's be practical, as it were.

Against these libertarian, socialist and pragmatic positions, I commend—in relation to health and healthcare—a distinct and more radical perspective. This highlights gross and counter-productive over-reliance on state power in some spheres, and its negligent under-utilisation in others. Both these errors derive from a single source—misconstrual of the state's proper and limited role in a genuinely liberal society. A democratic state should be modest in scope—but confident and vigorous in its action within its appropriate—and definitively minimal—domain.

The root of the problem is socialised medicine—the National Health Service itself and its utopian founding principles. No other healthcare system anywhere in the world or at any other time in history has combined state monopoly ownership, control and delivery with free as-of-right supply for the whole population, from bishops, through bar-tenders to beggars and from tinkers, through teachers to tycoons (Marsland, 1996a).

Not surprisingly, though we have been slow to acknowledge the truth, the consequences of this ultra-bureaucratic, super-paternalistic system are gravely negative: extravagant costs, gross waste, arbitrary inequity, stifled innovation, squalid standards and hopeless inefficiency (Bosanquet, 2001 & 2004). On these grounds in and of themselves the NHS should be urgently de-nationalised.

The state should be excluded entirely from ownership, delivery and control. All this should be restored to the more efficient and more humane hands of voluntary, charitable and independent agencies (Green, 1985). The state's influence should be restricted to common-sensical regulation. Subsidised supply should be limited to the small minority of people on genuinely low incomes, and even in these cases it should be strictly conditional.

However, the healthcare Behemoth has even worse effects than sustained inefficiency—effects which lead on directly to the sub-fascistic phenomena of state nannying and political correction. It turns us all into irresponsible serfs lacking entirely in personal and family responsibility for our own health. It destroys our capacity for autonomous attention to the conditions of our health and to the destructive effects upon it of our own freely chosen foolish—or worse—behaviour (Marsland, 1996b).

We sleep too little, exercise hardly at all, drink and take drugs to excess, eat sloppily, celebrate promiscuity and perversion, and make of mere hedonistic 'fun' an almost sacred mission. It is national suicide (Marsland, 2004).

Little wonder if the state finds itself compelled to trick and bully us instead into life-styles we might have chosen freely if we had been left free to face the consequences of their irresponsibly-chosen alternatives (O'Keeffe, 1999). Save for the clinically self-destructive few, most would learn and act wisely were it not for the state healthcare co-con.

"The root of the problem is... the National Health Service itself and utopian founding principles."

Cigarette smoking would have reduced anyway, and would continue to decrease, without hypocritically increased prices, without censorship of advertising, without the imposition of tyrannical controls on restaurants and public houses, and without generalised witch-finder vilification. Clear, honest information would suffice, with the addition only of effective parental control of children.

Again, obesity would be less widespread and dangerous if socialists had not outlawed competitive sport in schools; if normal neighbourhood control by ridicule of 'fatty' and of 'skinny' alike had not been politically corrected; if ultra-feminism and inadequate education had not robbed the population of its domestic cooking skills; and if parental control of children had not been sabotaged by decades of systematic subversion of the family (Segalman, 1998).

And drinking and drugs would not be flying out of control if, instead of wasting money and power on healthcare, the state had protected the police and the courts from political correction and enhanced their tradi-

tional effective control of punks and juvenile delinquents (Judicial Studies Board, 2004); if local communities and local people had not been inhibited by bullying state edicts in dealing toughly with wild-west estates, infamous streets, and known gangsters; if children and young people had not been released into moral free-fall by state sabotage of the family (Morgan, 1999).

Unless the state lets go of its adamant grip on healthcare, autonomous self-control by individuals, families and local communities will continue to decay. Health problems—from obesity, through drug abuse, heart disease and cancer to the current epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases—will continue to escalate. The temptation for further illegitimate, authoritarian and counter-productive state interference in the lives of individuals and in the functioning of families, communities and organisations—benevolent but not, alas, beneficent—will increase still further.

Indeed, once the process of well-intentioned nannying for the sake of health has got under way, and achieved—with the support of habit, state-controlled science, and a compliant media—a specious legitimacy, there is no evident stopping place. Since everything affects health for good or ill to some degree, the domain of state health intervention is potentially infinite in scope. It is also—as both National Socialists and Communists long ago demonstrated—an open door to

comprehensive political oppression.

Current modest beginnings on the path of political correction and state nannying may be, even in a deeply free and genuinely democratic society such as ours, the long-run pre-cursors of incipient fascism. One can imagine already that guidelines on the allowable weight of brief cases carried to and from work might be introduced to control back injuries. Entry to night-clubs might be restricted not just by age but also by occupation—to prevent so-called 'key-workers' exposing the public to undue risk the next day. Cafes serving anything officially classified as 'junk food' to under-eighteens might be subject to prosecution.

Selling salt without a prescription might be outlawed, lest home-cooked food should escape the bland tastelessness of the state-regimented processed alternatives. Newsreaders may be required to make explicit their currently implicit assumption that 'additive' means 'poison' and 'chemical' means 'deadly pollutant'.

In point of fact, the British Government has so far proved—to

the annoyance of health-fascists everywhere—quite sensible, resisting fashionable pressures to ban this, require that, and change the other. It remains at present reasonably well aware of the damage which surrender to the pressure groups might do to individual freedom, to trust in science, to employment levels, and to business success (Marsland, 2000).

But there are already signs of a dangerous momentum. For example:

- In relation to smoking in public, the Chief Medical Officer told a public health conference in March this year that he didn't think "we should give up on the goal of a national ban just like that". On the other hand, demonstrating a remarkable talent for highly spun propaganda, he warned that "the word 'ban' should not be part of the language of discourse" (*Public Health News*, 29th March 2004, p. 6).
- The modest, realistic and practical enterprise which was Health Education has been transformed over the past ten years into the undisciplined, utopian project of Health Promotion. Genuine, objective health education is just what we desperately need in our schools and colleges. Health Promotion, by contrast, is too often an excuse for bullying condescension, manipulative propaganda and



Libertarian Alliance Public Affairs Director Dr Tim Evans (l) & Professor David Marsland (r) at the Libertarian Alliance & Libertarian International conference in November 2003.

"Since everything affects health for good or ill to some degree, the domain of state health intervention is potentially infinite in scope."

fraudulent campaigning. Moreover, Health Promotion now appears to be in the process of stitching itself seamlessly into Public Health, thus gaining for itself entirely illegitimately an authority which its largely anti-medical and pseudo-scientific condition in no way merits.

- Vegetarian, animal-welfare and environmental fanatics are being given regular air-time in the context of every latest suspect piece of research on Variant CJD. More generally, the market for health scare-stories, especially on television, and the more ludicrous the better, gets more dynamic month by month (Gaffikin, 2001). Reporting of health statistics is generally amateur, ignorant, biased and easily manipulated by fashionable lobbyists.
- The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party is reported in the press to have “slunk off to the lavatories” rather than risk criticism for smoking perfectly legitimately at a public event. Yet another squalid victory for arrogant bullying.
- Commenting on the new governmental alcohol strategy and its proposals for voluntary reform of the drinks industry, the campaigning charity Alcohol Concern, has urged the government to “make clear its willingness to make the scheme compulsory”. The editor of the influential journal, *Public Health News*, appears to take the same view, claiming that “Perhaps the next time round, the government will have to get a little tougher”.

Unless the trend indicated in these examples is resisted and reversed, our freedom will be much diminished for little return. It is unlikely that this can be achieved without first radically reforming the Health Service, and restoring to the people responsibility for their own health (Green, 1993 & 1999). Socialism is the source of state nannying and political correction. It can only make them worse (Ellis, 2004). Libertarianism is too shy of using police, community and educational power to deal with them. Pragmatism cannot, by its constitutive nature, stop the ratchet effect. We need a radical analysis and a radical strategy if we are to rescue our health and our freedom. Yet the inexorable drift towards political control of health related behaviour is gaining pace. It is characteristic, for example, that in reporting the debate at which a draft of this paper was presented, *Public Health News* (31st May 2004) recorded the speech of the Secretary of State fully, presented the fellow-travelling messages of the second main speaker and of the head of the King’s Fund positively—and made no mention whatsoever of the critical and sceptical analysis presented here. As far as the healthcare establishment is concerned, the earth is apparently still flat.

“As far as the healthcare establishment is concerned, the earth is apparently still flat.”

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Alliance's Liberty in Theory award granted in recognition for intellectual and scholarly contributions to the understanding and advocacy of economic freedom, individual rights and civil liberties. Frequently appearing on radio and television, his best known appearance to date—according to his students—has been on the Ali G Show.

A shout of defiance against the socialist NHS...

"The financial purpose of The PROMIS Unit is to make profits from the sick."

Brochure of The PROMIS Unit, p. 11.

Based in South Kensington, London, The PROMIS Unit is a fully private general medical practice and diagnostic centre. It was founded in 1976, and now as then is run by Dr Robert Lefever who has contributed a number of articles over the years to the Society for Individual Freedom and the Libertarian Alliance. Further details can be obtained from: The PROMIS Unit, 2a Pelham Street, London, SW7 3HU, telephone 020 7584 6511.

The PROMIS Recovery Centre at Nonington, Kent



THE GROWTH OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT SINCE WORLD WAR TWO

Christopher Awuku

"British government is, and for many decades has been, big government."

To be a libertarian means that you condemn the usage of force and fraud against another person. It means that *you* should be free to live as you choose whilst respecting others' rights to person and property. If individuals are prohibited from using force in a libertarian society, then governments must be held accountable to the same standard and principle. For this reason, the state within a libertarian society should be as small as possible. Welfare (for example) equates with force since property is redistributed to help Paul and the expense of Peter; this property being the money that *we* earn from our various and respective jobs. Government is based on force and such a rule can easily be applied to the actions of British governments over the past several decades.

British government is, and for many decades has been, big government. Since the 'New Liberal' reforms of the early 20th century, the British citizen has had to sacrifice his hard-earned property to the state in many forms, be it through income tax, National Insurance or other forms of state sanctioned theft. Since the end of WW2, government has grown to even greater proportions.

In the summer of 1945, the war had ceased. The Attlee government was elected with the promise of a National Health Service. It nationalised numerous industries and implemented a Keynesian economic policy. Was the establishment of a health service funded by government force truly justified? Even today there are waiting lists for various operations and such lists even exist for

outpatient appointments. In a free market system, why *shouldn't* healthcare be affordable for all? With no state intervention, healthcare costs would fall.

Clement Attlee's administration had founded the 'post war consensus', meaning that the trend towards big government continued under the Conservative governments of Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Sir Douglas-Hume. The consensus extended to the Labour government of Wilson, though his administration should be commended for legalising abortion and homosexuality. Certainly regarding the latter, gays warrant the same rights to self-ownership as straights. Even still, these socially liberal moves were quite distant from the libertarian ideal.

When the Conservative party led by Edward Heath were formulating their manifesto for the 1970 election, they aimed to institute a free market economic policy. Such a belief was shattered during Heath's famous 'U-turn', by nationalising a blue-chip company. In this instance government force was used to save an ailing organisation and promote larger government. The Wilson/Callaghan government of the 1970's should have been more inclined to shift to smaller government after the IMF bailout of 1976. However, that administration permitted extensive trade union activity that culminated in the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979. In addition to various state-owned concerns, this was another era of big government.

Margaret Thatcher won the 1979 general election and soon after implemented a monetarist eco-

nomics policy. She also privatised numerous state industries and permitted council house residents to buy their council houses. After decades of growing government, the state was becoming smaller. But was it really? The government still owned education and healthcare. Government may have been shrunk, but not to any extent that would satisfy the average libertarian. Both the Major government and New Labour under Blair have maintained the same economic policies as Thatcher.

But under Tony Blair, government continues to grow in size. New Labour instituted a minimum wage. Even now, public expenditure is increasing in order to enhance 'public services'. British government is now worth over £400 billion! That means a figure equivalent to 40% of the UK's GDP is devoted to government force.

As those who oppose force, we libertarians must be sceptical over the growth of British government over the past several decades. As libertarians we must also be aware of the immorality of force, whether committed by an individual or the state.



Christopher Awuku is a 24 year old libertarian and a member of the Society for Individual Freedom. He resides in Bedfordshire and writes political articles from a libertarian standpoint as a hobby. He can be contacted at lapafrax@postmaster.co.uk.

Margaret Thatcher... privatised numerous state industries... [But] the government still owned education and healthcare."

Just a matter of time?

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship... The average of the world's greatest civilisations has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through this sequence: From bondage to spiritual faith; from spiritual faith to great courage; from courage to liberty; from liberty to abundance; from abundance to complacency; from complacency to apathy; from apathy to dependence; from dependence back to bondage."

Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747-1813)

Then as now?

"The majority of pacifists either belong to obscure religious sects or are simply humanitarians who object to the taking of life and prefer not to follow their thoughts beyond that point. But there is a minority of intellectual pacifists whose real though unadmitted motive appears to be hatred of western democracy and admiration of totalitarianism. Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but if one looks closely at the writings of younger intellectual pacifists, one finds that they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States. Moreover they do not as a rule condemn violence as such, but only violence used in defence of western countries."

George Orwell, 'Notes on Nationalism', 1945.



The motto of the wise libertarian...

"When I see my house burning down I do not wait for the evolution of private fire brigades."

Natalie Solent, 'Needs must when the devil drives', *Samizdata*,
www.samizdata.net/blog, 28th September 2004.

There is more...

"There is more to this world than a slow-warming globe in an indifferent universe & there is more to me than an isolated set of genetic connections."

From *The Cunningham Amendment*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

THE SS UNITED KINGDOM: HEADING TOWARDS THE ICEBERG

James A. Mackie

As I see it, Britain, like the Titanic, is heading towards an iceberg of tremendous size. In our case the iceberg is called Europe. With No 2 Mate Mandelson on the bridge we should have greater concerns. British law was always on the principle that everything was legal unless made illegal by law. Europe has a different approach. Everything is illegal unless approved by the government, thus the reason for such idiotic regulations and directives.

The precautionary principle sounds good in theory, but in practice it is a nightmare. How far do we go with the principle? European regulations and directives control every aspect of our lives. Charities and small groups like churches and the Women's Rural Institute cannot hold traditional coffee mornings unless they have somebody present who has a certificate in food hygiene. Supermarkets, which now monopolise the food supply chain, are only responsible to their shareholders, forcing down margins to the UK supply industry and many firms out of business, and allowing an influx of foreign goods that do not have the same safety checks. For example one UK food chain issues a 15-page document of compliance just for supplying poultry feed to a supplier's farm. If poultry farmers comply with one EU directive they are automatically in breach of another. Not only do we have a standard 'European Passport' we now have to have a standard European registration document for our vehicles. What minion keeps his backside on a seat dreaming these ideas up! Even if they do something wrong, like the Commissioners, they are immune from prosecution.

We put kids through school. They leave knowing how to work calculators and computers yet cannot write, count or spell. The State criminalises parents who try to discipline their offspring yet we complain about increased juvenile crime. The NHS can prescribe drugs with the same pharmacology as cocaine to kids as young as two years, yet cannot prescribe supplements like vitamin B12, trace elements such as Zinc and Magnesium or fish oil capsules, supplements that the modern diet is deficient in.

Red tape is strangling small businesses. Entrepreneurial companies fall by the wayside trying to comply with directives controlling the work place.

Even if it is physically impossible for a person with a disability to work in certain environments, you must still make provision for a toilet for them. Mr Jobs Right from the Council says it must be installed to comply with the law so therefore it must go in. Yet another £8000 or so down the drain just to sit idle to comply with the law. Plumbers have to go on registration/refresher courses costing about £2500 on a regular basis yet psychiatrists who prescribe mind-altering, physically debilitating and even sometimes fatal drugs have no such requirement. Regulations are driving small companies out of business, leaving the multinationals in a monopoly position in the supply chain. So much for customer choice: you have one product to choose from but there are over 500 outlets you can buy it from.

Once upon a time we knew what socialist ideals were. Everybody was to be equal. Nobody is equal: being *unequal* is what made this country great. To rise from poverty to a better standard of living was obtainable through one's own endeavour if one had the determination. That is now seen as antisocial. The minimum wage was one thing that was to make everybody equal. All it has done is set a basic wage for every job and the nation gets poorer rather than richer. Red tape chases companies overseas, out of Europe. We constantly hear

Government shouting we need immigrants to perform different jobs but we never hear from Government about the number of UK citizens who emigrate to a better life outside Europe away from social control. How can we as a country prosper with an increasing proportion of public sector jobs in the economy? When the bubble bursts we will be forced to join the Euro whether we want it or not.

If we are all equal why is it necessary to introduce the raft of laws on discrimination? Human rights legislation protects the criminal and makes it an offence for the ordinary citizen to photograph somebody breaking the law. Political correctness makes it impossible for the police to target minority sections of the community who are known to specialise in certain criminal activities. If you want to live in the UK you abide by UK law. There should be no racial discrimination over lawbreakers. Far too many police forces have strayed from their requirement to protect life and property, prevent crime, and detect offenders.



"Nobody is equal:
being *unequal* is
what made this
country great."

They have become crime managers and publicity seekers. The more civilians they employ, the more officers that are taken off the street for supervisory work.

By stealth our lives are now totally controlled by Big Government. From the colour of slates on the roofs of our houses, through what we can and can't eat, even down to a central computer that logs every time our car is MOT-ed. Socialism failed spectacularly in the Soviet block and other countries, yet, as they head towards capitalism, we

in the West are heading, like lemmings, into a totally Government-controlled life.

Will it be too late for this country when we finally wake up to Big Government?



James Mackie is a businessman (www.jamesmackie.com) based in Scotland, primarily supplying pharmaceutical and traditional animal health and aquacultural remedies.

Against restitution...

"Although reference to the past can contribute to just policies in many ways, to suppose that we are 'bound to make reparation'... for the [historical] crimes of our nations is no more plausible than supposing that there are [historical] crimes against our nations for which we are bound to exact revenge—a repellent corollary."

Richard Vernon, 'Against Restitution', *Political Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3, October 2003, pp. 542-557.

Unshackling Accountants

Professor David Myddelton & the IEA

Professor David Myddelton of Cranfield School of Management is a member of the SIF. In 1994 the SIF published a fully revised second edition of his book, *The Power to Destroy*, a devastating analysis of how taxes reduce the freedom of the individual and the creation of wealth.

The Institute of Economic Affairs has recently published Professor David Myddelton's latest work, *Unshackling Accountants*, and some readers of *The Individual* will have enjoyed his October 2004 talk to the SIF on this subject. The whole book can be downloaded as a free PDF from the IEA website via www.iea.org.uk and the hardcopy can also be ordered from their website. Alternatively, enquiries about purchasing hardcopies of all currently available IEA publications can be addressed to: Lavis Marketing, IEA orders, FREEPOST lon21280, Oxford OX3 7BR.

The following is the notice from the IEA's website:

"Professor David Myddelton argues that over-regulation of accounting is likely to lead to more bad practice and accounting scandals. In Unshackling Accountants, Professor D R Myddelton... looks at the history of and the arguments for and against detailed accounting standards. Myddelton concludes that, while there may be a case for the accounting profession to develop voluntary guidelines, the imposition of rigid standards is likely to prevent the art of accounting from evolving. Myddelton believes that the argument that more regulation and more uniformity are necessary to avoid scandals such as those at Enron and WorldCom is flawed. He argues that those scandals happened at a time when accounting practices were more regulated than ever before and in jurisdictions where practices were laid down in the greatest detail. Very often, in fact, bad practice is imposed by regulation and accounting standards."

"Professor David Myddelton ... is a member of the SIF."

As Professor Myddelton writes elsewhere: “Some people assume that regulators know best and want their views imposed on everyone. The stimulus for accounting regulation has often been so-called ‘scandals’, yet there is little evidence to show that misleading disclosure has caused losses to investors. As so often when regulation falls

short of what it promises, the ‘solution’ is to reinforce failure by more of the same. Regulators have an in-built tendency to over-regulate: hence in the UK 800 pages of ‘accounting standards’ ten years ago have now become over 2,000 pages and are still increasing rapidly.”



Israel and the moral blindness of the ‘Christian Left’...

“Leaders of the Presbyterian Church in the US approved a divestment campaign against Israel in a series of annual resolutions... In a vote of 431 to 62, the 216th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA compared Israel’s policies to those of South Africa and approved gathering data to support a selective divestment of holdings in multinational corporations doing business in Israel...”

Melissa Radler, ‘US Presbyterian Church calls for sanctions on Israel’, *Jerusalem Post*, 17th July 2004.



“The most grievous evil is that which is committed in the name of G-d. For not only do religious evils harm their victims, they also do lasting damage to G-d-based morality, which those of us who believe in G-d and religion consider the only viable antidote to evil... The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) joins the list of religious groups committing evil. In the name of Jesus, it has called for the economic strangulation of Israel... It takes a particularly virulent strain of moral idiocy and meanness to single out Israel, not Arafat’s Palestinian Authority, or terror-supporting, death-fatwa-issuing Iran, or women-subjugating Saudi Arabia, for condemnation and economic ruin. One of the most decent societies, one of the most liberal democracies in the world, is fighting for its life against Islamic fascists who praise the Holocaust and publicly call for the annihilation of Israel—and the Presbyterian Church calls for strangling Israel!”

Dennis Prager, ‘Presbyterian Church defames Christianity’, *Jewish World Review*, 20th July 2004.

No utopia... "Never assume the revolution will herald the departure of unhappiness."

From *The Cunningham Amendment*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

RELIGION AND MORALITY: AN HISTORICAL CONFIDENCE TRICK

Paul Anderton

How Do We Know?

When I was at school, in the late 1940s, one of my classmates asked the maths teacher why exactly "two plus two equals four?" This was not, as you might suspect, a silly question designed to initiate amusement or disruption, but followed from some previous discussion. The teacher's serious attempt to answer boiled down to "its must be because if you though it was five then it would just mean that you meant by five what everybody else meant by four."

That was the end of any discussion, but to me the answer seemed unsatisfactory. After many years I discovered that the answer was, in fact, unsatisfactory and also that no coherent answer could have been given by anybody before 1884 when Gottlob Frege published *Grundlagen der Arithmetik*. This was never a 'best seller'; in fact it was unnoticed until Bertrand Russell drew attention to it in 1901. It effectively defined number logically and inspired Russell and Whitehead to put the whole of mathematics on a sound logical basis in *Principia Mathematica*.

The interesting point about this is the observation that numbers and arithmetic had been used for thousands of years before anybody knew exactly what they were doing in the strict logical sense. In other words they must have applied what can only be described as 'subconscious reasoning' or 'intuition', as it is often known, to calculation problems.

Well, you might ask, what has that got to do with freedom and all that which is what we are interested in? It is very relevant because a similar process is at work on what are usually called moral questions which are crucial to considerations of freedom. It is quite usual to assume that any questions considered 'moral' should be referred either to religion or 'individual conscience'.

The belief that religions were the basis of morality is perhaps the biggest confidence trick in history.

The Ten Commandments: Common Sense and Dogma

To illustrate this let us look at what is usually regarded in the West as a concise distillation of religious wisdom, namely the 'Ten Commandments'.

(In case you can't recall them they boil down to (1) Worship no other God (than the Christian one, of course, in modern interpretation), (2) Do not worship graven images, (3) Do not take the name of God in vain, (4) Keep the Sabbath holy, (5) Honour your father and mother, (6) Do not kill anybody, (7) Do not commit adultery, (8) Do not steal, (9) Do not tell lies, (10) Do not covet other people's property.)

The religious interpretation is that these were handed down by God as basic golden rules for civilised living. So far as personal relationships are concerned the last six will usually be described as 'common sense' anyway: illustrating the wisdom embedded in religion, Christianity in this case. But if they are common sense, why not just rely on common sense for guidance independently of religious dogma? The clue to this is in the first four commandments. These serve to establish the elite of the time (i.e. the priesthood) as morally justified in exercising control on an equivalent basis to the common sense rules. (In modern times ignoring number 7 has become almost compulsory as a rite of passage to the chattering classes, but that only goes to show that common sense can change with time in response to changed conditions, in this case the availability of the pill, women's rights, and social security.)

In fact it does not take much intelligence to work out that adherence to the last six commandments by everybody would make life and civilised living

"The clue is in the first four commandments."

much easier than unrestrained pursuit of self interest (*rationally* restrained self interest is what we call ‘freedom with responsibility’).¹ The problem is not to work out the rules, but is getting people to adhere to them when they can see some benefit to themselves from not so doing.

When religious belief was virtually universal it was possible to encourage compliance by the invention of heaven and hell and rewards after death for compliance with the rules if temporal rewards and punishments were somehow ineffective. The decline of religion, chiefly as a result of rational criticism, has largely removed the incentive to virtue dependent on the tenets of religion.

Nevertheless most people do roughly comply with common sense morality: presumably including everybody reading this. The reason is very similar to why we believe in mathematics even though it is unlikely that we have studied *Grundlagen der Arithmetik* or *Principia Mathematica*. It is a result of ‘indoctrination’.

Indoctrination: Good and Bad

Indoctrination is generally perceived as bad—particularly by libertarians—and so it can be, and often is. As usual whether it is or not depends on what you mean by it. A definition which can withstand, I believe, any critical conceptual analysis is “propagating an idea or belief independently of truth”. Instead of “independently of the truth” perhaps “without specific reference to truth” is more appropriate in some cases. At one end of the scale indoctrination can be quite benign as in teaching mathematics, or geography, or science, where the truth is clear, but to establish it by detailed demonstration would be incredibly tedious and militate against achieving useful results in practice.

For instance a geography teacher might pre-empt a conversation such as “Have you been to Australia, Sir?” - “No” - “Then how do you know it is there?” by starting with a detailed consideration of the justification and verification of third party reports and testimony. But that would be not only a boring waste of time but quite unnecessary because if he just got out the maps and took their validity for granted, nobody would think of questioning it. Though such instruction has the characteristics of indoctrination it is certainly benign.

But if the same teacher took a group of children on a field course where they canoed up rivers, swung on trees, swam in lakes and generally had a good time including excellent food and spent the evenings on excitingly presented Bible study so they returned home ‘sincerely’ believing that Jews, Muslims, Pagans, New Agers, and anybody who had the chance to know Lord Jesus but had rejected him, were destined for eternal torment, then that would certainly not be benign; it would

be deeply pernicious. Nevertheless such methods are used world-wide to propagate religious notions: not only Christianity of course but also many other religions, and some political notions which are held with quasi-religious fervour.

It is quite likely that the some person, or somebody equally prestigious in the same institution, will employ virtually the same methodology discussing morality, taking it for granted that some text, Bible, Koran, *Das Capital*; or some individual, Christ, Mohamed, or some Guru or Celebrity, is a suitable and reliable source of information on the subject. Such use is not benign, and can be quite pernicious.

The trouble is that the process used is psychologically identical in each case. For indoctrination through personal contact there are usually four characteristics. First there is an authority figure who is believed to have special knowledge of the ideas to be indoctrinated. Secondly the audience of subjects must be motivated to pay attention and learn. Thirdly there is a system of reward for understanding and compliance. Lastly there is some idea or belief which is taken for granted without specific reference to it which is not noticed by the audience.

The classic situation is, of course, the school lesson. This has changed somewhat over time, but still retains the basic structure. Traditionally the teacher established authority by threat and punishment which commanded attention and acceptance of the veracity of the information by success in examinations.

Before mass communication, personal contact indoctrination was virtually universal. Religious observance was effectively compulsory and the priest was the unquestioned authority figure with an assumed ‘hot line to God’.

So it might appear that, as such performances are no longer common, indoctrination is defunct particularly with the development of democracy and mass communication in a competitive market. There are, however, interesting parallels between the traditional face to face indoctrination and the transmission of ideas and opinions in modern democracies.

The New Indoctrination

The media are generally recognised as authorities in the sense that it is assumed that their content is broadly true. Most confidence is placed in the broadcasting authorities, particularly the BBC, which is still living, to some extent, on the reputation for reliability it gained in the Second World War.

The ‘audience’ in this case is the totality of consumers, which is very nearly the whole popula-

“The decline of religion... has largely removed the incentive to virtue dependant on the tenets of religion.”

tion. The media in general therefore occupy a position of authority about information and ideas in relation to the general population similar to that of an individual 'authority' relative to a live audience. The main difference is that the media audience are separate individuals rather than a crowd all of whose members are concentrating on the same subject. They cannot therefore be given a reward for conforming as a teacher can reward correct answers with praise and high marks. There is, however, scope for rewards of sorts in the sense that much media output, such as 'soap operas' and political reports, is a subject of discussion and conversation. So there is a social disadvantage in not being aware of some media output, and a reward for familiarity in the form of 'social inclusion'.

So the operation of the media simulates to some extent the basic indoctrination situation, with the main exception of not being able to distribute a positive reward for conformity.

Their treatment of the fourth characteristic of indoctrination is the most revealing. Some beliefs are just taken for granted virtually universally across the media. This set of beliefs can be fairly described as the 'establishment view'. Examples are: there is no 'absolute' morality—everybody can decide for themselves, health is of paramount importance, smoking must be discouraged, drugs cause crime, government spending is generally beneficial, England and Englishness no longer matter.

The doubt about religious authority for morality, when this authority had been taken for granted, left an apparent 'vacuum' which implied that morality was just another personal decision. But, as indicated above, the idea that religion determined the morality was a confidence trick and an illusion. In fact morality had always been the result of individual decisions which generally had a common factor. The common factor arose directly from the common experience. The usurping of the universal ideas by the priesthood and

their attribution to God was facilitated because agreement by the majority was highly probable. The incorporation of most of the 'rules' in law, with a system of sanctions for transgressors, increased likelihood of compliance.

Conclusion

In practice in Western countries democracy has replaced religion as the basis of laws and sanctions. The basic moral laws are still thought by many people to have some sort of religious basis, even if their own religious ideas are a bit vague. (There is of course a considerable body of laws which are purely technical in that they enable modern technology to be used effectively, e.g. broadcasting regulations, transport laws, consumer protection, about which there might be some disagreements but not on 'moral' grounds.) The apparent abandonment of religious moral absolutism seems to have resulted in general 'moral' decisions being based on some sort of assessment of 'the feelings of the nation' or 'general opinion' together with trends in actual behaviour. This is certainly a better basis in logic, but there is the danger that a significant minority take the 'it's all a matter of individual decision' much too literally. If the obviously necessary basic restraints were embedded in belief by a process which was effectively indoctrination, then that could legitimately be classified as 'benign'. For the benign classification to be completely justified then care should be exercised in not applying anything resembling indoctrination to propagating the current establishment views.

Note

(1) The motto/aim of the Society for Individual Freedom is "To promote responsible individual freedom".



Paul Anderton is a retired maths teacher and, of course, the former editor of The Individual.

"... but there is a danger that a significant minority take the 'it's all a matter of individual decision' much too literally."

Irrepressible nationalism... *"In fact, the national spirit of [the Baltic States and the Ukraine] was never broken and it is worth remembering that the Soviet system, immeasurably more ruthless and single-minded than the EU, foundered on irrepressible nationalism."*

Dr Helen Szamuely, 'Another tragic anniversary', *EU Referendum*,
www.eureferendum.blogspot.com, 24th August 2004.

REVIEW OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTOS 1900-1997, EDITED BY IAIN DALE AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ALISTAIR B. COOKE

Martin Ball

The title of this fantastic compilation is misleading about the delights inside. For, as you may know, prior to the 1945 general election there wasn't such a thing as a Conservative Party national manifesto. So for the first half of the 20th century what the public got, and what the reader gets, is the Party Leader's election address to his own constituents. Yet the appearance of a national declaration of intent hasn't diluted the Leader's influence and they have frequently been dominant in determining the content of post-WW2 offerings. Indeed some have revelled in the manifesto's supposed embodiment of them and their beliefs. None more so than John Major, who famously boasted that the 1992 manifesto was "all me". Alas he wasn't so forthcoming with the *mea culpa* regarding the 1997 manifesto. So determined was he to convey that it was all him that he had his picture on the cover of both his manifestos. The only others to have done so were MacMillan in 1959 and Heath in 1966. On the other hand, the leader who gave her name to a political ideological didn't consider it necessary to have her face pictured on the cover of any of her three election-winning manifestos.

Faces and images may be latter-day stylistic innovations, but it is the words that maketh this product. It has to be said that the prose fails to make manifestos candidates for any literacy prizes. Yet for a document barely read by ordinary voters, it is remarkable how much effort is put into the process of drafting and re-drafting. The participation of the finest wordsmiths the Conservative Party can deploy has failed miserably to raise the literary quality, and the task of harnessing the powerful effect of the English language to incite the interest of the general public has proven to be beyond the very best. Even Churchill accepted defeat and instructed Rab Butler that the revised draft of the 1950 manifesto be "without style".

The physical size of this book reveals how the extension of the modern state's reach has also swelled the length of the manifesto. As governments increasingly intervene in people's lives, so the manifesto must state the Party's position on every topic imaginable. This policy prescription 'bloatation' is illustrated by the layout of the book. The manifestos for the 1900-1935 period, covering eleven general elections, are on pages 7 to 59. While those for 1945-1997, a total of fifteen general elections, run from page 60 to page 461.

If we search the past for lessons for the future, then what does this book suggest for the Conservative Party's salvation? Does it provide pointers to the content of a winning manifesto at the next general election? Is it possible to fillet the winning policies to conceive a Fantasy Manifesto? Thankfully not. Politics doesn't work like that. The answer isn't to concentrate on compiling a laundry list of individual policies, but rather to consider the broader picture. Margaret Thatcher—that Lady who knows a thing or two, or three, about winning general elections—claims the 1987 version is the best ever because it "projected a vision and then arranged the policies in a clear and logical way around it". So, Mr Howard, get "the vision thing" sorted and then build your policy programme on sound philosophical foundations.

Much more than just a reference source plaything for the policy anorak, this book is an essential addition to the library of any serious scholar of the Conservative Party. It is an excellent treasury of the policies the Conservative Party won and lost elections on, and is a must-buy for those interested in the history of the Conservative Century.



Conservative Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997, edited by Iain Dale and with an introduction by Alistair B. Cooke, Routledge, 2000, 479 pages. Price £95.



Martin Ball is the Secretary of the Conservative History Group (www.conservativehistory.org.uk).



"As governments increasingly intervene in people's lives, so the manifesto must state the Party's position on every topic imaginable."

SIF chairman Michael Plumbe listens to Sonya Porter of the UKIP address the SIF on the 14th July 2004. (Photo by SIF secretary Peter Jackson.)



Politically correct double standards...

"On the day [Home Secretary] David Blunkett unveiled plans to make it illegal for Britons to incite religious hatred, a Muslim cleric was welcomed into London to spout his hate-filled rhetoric. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi supports suicide bombers, has called for the executing of homosexuals, endorsed wife-beating and demanded war against the Jews."

David Hughes, 'Welcome to the land of free speech (as long as you believe in killing gays, wife-beating and suicide bombers)', *Daily Mail*, 8th July 2004, pp. 1 & 4-5.

[Editor's note: Mr Al-Qaradawi was personally welcomed to London by London Mayor Ken Livingstone, now again a member of the Labour Party. This is another instance of the new 'Green-Red alliance' between Islamic radicals and socialists united in their hatred of Western (true) liberalism. In fact, in this partnership it is clearly the Islamic side that has the whip hand. In an act of breathtaking opportunism—or equally breathtaking ignorance—the socialists have cheerfully abandoned the "anti-sexism, anti-racism, and anti-homophobia" platform that they once held so dear.]

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Alliance**

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Anchorage Anarchy. A publication of the BAD Press, an anti-government project. It is edited by Joe Peacott who has written articles for both the Society for Individual Freedom and the Libertarian Alliance. Subscriptions are \$1.00 per issue. Send cash to BAD Press, PO Box 230332, Anchorage, AK 99523-0332, USA.

The Cunningham Amendment. “The journal of the East Pennine Anarcrisps. Dedicated to revolutionary acts of joy and irreverence in a world increasingly weighed down by sterile bureaucracies.” Hand-printed using ‘traditional’ methods and working in collaboration with the renowned R. Supward Press, the often surreal and uplifting content is matched with a physical quality that makes each issue a work of art to be treasured and passed on to one’s grandchildren. Suggested cash donation £1.00 (or £1.01 if one’s lottery numbers have just come up) to *The Cunningham Amendment*, 1005 Huddersfield Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD12 8LP. (Yes, that really is one-thousand-and-five: they don’t do things by half Up North.)



THE BELIEFS OF THE SOCIETY FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Revised and formally approved in Committee
on the 27th October 2004

The SIF believes...

- ✓ That the individual, rather than the State, is the font of liberty, morality, and authority.
- ✓ That private citizens should have the freedom to act as they wish provided their actions do not harm others.
- ✓ That the law should exist principally to guarantee individual liberty and not to act as a paternalistic guardian.
- ✓ In the primacy of freely negotiated contract.
- ✓ That an efficient free-market economy benefits all, and that the State's economic function should mainly be limited to the prevention of violence and fraud and similar obstacles to honest competition and co-operation.
- ✓ That taxes in the United Kingdom are too high and erode individual responsibility and enterprise.
- ✓ That State assistance should be concentrated upon cases of unavoidable hardship.
- ✓ That official secrecy, except in limited cases such as matters of genuine national defence, is unacceptable in a free society.
- ✓ In Parliament as the supreme law-making body in the United Kingdom.
- ✓ That to preserve the liberties of private individuals we need more independent-minded Members of Parliament, a stronger Second Chamber, and more effective parliamentary control over the executive.
- ✓ That there is too much influence on government from pressure groups that call for legislation of an unnecessary and restrictive nature.
- ✓ That justice shall be administered by courts that are not subject to political pressure, and that government decisions have no validity unless founded on clear legal authority.

"That the individual, rather than the State, is the font of liberty, morality, and authority."

Herbert Spencer



Friedrich Hayek



Why Britons should take pride in their country's role in the slave trade...

There is absolutely no evidence that any opposition to slavery as an institution ever arose within Islam. The reduction and final abolition first of the slave trade and then of slavery itself came about... [with] the world-wide dominance of the European powers, with Britain in the forefront...

Findlay Dunachie, 'Slavery under Islam', *Samizdata*, 9th March 2004,
www.samizdata.net/blog/.



Fortified in mind by a leather bound, gold embossed, and hand illuminated copy of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, and in body by a very large whisky and soda, a typical member of the SIF considers how best to fight the evil forces of Statism.

Spoken English...

Michael Plumbe, Chairman of the Queen's English Society and, of course, the SIF, had the following letter printed in *The Times* on the 12th August 2004...

Sir, Libby Purves (Comment, August 10) makes good points about the guidelines on teaching 'oracy' in schools. Whilst we too applaud this scheme, I suggest that aiming it at young teenagers is too late.

At school we had two languages, one for use in the playground, the other at home and in front of teachers. We could switch effortlessly between the two from a very young age.

The time to teach children proper primary school. Once they have essential skills, they learn instinctively



elocution and articulation is at mastered these basic and when and how to use them.

If this teaching is left until later, bad the pupils by then resent being told that

habits have become ingrained, and they speak badly.

I am not too concerned about the growth of text messaging. There are many examples of the use of 'coding' systems to save time. What does matter is that the users should also possess the ability to use plain speech correctly and fluently.

We need a new generation of primary school teachers who are themselves able to communicate properly.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Plumbe

There are laws and then there are laws...

“But there are very few laws that really apply to us all: they are the ones mainly concerned with protecting our basic rights. The rule of law is then evident where very few such laws are upheld, where government is, therefore, limited to upholding them. That is what connects the rule of law so closely with the free society. For example, no one ought to murder, rob, kidnap, or assault another person. These are universal principles of human conduct. They are, to use Kant’s terminology, categorically true for guiding human interaction, anytime, anywhere. However, that seatbelts ought to be worn is not universally true: there can be plenty of circumstances in which that is false. Or again, that 40% of one’s earnings ought to be paid to the legal authorities: that, too, lacks universality by a long shot, if it is ever true at all.”

Professor Tibor Machan, ‘The Rules By Which We Live’, Ludwig von Mises Institute website, 18th August 2004, www.mises.org.

[Editor’s note: This extract appropriately highlights the *philosophical* underpinning of the SIF’s associated Choice in Personal Safety campaign. It may or not be the case that there is an *empirical* argument against the wearing of seatbelts or safety helmets. It is instead that whether one does or does not do so is not something that concerns “universal principles of human conduct” as Professor Machan puts it.]

Against perpetual sobriety...

“If wine were to disappear from human production, I believe that in the health and the intellect of the planet there would be left a void, an absence, a defect much more dreadful than all the excesses and the deviant behaviour for which wine is held responsible. Isn’t it reasonable to think that men who never drink wine... [are] drinking on the sly and keeping for themselves some occult wine? A man who only drinks water has a secret to hide from his fellow men.”

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), *On Wine and Hashish*, London, Hesperus Press, 1851/2002, p. 9.



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The SIF's Aim:

To promote responsible individual freedom

The SIF promotes...

- ✓ The liberty, 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.

Joining the SIF

If you broadly share our objectives and wish to support our work, then please write to us at the address on this page, enclosing a cheque for £15 (minimum) made payable to the Society for Individual Freedom.

Could You Write for *The Individual*?

We are always looking for contributions to *The Individual* corresponding with some aspect of the aims and beliefs of the SIF. These can range from referenced essays of an academic nature to personal opinions, experiences, and insights.

The subject might be almost anything that you can think of. It can be something of your own or in response to another's contribution in *The Individual* or elsewhere.

Length can range from a few hundred words to several thousand. Submissions should preferably be in electronic format.

If you have never written for publication before, then don't worry. We are happy to give advice and will never publish anything without the author's final approval.

As well as being published in hardcopy form, *The Individual* will also be uploaded onto the SIF's website.

If you think that you might be interested, then please contact us using the details on this page.

The editor of *The Individual* and the Management Committee of the SIF reserve the right not to use any submission.