

## Selected Articles from *The Individual* December 2001

# Society for Individual Freedom

Since 2002, each new issue of the SIF's journal, *The Individual*, has been uploaded onto the SIF's website at [www.individualist.org.uk](http://www.individualist.org.uk) as a PDF file. Before that, online availability was very limited.

To remedy this, we have reconstructed back-issues of the journal using only the core articles. We hope that you will find them of interest. Any comments should be directed to the current editor of *The Individual* at [editor@individualist.org.uk](mailto:editor@individualist.org.uk).

Please note that views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the SIF but are printed as a contribution to debate.

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# IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Derek Turner

Although Barbara Roche's speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research was short on detail, it seems clear that the government intends to allow an indeterminate but enormous number of immigrants entry into Britain. If this takes place, it will be the single most irresponsible thing this irresponsible government has done.

It may well be that there are 'skills shortages'. But labour shortages are often short-lived and made irrelevant by improved technology. In the Internet age, it surely does not matter where people are located. Computer specialists can work as easily from Dacca as from Dulwich. In any case, responsible governments ought to make provision within their educational systems for likely future employment needs. Besides this, there is already as Anne Widdecombe has noted a perfectly adequate work permit scheme in place. Is it worth sacrificing introducing future social fault lines (for racial consciousness is irreducible, as those of us who live in inner cities can testify) in order to solve a transitory economic problem? What about the descendants of those whom we import to mend our computers? The grandchildren of those delightful West Indians who came here to become bus conductors are now an alienated and angry (if pitiable) minority disproportionately involved in street crime and drugs.

Furthermore, the motives of those companies who complain most about the dearth of suitable employees should be scrutinised; are they simply trying to get cheap labour? A computer specialist from Bangladesh is certain to come a great deal cheaper than a computer specialist from Bedford or even Blackburn. Big companies can afford to pay their staff more; let them do so. When big companies campaign for the relaxation of immigration controls they are sacrificing long-term social peace for the sake of next year's dividends (the CBI's desperate wish for the Euro is likewise founded on short-term corporate greed). Retaining strict immigration controls will not deter a company from doing business or providing jobs in Britain if it is otherwise worthwhile for them to be here.

Then there is the problem of our already unsustainable social services and infrastructure. Although the immigrants themselves may constitute a net benefit in economic terms (in the short term), they come with families, often large ones, all or many of whom attend hospitals, live in houses, use trains, extend supermarket queues and get into drunken fights outside pubs late at night.

And what about the environmental pressures? Britain is already one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Recently, it emerged that about one fifth of present and projected housing demand is caused by immigration. Immigrants all drink water, consume electricity and produce waste. Socially speaking, the presence of too many immigrants increases general angst levels (as the tragic Stephen Lawrence episode demonstrated) and helps to undermine all kinds of social assumptions. In cultural terms, however well disposed,

by their very presence recent immigrants tend to further dilute both what is traditionally British and what is 'highbrow' (although Hollywood, on the one hand, and egalitarianism, on the other, are of course the prime culprits).

In political terms, increased immigration tends to boost the power of the Left. This is because immigrants bring with them an ethnic consciousness that is necessarily different from that of the indigenous ethnic majority, and they will not generally identify with majority interests (often called the 'national interest'). As Horace says, "man may change his skies but not his heart". When they vote, unassimilated immigrants (which means most immigrants, in this era of 'multiculturalism') vote for the party which seems least concerned about the national interest and most likely to grant them special privileges. In the British context this means Labour. In the United States, the Clinton-Gore administration famously pressurised the US Immigration and Naturalization Service to grant citizenship to one million new voters just in time for the 1996 election. One cannot help wondering if some Labour strategists are thinking along the same lines, cynically weighing up the short term electoral benefits of increased immigration. Labour is always seeking new minority 'client groups' whom they can recruit into shifting alliances against 'racism' and 'conservatism'. On the other hand, conservative 'fish' need a sea of national feeling in which to swim (to adapt an analogy from Mao Tse-Tung). How many immigrants joining an alien society are likely to have any interest in conserving it just as it is?

The most fundamental way of preserving or expanding national sentiment is to exert meaningful control over those entering the national territory. This offers an opportunity for the Conservatives: Labour's love affair with immigration will alienate them from their traditional supporters, who are feeling the impact at first hand. Rhetoric from William Hague about the foolishness of the proposed immigration relaxation (and continued exposure of the shambolic 'asylum' programme) are likely to play well in Dover and Sedgefield for a long time to come.

The interests of post-socialist Labour and of big business have begun to coincide in a de facto alliance against national sovereignty and local differences. In their different ways, both are committed to the idea of a borderless world the former out of Sunday-school notions of human interchangeability and doing away with 'divisiveness', the other in order to part as many people as possible from their money. The Conservatives have inadvertently boosted this tendency by encouraging foreign investment, reflexively defending big business and facilitating unfettered free trade, which is the single biggest solvent of national distinctions, high culture and everything else that makes life worthwhile.

Barbara Roche is quite right to say that we need 'a genuine debate on the benefits and challenges of managed migration'.

But she and those Panglossian Conservatives who pin their hopes on big business and 'the market' need to realise that there are at least as many 'challenges' as benefits.

*Editor's Note: Derek Turner is editor of Right NOW! and wrote the*

*above article before the 2001 general election. However, in view of the election having produced virtually the same government as before, his thought-provoking comments remain relevant. After his election as party leader, Iain Duncan Smith banned Tory MPs from having any connection with Right NOW! on the grounds of its perceived racism.*

## MORE ELITE MISCHIEF

Robert Henderson

In *Elite Mischief* (*The Individual*, July 1999), I described how the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards in Public Life, Elizabeth Filkin, and the Standards and Privileges Committee (henceforth the Committee), the body for which Mrs Filkin prepares her reports, dealt with complaints concerning Peter Mandelson's £373,000 loan from fellow Labour MP, Geoffrey Robinson, and his false mortgage application to the Britannia Building Society. In that case, Mrs Filkin failed to press home many obvious lines of enquiry and the Committee came to a conclusion favourable to Mandelson which was utterly at odds with the facts of the case. All very unsavoury. Unfortunately, as this article demonstrates, the Mandelson case was not a "one off", but par for the course where senior Labour figures are concerned.

More *Elite Mischief* deals with various misbehaviour by Labour MPs and the response of those supposedly charged with the task of investigating the misbehaviour and punishing it, people such as Mrs Filkin and the Committee and Sir Anthony Hammond QC, who conducted the enquiry into the Hinduja passport affair. The article also examines the persistent failure of authorities such as the police and the Benefits Agency to apply the law to senior Labour politicians and those connected with them as one might reasonably expect it to be applied. Finally, it describes the sinister treatment of those who embarrass senior Labour figures.

### My further complaints to Mrs Filkin

Mrs Filkin took up her office in early 1999. In addition to that originally made against Mandelson, I have submitted to her complaints against Tony Blair, Geoffrey Robinson, Gordon Brown (Chancellor), Jack Straw (Home Secretary), Keith Vaz (Minister for Europe) and a further complaint against Mandelson. All of the complaints were serious, all were supported with solid evidence in the form of documents and/or tapes. In every case Mrs Filkin has either refused to investigate without giving any meaningful reason for her refusal or has made a mess of the investigation by failing to pursue obvious lines of enquiry.

My major complaint against Blair concerned matters already well known to SIF members through Paul Anderton's article, *The Third Way of Justice* (*The Individual*, February 1999), so I will not repeat that story (the full details can be found at the Blair Scandal website <http://members.dencity.com/delenda/>). However, I shall start with another unrelated complaint against Blair.

According to the *News of the World* (16/8/98), in 1997/98, Blair's father-in-law, Tony Booth, committed a series of frauds by falsely claiming Income Support and Mortgage-Interest Benefit and by making false statements to the Child Support Agency (CSA). Because Booth has failed to take any legal action over the matter, it is reasonable to assume that the story is essentially true.

The *NoW* alleged that when he made the claims, Booth had £9,000 in a Swiss bank account. He also worked during the period for which the benefit was claimed and the attempt at evading child support payments was made. Booth was not prosecuted and, had the *NoW* not publicised the story, it would in all probability never have been made known to the public.

Blair is not responsible for the actions of his father-in-law, but it is very unusual for a fraud of this size and persistence not to result in a prosecution. Not only that, but the *NoW* story claimed that Booth's CSA file was marked "sensitive." There is at least a reasonable suspicion that improper pressure was brought to bear on the various agencies not to prosecute and that the pressure may have originated with Blair.

The failure to prosecute Booth is just one of a series of similar incidents involving senior Labour figures, their families and the law. The case of Jack Straw's brother, William, is probably the most bizarre. In their issue of 5 April 2000, *Punch* magazine printed a story which the national press had refused to publish. The story concerned the admission by William Straw of a serious sexual assault on a 14-year-old boy, most probably his son. Straw was neither charged nor placed on police bail. *Punch* quoted a senior Metropolitan Police officer as saying "...that it would be a very brave custody sergeant who would release back into the community a man who had confessed to the crime you [*Punch*] have mentioned."

The failure to charge Straw or place him on bail had severe consequences. He then proceeded to commit two assaults on teenage girls. These he was charged with. He was bound over to keep the peace on a charge of common assault (*Daily Telegraph* 21/7/2000) and found guilty of an indecent assault (*Daily Telegraph* 9/8/2000) for which he was fined £750, a trivial penalty for such an offence in these febrile, politically correct times.

This was the second occasion on which a relative of Jack Straw's has been involved with the law since he became Home Secretary. His son, also called William, got away with a

caution despite the fact that he was not merely in possession of a drug but acting as a supplier.

As with Blair, Straw, is not of course, responsible for the actions of his relatives, but it is very strange that they are treated so leniently. In the cases of both Blair and Jack Straw, I asked Mrs Filkin to investigate whether undue influence had been brought to bear by Blair and Straw. She refused to do so on the spurious ground that she could not investigate newspaper stories - she did precisely that when dealing with a complaint against Ken Livingstone, a complaint, incidentally, which she investigated with immense haste.

In *Elite Mischief* I dealt with the failure of Mrs Filkin to investigate whether Geoffrey Robinson obtained undue influence over Mandelson through the loan made to him. This was not an unreasonable idea, because Robinson was made a middle ranking minister in 1997, having spent most of the previous two decades as an obscure backbencher. Since then Robinson been accused by *EuroBusiness* magazine (March 2000) of two massive and startling frauds.

*EuroBusiness* accused Robinson, when he was head of Jaguar Cars in the early 1970s, of having illicitly diverted production of scarce Jaguar cars ( the E-type and XJ6) to a favoured continental dealer in return for monetary favours. That was a serious enough accusation involving millions of pounds, but it pales into insignificance against the second alleged fraud. This had Robinson acting as the corrupt agent for Robert Maxwell and embezzling vast sums of money (perhaps as much as £100 million) from various Maxwell companies. *EuroBusiness* claimed that this money was then primarily used to provide for Maxwell's family after his death, with a solid portion - again amounting to millions - going to Robinson for services rendered.

It would be difficult to imagine a more serious set of libels if the *EuroBusiness* claims were untrue. Yet Robinson, a man of very considerable wealth, has failed to take any legal action against the magazine. Consequently, it might, as with Tony Booth, reasonably be assumed that there is some substance to the allegations. Mrs Filkin flatly refused to investigate the complaint, again on the spurious ground that it was a magazine article.

The case of Gordon Brown also involved the ubiquitous Robinson. The *Sunday Telegraph* (9/1/2000) alleged that he purchased a flat well below the market price from a company in receivership which had had Geoffrey Robinson as a director. This raised the question of whether a conspiracy to defraud creditors had arisen and the defrauding of creditors had occurred. Once again Brown took no legal action over the accusation. Mrs Filkin formally conducted an investigation and concluded that there was no case to answer without giving reasons. When I pressed her to provide the evidence which supported her decision, she refused.

My most recent complaints concern Peter Mandelson and Keith Vaz. These arose from the Hinduja passport affair (see below). Mrs Filkin first tried the excuse that she could not investigate the complaint against Mandelson because he had acted in his position as a Minister, a manifest absurdity as he had no responsibility for Home Office matters. When I

pointed that out, Mrs Filkin fell back on the excuse that she would not investigate anything to do with the Hinduja passports because Sir Anthony Hammond QC had been appointed to investigate the matter and she does "not double track other enquiries, since to do so would be to waste public money". When I pointed out that this was akin to saying that the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise could not both carry out an investigation of a company because it would be a waste of public money, she changed her tack again and said she would look at the matter again after Hammond had produced his report.

I had a further complaint against Vaz concerning his attempt (in 2001) to buy a £1 million pound house, a deal he pulled out of when it was made public knowledge in the media. £1 million was a sum seemingly beyond Vaz's known assets and income. Mrs Filkin refused to look at the matter because "speculation about a Member's financial circumstances would not, on its own, be sufficient to warrant an enquiry". What would one wonders.

### **Filkin's Double standards: Robert Sheldon and Teresa Gorman**

It is of course not only my complaints which have received cavalier treatment from Mrs Filkin. Perhaps the most blatant bias she has shown in an actual investigation came when she dealt with a complaint submitted by the Tory MP, Ian Bruce, against the chairman of the Standards and privileges Committee, Robert Sheldon. The complaint concerned the nondisclosure of shareholdings and earnings for the Parliamentary Register of Interests. I did the research on which the complaint was based and can vouch for the fact that it was very solidly based, every accusation being firmly tied to publicly available documents relating to the group of companies involved.

Most of the more serious complaints against Sheldon dated from before 1993 Mrs Filkin refused to find on all but one of the complaints on the ground that she did not think it reasonable to go back more than 7 years unless the matters under consideration were extremely serious. The 7 year period was - surprise, surprise - exactly the period which kept Sheldon largely in the clear. This idea was entirely new. In her previous investigations, Mrs Filkin had gone back further, most notably in the case of a person well known to SIF members, Teresa Gorman, who was twice found to be in breach of the rules for events which took place in the 1980s.

Mrs Filkin did find against Sheldon on a minor matter, but this did not prevent him retaining the chairmanship of the Committee until the end of the last Parliament. He was then made a life peer by Blair.

### **My Interview with Mrs Filkin**

I met Mrs Filkin for an hour on the 3 May 2000. She had refused to meet me for over a year before she finally agreed to do so. The fact that she decided to meet me at all says a good deal, for very senior public servants such as Mrs Filkin normally avoid contact with the public like the plague. Her only obvious motive for meeting me was that she was worried about her refusals of my complaints and wanted to give an appearance of reasonableness by discussing with me the com-

plaints she had rejected.

On the day before we were due to meet she suddenly announced that after all she was not willing to discuss any of the complaints which I had already submitted. I can only presume that she had been pressured into changing her mind by someone acting on behalf of those to whom the complaints referred. Nonetheless I went along and dealt instead with her general attitude towards complaints. This meeting (which I taped) was very revealing.

Mrs Filkin was very nervous, a rather remarkable thing bearing in mind that she is a very senior public servant and I have no power, wealth, official standing or influence. (Mrs Filkin spent most of the hour we were together staring at the floor and speaking in a very small voice). That nervousness I can only ascribe to her knowledge that both her treatment of my complaints and her sudden refusal to discuss them, having previously agreed to do so, were indefensible.

During the course of the interview Mrs Filkin effectively said that she did not apply the Code of Conduct under which MPs bound themselves in 1996, even though it is within her remit to do so. She came out with the nonsensical statement that she took note of the Code but did not apply it in particular instances. The logic of that is that she does not apply it at all. The effect of her refusal is that the Code of Conduct has no force, because no other individual has the power to act upon it.

Mrs Filkin also denied that she could act over refusals by MPs to act over constituents' complaints, despite the fact that the Code specifically states that MPs have a special obligation to their constituents.

The refusal to apply the Code is very important, because it would be a potent weapon against MPs, containing amongst other clauses this wide-ranging check on their behaviour:

"Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a manner which will tend to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of Parliament and never undertake any action which would bring the House of Commons, or its Members generally, into disrepute."

### **My Formal Complaint against Mrs Filkin**

After my meeting with Mrs Filkin, I submitted a detailed complaint about her methods to the Standards and Privileges Committee. The complaint was sent on 31 July 2000 to every member (11) of the Committee. I received only one reply, from the Tory MP, Peter Bottomley. He refused to raise the matter when the Committee met. As I write this in November 2001, I am still waiting for any response from the Committee about whether my complaint will be formally considered.

However, my complaint may have borne fruit indirectly. Since I submitted my complaint against her to the Committee, Mrs Filkin seems to have changed her tack. She has attempted to bring to book the Scottish Secretary, John Reid and a fellow Scotch Labour MP, John Maxton. Mrs Filkin concluded that both had entered into arrangements for three researchers, one Reid's son, to be paid from Commons' allowances (which are strictly for Commons business) when they were in fact work-

ing on the Labour Campaign for the 1999 elections to the Scottish Parliament. I suspect that Mrs Filkin has done this to try to disprove my claim, supported by her general performance, that she is biased in favour of the Labour Hierarchy.

The Committee's response was to reject Mrs Filkin's report on Reid et al on the grounds that her evidence "did not reach the standard we require to uphold the complaint" (*Daily Telegraph* 23/12/2000). Although previous reports had been rejected, this was much stronger language than that previously used. It is possible that moves are afoot to ditch her.

### **The Attitude of MPs to Mrs Filkin's investigations**

Although Mrs Filkin has frequently failed to act when she should and has not pursued investigations with due vigour, not all of her failures can be laid at her door. She has been thwarted by not only the Committee (see above) but also by MPs.

In 2001, she presented to the Committee the results of her investigations into 18 complaints against the Minister for Europe, Keith Vaz. These concerned various payments which it was claimed had been received by Mr Vaz and not declared on the Members' Register of Interests. Mrs Filkin could not come to an opinion on eight of the complaints for the beautifully simple reason that Vaz refused to answer her questions or provide evidence. Mrs Filkin has no power to compel him to do either. The Committee does have the power but failed to use it. The non-Labour MPs went along with this dereliction.

The Committee condemned Vaz's lack of co-operation ("All members have a duty to co-operate with the commissioner. In this respect, Mr Vaz's behaviour was not in accord with his duty of accountability under the code of conduct") and found against him in two minor cases of undeclared payments totalling a few hundred pounds, but the upshot of their report is that no serious misconduct was found proved and no disciplinary action against Vaz recommended. He has since resigned as a minister on the grounds of ill-health.

### **The Hinduja Affair**

If there is one scandal which is emblematic of New Labour it is that involving the Hinduja's, an exceptionally wealthy but controversial Indian family who were, and remain, accused of involvement in an arms sales scandal in India. The main representatives of the family are three brothers, Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash. All three brothers have obtained a British passport since Labour came to power despite the fact of the ongoing arms scandal and notwithstanding the requirement on anyone applying for British citizenship to demonstrate that they are of good character. The fact that they obtained the passports after interventions by senior Labour members makes their granting more than a little suspicious. This involvement also had dramatic consequences

Mandelson, when minister in charge of the Dome, obtained a donation of £1 million from the Hinduja's to sponsor the Faith Zone. At the same time he made enquiries about a passport application to the Home Office on behalf of one of the Hinduja brothers, Srichand, who had already been refused a

passport when the Tories were in office. Scrichand Hinduja was not a constituent of Mandelson's it should be noted and thus such an enquiry was absolutely out of the ordinary. The obvious suspicion was that Mandelson had acted to gain a passport for Scrichand in return for the donation to the Faith Zone.

The fact that Mandelson had become involved in the passport application became public knowledge after a LibDem MP, Norman Baker, put down a written question in the House of Commons. At that point panic appears to have gripped both Mandelson and various members of the Government including Tony Blair.

Mandelson first attempted to stop the answer to Baker's question describing his role in Scrichand's passport application on the grounds that "it was a private matter". Failing in that, he then gave conflicting accounts about the matter to the media and to Blair's Press Spokesman, Alistair Campbell. Mandelson's conversations with Campbell led to Campbell apparently giving false information to the media.

The conflicting information revolved around an alleged conversation between Mandelson and Mike O'Brien, a junior Home Office minister. Mandelson claimed initially that his private secretary had contacted the Home Office about Scrichand's passport. O'Brien contradicted this and stated firmly that Mandelson had phoned him to raise the matter of the passport. This dispute became the ostensible cause of Mandelson's resignation.

With amazing speed Mandelson was then summoned to 10 Downing Street (on 25/1/2001) and a matter of hours later had resigned from his position as Northern Ireland Secretary. What was probably the last photograph of Blair and Mandelson sitting together on the Government Front Bench showed the pair looking for all the world like lovers who had just had the most awful tiff. In his resignation statement, Mandelson accepted that he had misled Campbell. He soon changed his tune.

Within days of his resignation Mandelson started a media briefing blitz in which he claimed he had not misled Campbell and that he had been "bounced" into resigning without a fair hearing. The public attitude of the Labour hierarchy rapidly changed to ice. From being the man with Blair's inner ear, Mandelson became perilously close to a non-person. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, went as far as to say that Mandelson had had to resign because he had lied. The whole affair became very messy.

Under pressure, Blair set up an investigation headed by Sir Anthony Hammond QC to investigate the granting of passports to the Hinduja brothers and Mandelson's role in that matter in particular. Sir Anthony, despite being a QC, had never been in private practice, had undertaken little if any criminal work and had spent his career primarily working for the government in various guises, the most notable of which was that of Treasury solicitor. Anyone with an understanding of Whitehall and Westminster could have predicted the result. Sir Anthony produced a report which blamed none of the politicians involved. Mandelson had not lied, O'Brien had not lied. Blair was not guilty of sacking an innocent man. The

granting of passports to both Scrichand and Prakash Hinduja had been handled absolutely fairly.

However, although the Hammond Report was a whitewash, in its detail it revealed some very strange happenings indeed. Apart from Mandelson's involvement, the report showed that the Home Secretary, Jack Straw had asked that a passport application by Prakash Hinduja be handled "helpfully" despite the fact that, apart from his troubles in with the Indian arms scandal, Prakash was resident in Switzerland and visited Britain but occasionally, a fact which on its own would preclude citizenship under normal circumstances.

Straw told Sir Anthony Hammond QC that by "helpfully" he had meant "properly" Sir Anthony concluded: "I am satisfied that the use of the word 'helpfully' did not have any suspicious connotations or suggest Mr Straw wished to give Prakash any preferential treatment." This was perhaps the most absurd of many ridiculous interpretations of suspicious behaviour which Hammond came to. Now this is primarily circumstantial evidence, but men and women have been sent to the gallows on circumstantial evidence. Rosemary West, the widow of Fred West, is currently serving a life sentence on purely circumstantial evidence. This is not unreasonable because circumstantial evidence can become so overwhelming that to come to any other conclusion than guilty becomes either absurd or corrupt. That, I would argue, is the case where the Hinduja passports are concerned.

Strange things happen to those who embarrass New Labour Grandees During the drug episode involving Jack Straw's son, the Mirror reporter who exposed the son's drug dealing, Dawn Alford, was subjected to considerable harassment by the police, including being questioned under caution, which was utterly at variance with the police's normal behaviour when a newspaper goes to them with an exposure of drug offences.

Two very odd stories have appeared in the newspapers in the past year, e.g. the *Sunday Telegraphs* of 22/12/2000 and 7/1/2001.

They concerned the ticket inspector who had fined Cherie Blair when she arrived without a ticket at Luton Station on her first day as a Recorder and the policeman who arrested Euan Blair in Leicester Square for being drunk and incapable.

The ticket inspector has been sacked for refusing to take a second urine test after unsubstantiated claims were made that he was taking drugs, while the policeman has been arrested for the possession of drugs following a tip off to the police. The interesting thing about the latter story is that the policeman was reported to be in a distressed state from the result of taking drugs. This suggests that he was not an experienced drug taker and one might reasonably ask, had he taken the drug unknowingly, e.g. in a spiked drink?

Whatever the truth of the cases of the ticket inspector and the constable, it is a remarkable coincidence that the two people who have most publicly embarrassed the Blairs since the last election have come a cropper and even more of coincidence that the agent of their fall was the same, drugs.

## Conclusion

In four short years Labour have racked up a surprising amount of scandal. Whether it be the major player in Formula One, Bernie Ecclestone, paying Labour £1 million before Labour exempted Grand Prix racing from the immediate effect of a ban on tobacco sponsorship of sporting events or Keith Vaz accepting a few hundred pounds from a man he later recommended for a peerage, this Government has shown itself to be remarkably ready to take favours from people who were in need of a favour from the Government. Senior Labour figures have also shown an ever increasing arrogance, as though they believe they are beyond the law or any other penalty. The evidence to date is that this is not an unwarranted belief, because no matter the evidence against a senior Labour figure, he is always exonerated by those who are set up to judge the misbehaviour by politicians.

Taking her time as Parliamentary Commissioner over all, a reasonable judgement of Mrs Filkin is that she has persistently failed to investigate complaints about MPs on their merits and that she has not been even handed in her treatment of complaints. It is not that she has a complete bias towards the Labour Party. She is quite happy - as was shown in the case of Ken Livingstone - to pursue with remarkable haste complaints against Labour Members if they are out of favour with the Government. Rather, her bias favours those Labour Party members who are either part of the Government or approved of by Blair. Even where she has undertaken complaints against senior Labour members, she has failed to meaningfully investigate the most damaging charges against them. For example, in the Mandelson case she was very weak on the question of whether a criminal offence had been committed and in that of Sheldon she avoided the most dangerous allegations by simply moving the previous investigatory goalposts. I do not accuse Mrs Filkin of a deliberate conspiracy with the Labour hierarchy to provide favourable judgements. Rather I see her as a woman who is intimidated by the position she holds and that fear drives her instinctively not to go in as hard as possible where that will displease the Government. It is also true that she is handicapped by her complete lack of professional investigatory experience prior to taking the job. A cynic might suggest that she was partly chosen for that reason.

However, notwithstanding her favourable treatment of Blair and his chums, Mrs Filkin has not been granted automatic renewal of her contract and has been told she must re-apply for her job. This might seem odd, but it is not. Although she has done Blair favours, she has not completely quashed complaints against the likes of Mandelson. For Blair, any action which goes against his wishes or disadvantages those of whom he approves is enough to result in an "imperial" thumbs down. There is also the fact that many backbenchers (and indeed members on the Front Benches) on both sides resent the very idea of a check on their behaviour (G.K. Chesterton's jibe that "the poor object to being governed badly: the rich object to being governed at all" just about represents their attitude). It could be that Blair wished to have his cake and eat it by arranging for Filkin to have her job if she re-applied. This would both reduce her authority for the future and be a sop to those MPs who do not wish, at best, to have anything more than a figurehead in the position. There have also been reports in recent weeks (Nov 2001) of attempts to

reduce the post's status and powers. Mrs Filkin has as yet not re-applied and has more or less indicated that she will not do so. The Standards and Privileges Committee has been biased in the same general manner as Mrs Filkin, but has shown an even greater reluctance to pursue any member approved of by Blair. Apart from the Reid and Maxton cases, it has rejected in whole or part complaints against Mandelson and John Prescott, while Robert Sheldon remains as Chairman despite the Committee having accepted the minor charge recommended as proven by Mrs Filkin.

Perhaps the most revealing fact about the Committee is the behaviour of the non-Labour members in general and the Tory members in particular. Before the last election, these included the independent MP, Martin Bell and the Tories Peter Bottomley and Eric Forth. Yet report after report was issued by the Committee without a dissenting voice. The apogee of this behaviour occurred over the Sheldon complaint when Mrs Filkin's extraordinarily inadequate report was abjectly accepted by all members of the Committee without any discussion. Their behaviour in the Vaz case was scarcely better. Beyond the Committee and Mrs Filkin lies the failure of the Tory leadership to take up and fire the ammunition being given them. Hague could have made hay with the behaviour of the Committee and Mrs Filkin, the spectacular allegations against Robinson, the refusal of the police to investigate Robinson and the mysterious events surrounding people such as the policeman who arrested Euan Blair. Yet Hague was as silent as the grave and was joined in that silence by his entire Parliamentary Party, the LibDems and the likes of Martin "independent" Bell. That speaks of a general reason for the reticence. The most obvious explanation is that every MP is worried that an exposure of other people's scandals may reveal one of their own. They may not be paranoid in believing so. I think it probable that every MP has a 'dirt file' kept by the security service and, of course, scandals can be manufactured by agent-provocateurs and disinformation.

Elites invariably behave in an abusive and self-serving fashion, that is their nature. What matters is how far the abuse goes. This Government in general and Blair in particular has generated in a very short time an amazing number of unsavoury incidents, incidents which are all the more worrying because they involve the administration of justice and the misuse of state power. They have also passed a massive raft of oppressive legislation such as the Terrorism Act and the Crime and Disorder Act, the jury system and the abolition of the double jeopardy rule under threat. We are marching towards a police state with a gangster government. The attacks on the USA on 11 September (2001) have allowed him to greatly accelerate this process of oppressive legislation with the vast 125 clause anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill now before Parliament (which was opposed in the first vote in the House of Commons by 5 MPs out of 659) and which covers everything from a suspension of habeas corpus for foreigners suspected of terrorism and the sharing of data between state agencies such as the Revenue, Customs, the DSS and the police.

Anyone who wants a snapshot of what has happened to Labour since Blair took over as leader should reflect on his behaviour after the Hammond Report was published. Blair simply refused to discuss the reason for Mandelson's resignation which was rather odd if Mandelson had done, as the report

suggested, nothing wrong. Such a refusal to engage with the media is not the behaviour of a democratic leader but a tyrant.

Another trait of would-be tyrants is the planting of their own men in positions of power beyond the reach of any meaningful democratic control. Take but two examples of Blair doing this, the planting of his men in positions which directly reflect on the law. It cannot be healthy to have the Law Officers - Lord Chancellor, Attorney-General and Solicitor-General - drawn from the serving ranks of a political party - that is a fault of our constitution. However, when those officers are also the closest personal friends of the Prime Minister, the danger from a lack of division of powers between politics and the judiciary is greatly amplified. Can anyone imagine a criminal complaint being proceeded with if it involved Blair unless the evidence was so overwhelming and public that it could not be practically ignored? If such an arrangement existed in a foreign country we should call it corrupt.

My second example concerns the Data Protection Tribunal (security appeals panel) which hears appeals against a refusal of MI5 and MI6 to supply data to applicants which would otherwise be due to them under the subject access provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998). Two of the three members of the first panel to sit were Michael Beloff QC and James Goudie QC. Both are very close friends of the Blairs and Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor Irvine appoints the panel members. Blair served in Irvine's Chambers. Beloff was head of Cherie Blair's old Chambers. Goudie heads Irvine's old chamber sand has practised in them for many years previ-

ously. Both Goudie and Beloff are Labour Party supporters, Goudie's wife being a major fundraiser for the Labour Party. They are self-evidently not independent of the Government.

When I came to write this article, it was intended to be merely further evidence of a sickness at the heart of this Government, namely a cavalier attitude towards the law and the ever developing cronyism. The attack on America on 11 Sept has changed all that. Blair has seized the opportunity to introduce the most draconian measures (all of which will have no effect on the frequency of terrorism) and to progress the liberal bigot internationalist cause with frenzied calls for more international integration and action. Indeed, so frenzied and unrealistic have been his statements that his mental stability must be seriously in doubt.

Blair's behaviour has become increasingly erratic and autocratic throughout his premiership, but since 11 Sept, it has been positively messianic - this tendency reached its peak (to date) with his insistence, during his November Guildhall speech, that Utopia was within reach for the entire world. He resembles nothing more in his general mentality than an earnest fifth former out to save the world. The problem is that unlike the earnest fifth former he has power. We are presently unfortunate enough to have a Prime Minister who is a positive danger to both our lives and liberty because he is paranoid (hence his desire to control) and utterly reckless in international affairs. Left to his own devices, he will lead us to Hell in a handcart.

## **THE NATURE-NURTURE DEBATE: A LIBERTARIAN VIEW**

**Nigel Meek**

Earlier this year there appeared in the media a little flurry of interest in that hardy favourite, the Nature-Nurture debate. To put it simply, whether our intelligence, personality, and behaviour are a product of our genetic inheritance, or alternatively how, when, and where we are brought up.

By the time that I took my psychology degree as a mature student between 1993 and 1996 it was unequivocally clear that serious, empirical psychologists in this country believed that the nature-nurture debate in its pure form was a dead duck. The evidence was just too compelling in favour of the impact of genetic inheritance for it all to be nurture, but the same evidence was equally clear that it was not all due to nature either. Where the real debate came was the proportional impact that each of these factors had.

It is worth noting that former SIF associate, the late Professor Hans Eysenck, was quite clear that there is an interaction between the two forces. This is important as he is regarded as a leading hereditarian and has often been misrepresented, sometimes by accident but sometimes not, as believing that it is all down to genetics.

Almost the only people who have clung to a full-blooded nurture position are usually knowing or unknowing Marxists of some variety who have to believe this if one of the central tenets of classical Marxism - that we are a product of our economic relations and hence the society and environment in which we live, and that man will be created anew under communism - is not to be shown to be false.

On the other hand, there are also those who claim that humans are and can be really no more than carrying-cases for their genes. In turn, that these genes have left us with a range of behaviours fixed and limited to what was appropriate to the conditions when homo sapiens first evolved. (This despite plenty of evidence that we are capable of a good deal more of both imagination and restraint.)

For my own part I take a tripartite, interactionist view. Both our genetic inheritance, and the way in which we are brought up together with the social environment in which we live are, indeed, of crucial importance. But since, through introspection, I also believe that we possess free-will, we can in fact go to some lengths to forge a self at least somewhat different

from the self that the purely internal and external deterministic forces of nature and nurture respectively would otherwise lead us to. Most of the more reputable forms of psychotherapy, like those that fall into the cognitive-behavioural school such as Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, are based on this very idea.

The political importance of this third, volitional component cannot be overstated. To ignore it is to face the prospect of, for example, admitting any number of determinist pseudo-explanations (as opposed to possible mitigation) for malignant behaviour, or alternatively lending false credence to certain

notions concerning the immutable inferiority or superiority of certain groups of people.

The proper libertarian viewpoint, I suggest, is to accept that we truly are the children of our biological parents but not their clones; that the world in which we live does indeed profoundly influence the way in which we evolve as individuals and that a free and stable society is the best stage on which this can take place; but that we should never forget that we are, ultimately, responsible for our actions.

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## REPORT ON THE TALK TO THE SIF BY PETER HITCHENS ON THE 18th JULY 2000

Anon.

The title of 'Cigarettes and Condoms' caused some confusion even to the extent of one or two people expecting handouts! The title was selected by the Speaker, the well-known radical journalist Peter Hitchens who described himself as 'a full-blooded, full-throated reactionary who believes in something and wants to make sure as many other people as possible do as well'.

This talk was based on a chapter of his recent book *The Abolition of Britain* which was originally headed 'Health Warning' and began with the words 'Smoking and buggery can both kill you...'. The publisher asked him to leave this chapter out because it would be the only part commented on almost certainly in hysterical accusations of homophobia. It was left out of the hardback but included in the softback edition apparently with no ill-effects after all.

He remarked on the profound difference in attitude to AIDS and lung cancer. AIDS was regarded as an affliction for which we should feel great sympathy and regard sufferers as 'victims', even feel a kind of rage at its unfairness, and provide resources for alleviating its effects. Not a lot wrong with that. On the other hand lung cancer, and other diseases attributed to smoking, were regarded as moral failures, the acts of a pariah, and treatment of those afflicted was often conditional on giving up smoking. Smoking is one of the few things of which we are allowed to disapprove.

The similarity was, of course, that both were the result of conscious lifestyle choices. He quoted a 16 year old girl of his acquaintance who said that she thought the school medical service would be much happier if she said she was pregnant and wanted an abortion, or that she wanted to go on the pill, than if she said she had started smoking.

National Health Service providing 'free' treatment makes us all the property of the state in that we must not impose unnecessarily on its resources. Apart from not smoking we are obliged to wear seat belts and safety helmets for cycling but smokers are specially selected for criticism in contrast to

AIDS 'victims'.

Peter Hitchens insisted that he was tolerant of homosexuality, but fiercely opposed to those who tried to promote it as a valid alternative to lifelong heterosexual marriage, as he also was opposed to promoting serial marriage and divorce, or what we used to call fornication and adultery, as also equally valid. There was absolutely no properly moral alternative to lifelong heterosexual marriage and anything which challenges its moral primacy is a danger to the whole society not just the finances of the Health Service.

The point about the contrast between the treatment of smoking and AIDS was that the two attitudes were completely contradictory and the most remarkable aspect of that was that nobody seemed to have noticed.

The same state-financed education bodies which say that smoking is bad for you and deluge children and adults with propaganda against it also, when confronted by homosexuality (and intravenous drug use for that matter), shut up and will not say that it is wrong.

This is a symptom of a society undergoing a cultural and moral revolution. What is happening is a change in the morality of the western world comparable to the Reformation in its power and significance yet it is passing virtually unnoticed. This is resulting in the substitution of a series of moral rules based on a highly intolerant, highly prescriptive, set of ideas about how we should behave where we have no rights except as members of a group but as individuals none at all.

Two thousand years of (Christian) morality have been pushed aside in favour of a licensed hedonism because the family is seen as an opponent of the almighty state. This is being spread at amazing speed with little serious or considered opposition. It has happened finally with the election in 1997 of the Labour government. Until then the people who really wanted to take over the country had sat in fury and resentment through the Thatcher years. They were in power in the

theatre, in the BBC, in the schools, the universities, in the law and the courts, the only problem was why not in 10 Downing Street. And now they are. As a result all these lies and distortions, all these reversals of morality, these over turnings of culture, all this plebeian culture of which V S Naipaul remarked some weeks ago and was supported, surprisingly but admirably by Doris Lessing, who rightly compared our alleged Prime Minister to Robert Mugabe who reaches for race as Blair reaches for class, whenever he is in trouble.

All these things are being propelled forward at an amazing speed. This not only by the government that exists on this territory but also by the European Union.

It might seem that I have come a long way from cigarettes and condoms, he said, but I have to say that this particular symptom of the dishonesty, sneakiness and revolutionary nature of our modern culture should be a warning of what lies in store for us, and of the immense power of what faces us, if we actually want to preserve the things for which this Society (the SIF of course) stands. That is the simple liberty of the individual to live his life as he pleases with as little interference from government as possible.

In reply to questions Peter Hitchens expressed general satisfaction with the Press in providing opportunities for non-PC viewpoints specifically mentioning the Express, Mail, and Telegraph, but was very unhappy with the broadcasting media, particularly the BBC, as it was particularly difficult to get any 'right wing' view expressed at any length. The producers and editors of TV programmes 'did not know they did not understand a conservative view because on their journey from Balliol College junior common room to Golders Green crematorium they have never met anyone to disagree with them - just as a goldfish does not know it is surrounded by water they do not know they are left wing'.

Nevertheless we still had a certain amount of freedom of expression and we should use it as much as possible. But there was much on the Right that he deplored - in particular UKIP which could only cost Conservative seats, and playing with racialism which was profoundly immoral and un-Christian - and that these tendencies were unproductive. He also disputed that Enoch Powell was a 'principled politician' and deplored the regard given to him in some places.

The Right in this country has often done itself very little service by some of the attitudes struck, some of the language used, and some of the company it has kept. Regrettably it has

failed to seek common cause with people on the Left who, for all we may disagree with them, remain patriots deeply committed to freedom and liberty. Much of the Left could be won over if we put forward ideas which made clear our genuine commitment to liberty and tolerance. The eccentricity of much of the Right was unhelpful and he counselled strongly against it.

The Clinton campaigns of '92 and '96 and the Blair campaign modelled on them were the biggest triumphs of political cynicism since the days of Joseph Goebbels. The modern versions were successful because of the use of the immense propaganda power of television and the destruction of genuine education by the comprehensive school system. This applied particularly to history for which he quoted a pupil who had allegedly studied the English Civil War and knew all about the diseases and sufferings of the soldiers in it but did not know on which side Oliver Cromwell was! This sort of ignorance makes it easy to manipulate 'public opinion'.

In response to information from the floor that a conference organised by the World Confederation on Mental Health in the 1940's had stated that its aim should be to infiltrate the major professions and eliminate ideas of right and wrong, Peter Hitchens noted that there had once been a Marxist aim, centred on Oxford, to infiltrate the professions, starting with the church and education, and work towards a Marxist society from within them. Whether or not it was a conspiracy (which he doubted) this had certainly happened and now included the law, and virtually all the arts. Consequently the pillars of civil society had collapsed and there had been a general 'loss of nerve' among leaders of society which had coincided with the loss of belief in God. There was now a search for substitutes for God which were inevitably unsatisfactory. There was a not entirely facetious suggestion that for a large part of the population football was now the replacement of religion.

On the topic of homosexuality he advocated complete tolerance but warned against the effects of making homosexual relationships legally and socially equivalent to heterosexual marriage as this would inevitably lead to the downgrading of marriage and the consequent break-up of the bedrock institution of western civilisation.

Martin Ball, who chaired the meeting, gave warm thanks to Peter Hitchens for a very informative and thought-provoking talk and the audience expressed its appreciation in the usual way. The meeting ended at about 8.45pm.

## CURRENCY IS VERY POLITICAL

Paul Anderton

In the very earliest trading functions, after bartering, rare natural materials - gold and precious stones - were used as currency. Then government got in on it by making specified quantities of these materials (particularly gold and silver) into coins 'authenticated' by the inclusion of a state symbol, usu-

ally the likeness of an emperor or king. In that sense currency was politicised almost from its origins.

But actually carrying large amounts of precious material of any sort presents a serious security problem so most of it was de-

posited in secure premises, such as with goldsmiths. They soon realised that, because at anyone time only a small proportion of their stock was actually called for by its owners, there was a large amount in value permanently in their strong-rooms. So they made loans from it and charged interest. And instead of a fee for secure storage they actually paid interest to depositors. Banking had been invented.

Customers soon found that the receipts for their stored assets were much more convenient trading instruments than the cumbersome precious metal coins, and 'paper money' was invented by the private sector (some might regard it as a 'discovery').

Such an important development could not be left to itself, of course. Governments had to get in on the act by setting up central banks and making the paper currency issued by that bank the only sort legally valid in its jurisdiction. So independent banking was now politicised - in the interest of improvement of course - by a uniform 'trusted' medium of exchange. The central bank was popularly characterised as 'the banker's bank', and also the government's bank in the sense of holding and distributing tax revenues and paying government bills. Central banks smoothed out the considerable annual variations of income, due to tax receipts not being in phase with expenditure, mainly by borrowing, when necessary, from the commercial banks. Commercial banks soon learned to regard treasury backed money as being as 'safe' for backing their own lending as gold itself (because in those simplistic days it was believed that the government could always meet its debts by taxation).

Then there was a further advance in financial mechanisms. The government found that by issuing more and more paper - which the banks treated as gold because the interest payments were guaranteed by raising taxes - then the banks issued more credit to customers so stimulating economic activity and giving voters, in particular, the illusion that prosperity was increasing, a phenomenon which the ruling political party claimed was a result of their policies. This trick was academically endorsed by Keynes in particular and was supposed to be a sure-fire antidote to economic depressions which were now claimed to be banished for ever by wise government economic management. Unfortunately an effect not allowed for was inflation, or devaluation of the paper currency.

There was of course a market in paper currencies which established exchange rates - which could vary. The exchange rate of the currency became (and is now) a major factor in domestic and international politics. Tourists like a strong currency because it makes foreign travel and goods cheaper. So did importers of foreign products. But exporters like a 'weak' currency because it makes their products cheaper in terms of other currencies.

One way of manipulating the exchange rate was through interest rates which, until recently, were set by the Treasury with of course due regard to the economy. Savers and foreign investors liked high interest rates, but mortgage payers and other borrowers liked low interest rates. And politicians who controlled the Treasury wanted to please as many voters as possible, particularly near election times.

The management, or, more accurately, the manipulation of both credit and exchange rates was a very political matter. The main, and in fact ultimately the only reason for this is the use of paper currency and government 'guarantees' of its 'value'. To suggest that exchange rates, and particularly any combining of currencies into a 'single currency', is purely an economic decision is absurd.

Making a central bank, rather than the politicised Treasury, responsible for interest rates is only a minor adjustment and only possible when inflation is discredited (by experience) as a means of inducing 'economic growth' and a 'feel good' factor for electorates. The political influences are merely made less transparent.

One important and much neglected effect of national currencies and exchange rates is the effect on investment and consequent employment. A weak currency encourages exports from the weak currency country and also foreign investment in it because its prices of labour and property seem attractive to holders of strong currencies. This obviously tends eventually to make the weak currency stronger relative to others and so act as a self correcting mechanism.

Within the area where a particular currency is the only legal tender, there is no such mechanism because there are no currency variations. There is often a differential in property prices and expected rates of pay which have a similar effect in theory but which are largely suppressed in practice. The 'cheap' property is often unsuitable because it was created to serve a dying or dead industry whose demise is the reason for the area being depressed. More seriously labour mobility is discouraged by social security payments and pay agreements which resist the employment of 'cheap labour'.

The usual national political - usually called 'democratic' - palliative is to provide taxpayer financed subsidies to induce 'investment' in depressed areas and so gain support from local voters. And usually the approval of media commentators who, at least implicitly, approve of government initiatives to cure unemployment and invariably neglect and obscure other economic effects of these 'initiatives'.

If the money had been left in taxpayers' pockets they would either spend it or invest it (i.e. save it in any way except 'putting it under the bed'). This would also 'create jobs' somewhere. The difference is that it is easy to trundle TV cameras round areas of mass unemployment and get 'human interest' stories about spoilt plans and mortgage difficulties, whereas the jobs created by taxpayers spending their own money in their own way will be diffused over a number of industries and not directly identifiable with any specific spending of uncollected taxes.

Another 'democratic' development, noticed particularly in the USA, is the mutual support of government spending by area representatives. Getting 'government investment' into an area is regarded by local voters as a 'good thing' achieved by their representative and therefore a big help towards his or her re-election. But, in order to obscure this aspect of the process, it is usual for representatives from different areas to vote for government spending in each other's constituencies. Then it looks as if the local government 'investment' has outside sup-

port as well as local. In that way two political careers are enhanced and two doses of taxpayers money is transferred to 'depressed areas'. The high profile 'good' done to depressed areas is noticed but the taxation which financed it is not. And, of course, schemes need administering. Jobs are created in the bureaucracy as well as in depressed areas so the departments of state are generally quite keen and willing to propose new 'initiatives' for spending taxpayers' money.

The fact that the extended area of the USA has a single currency and is apparently very prosperous is usually taken as evidence that a single currency over a large area is an economic benefit in itself. Other large areas such as China or Brazil have also had single currencies for a long time, but any notably increased prosperity recently has coincided more obviously with the adoption of (some) free-market economic policies rather than their single currencies.

A single currency for Europe is much more likely to produce American type corruption of voting for local subsidies than any improvement in economic performance due only to the single currency. Free-market economics is a much better way of promoting economic development and, in fact, separate national currencies are a positive advantage in at least making the built-in tendency of 'democratic' politicians to spend taxpayers' money on promoting their own electoral interests more transparent by being confined to individual countries. And, as explained, variable exchange rates have positive effects in the rational economic distribution of resources between countries, as distinct from distribution according to political special interests and pressure groups, even if currency exchange is a minor expense and inconvenience for tourists.

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