

## Selected Articles from *The Individual* February 2000

# 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.

Title	Page
<i>Your Editor and the News of the World</i> - Paul Anderton	2
Report on the SIF Luncheon & Talk by Theresa Gorman MP, 5 <sup>th</sup> April 2000 - Anon.	4
<i>Against the National Lottery</i> - Walt Hare	7
<i>In Favour of the National Lottery</i> - Ann Guishe	7
'Charity' Shops: Do They Do More Harm Than Good? - Terrance C. Jacobs	8

## YOUR EDITOR AND THE *NEWS OF THE WORLD*

Paul Anderton

An article on page 27 of the October 17<sup>th</sup> 1999 edition of the *News of the World* (NoW) under the headline 'This cardigan-wearing Tory looks like a harmless granddad.. but he deals in heroin' alleged that I arranged to supply heroin to a NoW 'investigative reporter' one Mazher Mahmood, and was therefore a 'drug dealer'. I particularly resented the image implied by the 'cardigan wearing granddad' description, but assumed that nobody whose opinion was worth bothering about was likely to read the NoW anyway so it probably wouldn't be noticed by those people, and after a few weeks forgotten by everybody else as well.

Mahmood had warned me in a telephone call the previous day (Sat 16<sup>th</sup>) that a story about my drug dealing was appearing in the NoW so I took some pre-emptive action in the form of asking Radio Sheffield to give me a chance to 'put my side of the story'. This they did, broadcasting an interview, and the story received brief coverage from BBC and Yorks TV. I must say that, considering the time limitations, the local coverage from the broadcasting organisations was reasonable. Also the local newspaper *The Star* published a front page article about the local Tory ex-chairman who had 'tried drugs' and the *Yorkshire Post* published a reasonably balanced article based on a longish interview. My chief point in these follow-up reports was that I was not a dealer but had a certain academic interest in the so-called 'drugs problem' and therefore in the people involved in it. *Radio Hallam* (the local Commercial station) devoted a whole two hour phone-in to my situation in which I had about 20mins of 'phone interview.

I also informed my colleagues in the SIF and the LA about the article. I am very gratified that all members of both organisations gave me instant support without question, which confirms my view that nobody whose opinion was worth having would be bothered about NoW articles. This was in contrast to the local Conservative Association who had a special executive meeting in view of the *Star* article. They were, of course, polite, but made no objection to my immediate resignation which they thought appropriate because my views on drugs were not in line with Party policy.

Though the immediate media coverage, apart from NoW itself, was reasonably balanced it was by no means the whole picture, which goes back quite a long way. As a long standing libertarian I had always been perturbed by attitudes to, and laws on, the use of drugs. Readers will be familiar with the arguments on this topic, but in spite of those there was the ingrained attitude that drugs were a threat to society and somehow outside the normal freedom of choice and acceptable risk criteria for individuals. This had the classic properties of either an argument with false premises or a prejudice so firmly established that it was impervious to reason. Even twenty or so years ago there was a considerable literature on the topic. This fell into two main categories - the academic factual histories, and 'popular' expositions, usually by journalists, recommending increased suppression because of the dan-

gers and evil nature of drugs and, if anything, even more so the 'drug dealers'.

After I retired (very early) I realised that I had no further use for 'respectability' so I could do a bit of investigation and direct observation myself. I actually visited Amsterdam but soon realised that the time span of a holiday was quite insufficient for any sort of meaningful enquiry. When I got back the solution became obvious - use the local and easily accessed environment. If 'drug problems' were as widespread as they were portrayed to be then there must be a lot very close. The street girls or prostitutes were an obvious starting point as they were so easily approachable and popularly assumed to be drug soaked. I did not intend to be a punter, of course, a wise decision as it turned out because punters are not 'respected' being regarded rather as certain politicians regard voters - a somewhat irritating necessity for providing money. The most effective bribe for contact and information was car transport. If they were unlucky in not getting a punter to take them home after working they were grateful for a 'lift' without strings and from there it was relatively easy to develop other ways of observing their general way of life and that of their friends.

Without going into all the details of individual cases some conclusions are quite clear. The first is that the drug business is definitely demand led. The notion that dealers, or pushers, trick or deceive users into 'addiction' is absurd. The usual introduction to drug use is through friends and in fact lone drug consumption is rare. I was often offered a chance to try some, particularly crack and smokable heroin as well as the ubiquitous cannabis, as some reimbursement for 'taxi service'. Sometimes I accepted and sometimes I did not. Anyway, what sort of scientist or enquirer is it who does not acquaint himself as thoroughly as possible with his subject - only a wimp or one employed to find evidence for a preconceived conclusion probably. There is a long history of scientific researchers exposing themselves to the risk of serious injury or death never mind about the mythical 'instant addiction'. In fact the effect of either crack or heroin on me was minimal. As I could generally hold my breath with lungs full of heroin or crack smoke a good 30secs. longer than most of the regular users (because I am fitter) the effect on me was presumably greater than on them. Any suggestion of 'instant addiction' is completely unrealistic.

Certainly some users could be described as addicts in the sense that at intervals getting supplies became quite urgent and obviously a first call on money before food or rent. But there was nothing that I found seriously disturbing in their behaviour after taking drugs - nothing like as disturbing as drunken brawls for instance.

Quite where the NoW's interest came from is puzzling. They claim to have a letter stating that I am a drug dealer, but refuse to give details of it. Of my drug using acquaintances there

was only one with the education and intelligence to write such a letter, one Carla Fenlon. She denied writing it and has herself written to the NoW asking them for an assurance that it was not her (in much of the company she keeps a reputation for 'grassing' is a big disadvantage). Several have reported to me that they were pestered by a NoW reporter for information about me and that he was not at all interested in anything favourable - only 'dirt'. One woman in particular had several visits and was offered money as a bribe to say I had supplied her with heroin and could get some for the reporter's 'brother'. He kept trying until her husband eventually told him that if he came to see her again he might well be leaving in an Ambulance rather than his Mercedes! It is still possible that some such acquaintance gave information, but all the suspects I can think of are extremely improbable instigators.

This leaves two other possibilities for supplying information (which must be either surmised or completely invented). One very minuscule possibility is that it was a member of the local Conservative Association who so disliked my libertarian views that they wanted to discredit me in a big way. I can't think of anybody to whom this might apply and in any case, because drugs were rarely mentioned and never actually discussed - only assumed to be a serious 'evil' without argument - then in fact none of the members knew of my long standing association with drug users.

The other possibility is much more interesting. Last year I attended the Conservative Party Conference for the fifteenth time but as a reporter not a delegate. When I was there I tried to arouse interest in the 'Henderson case'. The first visit from a NoW reporter was just before I returned from the conference when he spoke at some length to my wife (who had stayed at home). It is therefore just possible that the article was an officially inspired device to discredit me and, by association, anybody else who supported Robert Henderson's efforts to get his case publicly discussed. The main evidence against this is that the other two editors who have published articles supporting him, Sean Gabb of *Free Life* and Derek Turner of *Right NOW!* have not been similarly harassed. However, so far as I know, both these gentlemen are completely pure in both their public and private lives (except possibly that they might have one or two acquaintances who smoke) so perhaps it is just not possible to discredit them at all easily.

However the fact that someone can be discredited merely by being accused of being a drug dealer is itself both interesting and disturbing. It is presumably based on the syllogism that drugs lead to 'addiction' and that addiction is inevitably destructive of personality and willpower. If this is so, and just about everybody knows it because of the incessant official propaganda, then it is just inconceivable that anybody - particularly large numbers - could actually *choose* to risk it so they must therefore somehow be deceived into it. Those who do the deceiving must do it from selfish and disreputable motives, such as making money so it must be the dealers. But they can't possibly just be dealers they must be 'pushers' who have some mysterious power, never explained, somehow to inveigle presumably otherwise sensible people into a life of 'degradation and destruction'. With that level of persuasive powers they could make an immense fortune as legitimate salesmen or political spin doctors.

The truth of course, as one can work out by abstract reasoning, but which direct observation makes blindingly obvious, is that the whole establishment attitude is essentially a political scam. That is to say it is in the tradition of devices used by both church and state to exert power over individuals and maintain control. One of the most potent psychological devices is control over that most fundamental of possessions - one's own body. The church tried it on with dietary rules and particularly sexual behaviour (especially behaviour which could not lead to reproduction and therefore a responsibility for 'society'). Whilst the church was influential and economically significant the politicians backed the church's rules with laws, but found other excuses as church influence declined. As few people pay much attention to the dietary and sexual prescriptions some substitute has to be found, and 'dangerous drug' control is the current chosen spearhead, with smoking and child pornography close behind. In so far as any justification is attempted it used to be through 'grace' and 'the will of god' but this has now changed to 'health' - physical, mental, 'spiritual' (and is there anything that cannot be made into some sort of health issue?).

The drugs issue bears the hallmarks of a pure social control device as shown by the refusal of serious discussion on the grounds of somehow encouraging 'sin', demonization of individual practitioners, intrusion in otherwise private areas, highly selective use of 'evidence' in presenting rare individual bad experiences as typical.

The case of Leah Betts is well known - one death among an estimated 250,000 regular users of 'ecstasy' - which received near blanket coverage. So if individual cases are so significant I will describe two out of many possible (with names changed to set an example in protecting privacy).

Toni had been 'in care' most of her life up to age 18 (when I first met her). She often ran away from care homes and went back to her mother who taught her the arts of shoplifting, 'walk in' burglary, and prostitution - skills which she developed in spite of numerous fines, probation orders, and eventually prison. She was in care because her mother was in prison when she was born as the first of seven children by three different fathers. Her mother and fathers were often drunk and Toni has a aversion to alcohol but had a long standing drugs habit - cannabis, heroin (smoke only), and crack. This clearly varied with her level of financial and emotional security. Her only educational achievement is to be quite good at reading and writing due to individual attention she received from one teacher to whom she is still grateful. Otherwise she admits to being disruptive and inattentive during her very brief and irregular school attendance.

During the nine years I have known her she has begun to emulate her mother by now having three children by different fathers. During the relatively calm period when she was with the father of her first child she used little, if any, 'hard' drugs - just cannabis and tobacco. When the first partner left for a while because of family problems, she got another man and child and soon lost both children to the social services after which she resumed her old habits including heroin and crack. Later she met a 'normal' man with a trade and job, had yet another child, married the last father and they are now both engaged in an epic struggle with the social services to restore

custody of the children.

Rosanne is illiterate and says she has AIDS but her AIDS lesions look more like old deep injection sores. She did not go to school after she was 12 and has also been a prostitute since then. Her mother is an alcoholic. Her youngest brother of 14 is quite a nice boy who goes to school, accepts his mother's drinking as something of a joke, and helps Rosanne sometimes by reading her letters and taking messages. Rosanne has had four children whose whereabouts she does not know as they were taken into care several years ago, because of her drug use and prostitution. They are presumably adopted and she accepts that she will never be allowed to look after any of them, but clings to the conviction that 'some day they will come and find me'. She has no regular boyfriend and claims to sleep with women as well as men. Her body is in quite good shape but extensively marked with eight tattoos, a long knife wound scar, a reconstruction of her left femoral artery because of damage from injecting into it, a deep wound on the back of her right thigh which affects her walking.. She is on a 200ml per day Methadone maintenance dose (an enormous dose which would kill anybody not used to it) which she has to collect and consume in one particular pharmacy every day.

So far as ordinary social relationships are concerned they are completely without normal manners or discretion and are definitely not to be trusted either to keep promises that turn out to be inconvenient or 'respect' property. Short-term atavistic self-interest is the only discernible aim of their behaviour. Both are outstanding examples of the complete failure of education, social services, and drug controls.

The usual reaction to such individuals is of course to go into the 'blaming mode' and demand that they be permanently locked up or compulsorily treated and reformed. However that reaction has been current for as long as history and it can hardly be much use or the proportion of individuals indulging in unacceptable behaviour should have been near zero by now whereas government agencies and media insist that the problems are constantly increasing. The theory boils down to; find

a problem - decide who is to 'blame' for it - punish those to blame - problem solved. The trouble is that the problems never are solved and in fact new ones are 'discovered' periodically, for example drug abuse and pornography. The basic misconception is, of course, that so-called civilised behaviour is 'natural'. This will apply to the people who formulate the blame theories - including the readers of this account and certainly the author. That is because we have been reared in families, and other circumstances, where such behaviour was the norm - with rewards for conformity and sanctions of various kinds for non-conformity.

But the criminal and underprivileged are in fact behaving much nearer the normal human being in the sense of what comes naturally without privileged training and in fact what a good many of 'us' would return to in the absence of the standard rewards for respectability. This is seen when law and order disintegrates or a corrupt government, such as the Fascists or Communists give rewards for degenerate behaviour such as 'informing' and looting the property of demonised minorities (have you heard of the instant confiscation policy for the property of drug dealers, originally, and now for a growing list of 'dissidents'?). Our primitive ancestors simply grabbed what they could and discarded it when no longer needed, including pillaging from other groups, without any sophisticated ideas of property or other 'rights' - and such behaviour can be observed any time in 'modern' inner cities and decaying estates; no need to go to darkest Africa or the upper reaches of the Amazon basin.

In fact the persistence of such behaviour points directly to the failure of seven generations of compulsory 'education', phalanxes of social workers, police and prison 'services', and economic progress. I suppose it is only to be expected that government agencies will search for 'causes' other than their own incompetence so they can continue to get 'more resources' (the inevitable demand for 'doing better tomorrow').

But it is very sad and disappointing when the so-called 'free press' gives completely uncritical support to such absurd and destructive illusions.

## REPORT ON THE SIF LUNCHEON AND TALK BY THERESA GORMAN MP, 5th APRIL 2000

**Anon.**

The Society held one of its regular annual luncheons in the Dining Room of the House of Commons on Wednesday 5th April 2000. This was one of the best attended of our luncheons, some late applicants for places having, sadly, to be turned down due to lack of space in the dining room.

Michael Plumbe, the Management Committee chairman, opened the proceedings following the excellent lunch.

First he apologised for the absence of Christopher Arkell (editor of the excellent magazine *London Miscellany*) and Neil Hamilton the former MP who had been 'treated badly by the

courts'. Then he warmly thanked Lucy Ryder and Cynthia Campbell-Savours for organising the event. 'We are here for two main purposes', he continued, 'first in the millennium year to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to Sir Richard Body who had been our host today and devoted himself to various libertarian causes, and very much involved with Conservatives against a Federal Europe and a great supporter of this society. We are also here to listen to our wonderful 'forthright and forceful' guest today, Teresa Gorman. She has been treated abominably by the Parliamentary Commissioner Elizabeth Filkin particularly in comparison with certain senior members of the present government - a situation she has endured with

fortitude! ?

Teresa Gorman, looking young and vibrant with blond curly hair and dressed in a bright yellow suit, then addressed the meeting.

"A wonderful introduction for me Chairman - forthright, forceful, fortitude all those lovely words - it is the best press I have had in a month! And if I may add another 'P' to this I think the press is filthy, and thoughtless and very unfair! If I had forged two mortgage applications, and shoved £300,000 in my back pocket and forgot about it from the man whose business I was about to judge, why I would be Secretary of State for Northern Ireland now. And if I had forgotten to register my nice little fees from being a member of this house and tucked them away in an offshore company - why, I would be standing for Lord Mayor of London! So you can see that whatever my sins were they don't compare with what the Labour party are getting away with. And another 'P' of course is Filkin who is now in charge of the morals of this place and whose husband was recently elevated to a Labour peerage I must say I do believe that the way we are behaving in this House, not so much what people have or haven't registered, but the way we are attacking each other through this institution is doing grave damage to the reputation of Parliament generally. And I do believe that whilst we must be exemplary and expected to set standards for the rest of society, the present feeding frenzy - another 'P' - which is going on here is likely to do long-term damage to the respect, such as it is, for this institution. And there is no doubt that this institution should continue to embody the standards and the freedoms - another 'P' word for us - which we in this country do enjoy. This society - the Society for Individual Freedom - has played a noble role, not just through Lord Monson's leadership here, but also before him Ian McTaggart. I remember being a member all those years ago, long before I dreamed of being embroiled in politics, and going to Grosvenor House and the meetings there in the small back room and it is so sad that Fiona McTaggart has decided to join the Labour party and I wonder what happened in her upbringing - something wrong there I'm afraid! She is a very nice woman but unfortunately not in the right party. And if I may say so this party has been blessed not only with its libertarian views which unfortunately are in the minority in this country - there is always someone round the corner wanting to regulate and poke their noses into somebody else's business. One of my favourite authors is Frederick Bastiat - I don't know how many of you have read any of his literature - he was a wonderful man - he was in correspondence with the anti-slavery people in this country, he wrote marvellous tracts on this and he came out with some wonderful aphorisms, one of which is 'mind your own business is the only moral law'. Minding your own business is a virtue which most politicians seem incapable of embracing. Another is 'the state is that great fiction where everyone seeks to live at the expense of somebody else.' I had that on the bottom of my writing paper - I put it on the day I got into this House and everyone thought I was quite barmy - the first time anyone had put a slogan on their writing paper but I have kept it on. And that I'm afraid is what passes for legislation a lot of the time in this house, not liberating people and guarding our freedoms but giving factions of one sort or another the opportunity to legislate their prejudices into law and inflict them.

And, of course, Richard here throughout his Parliamentary career of 40 years has been one of the great champions of freedom. I got to know him when I became a member of this House, particularly when we were fighting the Maastricht treaty and battling to stop that wretched treaty becoming law and he gave one of the most marvellous *tour de forces* where we would keep the debate going half the night and three quarters of the day and Richard would feed us little lines and we would pick that up and keep the debate going and we really did make that into a *cause celebre*. It was a crusade which turned opinion in this country about whether we could do anything about this vicious European Union which is the most undemocratic organisation after Stalin and Communist China to emerge this century and could yet be the end of our democracy if we don't continue to keep up that battle.

And I know that in his early days Richard actually flirted with Europe! I am told he fell in with Mr Edward Heath and invited him to his home where he actually has a Heath Chair - I hope no well bred libertarians put their bottoms on that chair isn't that true Richard? And he allowed himself to be seduced into Europe and attending one of these early meetings of the Union. But they weren't telling us what it was really going to be and on that occasion the scales were taken from his eyes when he was made privy to the conspiracy which was being hatched against the British people and he had that marvellous conversion on the road to Damascus - or rather the ferry back to Dover in 1967. And from then on he has campaigned sincerely and without any let or hindrance make the British public aware of what is happening to our country and our democracy.

That is not his only virtue. I understand he and Joanna Lumley have a connection - Joanna Lumley who is absolutely fabulous - that's another 'P' for us - campaigning for compassion in world farming because he said that although we have to love and cherish our own freedom there is no reason why we should not extend the decency of a reasonable life to the animals we use as part of our food chain and husbandry. That is one of his great virtues too. Despite the fact that he keeps pigs he has never ever tethered up a pig. What an epitaph to have on your tombstone - I never ever tethered up a pig!

So here he is - a great man - and I hope this is not going to be his last lunch but this may be the last lunch where so many people have come from all over the country to attend.

Since I have been in this House he has been a great inspiration to me. There is not a campaign I have thought of that he has not thought of before - he has campaigned for an English parliament and written the excellent pamphlet which I hope you will buy for £3 - I have a few copies with me! It is published by the excellent magazine *This England* which has the largest subscription of any magazine in this country and perhaps the world - though I don't know about the *Readers Digest* of course. They have over 350,000 registered subscribers and something like 60,000 in S Africa and Australia and New Zealand so the British spirit is still out there spread all over the globe still and they printed this booklet for us.

We campaign, not just in this organisation but through others such as UKIP and CAFE - conservatives against a federal Europe - who have helped to guide the Conservative party in

the right direction. I know as a Conservative I am not supposed to mention UKIP or Jimmy Goldsmith's Referendum Party but they have done their bit in persuading William - not that I doubt his sincerity, of course. But in a party with mixed pressures, as you are well aware, we need to keep up our pressure.

I am not a pessimist over Europe, not one of those people who think things have gone so far that they can't be altered. But if we are to persuade the British public that we are not yet completely committed, then we have to have an alternative vision that we can put forward. We have to have another flag around which we can rally - to be against something and to want to come out of something is not easy to sell to the voters. I believe that vision lies with our relationship with the North American free trade area - NAFTA. You will know that there are countries that have strong trading relationships - the Norwegians who are not in, but they enjoy full trading relationships, the Swiss who run their economy outside the EU and outside of that there is the World Trade Organisation which is bringing down barriers and then other sorts of relationship, such as the Japanese which allows them to trade and absolves them from the awful tariffs which are charged to other countries - in fact the EU is a cartel, not a free trade area at all. I believe that if we developed our relationship with NAFTA then we could open up new opportunities. This would preclude us from being a part of the *political* structure of Europe. I'm not one of these people who thinks that unless we are in there the Europeans will start the next World War - we have gone way past that now. But I am definitely against the idea of a European army into which our own army is incorporated. And a European Court system into which our own court system would be subsumed and subject to a completely different regime because the starting point of the European system is so different from ours. And I believe that if we develop that prospect then that we can make people feel confident that we could exist without that close tie to the Union. I do not believe we can renegotiate the treaty - that is pie in the sky. The fourteen partners would not let us slip out of that and carry on being just as influential is just nonsense.

The EU is a fifty year old organisation which has gone past its sell by date - certainly from our point of view. So now I see a break in the clouds as we are beginning to cultivate that relationship with NAFTA and the Americans are very willing to negotiate, not just with us but with other countries. We would have no need to change our currency, change our system of measurements, alter our legal structures or affect the domestic laws of this country. Simply free trade. And I am sure that you all as libertarians believe in free trade as without free trade we do not have freedom - the freedom to trade is one of the essential parts of any free society.

So I think with Groucho Marx that the EU is a club which if they would have me as a member I wouldn't want to join. And I think a tremendous number of the British people feel like that so we have an opportunity. Some people from Britain have been over there and some of our own people such as David Davis who is very much a supporter of the whole idea and he is now chairman of the accounts committee. They are exposing a good many of the fiddles which are going on in the current government. We can rubbish Blair as much as we like - and they give us ample opportunity - but the Press still

feel that power lies with Labour and this is very important even in the law because, as I have been told by Mr Henderson, who is here today, that it is very difficult to get the legal profession to take up causes which normally they would willingly do that impinge on the Blairs. And that is a very dangerous situation that we are in. But of course people do not as we do necessarily take a lot of notice of these affairs. So long as they feel comfortably off and things are getting better for them they tend to let the government of the day continue. But the more we expose the degree to which people are being overtaxed and the stealth taxes they are subject to the more we will see them becoming disillusioned with the Labour Party. Their own internal wranglings are of course stunning for us and I do hope Mr Livingstone does not blot his copy book too much because he is the best thing for us as the Mayor of London. The Labour party will hate him and they will sink into internecine warfare. What with that and the freedom of information bill we are struggling with now is another area where they are falling out internally.

They do say people do not win elections government loose them but I don't know if that is entirely true and we must continue to fight our battles. There are many cracks developing in this smooth surface the government has succeeded in presenting in the last three years. And we must continue to believe that there is life after our last election defeat and there will be another opportunity for the Conservatives to reassert a more liberal society. This organisation and the others represented here are all chipping away in one area or another whether it is the Salisbury people, or *This England*, mentioned earlier, and Christopher Booker, and Neil Hamilton and Derek Turner of *Right NOW!*, and of course Paul Anderton.

It is always said that when we have so many such groups we should all get together but I think it is best for us all to continue to promote our own interests among our supporters. And the backup to that, I'm sure is helping the Conservative party as it is our only hope of reform. William Hague's slogan of 'in Europe but not run by Europe' might be open to misinterpretation but it is at least a start. In him we have the best chance since Margaret Thatcher to bring back our values into government so we must back him as the only alternative to Labour and a mover to that really glorious day when we have a truly libertarian society where everybody is free to pursue their own interests so long as they do not impinging on the equal rights of others. In doing that and keeping those values alive we are doing and absolutely essential thing for our country.

So I sincerely thank you for this opportunity to say a few words to you today - it is quite wonderful - and I am sure that you want to show your appreciation to Richard Body for his leadership which has been so true and sincere all these years - so thank you Richard so much and, thank you all.

Michael Plumbe thanked Teresa for a most stimulating talk after which she answered questions from guests on a number of topics concerned mostly with Europe and the morality of the 'Welfare State' from Barbara Hosegood, Peter Jackson, and David Wedgwood.

Michael then closed the proceedings.

## AGAINST THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

Walt Hare

It is not a matter of being against the idea of the National Lottery in principle, or the way Camelot has run it. From the start of the discussions about it there was every sign that it was destined to be a good idea spoilt and that is the way it has turned out.

Of course, the lottery was resisted largely on 'moral' grounds - making money from gambling without work or effort was morally wrong, the old puritan argument. On the other hand taking risks and bearing the losses of bad ones and benefiting (usually financially) from the good ones is the main economic driving force behind economic progress. But there are two types of risk taking - calculated risks and pure gambling risks. These may overlap in the sense that the same situation looks different to different people. If you don't know anything about horses and bookmaking then horse racing is pure gambling with the proverbial pin as the most important piece of equipment, but if you do know something about it then it becomes a calculated risk with the form book as the main piece of equipment. Much the same thing applies to the stock markets - if you understand economics and company accounts the markets are a calculated risk, if not then they are just a gamble.

The national lottery is arranged to be a pure gamble in the sense that there is no way of predicting the result. What is the chance of getting the numbers 1,2,3,4,5,6 as the result? Just the same as for any other six numbers, so if the first six seems very unlikely then it is no more unlikely than any other combination of six selections such as birthdays or house numbers. So the national lottery is made for the classic gambling 'come on'. The big prizes are very unlikely so it can afford to pay very large amounts in the certain knowledge that few can win but the prospect of winning the very big prizes will attract a lot of punters. As there is no skill of any sort involved it is classically 'democratic' in the sense that everybody has an equal, though minuscule, chance of a really big win. A classical appeal to 'irrational greed' which can easily empty the pockets of the mathematically unsophisticated who often lead dull and boring lives anyway so the prospect of instant great wealth is especially beguiling. In other words the success of the lottery depends on appealing to the very same irrational impulses

which are usually so deplored in other contexts (e.g. Bank robberies or large scale systematic social security fraud).

The 'excuse' in the case of the national lottery is, of course, that the profits are devoted to promoting 'good causes' (apart from Camelot's fees and the inevitable slice of taxation). It is this aspect of the present national lottery set up which is where the good idea spoilt aspect is most evident. And yet another example of the way 'the public' is systematically seduced into tacitly accepting more and more government (i.e. political) influence on both resource distribution and available choices for whatever money individuals have left after meeting direct, indirect, and stealth taxes. What exactly is a good cause? Whatever it is is decided by yet another committee of the great and good. They decide which organisations are to receive some share of the lottery profits and how much.

As with charities which receive government grants for 'contracts' the prospect of a lottery grant immediately generates a desire to comply with whatever requirements are laid down for receiving such grants. In other words yet another extension of 'Hobson's choice' in conforming with establishment and essentially politically correct attitudes and policies. Very significant was the promise that lottery money would not replace existing government grants to arts and humanitarian causes which was enthusiastically endorsed by the new ruling class who rely extensively on taxpayer support.

It would really have been much better to use lottery money to replace some aspects of government expenditure and so reduce general taxation. The exact reverse of what was actually done. A similar effect to the 'good causes' as motivation could be achieved by specific targeting of some government service, particularly one where the expenditure of 'government money' has largely destroyed the incentive for people to provide it for themselves. The Health Service and Education are the most obvious areas because taxation money saved could then be used to extend the much more effective private provision of such services.

*Walt Hare is an economist and occasional libertarian writer.*

## IN FAVOUR OF THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

Ann Guishe

Well I think the National Lottery was and is a very good idea. Instead of a long discussion I am sure the best argument is experience. So here is a recording from a very good friend of mine, Kevin - who might seem a bit rough at first but is *really* sensitive and discerning, deep down - of his introduction to

culture as a result of the National Lottery supporting artistic activities.

"My friend Anne gave me this ticket to a dance show which she called 'ballet' because she couldn't go with her posh boy-

friend. He must have been the bloke next to me with the bow tie and corduroy jacket. I thought there would be a lot of girls with not much on dancing around but it started off with just one geezer jumping around on his own. I could see why he was jumping because if my trousers were as tight as his I'd feel like jumping around a bit. And he kept putting his hand over his eyes as if he was looking for something like where he could make himself comfortable without all us looking at him. But after he had been jumping and twirling about a bit a really thin woman ran from the side and sort of threw herself at him! She must have been in a hurry because she only had her underslip on and soft slippers. Anyway this geezer caught her and started lifting her up and twirling her round and she didn't seem to mind. In fact judging by where he was putting his hands he must have known her quite well. If I tried feeling the girls I know in those places I would probably get my face slapped and a lawsuit as well! Anyway after they had been going on like this for some time he seemed to get fed-up with her and sort of threw her away and she ran of looking quite upset. Then he went on jumping about and looking in the distance for a bit until another anorexic type bird ran from the other side and went on with him like the first one. Then he just threw her away as well. And after that there was yet another one. I thought that if he was going to throw her away as well he might throw her my way and I'd see she wouldn't go off upset. But she went the same way as the others. I hope they consoled themselves with a good meal, they all needed one.

When the last girl had gone, the bloke did some more jump-

ing and twirling and then ran off as well and everybody clapped. "Well, there weren't many laughs in that; nobody said anything or sang a song," I said to Anne's other boyfriend, and he looked at me in a funny way - down his nose like. "Of course nobody said anything. It was all symbolic. It was all in the symbolism!" he said in his plummy voice.

Then the penny dropped when I thought about symbolism! Of course it was obvious - a proper window on real life. That geezer had very bad eyesight and all that jumping and twirling was symbolic of his journey through life looking for his ideal woman and probably other things as well. And he knew what he wanted. When women just threw themselves at him he tested them out and if they were not suitable he sent them off. No matter how easy a substitute seems to come, stick out for what you want.

I always wanted a red Ferrari and a really well built girlfriend with plenty of bounce not the anorexic kind who threw themselves at that geezer who was obviously well provided for himself. So what I had to do was put all the money I could lay my hands on into buying National Lottery tickets so I could get a big win and then get what I really want in life. And I realised that all through Art and the lottery!

*Anne Guishe's latest book The Agony of Affluence is a heart rending account of a lone social worker's struggle to save children in Chelsea and Kensington from the corrosive physical and mental effects of alcohol fumes, cigar smoke, and elitist education. Copies may be ordered on the Internet from [www.reminders.com](http://www.reminders.com).*

## ‘CHARITY’ SHOPS: DO THEY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Terrance C. Jacobs

We have noted before how a large number of charities now depend on government sponsorship in the form of subcontracting for services or consultation, so they are effectively instruments of central policies rather than truly independent innovators. Some charities are now extending their activity into areas that adversely affect many traditional small businesses. This is not confined to ‘charity shops’ - some actually manufacture at home and abroad and sell new goods. Others extend their activities even further into areas such as painting and decorating, removals, gardening, creosoting, car washing, garage services, importing, street collections, car boot sales, scrap metal dealing, and market stalls. Provided you have that ‘charity number’ it seems any activity is open for trading. Charity shops are a real growth industry and I know of one in Sheffield that has grown from one shop six years ago to seven now and has hundreds of staff. This must be doing damage to small builders, garages and gardeners for instance who have to pay all their own costs.

*These charities are businesses under another name which compete (unfairly) with small businesses. Because the word ‘charity’ is used it is assumed they must be a ‘good thing’.*

Also charity shops help to disguise the failings of national and local government. They are usually so inviting and well maintained that they give the impression that the area they are in is vibrant rather than run down. This is a convenient illusion for local government in particular. Once charity shops start appearing in any locality it is a sign of deterioration. If the shop units were left empty, so encouraging less local trade and consequently other shops to move out, it would soon become obvious that an area was deteriorating and there would be demands for the elected national and local representatives to do something about it.

Another effect is that money is lost from local communities. Normally the limited amount of ‘physical cash’ is spent many times - it circulates - but that which goes into a charity shop is lost because the shop spends nothing on buying its goods or paying staff - who usually work voluntarily.

Charities work exactly like businesses but are given unfair advantages compared with other small businesses. They don't pay council tax, wages, or for stock, and their rent is usually reduced as well. Consequently they are a growth market in retailing but nevertheless misfits in shop parades, arterial



roads, and town centres of thousands of places in the UK. Hardly any consideration is given to the effect they have on other businesses especially the ones who might sell similar items such as clothing or furniture and domestic appliances.

There is also the cost of 'charity rate relief'. This can be ascertained from the non-domestic rates section of local authority offices. In Sheffield the current figure is about £11,000,000. As Sheffield has about 1% of the total population a simple *pro rata* calculation gives a national estimate of around £1 billion. Charities get 80% relief and many local authorities waive the remaining 20%.

Also the landlords of vacant 'hard to let' shop units welcome charity shops because the rates are paid instead of the landlord being responsible for 50% of the full rate for empty premises. No doubt part of the agreement with the tenant will be to maintain the property and insure it. If the amount lost from the 50% rate obligation of landlords is added to the £1 billion estimated above then we are looking at about £1.5 billion nationally. What is not paid by others means an extra burden on the rest of us.

A check on the items sold by charity shops will reveal that many sell both new and second-hand goods. Small businesses have to pay for their stock but charity shops get theirs for nothing (or they are made in their own workshops) so they can undercut the small businesses. And price is primarily what matters in today's economic world.

For the past fifty years or so second hand shops selling 'nearly new' clothing, used washing machines, cookers, furniture and general *bric-a-brac* have been a feature of every parade of shops in towns and cities. They were on the estates, arterial roads, and even larger ones in city centres. They are disappearing because of their high overheads compared with subsidised charity shops selling similar items. As more premises become vacant more charity shops move in and the downward spiral continues. In Sheffield even the most up market local shopping areas have as many as ten charity shops.

The volunteer workers in charity shops are usually older people who want to donate time to helping others and seriously believe they are doing a good job for the community. On one level that is most certainly true, but there are other considerations. Where the charity shop now is there was very likely once a vibrant small business which gave casual work to *young people*. In the past many young people got their first chance of 'paid work', usually on Saturday morning, doing such jobs as cleaning, making tea, running errands, helping or serving customers etc. Those job opportunities no longer exist and it is a loss to the community. There is very little evidence to suggest that young people do similar things in charity shops. So now charity shops are having a direct and indirect effect on local society. Is it surprising that the young find other things to do - in some cases activities that get them criticised by the very people who have taken away the jobs they used to do?

Also the local second hand shop used to be the place where people could sell some of their surplus personal items that had been purchased in 'better times'. Those days are gone as well because nearly all the small second hand shops have closed. Now there is nowhere to get any money when you are

desperate - and this has been brought about by well meaning (and often well-off) people who have donated their surplus goods to charity shops. Because sales are now lower the second hand dealer has less money to offer sellers so the downward spiral takes another turn and eventually they have to close. In Sheffield there are far fewer second hand shops than there were ten years ago and their demise is mirrored by the growth in charity shops. All that has happened is that businesses paying full and proper cost have been replaced by highly subsidised charity shops.

*Terrence Jacobs is a well-known trader in the Sheffield area. His website is [www.djtools-direct.co.uk](http://www.djtools-direct.co.uk).*

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