

# Red Tories, Cameronians, and capitalism for the workers

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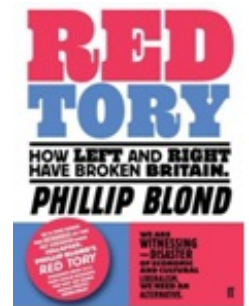
[Rodney Barker](#) analyses the influences on political philosopher Philip Blond, whose [Red-Tory](#) book is credited with many of the ideas in the Conservatives' manifesto.



Philip Blond's advocacy of Red Toryism has attracted attention by its very novelty. Strange bedfellows are always worth a headline, and Blond's paradoxical juxtaposition has joined 'champagne socialists', 'anarcho-capitalists' and 'revolutionary nostalgia' in the handy bag of eye catching bill board titles. Blond places himself in a tradition which runs back to Chesterton and Belloc at the start of the last century.

The comparison is not as risk free as he seems to think. The Chesterbelloc, as Shaw satirized it, was at the far end of the populist scale in seeing enemies everywhere. The attraction of conjuring up bogey men has always been a short cut to political support,\* and the Chesterbelloc did it in spadefulls: protestants, Jews, socialists, liberals, intellectuals.

Blond's aversion to the modern state and much of modern society, and his recommendation that we re-establish small scale community life and a kind of guild-socialist control of our economic life has plenty of ancestors on both left and right, from William Morris on the one hand and Edmund Burke's 'little platoon' on the other. But its links and affinities with the past may be stronger than its links and affinities with David Cameron's Conservative Party.



The Conservative manifesto's ['Invitation to Join the Government of Great Britain'](#) has rather more of 'we politicians have done as much as we can, now you lot sort it out' than of a serious devolution or shedding of power. The perils, for central government and national parties of devolving power were quickly illustrated when the Blair government tried it after 1997. In Chesterton and Belloc's day it might have been possible to hope that however small the community, it would be a fragment of a greater homogeneous whole. Alex Salmond, Rhodri Morgan, and Ken Livingstone were painful reminders, for centralists, that things have changed.

\* The political use of tales about enemies is something I've discussed in my most recent book Rodney Barker, *Making Enemies*, 2007.