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Edited by Richard Kelly

NEW LABOUR, NEW CONSTITUTION?

Philip Norton looks at the Blair/Brown legacy

ANARCHY IN THE UK?

Ashley Hern says yes

GENERATION i-Pod

Jacqueline Briggs surveys youth and politics

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POLITICAL EDUCATION FORUM

April 2010

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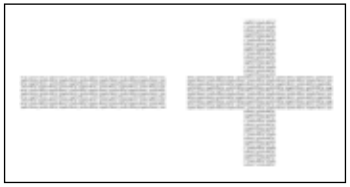

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Generation i-Pod: from apathy to engagement

Jacqueline Briggs considers the nature of political participation among young people

> Young people are not necessarily apathetic but that they are disinterested and disillusioned with mainstream politics.

Youth political participation is a topical issue in 2010. Not only are politicians and political scientists alike interested in whether younger voters will turn out in the 2010 General Election; there is an ongoing debate as to whether the voting age should be lowered. In part this drive to lower the voting age is driven by a desire to re-engage young people with the political process. A recent survey by the Children's Society stated that Stephen Fry is the most popular choice for Prime Minister and that fewer than one in ten young people (9 per cent) think that politicians can be trusted.

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More worryingly perhaps, only 8 per cent of the same respondents believe that politicians actually care about young people's views.

Debate often centres upon the extent to which young people are interested in politics. Research conducted by political scientists (cf. Henn *et al*., 2005) has discovered that young people are not necessarily apathetic but that they are disinterested and disillusioned with mainstream politics. As Alex Delaney, the 25 year old Chair of the British Youth Council, states, 'Young people are not apathetic about politics but perhaps they are about politicians' (Watson, 2010: 13). Young people are often, for example, concerned about issues like animal rights and environmentalism and will tend to focus upon single issue campaigns. They are often active in informal politics and participate in boycotts, protests and campaigns.

It can not be argued, therefore, that young people dislike political issues and political debate: they are simply unimpressed with the major political parties. Aside from the recent expenses scandal, given that the average age of a Member of Parliament is 50.6 years of age (up from 49 in 1997), it is no wonder perhaps that young people do not feel a great connection. Indeed, 56 per cent of MPs elected in 2005 (393) were over the age of 50. Perhaps the election of more, younger MPs, such as the election of the current youngest MP - 27 year old Chloe Smith for Norwich North in July 2009 - may go some way towards redressing the balance. But there is still a long way to travel before the green benches have a youthful look to them.

Recently, there has been a focus specifically upon whether the voting age should be lowered from 18 to 16 years of age. Universal franchise was achieved in 1928 when the voting age for women was lowered to 21 and put them on a par with men. The Labour Government lowered the voting age for both sexes in 1969 to 18. If it believed young people would help Labour to victory at the 1970 General Election, they were mistaken; indeed an estimated 25 to 33 per cent had not registered (Abrams, 1970: 320). The campaign for lowering the voting age to 16 is gathering momentum. Key arguments espoused include the fact that many young people are part of the workforce, paying taxes, serving in the armed forces and that young people can get married with the consent of one of their parents. As one young Member of the UK Youth Parliament, James Evans, put it rather graphically (when participating in a debate held in the House of Commons Chamber on the 30th October 2009), they can sleep with their MP (given the age of heterosexual and homosexual consent) and yet they cannot vote for him or her!

Arguments against giving 16 year olds the vote centre primarily upon there being an insufficient demand for this change in the law. Indeed, a recent BBC programme fronted by Melissa Suffield, the actress who plays Lucy Beale in Eastenders, showed that she did not draw a huge crowd when she tried, via *Facebook*, to get a flash-mob of 16 and 17 year olds to descend on Trafalgar Square to show their support for lowering the voting age. Cowley and Denver (2004) have also clearly highlighted the case against lowering the voting age. The key arguments usually cited by those opposed to lowering the voting age include the point that most 16 and 17 year olds are not sufficiently mature to use those rights properly (Youth Citizenship Commission, 2008: 23). This relates to levels of personal development and to the process of socialisation. It is also said that they have other avenues to articulate their views, for example, youth councils and youth parliaments. The 'tax payer' argument is refuted by those who claim that even very young children pay VAT on pocket-money purchases.

> **Young people see informal channels as potentially more productive**

Clearly, opinion is divided over the question of lowering the voting age. The dramatic decline in turnout amongst the youngest voters (the 18-24 year old classification) from an estimated 68 per cent at the 1997 General Election (Weinstein, 2004: 188), to 39 per cent in 2001 and then a further drop in 2005 to 37 per cent raises questions about a sector of society that is potentially dropping off the political radar. The Hansard Society's *Audit of Political Engagement 7* (March, 2010), found that only 27 per cent of 18 to 24s are certain to vote at the 2010 Election compared with 80 per cent of those aged 75 and above. A recent survey by the Electoral Commission found that 56 per cent of 17-24 year olds may not be on the electoral register. How can we justify lowering the voting age further if the youngest voters are already failing to participate in the electoral process?

Others respond to this by saying that turnout is irrelevant, that the crux of the issue is about having the right to vote or not to vote. As the Votes at 16 Coalition noted, '… the recorded level of turnout is in reality subordinate to rights-based arguments about who should be entitled to vote'. In addition, the increasing commercialisation of young people, their disposable income and the fact that they are economic purchasers mean that they should also be able to participate in the political process. Policy makers need to recognise the changing face of childhood.

If policy transfer is considered, there may be lessons to be learnt from the experience of other countries/crown dependencies. Recently, the Isle of Man (2006), Jersey (2007) and Guernsey (2007) have all lowered the voting age from 18 to 16. Additionally, Austria (2007) has become the first country out of the 27 nations of the European Union to lower the voting age to 16. Brazil, Nicaragua and Cuba are other countries where 16 year olds have the right to vote. Granted, the argument is not necessarily that there is a desire to emulate some of these countries but, certainly, there appears to be a dynamism taking place. In addition to the experience of other countries, there is also support for the idea in certain key quarters. The Liberal Democrats, for example, are firmly in favour of the idea, as are the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru.

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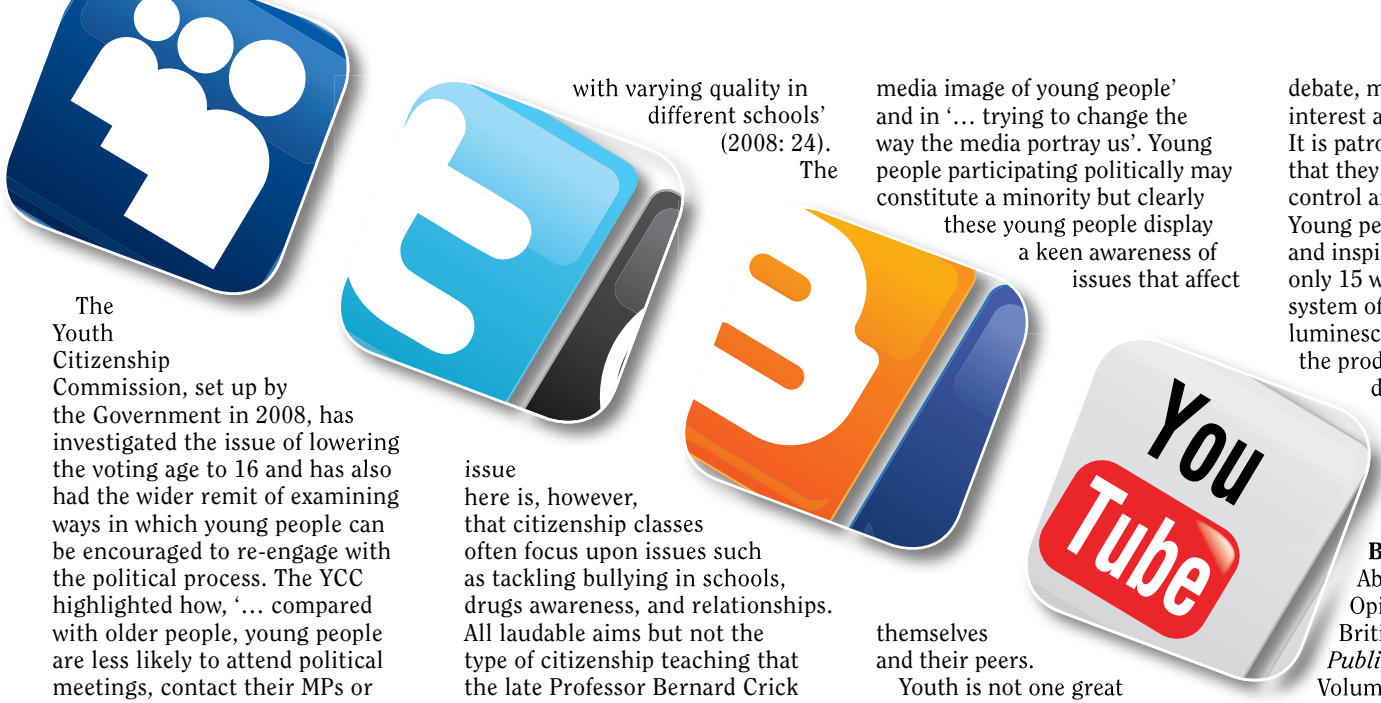

The Youth Citizenship Commission, set up by the Government in 2008, has investigated the issue of lowering the voting age to 16 and has also had the wider remit of examining ways in which young people can be encouraged to re-engage with the political process. The YCC highlighted how, '… compared with older people, young people are less likely to attend political meetings, contact their MPs or join a political party' (Youth Citizenship Commision, 2008: 9). They too highlight that levels of youth political participation might be low in mainstream politics but that young people often participate in more informal ways. They found that 82 per cent of young people do not trust politicians and that 76 per cent of young people do not feel that they can influence government decisions. No surprise, therefore, that young people see informal channels as potentially more productive.

A key way in which young people can be encouraged to take more of an interest in politics and to participate in politics is through the education system. In particular, citizenship teaching could be used to re-engage the youth cohort. Citizenship teaching has been compulsory in schools in England since 2002. As the Youth Citizenship Commission highlights, citizenship teaching '… is in its infancy, with varying quality in different schools' (2008: 24). The issue here is, however, that citizenship classes often focus upon issues such as tackling bullying in schools, drugs awareness, and relationships. All laudable aims but not the type of citizenship teaching that the late Professor Bernard Crick envisaged when he first proposed citizenship teaching. The idea was that these sessions would be used to teach young people about the key institutions, how laws are made, how the electoral system works, etc. If the Citizenship curricula reverts to the type of lessons envisaged by Professor Crick, we will perhaps start to see young people developing a firm understanding of and key interest in the political process.

A case study of Lincolnshire Youth Cabinet reveals these young politicos to be erudite, vibrant and full of ideas. One of these young politicos stated that for her the key issue is transport. Her priority is '… getting better transport and better travel prices for young people in Lincolnshire'. This issue is all the more important given the rural nature of Lincolnshire and the fact that young people, in particular, need access to reliable, affordable transport. Another interviewee expressed an interest in the '… media image of young people' and in '… trying to change the way the media portray us'. Young people participating politically may constitute a minority but clearly these young people display a keen awareness of issues that affect themselves and their peers.

Youth is not one great amorphous mass. There are as many divisions amongst young people as there are unifying aspects but questions must be asked when we see such low levels of political participation amongst a particular sector of society. The debate in the House of Commons in October 2009, the first time the Commons was used as a debating chamber by non-MPs, whereby 300 members of the UK Youth Parliament graced the seats, can surely be seen as a positive move. Chaired by the Speaker, John Bercow, the debates were dynamic and topics included youth crime, whether the voting age should be lowered to 16 years of age, and free university education.

Young people are not disinterested in politics but appear less than enamoured by mainstream politics. The 'buzz', for many, comes through an interest in specific issues such as environmentalism and animal rights. Young people are, self-evidently, the future. Events such as the Commons debate, may serve to spread political interest amongst our young people. It is patronising for adults to believe that they must constantly direct, control and chaperone young people. Young people can be bold, innovative and inspirational. Louis Braille was only 15 when he devised the braille system of writing; the Glo-sheet luminescent device was apparently the product of a ten year old. Adults do not have a monopoly on creativity and dynamism. The question now is: should they have one on political discussion?

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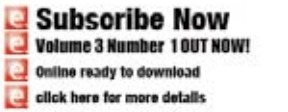

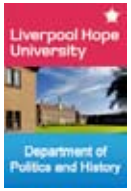

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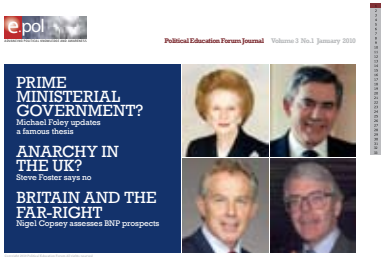

The future of e cologism: A lighter shade of green?

Robert Garner looks at the political options facing those who are 'keen to green'

As with other ideologies, environmentalism or ecologism (the distinction, as we will see below, is important) should be seen in its historical context. Just as liberalism and socialism emerged at the time of the industrial revolution, the growth of environmentalism should be seen as a consequence of the effects of the industrial revolution. How we ought to deal with environmental problems, and for whom we ought to protect the environment, is the subject matter of environmentalism as an ideology.

Radical and Reformist Versions

A useful way into the character of environmental thought is to note that, broadly speaking, it is possible to identify two mutually exclusive categories. On the one hand is the reformist approach (often described as shallow or light green). On the other is the radical approach (sometimes described as deep ecology or dark green). The key difference between these approaches is that the reformist strand sees environmentalism as a concern that can be incorporated into the existing agendas of political parties and governments. That is, it is seen as a single-issue concern which is not necessarily inconsistent with a broad range of ideologies. This is the common-sense view of what environmentalism is all about. According to this view, it is the politics of catalytic converters, of recycling, of energy saving light bulbs. By contrast, ecology, properly stated, is regarded by its advocates as a distinct political ideology requiring a radical rethinking of our economic, philosophical and political principles. As such, it is very different from other ideologies like conservatism, liberalism and socialism.

Both radical and reformist versions of environmentalism can be contrasted with a so-called 'Promethean' ideology which challenges the view that environmental degradation presents a serious problem for society. It is based on the principle that human ingenuity is such that there are no problems that cannot be solved if only we put our mind to it (for a modern statement of this position see Lomborg, 2001). The debate between light and dark green versions of environmentalism can be better understood if we explore what they have to say about the economic, philosophical and political dimensions of the debate.

The Limits to Growth

The first area which distinguishes ecologism from environmentalism is in what it has to say about economic growth. The radical, ecological, position argues that economic growth is incompatible with environmental protection. In other words, you can have one or the other but not both. Any attempt to grow the economy will inevitably lead to environmental degradation, and any attempt to protect the environment will have negative implications for economic growth. In order to protect the environment, in other words, it is necessary for us to live under a very different economic order.

This radical position is mainly an empirical claim, although it does have a normative theme too. In the latter case, economic growth is seen as undesirable not because of its environmental consequences but because it is intrinsically bad. In other words, some greens regard a life without the striving for material prosperity as much more fulfilling and worthwhile. It is the empirical claim, though, that has held sway. Here, it is argued that there are material limits to growth, and that unless production and consumption levels and population growth are reduced to a sustainable level, then environmental disaster will befall us.

This empirical claim got its impetus from a report called 'The Limits to Growth' published by a group of American scientists in 1972 (Meadows, 1972; 1992). Their conclusion, that current trends of economic growth are unsustainable, was based upon factoring in a number of variables – such as pollution, resource

use, population growth - into a computer programme and trying to predict the consequences of continuing on our present path. What they found was that it is no use implementing solutions to individual problems as they arise since this merely leads ultimately to the same cataclysmic outcome.

For example, imagine that a solution was found for resource depletion, such as the discovery of a new source of oil, or even the development of a new source of renewable energy such as wind power. The effect of this, it was argued, would be to deal with the problem of resource depletion, but at the cost of unsustainable levels of pollution caused by maintaining levels of production. What is more, these environmental problems will grow in an exponential, rather than a linear, way, so that a crisis point of unsustainability will occur much quicker than we can imagine. We already, they suggest, may have reached the point of no return.

The 'Limits' report has been criticised on a number of grounds, most notably for the fact that it has proven to be unduly pessimistic. Economic growth has continued to increase, not least with the industrialisation of large parts of the developing world, and yet environment catastrophe has not yet occurred. Having said that, the Limits to Growth report was written before the identification of climate change, and some of the most pessimistic scenarios presented in relation to this issue do echo the doom-laden tone of the 'Limits' report. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the reformist position, the pessimism of the radical claims are caused by their failure to realise that economic growth can be compatible with environmental protection. This is the language of sustainable development.

The absence of conflict between environmental protection and economic growth is the major thrust of the so-called 'ecological modernisation' approach (Hajer, 1997). Advocates of this approach point, for example, to the use of renewable resources as a source of economic growth, and the growth of economic activity in the production of environmentally benign products. In addition, they would also point to the economic costs of not acting to protect the environment, thus challenging the radical assertion that there is a trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection.

A striking illustration of this was provided by the Stern Report on climate change commissioned by the British Government (1996). Stern, a former chief economist with the World Bank, argued, in a lengthy report, that if we do nothing about climate change it will have severe economic consequences. It is therefore economically beneficial in the long-term for governments to act on climate change, despite the short-term economic costs this will involve.

Competing Ethics

The second source of disagreement between radical and reformist strands of environmentalism is concerned with ethics. Environmental ethics asks *for whom* should we protect the environment? Reformist environmentalists, like all traditional ideologies, adopt an anthropocentric, or human-centred, ethic. That is, they argue that nature, beyond humans, does not have intrinsic value. So, for example, the cutting down of a tree, or the degradation of a whole habitat, does not raise any ethical implications for the tree or habitat itself, only for those humans who may benefit or lose out because of it. Only humans (and perhaps some animals), then, have intrinsic value. The only value nature has is in relation to us. Thus, there may be anthropocentric grounds for cutting down the tree – in terms, for instance, of economic benefits – and there may be anthropocentric grounds for not cutting down the tree – in terms, for instance, of the aesthetic pleasure we get from trees and their role in acting as sinks for CO^2, the major cause of climate change.

By contrast, radical ecologists adopt an ecocentric, rather than an anthropocentric, view of the world. For them, nature has intrinsic value, so that what we do to nature has ethical implications, not just for humans, but for nature too (see Fox, 1984 and Naess, 1973). So, when we consider the ethical consequences of cutting down a tree, we need to consider not just the interests of humans, but those of the tree too. Ecologists, therefore, adopt a very distinctive ethic which distinguishes it from all other ideologies. Indeed, by extending moral concern to nature as a whole – including all living things as well as inanimate objects such as mountains and rivers – radical ecology is even more far-reaching than an animal rights ethic.

However, it is important to note that radical ecologists are not necessarily claiming that all parts of nature are morally equal (although some do), only that nature has some intrinsic value that we have to consider when taking political decisions. The radical implications of this position becomes clear when we consider that the adoption of an ecocentric ethic could mean that we should sometimes sacrifice the interests of humans if, by so doing, we protect the interests of nature.

All of this may sound overly academic and lacking in political relevance. After all, the reality of political power surely is that human interests will always predominate. Whilst this is a truism, it should also be remembered that political conflicts over the environment often occur when the intrinsic value of the natural world is invoked by one group of humans against the human-centred, usually economic, interests of another. A classic example here is the issue of whaling.

An international body to regulate whaling (the International Whaling Commission - IWC) was set up by whaling nations in the 1940s. The aim of this organisation was the anthropocentric one of trying to ensure that enough whales were left to continue hunting them. Over the years, however, the membership of the IWC has expanded to include nations with no interest in whaling. These new entrants secured a moratorium on commercial whaling, not because they want whale stocks to recover but largely because they oppose whaling which they perceive as cruel. In other words, their opposition is based on their perception of the intrinsic value of whales. Conflict in the IWC is endemic because the participants have very different ethical perspectives. The context is that, as whale stocks have begun to recover, whaling nations have sought to end the moratorium, but this has been rejected by other nations whose opposition to whaling is not based on an anthropocentric motive.

Political Structure

The final area which enables us to distinguish between a reformist environmentalism and a radical ecologism is concerned with political structure. Radical ecologists argue that in order for environmental objectives to be achieved it is necessary for radical social and political change. By contrast, reformist environmentalists argue that environmental solutions can co-exist with existing social and political structures.

Radical ecologists are not uniformly agreed on what form this radical political change should take. In the first place, there is an authoritarian strain within some Green writing (Ophuls, 1973). Most famous or infamous here is the work of Garrett Hardin (1968). Hardin argued that left to their own devices people will always despoil the natural environment through greed and naivety. Humans, therefore, need to be directed by a strong state, not least in reproduction habits so that population increases can be reversed. This kind of authoritarian analysis, which includes very illiberal attitudes towards the poor in the developing world, was most apparent in the 1970s at a

time when dire warnings were being made about the state of the environment and the dangers of doing nothing. At this time, authoritarian solutions were seen as particularly appropriate because time to do something to reverse environmental degradation was thought to be running out. In this context, democracy was seen as a luxury we could ill-afford.

By contrast, most radical Greens now advocate decentralised, small-scale, self-sufficient anarchist type communities linked together by an informal authority structure (see Sale, 1984 and Schumacher). Such anarchist-style communities are attractive from an ecological perspective because they will reduce or eliminate large-scale industrial production, people will live closer to the natural world, and such egalitarian and participatory communities will promote social cohesion and give greater meaning to people's lives. Other Greens are much more sanguine about the ability of such communities to solve global environmental problems (Goodin, 1992).

Conclusion

It will be seen that ecological thought is much more radical than reformist environmentalism. The former's approach to the economy and to ethics certainly makes it a distinctive ideology, requiring far-reaching change and a separate Green Party to promote its objectives. In political terms, ecologism requires far-reaching change, although disagreements exist on the nature of this change. Moreover, in the political arena, ecologists tend to borrow from other traditions of political thought - not least anarchism.

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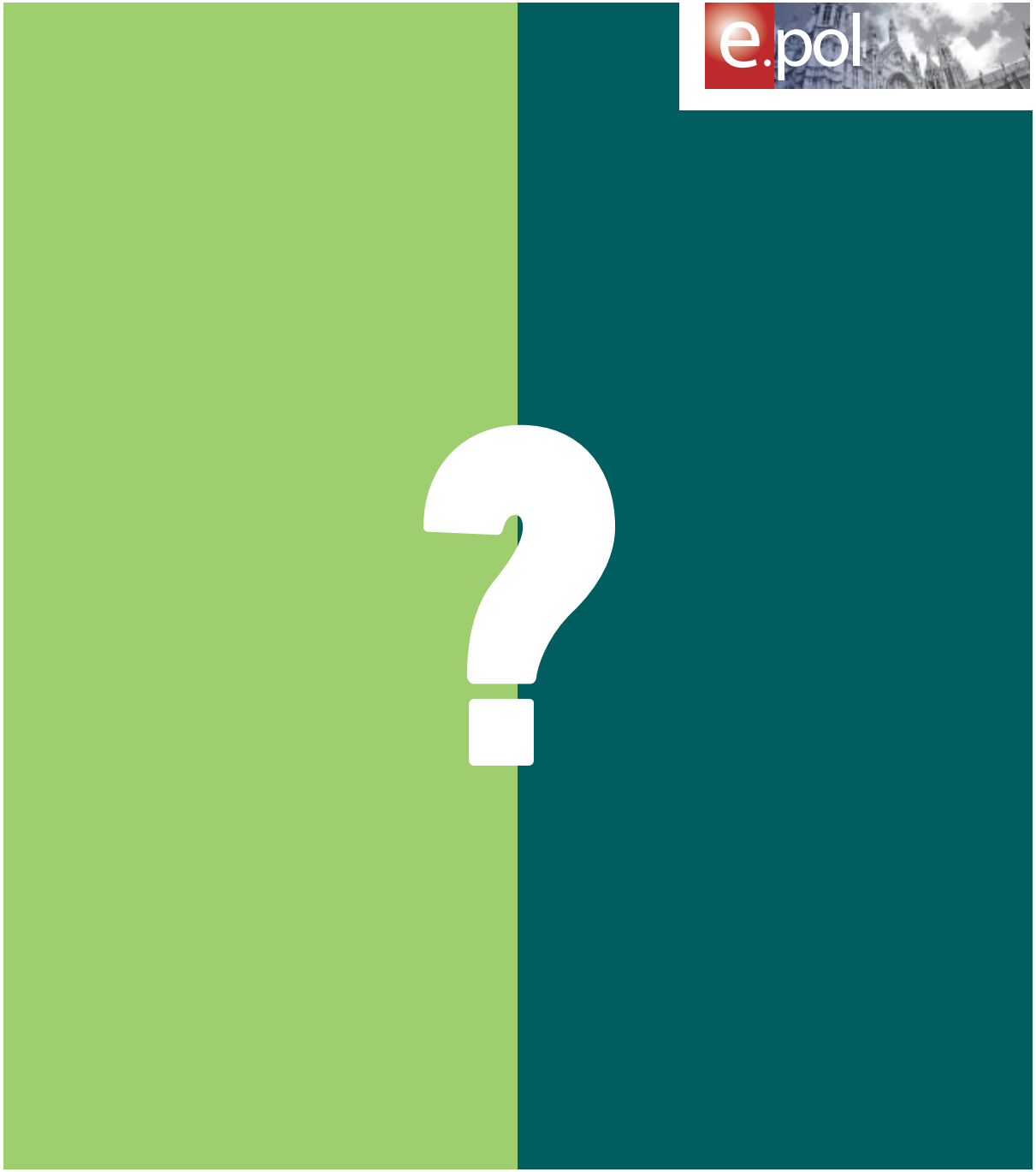

> In the UK too there has been much debate about multiculturalism and integration with far greater emphasis placed on adaptation by immigrant newcomers who need to demonstrate their understanding of UK society

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IMMIGRATION: Problems and Perspectives

Andrew Geddes examines the resurgence of a thorny and perilous issue

What's the problem with immigration? Scarcely a day goes by without some reference in the news media to issues, problems and challenges raised by immigration. These may be related to the economic impacts of immigration, to the numbers of migrants, to the countries they come from, or to their capacity to 'integrate' in the countries that they move to.

Immigration issues are evident across the EU. For example in Spain and Italy there is frequent reference to the plight of 'illegal immigrants' trying to enter the countries by boat, often at tremendous personal risk and with terrible loss of life. In both these countries there has been - at times, agonised - debate about the impacts of immigration and the move towards a multicultural society in countries that were previously known for emigration rather than immigration. In the UK, the debate has been quite strongly focused on the numbers of migrants entering the country since the end of the 1990s. In the UK too there has been much debate about multiculturalism and integration with far greater emphasis placed on adaptation by immigrant newcomers who need to demonstrate their understanding of UK society and languages before they

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can acquire citizenship. This emphasis on adaptation is a trend evident in France, Germany and the Netherlands too.

The EU is also very active in the areas of migration and asylum policy. Since the Amsterdam Treaty, which came into force in 1997, it is now fair to say that there is a common migration and asylum policy. This does not cover all policy areas, but is now a central component of the strategic context within which migration policy is formulated and implemented. The EU also provides a rights framework for free movement. This has led to highly significant 'intra-EU mobility'. In 2006, 1.2 million of the 3.5 million people who settled in a new country of residence within the EU did so from another member state. Of those that moved to Germany in 2006, 64.2 per cent did so from another EU state. In Denmark the figure was 50.5 per cent and in Belgium 49.8 per cent. In the UK, nearly a quarter (24.3 per cent) of those who entered the UK did so on the basis of EU free movement provisions. This intra-EU mobility is significant in scale, but these people are not 'immigrants' as traditionally understood because they move as EU citizens according to rights extended by the EU treaty framework.

This all suggests that 'the problem' is complex and multi-faceted and that simple assertions about the politics of immigration in Europe are unlikely to capture these rather more complicated realities. A key reason for this is that the motives for movements are highly diverse. People may move from one country to another for a wide variety of reasons. We can now take a look at these and, by doing so, get a sense of the diversity of migrant flows to Europe.

Labour migration

People may move for economic reasons to seek work, which seems straightforward enough, but if we look more closely we see that this is actually a broad category encompassing a wide range of motives. People may move into higher or lower skilled work that may be shorter or longer term. European countries have developed complicated legal frameworks to govern labour migration, i.e. to say who can enter, on what basis and for what duration. The UK has a points system (similar to Australia and Canada) that assigns points based on factors such as people's educational and business background. The EU has created a 'Blue Card' which tries to create a common framework for the admission of highly skilled workers, although does not impinge on the ability of member states to decide how many people will be allowed to enter as labour migrants. In general, though, this is an area where the EU has relatively little influence.

Family migration

A key reason that people move is to join with family members. In 2008, 62 per cent of migration into Portugal was family migration, in France it was 59 per cent, 47 per cent in the Netherlands and 42 per cent in Italy. At the lower end of the scale, 23 per cent of permanent-type immigration to Germany was family migration while 26 per cent and 32 per cent were the figures in Denmark and the UK respectively (OECD, 2008: 36). The EU's role in this area has been limited as it is an issue that relates to admissions policy. A 2003 'Directive' on the right to family migration did create a legal basis for EU action, but this is only a weak framework and mainly replicates what member states are already doing without seeking improved or changed standards.

Asylum

An international legal framework – the Geneva Convention of 1951 – seeks to protect the rights of people fleeing persecution. All EU member states have agreed to abide by its principles but all have sought to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers. Indeed, the EU has been central to the politics of asylum and it is now fair to say that there is a common EU-wide asylum policy. Table 1 shows, the numbers of asylum-seekers across the EU and how numbers have tailed off. One reason for this is the resolution of the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia, which had been a key source of asylum-seekers going to EU member states, particularly Germany. In recent years, legislation at national and EU level has made it difficult to for asylum-seekers to get to the EU. Tighter and tougher border controls have, actually, forced many asylum-seekers into the category of 'illegal immigrants' which is the type of migration we look at next.

Table 1
Asylum seekers in the EU 1996-2007

Year	Number of asylum seekers
1996	227835
1997	242845
1998	295845
1999	352965
2000	379530
2001	375450
2002	385425
2003	306410
2004	238070
2005	234490
2006	196530

Source: Eurostat 2009

Illegal immigration

At the end of March 2009 a boat capsized off the Libyan coast killing most of the 200 people on board, believed to be en route to Italy. Meanwhile, the EU's border control agency, FRONTEX, was reporting that attempted illegal crossings at EU member states' land and sea border rose by 20 per cent between 2007 and 2008 (European Voice, April 16 2009). The terrible human tragedies involved in these incidents are central to the discussion of 'illegal immigration'. One thing to note immediately, however, is that most so-called illegal immigrants do not enter in the dangerous ways just described. Most actually enter legally (on a short –term permit, for example) and then 'over-stay'. The main reason for this is that they find work. This means that there are both 'push' factors at work as migrants seek to leave poorer countries and move to the rich EU. There are also 'pull' factors as there are spaces in the labour markets of EU member states for people whose migration status is irregular. In Italy, for example, a 2003 amnesty for irregular migrants led to more than 600,000 people regularising their status. Many of these worked in care homes, looking after elderly people or providing support in the homes of Italian families. The work they do is important and has become relied upon. It is too simplistic to portray this as some kind of external threat to the borders of countries such as Italy, because migration is also closely linked to the organisation of labour markets and welfare states.

This overview of key migration types shows the diversity of flows and the need to distinguish between the various motives

for movement. In fact, the term 'immigration' is analytically useless because of the diversity of flows and the need to develop a response that is sensitive to the types and forms of contemporary migration to Europe. It is also clear that immigration is likely to remain a key issue, which is the issue we now move on to discuss.

Migration futures

Migration is likely to play a key role in the future of EU politics, not least because the EU population is getting older. It is difficult to make predictions about population change, but EU demographic data have consistently shown declining birth rates. This has led to concern about the effects of an ageing population, which, in turn, has led to discussion about the role that migration can play in offsetting the effects of an ageing population.

In 2008, the EU population was 495.4 million people with four people of working age (15-64) for each person over the age of 65.

By 2060, it is projected that this ratio will be 2:1, i.e. 2 people in work for every person that is retired (assuming that retirement age remains at 65, of course).

These changes are not evenly distributed so, for example, Poland and Slovakia are projected to see an increase in the median age of their population by 15 years between 2008 and 2060 , whereas the increase in the median age is expected to be less than 5 years in Luxembourg, the UK, Germany, France, Sweden, Belgium and Finland.

Migration seems likely to be part of the solution to population ageing, but is not a magic bullet that will resolve the problem. There are three reasons for this. First, migrants get old too, which means that high and sustained levels of immigration would be needed. Second, there are other possible solutions such as an increase in the retirement age or increased female participation in the labour market that can also help address some of these problems. Third, it seems reasonable to suppose that high and sustained levels of immigration to EU member states would cause some political controversy.

Migration as problem and solution

So far we have looked at the issues only from the perspective of EU member states and the 'problems' they face. This is a major analytical weakness because international migration is an issue that cuts across domestic and international politics. To understand it we need to make connections between the domestic and the international. By doing so, we can see that two main drivers of international migration are conflict and inequality. It is misguided and short-sighted to imagine that immigration is some kind of 'external' threat to the EU when, in fact, there are close connections – often dating back for hundreds of years – between the countries that people move from and the countries they move too. These may have been based on colonial ties or, more recently, on global inequalities of wealth and on major international conflicts, not least in the Middle East. It is simply not possible to understand international migration without making these connections, and understanding that issues associated with international migration have a clear and important international political dimension.

If we think for a moment about what these connections might be, then we see that there is another way of looking at international migration. So far, we have focused on EU member states and seen that arguments for and against migration may focus on economic, human rights and security arguments. If we broaden the focus then we get new insight into these ways of understanding international migration and can begin to think more broadly and sensibly) about international migration as both a problem and a solution. It is wrong, misguided and short-sighted to only see international migration as 'a problem' to be 'solved' by ever more stringent border controls in economically developed states. Migration can also be a solution to hardship and repression in countries of origin and to labour market shortages and skills gaps in the countries that people move to.

International migration is a fact of life in international politics that requires debate and discussion that looks more carefully at types and forms of migration, makes connections between the domestic and the international and thinks seriously about migration as a problem - and solution - for the people that move and the people they go among.

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"Migration seems likely to be part of the solution to population ageing, but is not a magic bullet that will resolve the problem"

Socialism: Towards the Garbage Station?

Following his article in E-Pol 3,1 Matthew Hall examines the future of socialist theory

In 1989 Francis Fukuyama famously stated: "we are witnessing…not just the passing of a particular period of post war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution".

This suggested that socialism was a fundamentally flawed and failed experiment that should be confined to '*the dustbin of history*'. Similarly it has been argued that socialism has lost its relevance given that the productive relationships and nature of capitalism have been transformed to such an extent that it is no longer an intrinsically exploitative and alienating economic system. The decline of class, the separation of ownership from control and rising affluence in western capitalist societies have all been advanced as reasons why socialism lacks contemporary relevance or indeed, a constituency. Furthermore recent developments such as the advent of globalisation and post-modernism are often advanced by those who suggest socialism no longer has anything to offer. Such charges have been furthered by the willingness of social democratic parties to advocate free market capitalism and neo-liberalism. However, despite these criticisms, socialism remains a critical framework through which to explain contemporary developments in society, and an inspiration for those who seek an alternative to capitalism. This can clearly be demonstrated by focusing on both UK and global politics.

Contemporary UK politics

Since the post-war heyday of Keynesian social democracy, socialism has experienced something of a chequered history with its key adherents such as the Labour party either abandoning or revising central tenets of their ideological stance. Even during its heyday critics such as Ralph Miliband (1962) questioned the extent to which the Labour party was actually a socialist party, arguing that it "remains, in practice, what it has always been - a party of modest social reform in a capitalist system". However, debates concerning socialism have remained important in the context of Labour party politics.

Firstly much recent debate has centred on the role of New Labour and its relationship to socialism. In the 1970s faced with the consequences of economic decline, the Labour government wrestled with how best to balance the demands of its core supporters and the requirements of the British capitalist economy. Both Wilson, and then Callaghan proved unable to reconcile these demands and the government staggered ignominiously towards the Winter of Discontent and defeat in 1979.

In the early 1980s the Labour party famously lurched to the left under the leadership of Michael Foot and Tony Benn. They democratized the party, radicalised its stance and produced its most socialist manifesto ever in 1983, the much maligned, 'longest suicide note in history'. Since the defeat in 1983, successive Labour leaders moved the party closer to the centre ground, accepting key Thatcherite policies such as Right to Buy, privatisation and more broadly, free market capitalism; the hard left of the party was either marginalised or expelled. Links with the Trade Unions were also downplayed and (in 1995) Tony Blair succeeded where Hugh Gaitskell had failed in the 1950s, revising Clause IV of Labour's constitution in a way that removed any implicit commitment to the abolition of capitalism.

In the new Clause IV, commitments to common ownership and working class interests were gone, replaced by references to the 'dynamism of the free market' and the 'rigours of competition'. This acceptance of free market economics by New Labour came through the idea that there was no alternative, given the advent of globalisation, de-industrialisation, the failure of Keynesianism and the collapse of communism. It also signalled a level of acceptance of capitalism never before advocated by social democrats. For New Labour, capitalism was no longer 'the enemy' or even something that required taming. Rather, Labour would seek to harness a dynamic market economy for the wider benefit of all individuals in society. Thus they sought to marry free market policies to the greater good and individualism to community responsibility, while replacing social equality with social inclusion and meritocracy.

Once in power, New Labour stalwarts such as Peter Mandelson and Alan Milburn have consistently argued that they are the heirs to a long running social democratic tradition associated with Gaitskell and Crosland. They claim they have modernised social democracy for a changing, knowledge based world whilst retaining a concern for social justice and fairness. To

support these claims they point to policies such as the minimum wage, increased public spending on health and education, tax credits for lower income earners and a windfall tax on the privatised utilities. Anthony Giddens has given intellectual weight to this project in his book, *The Third Way* (1998), while academics such as Driver and Martell have argued that New Labour is 'post Thatcherite' and thus constitutes a distinctive social democratic project (1998).

Critics of New Labour have come from within and beyond the Labour party with many seeking to highlight the similarities between it and neo-liberalism and Thatcherism. Former Labour Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley famously stated that "Blair's Labour Party is not the Labour Party I joined". Other critics from within the party include old Labour stalwarts such as Tony Benn and Alan Simpson. Academics such as Colin Hay, David Coates and Bob Jessop stress the continuity with the policies of the previous Thatcherite governments. Stuart Hall argues that: "New Labour has a long-term strategy, a "project": the transformation of social democracy into a particular variant of free market neo-liberalism".

Still relevant?

Despite recent developments, it can be argued that socialism still has much to offer both in analysing UK society and politics. Even a cursory examination of contemporary British society highlights the fact that it remains vastly unequal. For example in 2005, UK society remained one of the most unequal in the OECD, with the richest 10% of UK society earning 9 times more than the poorest 10%. Indeed the Institute for Fiscal Studies claimed in 2005 that "income inequality was at its highest level since the 1940s". This alone suggests that poverty and inequality remain hallmark features of British society.

More broadly we can see inequality and elitism in UK society if we focus on education. Only 7% of UK children attend independent schools. For the 'top' public schools the average live in fee is c. £25,000 per annum. It hardly needs saying that with schooling fees often higher than the national average income, independent schooling is open primarily to those with wealth and other key resources such as knowledge. Turning to elite universities, research shows that whilst the percentage of those attending 'elite universities' from state schools has increased since 1997, there remains a large degree of disproportionality of representation between fee paying and state schools. For example, 45% of those attending Oxford in 2002-03 had attended a fee paying school.

Furthermore, The Sutton Trust (2005) notes the extent to which UK Judges and Barristers have also attended independent schools and/or Oxbridge: in 2004 84% of Barristers and 81% of Judges attended Oxbridge. Recent research has also highlighted the extent to which leading journalists can also be seen to have a similar educational background (Sutton Trust 2006) which over half of the UK's leading journalists having attended a fee paying school with 37% having attended the University of Oxford.

As such, socialists argue there is a persistent pattern of inequality in the UK education system. In this socio-economic elites, due to their advantages in terms of wealth, knowledge and power are able to access elite educational institutions in far greater proportions. This in turn leads them to have greater life chances and sees them occupy key positions in UK society in far greater numbers.

A similar trend of inequality and elitism can be seen in the composition of the Westminster Parliament. Of the 646 MPs after 2005, there were only 126 females and 520 males. Women are also significantly underrepresented in the Lords, Holyrood, Stormont and amongst the UK members of the European Parliament (Marsh 2008). There are currently only 15 MPs from an ethnic minority background. In the Lords the figure is only four per cent, with the appointments procedure based upon 'the great and the good' criteria clearly acting as an impediment in a society where structured inequality creates both a glass ceiling for women and ethnic minorities. Similar trends for the under representation of women and ethnic minorities can be detected among senior civil servants, where in 2005 women made up just 28 percent.

The educational background of MPs highlights a disproportionate representation of those who come from backgrounds of wealth, knowledge and power. The Sutton Trust (2005) showed that almost 32% of MPs had attended an Independent school, whilst only 7% of the population was educated in this way and a further 25% had attended state grammar schools which were academically selective. This research is supported by House of Commons research (SN 1528: 2005). Only 42% of MPs had attended a comprehensive school even though such schools account for the education of the majority of the UK's youngsters. 72% of MPs had attended university as compared to 34% for the population as whole, with 43% of those having attended one of the leading 13 universities and 27% having attended Oxbridge. Educational inequality amongst our MPs further demonstrates the extent of inequality and elitism in the UK.

In terms of previous occupation, the main groups represented amongst the current crop of MPs are professional occupations and business (House of Commons SN 1528: 2005). On the basis of the evidence it can be concluded that the majority of politicians are drawn from a socially exclusive background in which wealth, knowledge and power are the key resources and these are more likely to be available to those who have attended certain educational institutions and/or entered certain occupations. This trend is accentuated when senior government positions are assessed. Thus, we can talk about structured inequality in UK society based around class, gender and ethnicity.

This also raises questions regarding power and democracy in the UK. Whilst democracy suggests political equality and dispersal of power, closer analysis of British politics highlights inequalities of knowledge, wealth and power. Marsh and Hall (2007) argue that the UK political system is characterised by an elitist view of democracy referred to as The British Political Tradition (BPT). This dominant tradition owes much to the elitism of Burke and very little to the notion of equality. It stresses the mantra that 'politicians know best' and reduces popular participation to voting in periodic elections. In the BPT, governance is done by and largely for, the socio-economic elites. Critics of the BPT point to more participatory democratic notions and highlight the need for democratization to challenge structured inequality. Advocates of participatory democracy and constitutional reform, such as *New Politics Network*, *Unlock Democracy* and *Power 2010,* draw in part, from the socialist ideas and values.

Socialism and the modern world

Socialism also has much to offer when we turn our attention to contemporary global politics.

The dominance of free-market economics and the liberalisation of markets since the 1980s have facilitated the rise of the multi-national corporation and furthered the globalisation of capital. Socialists argue that the consequence of this is the widening gap between rich and poor globally and the 'structural adjustment' programmes which introduce free market capitalism in the developing world under the auspices of the WTO, IMF and World Bank. In the 21st century capitalism has become truly global. Capitalist ideas and culture are to be found everywhere. The world of globalisation is the world where multi-nationals such as McDonalds, Nike, Gap, Time Warner and Microsoft permeate all corners

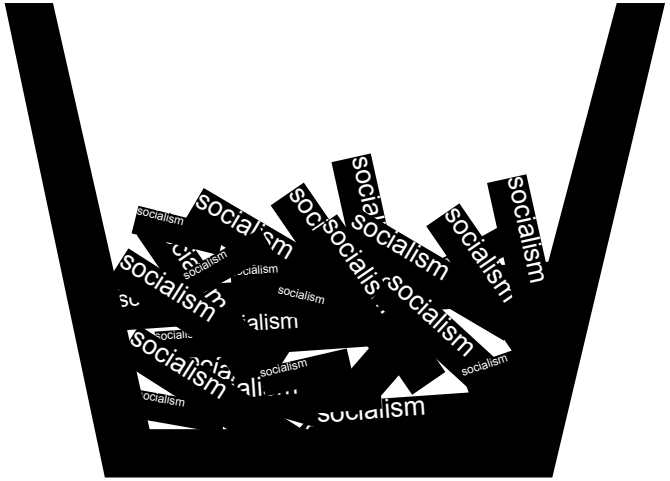
of planet and all aspects of our lives.

The experience of work in the era of globalisation is something that socialists still criticise. The sweatshops in the developing world where low pay and appalling working conditions are the norm make them resemble the 19th century factory. Meanwhile, the western world has seen the emergence of *large open plan offices*, *hot-desking* and *de-personalised working environments* alongside numerous other productivity-maximising enterprises that socialists view as both exploitative and alienating. Rather than lessening the workload, new technologies such as mobile phones and laptop computers allow the permeation of work beyond the workplace in ways that were not witnessed in earlier capitalism. Restless material acquisition and consumption driven by 24 hour advertising and new media technologies further suggests that all aspects of human life are now commodified. Thus, whilst the capitalist system in the West has developed more subtle forms of domination and control, it remains fundamentally flawed.

As with early industrial capitalism, critics of late modern capitalism have emerged who appeal to notions such as community, justice and equality. The work of the libertarian socialist Noam Chomsky raises fundamental questions concerning the nature of power and inequality on a global scale. Recent challenges to a global economic system, like the Trade Justice Movement, Drop the Debt or Live 8, could be seen as attempts to establish an alternative way in which to conceptualise international trade in a more equitable manner. The much vaunted rise of Post-Modernism has been analysed by Neo Marxists such as Frederic Jameson and is suggested to be the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'.

Furthermore, while socialist parties in the Western world has been re-evaluating and perhaps even, abandoning socialism, South American politics retains a large socialist influence. The governments of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia appeal to socialist ideas and principles. Chavez focuses on the ideals of Chilean Socialist Salvador Allende, and more broadly, democratic socialism. His programme of nationalisation, price controls and opposition to US imperialism all highlight his socialist tendencies. In Bolivia, Morales government has pursued a policy of nationalisation of the gas industry, increasing the minimum wage by 50% and social reform. Meanwhile, despite some reforms, Cuba remains a country controlled by the Communist party, which is defined constitutionally as: "the leading force of society and of the state".

Finally, in 2008 the world was hit by a financial crisis of a scale not witnessed since the 1930s. The 'Credit Crunch' began in the US Housing Market in 2007 but soon spread across the financial sector of the global economy with the collapse of Northern Rock in 2007 and Lehman Brothers in September 2008. This precipitated a global economic downturn where governments intervened. In the UK, the Labour government eventually took Northern Rock into public ownership and as the crisis continued bought large stakes in various high street banks to prevent them from collapsing. This fiscal stimulus will see the UK government's debt reach £1.5 trillion by 2014, with Alistair Darling promising a further £40 billion of support in November 2009. As governments globally adopted a similar strategy, the scale of government bailouts of both banks and industry grew to $10.8 trillion.



In 2009 in the US, Barack Obama managed to secure a $787 billion stimulus package to reflate the US economy. This widespread state intervention has been characterised as a return to the social democratic policies of the past with Keynesian style state intervention and an abandonment of the free market. Public money has been used to save and stabilise the global financial market and its institutions. Public ownership or nationalisation has also returned with the nationalisation of Northern Rock and stake-holding in other major banks. In 2009, Alistair Darling announced a new 50% tax rate for earnings over £150,000 which was seen by some as signalling a further rediscovery of socialism.

However, in the UK nationalisation has not been extended to other industries. Nor has a Keynesianism style approach been utilised in other economic sectors in the UK. We have not witnessed a rapid expansion of public spending on the public services or increases in welfare provision since the Credit Crunch. In fact public service spending has been constricted, although this could be a consequence of the sheer scale of the banking bailout. Also other changes to the banking sector have not been forthcoming such as the regulation of 'the bonus culture' promised by the G20.

For many socialists the causes of the crisis lie in the heart of capitalism and the values it promotes: avarice, competition and risk-taking for individual material gain. In this analysis, capitalism is an inherently unstable economic system, prone to both periodic crises and collapse and the exacerbation of inequality and poverty. For example, as a consequence of the financial crisis and economic depression, child poverty has increased dramatically: a fifth of children in the UK now live in a family where neither parent is in employment. Whilst a truly socialist alternative seems to be somewhat lacking or marginalised at the moment, it could be argued that socialism continues to offer an alternative view based upon harnessing the talents and abilities of all in the interests of fairness and equality.

Conclusion

In 1994 the late Ralph Miliband wrote:

"the notion that capitalism has been thoroughly transformed, and represents the best that humankind can ever hope to achieve, is a dreadful slur on the human race".

An economic system that enfranchises, empowers and rewards a fraction of the world's population, whilst creating vast inequalities of wealth, knowledge and power (as well as squandering countless resources and talents) cannot be the best that human creativity can achieve. As the 21st century progresses and the world faces the restless expansion of global corporations and the consequences of the financial crisis, the oft cited mantra that 'there is no alternative' looks more questionable than ever. The task for socialists in the 21st century is to confront capitalism's global dominance - and then find new ways to articulate their core values and visions

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THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT, THE FUTURE'S ANARCHIST

Following an article in the previous E-Pol, which derided anarchism's relevance, Ashley Hern offers a more supportive analysis

To many observers the parliamentary expenses scandal has illustrated how far politicians in Britain have become distanced from the electorate. Hearing our representatives defend their pecuniary peculations as an entitlement extending from their public service has conflated with broader concerns that the UK political class has become a self perpetuating elite, drawn from a narrow pool of party apparatchiks with little experience of life beyond parliamentary internships and research forums. Beyond the general moral indignation and belief that all politicians are 'in on it,' deeper political questions arise. Should we be reproaching government for breaking promises and abusing its power, and demand that it reforms? Or is it the case that "the Thing, the Thing itself is the Abuse."

Two eminent political scientists, Anthony King and Ivor Crewe, are currently investigating why modern British Government has made so many mistakes in recent years. Recent British governments of both political parties have made costly ones: the Social Security Act of 1986, the poll tax of 1989, the abolition of the 10p income rate in 2008, the various calamitous IT projects, to name but a few. They were also eminently avoidable. Professor King suggests that this represents a problem in the methods of government, but not necessarily any inherent flaws in the British political system. I would suggest the problems cannot be remedied by incremental reform. The answers lie with anarchism.

Against the state

Anarchists are usually lumped in with Marxists as a leftist revolutionary political movement that reacted against the economic and social changes of the 19th century in the west. While both challenge the economic and political *status quo*, they fundamentally differ in their diagnosis of society's ills. Marxists identified the means of the production as the central problem, but for anarchists it was the state. Anarchism, in its essence, is thus a critique of authority. To all anarchists the values of liberty and autonomy

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are everything and, since the state is the embodiment of authority, it should be denied vigorously. The state undermines the ability of humans to reach their full potential as free and autonomous moral individuals, its control preventing them from making decisions for themselves. In short, it represents 'institutionalised infantilisation'. As the classical 19th century French anarchist Proudhon argued:

To be governed is to be kept in sight, inspected, spied upon, directed, law driven, numbered, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue to do so... to be governed is to be at every operation, at every transaction, noted, registered, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorised, admonished, forbidden, corrected, punished..... that is government.

The problem with authority is that it can easily be separated from the original need it was created to serve, and the need to subject others becomes an end in itself. Government therefore becomes a vested interest aiming to maintain its power and privilege and thus subject everything to its own will, using coercion to prevent opposition.

As anarchists argue, it is futile attempting to subordinate the state to your own purposes by taking it over. This would corrupt any original good intentions, and authority would continue to be exercised in its own interest. As the Russian anarchist Bakunin famously argued, in a critique of Marxism: "the establishment of a universal dictatorship, collective or individual, a dictatorship that would create the post of a kind of chief engineer of world revolution... that such a dictatorship would in itself suffice to kill revolution and warp and paralyse all popular movements." (Bakunin 1872).

Dead doctrine or lively tradition?

In the popular mind 'anarchy' is associated with the perceived consequences that would result should the state not exist - chaos, destruction of property and violence. Nihilistic men with bombs attempting to kill leaders are another common idea, usually from G. K. Chesterton novels. That anarchism seems counter-intuitive is testament, perhaps, to how the state has conditioned us to see it as axiomatic rather than contingent. "Anarchy" originates from the Greek word *anarchia* which means an absence of government. Rather than representing an unintentional collapse, anarchism sees the disappearance of authority as a positive political objective: its anti-authoritarianism opposes all mediated, centralised and hierarchical power.

This is not restricted to 'government' in the narrow sense as it also applies to other forms of institutionalised domination and control, which includes religion and capitalism, though some would see these as liberating forces. Anarchists are not simply oppositional, nor are they simply anti-statist. Many anarchists actively research and celebrate spontaneous forms of voluntary organisation by communities and individuals, which provide alternatives to the state.

Given its opposition to hierarchical structures, anarchism cannot be understood as a conventional political movement. In fact most working definitions are often incomplete. As Peter Marshall put it, "anarchism is like a river with many currents and eddies, constantly changing and being refreshed by new surges but always moving towards the wide ocean of freedom." Critics argue that anarchism is thus incoherent: embracing groups such as anarcho-communists and anarcho-capitalists whose ideas are almost mutually exclusive. This ignores how tensions between individual and social anarchism, and how they theorise the form of social organisation best suited to achieving individual freedom and autonomy, are central to the anarchist tradition. One way of understanding this is that social anarchists - the mutualists, collectivists, communists, communitarians, and syndicalists - represent the mainstream groups usually found in Europe, while the USA has been the main centre for those who developed (indirectly) Max Stirner warned the individual would be lost in the community. Those who identify themselves as anarchists struggle to reconcile these different trends as part of the same movement, but this is much sectarian argument as evidence for different paradigms of thought. This crude statement does underpin the difficulty of identifying the anarchist tradition, but this does not invalidate it but rather show "the limitations of a crude understanding of a tradition as consisting in a chain of acceptance of a single body of authoritative statements."

Unity comes from the initial diagnosis of authority and the state as the enemy of individual autonomy and a protest against oppression and injustice by authority. This has articulated itself in an enormous variety of ways. Marshall, for example, has identified 'anarchist' groups (in essence if not in name) operating across the world, whose views were shaped by the political and social context of their own cultures. The anarchist movements in Spain during the 1930s, and the Zapatista movement of Mexico of the early 20th century (which still operates today), would not necessarily be replicated in 21st century Western Europe. There is also the question of anachronism. Surely, many argue, anarchism is a relic of the Enlightenment, suitable for artisans and peasants who have long since disappeared, such as the Swiss watchmakers who supported Bakunin.

I would disagree. One of the flaws in many major ideologies (such as Marxism) is their belief that an overly schematic theory can be universally applied. Yet, rather than offering one solution, there are many anarchist possibilities. There is a clear tradition, from the English religious reformer John Wycliffe of the 14th century (in whose eyes spiritual renewal was impossible without the abolition of a corrupt and oppressive Church) to the anti-globalisation campaigners of Reclaim the Streets – especially if one replaces 'Church' with 'hierarchical and authoritarian society, including capitalism.'

Many scholars of anarchism such as Woodcock have stressed that anarchism is a modern phenomenon, focusing on key thinkers such as Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. While arguing for relevance, such studies have inevitably given the impression that anarchism is a relic, to be studied as a dead cultural specimen. However, anarchism continues to flourish and has adopted itself to the 21st century, to the extent that we can now talk of small 'a' anarchists (as opposed to capital 'A' Anarchists) who are more influenced by the ideas and spirit of anarchism than dogmatic adherence of the canon of 'classical' anarchists. This pragmatic spirit can be seen in the anti-globalisation movement, whose dynamism is a direct descendant of the anarchist tradition, invigorated by the New Left criticisms of authority that appeared in the 1960s and 70s. Therefore anarchism continues to be a living, complex tradition that is continually reinvented and is as relevant as ever when facing the colossal issues that face us globally and locally.

Anarchy UK

A common criticism of anarchism is that its oppositional nature means it can never be satisfied with its own solutions. A purist anarchist approach would involve the moral transformation of individuals, and a 'revolution from below.' While such utopian thoughts are not irrelevant, there are several trends in 21st century Britain that indicate an anarchist future.

Decentralisation of power

All political parties are now aware of the electoral advantage of giving power back "to the people." Britain's democratic deficit is alarming, and perhaps explains the rise of protest parties such as the BNP. The Conservatives have presented themselves as the party of 'localism' as they aspire to exceed Labour's policies of devolution and elected mayors. It is hard to take these demands seriously, as many political party schemes appear superficial, and may be designed to benefit local party organisations and local activists with links to organised pressure groups rather than to allow local communities genuine self-government. However, the centralised model has proved incapable of creating sustainable

local political communities, and discontent at state incompetence will only be resolved by a dismantling of the system as it now stands and its replacement by autonomous local forms of government that federate for issues of common interest.

Local economic networks

Our economy is built on specialisation based on the division of labour, which has underpinned industrialisation. The post-war economic boom has been the central plank of the social contract since 1945 –our autonomy is traded for material affluence. However, this is environmentally unsustainable. The transport infrastructure, required to move goods around the country, is entirely dependent on oil prices which are going up in the long-term, while food production's focus on 'just-in-time' production consumes enormous resources to provide us with convenience. Arguably, the state would be an essential part of strategic planning to overcome this, but the reality is different. Governments have historically done little, except protect those with a vested interest in the *status quo*, and comfort the populace with the pretence that something is being done. States have produced no binding agreements on limiting carbon emissions, despite the universal recognition of the problem.

The environmental argument is a central dynamic to recent manifestations of anarchism. The answer of anarcho-primitivists, that salvation comes only by dismantling civilisation, is morally compelling but practically bewildering. However 'Primitivism' is a negative stereotype attached to discredit anarchism. Peter Kropotkin, the 19th century Russian anarchist, was no primitivist in his contention that all human history was a struggle between egalitarian mutual aid and hierarchical self-assertion. His *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1901) has a clear practical solution showing that agricultural and industrial production should be done on a local basis aiming (as far as possible) at self-sufficiency. His analysis, while the data is outdated, seems the best solution for a low carbon future.

The end of the state monopoly

The state would argue that the provision of universal health care and education is sufficient evidence that its existence is for the common good. Statists would also contend that anarchism has no answer to satisfying the health and educational needs of 65 million people, especially the poorest. Any survey of relevant professionals, however, would list numerous grievances. For example, the mushrooming growth of 'managerialism', whereby the state enforces and extends its control, has undermined the autonomy and individuals that provide these services. An elite of politicians and bureaucrats conspire to further their own interests and hides behind the imprecise, banal language of liberalism that suggests empathy ('concerns' 'guidance' etc.). Yet all too often such language is a vehicle for coercion.

Indeed, managerialism has infected the whole body politic, with its impenetrable jargon smothering professionals with meaningless terms that must be used if your career is to progress. Accountability is impossible as those who manage the system also decide their own criteria for failure, which ensures permanent success. Rather than lifting people from poverty, the state entraps them in poverty and ill health by increasing servility and dependence. The foundation of the NHS actually destroyed many successful working class mutual aid institutions such as the Peckham Health Centre, and those organised by the South Wales miners. The increased state control of education, aiming to eliminate poor standards, has been a dismal failure in Britain with enormous investment producing dubious benefits to standards, and a system that is "shallow as well as narrow." If Britain is to achieve a better society we need to allow a network of co-operative associations, organized from the bottom upwards and freely federated and permitting real autonomy for the individual.

Unhelpful Hobbes

As de Jasay argued "The state is either a necessity, a convenience; or it is an imposition shored up by the delusion that it is a necessity or a convenience." The social contract theory, posited since Hobbes, deludes us that we cannot rationally resolve our differences without the state. Anarchism is accused of utopianism, and a naive belief in human good. I would argue that instead it is more pessimistic about humans seeking to exercise authority over others, than it is about those who seek to co-operate and foster mutual self-interest. The truly naive are those who believe that authority is the panacea for all our problems.

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> There are a number of reasons that relate to a certain 'liberalization' of socialism in Gramsci's ideas, which seem to make them (unlike classical Marxism) attuned to our liberalised society.

GRAMSCI AND THE STATE

Mark McNally examines an enduring influence upon political

Over seventy years after his death, the writings of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) continue to inform and inspire not only left-wing politics, but the study of politics itself. This achievement is a remarkable one - especially when we consider that Gramsci's best work was produced under the most harrowing conditions in a fascist prison cell in the 1930s, and moreover, that other Marxist thinkers have fallen out of favour in Western intellectual circles since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This raises the question of why Gramsci's work enjoys as much salience today as it did almost forty years ago, when his political thought was first introduced into the English-speaking world. In this article I hope to shed some light on the continuing popularity of Gramsci's political thought, arguing that it is his unique contribution to our understanding of the complex power structure of the modern capitalist state - and the *ideological* strategy that would be required to resist and overcome it - that gives his ideas a continuing attraction. Illuminating how he came to bestow such a rich and enduring legacy, however, will first require a closer look at the man and his times.

The Failure of Revolution

Part of the allure of Gramsci is undoubtedly the fact that he was no armchair socialist. In fact, he was at the frontline of the workers' struggle in Italy in his own day and paid a very high price for its failure. In the period after the successful Russian Revolution (1917) and the end of the First World War, millions of workers across Europe were streaming into the party and trade union movements of organised labour under a mounting wave of optimism that what had been achieved in Russia could now be repeated across the world. This was reflected by the establishment in 1919 of the Third International (The Comintern)

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in Moscow, one that sought to bring all revolutionary socialist parties together in a worldwide struggle against capitalism.

In Italy Gramsci was centrally involved in what has become known to history as the *Biennio Rosso* (two red years 1919-20) when workers briefly took control of production in the factories of Turin and set out - but ultimately failed - to spread their movement all across the country. Part of the consequences of the threat and failure of the Factory Council Movement was the rise of Italian fascism which enjoyed not only the economic support of capitalist industrialists determined to bring increasingly rebellious workers to heel, but also a mass of middle class proprietors and poor peasants who saw too in the proletarian movement a menace to their own interests as well as that of their country.

By 1923, with Mussolini tightening his grip on power in Rome, and with the Comintern recording no proletarian victories in any other county in Europe, the tide of revolutionary optimism was receding rapidly. It was in this climate that Gramsci took over the reins of the Italian Communist Party in 1924 and set about revising the revolutionary strategy of the Party. This was to be a short-lived experiment; after barely three years at the helm of the PCI Gramsci was arrested and imprisoned in October 1927 in a wave of fascist reaction. Yet Gramsci's misfortune would bring us some of the most thoughtful, inspiring and insightful writings ever produced on the Left.

The 'Integral' State

Although Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were in many ways a continuation of his attempts to understand the revolutionary failure of the 1920s, there is no doubt that he was acutely aware that he was radically rethinking some of the key theories of political power. Herein lies the wider appeal of Gramsci's political thought today; and nowhere is this more evident than in his novel conception of the state.

While liberals were inclined to view the power of the modern state as based on the consent of the governed, Marxists before Gramsci generally regarded the state as having a deeper foundation in the uneven distribution of economic power in society. It was for them, as Marx proclaimed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), a political organ in which the capitalist class held 'exclusive political sway…a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.' The basis of state power was thus contested, but there was nevertheless considerable agreement that the state itself was a set of centralized institutions - the executive, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy and its means of coercion (the army and police) – with a monopoly of physical force in any given territory (as Max Weber famously put it).

In his efforts to understand how the modern capitalist state had proved so resilient against the proletarian onslaught of the 1920s, Gramsci offered a new conception of the state that was to expand significantly on the *relational* and *ideological* character of power already existing in the Marxist tradition. While Gramsci did not dispute the class character of state power or indeed its coercive nature, he did however insist that Marxism's narrow focus on economic domination and the capture of centralized power ('the dictatorship of the proletariat') had led to a failure to comprehend the complex relations that the modern bourgeois state had built up in 'civil society' with the so-called intermediary sectors of society, viz, political parties, trade unions, business organisations, the media, educational and religious institutions and all sorts of voluntary associations. For Gramsci, these 'superstructures of civil society' were like 'the trench systems of modern warfare'; 'a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks' through which 'the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules'.

This notion of the state as a set of well-articulated relations between central government, civil society and the masses involving both coercion and consent is what Gramsci called 'the integral state'. Part of its attraction for contemporary scholars of politics is not only its pervasive conception of power, but also its explanation for the workers' attachment to the capitalist state. It was this, of course, which Gramsci and Comintern leaders had been unable to overcome in the 1920s; and it formed a central theme in Gramsci's prison writings where it was most often related to the concept of hegemony.

Hegemony, Resistance and Ideology

The concept of hegemony has become synonymous with Antonio Gramsci's name. In Gramsci's work it has a double purchase. Firstly, Gramsci uses hegemony to capture the idea of the kind of supremacy achieved by the bourgeoisie over other groups in society when it has established an 'integral state'. While 'leadership' of this nature presupposes an economic foundation in society (ownership of the means of production), and the ability to deploy coercion when necessary, Gramsci is at pains, throughout the *Prison Notebooks,* to focus on the manufacture of consent among the masses. In Gramsci's view, this ideological bond, between workers and ruling class, was something Marxists had critically overlooked.

Secondly, and most importantly, Gramsci clearly used the concept of hegemony to develop a new strategy of resistance to bourgeois rule. Building on the discussions that had been taking place at the Comintern in the mid-1920s, on the specific character the Revolution would have to take in the West, Gramsci now introduced into Marxist revolutionary theory the following novel idea:

A social group can, indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well.

The effect of this principle was to shift the focus of resistance away from the traditional Marxist emphasis on seizing the organs of the state and the means of production, to the ideological front where the battle for hegemony had to be won before the former could be successfully accomplished.

For Gramsci it was the revolutionary party and its legions of intellectuals who would play the key role in this ideological war - against the bourgeoisie - for 'intellectual and moral leadership'. Gramsci insisted that, for this to be achieved, the Party would have to abandon its 'economic-corporate' or 'sectarian' mentality and embrace compromise with other groups, incorporating their interests and identities into its world-view and taking up their struggles as its own. The Party's ideology would thus take on a 'national-popular' character and form what Gramsci called 'the cement' that held the historical bloc of anti-capitalist forces together, welding them into 'a collective will'. This was indeed the crucial prelude to full-scale revolution - and its absence was precisely what explained the revolutionary failure both in Italy and across Europe in the years after the First World War.

Gramsci, Liberalism and the Contemporary Left

Why then has Gramsci's hegemony theory proved such an enduring attraction to the contemporary left? There are a number of reasons that relate to a certain 'liberalization' of socialism in Gramsci's ideas, which seem to make them (unlike classical Marxism) attuned to our liberalised society.

Firstly, Gramsci's emphasis on an ideological revolution is much more attractive to the contemporary left, which has for the most part assigned violent revolutionary action to history. This is hardly surprising given the kind of authoritarian regimes established by such means throughout the 20th century. But while Gramsci saw the battle for

hegemony as a prelude to full-scale political and economic revolution, there has been a tendency among modern Gramscians to downplay this aspect of his thought, regarding it unsuitable to contemporary, reformist conditions. Gramsci's hegemony has thus been into a full-scale reformist doctrine. Suffice to say the author of the *Prison Notebooks* would not have been impressed.

Secondly, Gramsci's notion of government by consent gives his thought a certain liberal-democratic flavour that resonates with our own age. Indeed, it could even be argued that the notion of consent that informs Gramsci's hegemony is more robust than that of liberalism. For although contemporary liberals are inclined to see the liberal-democratic state's authority and legitimacy as founded on the consent of the people - through its periodic expression in popular elections – Gramsci's hegemony suggests that consent must be constantly renewed and reforged via the various subaltern groups in civil society. In some respects this is a deeper vision of democratic politics, one that retains an appeal for the contemporary left which has long been dissatisfied with the minimal quality of democratic governance in the West.

Finally, there is built into the very logic of Gramsci's hegemony the assumption of a society that is made up of plural and historically-formed elements whose differences and social demands cannot be reduced to those of the two major class forces (bourgeoisie and proletariat). It is for this reason that Gramsci sees hegemony as an ideologically *creative* enterprise that must be attuned to each nation's specific historical circumstances. In a world where the contemporary Left has had to recognise the numerical decline of industrial workers, this Gramscian conception - of a counter-hegemonic alliance of forces - has proved particularly attractive. Indeed, it has strong echoes with the Anti-globalization Movement and its efforts to mobilize a coalition of progressive forces against capitalism.

However, once again the logic of such pluralism can be taken far beyond Gramsci's intentions. For it must be recalled that, while Gramsci recognised this diversity, he insisted that, if they were to be effective, there would have to be forged a new ideological unity between the anti-capitalist forces. For Gramsci, that unity could only be achieved by 'a fundamental social class' capable of organising and managing the economic and productive apparatus of society. There are those on the contemporary Left - and no doubt within the Anti-globalization Movement itself - who see this emphasis on ideological unity, and the accordance of a privileged role to the working-class, as an attempt to thwart the spontaneous plurality and difference of progressive movements. But Gramsci would point to the 1920s, when loosely-formed, divided and leaderless working-class movements proved quite worthless in the battle against capitalist hegemony. The ghost of Antonio Gramsci thus continues to detain the contemporary Left - and is unlikely to recede in the foreseeable future.

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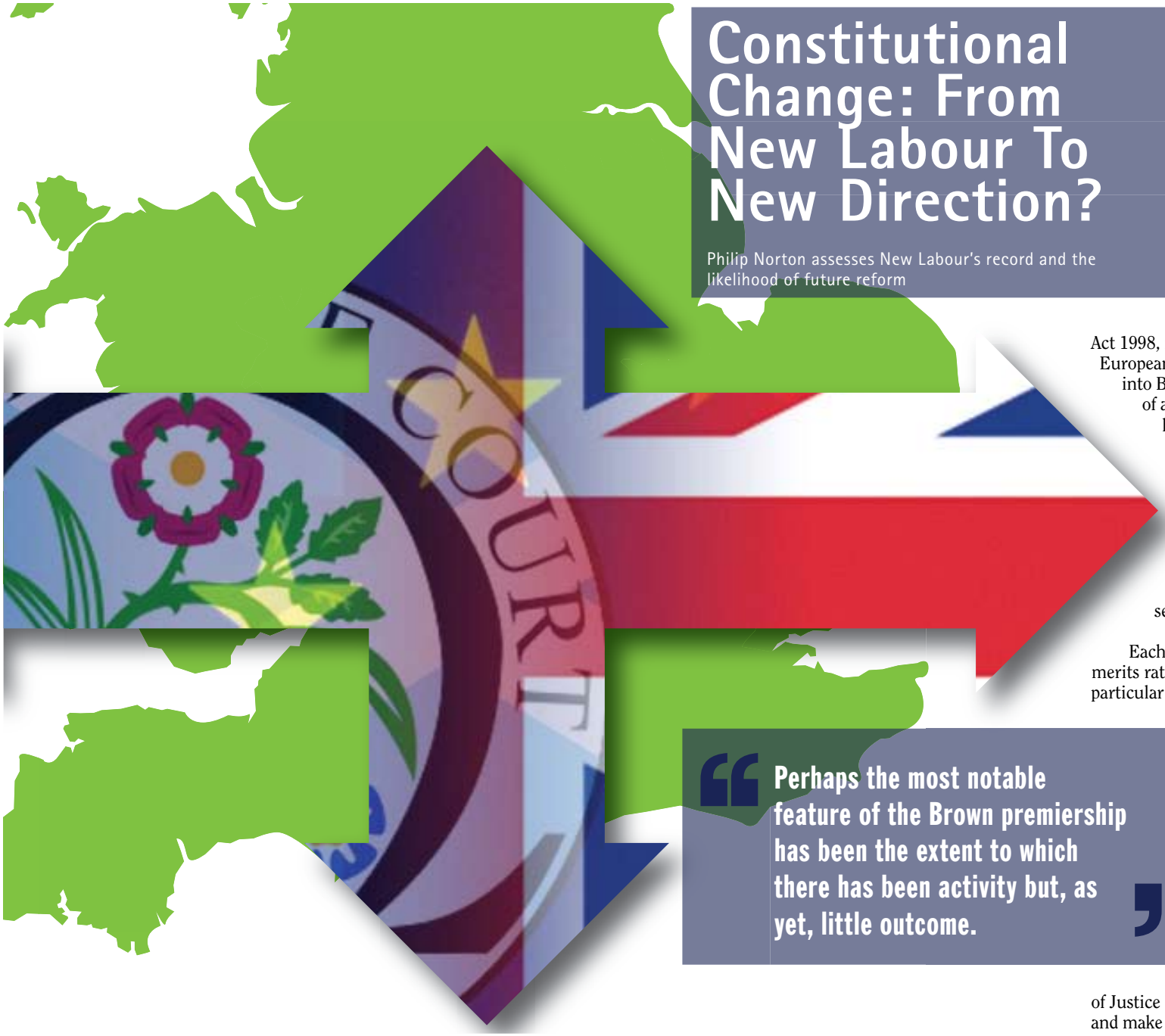

Constitutional Change: From New Labour To New Direction?

Philip Norton assesses New Labour's record and the likelihood of future reform

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The Labour Government of Tony Blair (1997-2007) implemented constitutional changes which, in combination, substantially changed the contours of the British constitution. Foremost among them were the devolution of power to elected bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the enactment of the Human Rights Act 1998, incorporating most of the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British law. We have also seen the creation of a Supreme Court, the removal of most hereditary peers from the House of Lords, and implementation of a Freedom of Information Act. There was the more frequent use of referendums. Taken with British membership of the European Union, and further treaty changes, the scale of constitutional change, according to Robert Stevens (2002, p. xiii), had not been seen since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Each of these changes was justified on its particular merits rather than deriving from a clear view of a particular type of constitution deemed appropriate for the United Kingdom. Constitutional change was being achieved on a bottom-up basis rather than from the top down (Norton 2007). The changes were largely undertaken without regard to their effect on Parliament. When Gordon Brown entered 10 Downing Street, his initial priority was further constitutional change, but change focused on Parliament. As part of a *Governance of Britain* agenda – embodied in a Green Paper published within weeks of his taking office (Ministry of Justice 2007) – he wanted to strengthen Parliament and make the Government more accountable.

> **Perhaps the most notable feature of the Brown premiership has been the extent to which there has been activity but, as yet, little outcome.**

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Since the articulation of the *Governance of Britain* agenda, the Government has been deflected by economic recession. Despite that, the Prime Minister has pressed on with a reform agenda. At the same time, the Leader of the Opposition, David Cameron, has been proposing ideas for constitutional change. What, then, has happened under the Brown Government? What may happen under a Cameron Government?

The Brown Premiership

Perhaps the most notable feature of the Brown premiership has been the extent to which there has been activity but, as yet, little outcome. The main activity has largely taken the form of a fire-fighting action: that is, responding to the crisis over MPs' expenses. This has included the passage of the Parliamentary Standards Act, handing over responsibility for handling MPs' expenses to an independent body. However, when it comes to being pro-active and pursuing the *Governance of Britain* agenda, bodies have been established to come up with proposals - but little as yet has been implemented.

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill.

The Government published a draft Constitutional Renewal Bill in 2008 which included provisions for transferring the prerogative power to approve treaties from Government to Parliament and putting the civil service on a statutory basis. It was subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee of the two Houses, which reported in July 2008. At the end of the 2008-09 parliamentary session, the Government introduced the Bill, now named the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill, into the House of Commons. It included new provisions relating to the House of Lords.

Select Committee on House of Commons reform. The Prime Minister supported the creation of a new select committee to address the scheduling of business and appointment of members of select committees as well as to consider 'enabling the public to initiate debates and proceedings in the House'. Chaired by Dr Tony Wright MP, the Committee was appointed in July 2009 and reported, as it was instructed to do, by November 2009 (House of Commons Reform Committee, 2009). It recommended that chairs and members of select committees be elected by secret ballot and that the proposal be pursued of enabling the public to utilise e-petitions, perhaps with a view to triggering debates in the Commons.

Speaker's Conference. The Prime Minister also initiated the creation of a Speaker's Conference, a rarely employed procedure for discussing issues relating to the electoral process. On 12 November 2008, the House agreed to establish such a conference to consider and make recommendations for 'rectifying the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large'. Though by the beginning of 2010 the Conference had published two interim reports, it was given until the end of the Parliament to complete its inquiries.

In June 2009, the Prime Minister also announced that he wanted to move forward on producing a new statement of rights and responsibilities of British citizens, consultation on the merits of a written constitution, further development of devolution, and completion of reform of the House of Lords. He also wanted debate on the possibility of electoral reform. The Queen's Speech in November 2009 included the announcement that draft legislation on reform of the House of Lords would be published in the new session.

There has thus been a great deal of activity, though at the beginning of 2010 there was little to show for it. Although the Select Committee had moved quickly and produced its report, as required by the House, in November, no substantive change had occurred as a result of all this activity. Although the Prime Minister had committed himself to the reform agenda, there appeared little determination to carry through change within the limited time available. The Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill was late in being introduced in Parliament. It had to be carried over from one session to the next. The Government agreed to give it two additional days in committee, over and above those originally timetabled, but at the beginning of 2010 these additional days had not been allocated. Parliamentarians began to doubt that it would be possible to get the Bill through in its entirety before the end of the Parliament. The Speaker's Conference had until the end of the Parliament to complete its work. The publication of draft legislation on reform of the House of Lords would not lead to any legislative action in the present Parliament: the Government had long accepted that substantive reform was for a new Parliament. Little public attention was given to the issue of a written constitution or electoral reform.

Though there may be some changes as a result of all this activity, it is not clear how much will be achieved – and how much will be achieved in the next Parliament. If the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill has not completed all its stages by the time of dissolution, some provisions may be salvaged as a result of all-party agreement in the so-called 'wash-up' period (the days between the announcement of an election and the dissolution of Parliament, when parties discuss what they will accept of legislation still before Parliament). Some of the recommendations of the Reform Committee may be implemented in the remainder of the Parliament or at the start of the next one. However, any changes that are achieved are likely to be modest relative to the sheer energy expended on discussing change and shapeless in relation to a comprehensive reform agenda. Like the reforms of the Blair era, they will lack intellectual coherence.

Change Under Cameron ?

Are we likely to see any significant change under a Cameron Government? The primary focus will be the economy. However, there is the prospect of some constitutional change. The changes themselves relate to no constitutional reform agenda. A Conservative Government is likely to want to retain the basic features of the existing constitution – in essence, adopt a truly conservative approach (see Norton 2005) – but nonetheless introduce piecemeal reform. There are two items in particular on the agenda. One is to reduce the size of the House of Commons. The

other is to introduce a Bill to protect parliamentary sovereignty.

In May 2009, David Cameron indicated his preference for a manifesto commitment to reduce the size of the House of Commons, initially by ten per cent. The intention is to move early on this proposal in a new Parliament with the new boundaries being in place for the next general election. He floated the possibility of fixed-term parliaments. He also favoured a referendum on any further transfer of powers to the European Union. Subsequent ratification of the Lisbon Treaty meant that it was too late, in his view, to hold a referendum on that treaty, but he favoured a Bill to refer any future treaty provisions transferring power to a referendum. In January 2010, Martin Howe QC published a pamphlet making the case for a Sovereignty Bill, to ensure that EU law did not have primacy over parliamentary sovereignty (Howe 2010). Shadow Foreign Secretary, William Hague, said that the case made by Howe was 'compelling' and would play an important part in the work of a Conservative Government.

In his article, Cameron also envisaged pushing power from the centre to local government, including provision for more locally-elected mayors, the transfer of more prerogative powers to Parliament, and more changes within the House of Commons to give members more say over the timetable and greater sway over the executive.

Lingering Uncertainty

Whoever is returned to office at the next election, the issue of constitutional change will remain on the agenda. Whichever party is in office, there will be a declared intention to strengthen the House of Commons. On wider constitutional change, there will be the lack of a clear top-down approach, each party pursuing particular changes on the presumed merits of each case. The only difference is that, if David Cameron delivers on a Sovereignty Bill and a smaller House of Commons, the constitutional changes wrought under a Conservative Government may be more substantial than those achieved under the Government of Gordon Brown. Whether or not this is going to be the case should be apparent when the Queen delivers her Speech at the start of the new Parliament.

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Civil Liberties in Britain today

Mark Rathbone investigates how civil liberties have become a major political issue in Britain.

If the state of the economy and the public finances are likely to the main issue in the 2010 general election campaign, civil liberties may not be far behind. How did this issue, hardly seen as one of much significance in the 1990s, become so important in the first decade of the twenty-first century?

In May 1997, it seemed as if a new era for civil liberties in Britain was dawning. The incoming Labour Government was committed to the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law. The Human Rights Act reached the statute book in November 1998 and came into force on 2 October 2000. Yet even before the Act had come into force, the Terrorism Act 2000 had raised doubts about Labour's commitment to civil liberties, especially Section 44, which facilitated the detention of terrorist suspects. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 were then used repeatedly by ministers to justify further encroachments on long-established civil liberties.

Debate on civil liberties since 2001 has focused principally on five areas: the **detention** of suspects for prolonged periods without trial, **restrictions** on freedom of speech, **intrusion** into the privacy of citizens, complicity in the **torture** of suspects in other countries, and attacks on the **Human Rights Act**.

Detention of suspects

Controversy about the detention of suspects followed the passage of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, part 4 of which allowed internment of terrorist suspects without trial. In December 2003, the Newton Committee (a committee of the Privy Council) called for the government to end detention without trial, after an investigation into suspects held at Belmarsh Prison. It was also condemned by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, the UN Committee on Torture and the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. Finally the Law Lords in December 2004 ruled that Part 4 of the 2001 Act was unlawful.

The Government's response to this barrage of condemnation, however, was far from contrite. In January 2005, the Home Secretary Charles Clarke announced that internment would be replaced by

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Control Orders, imposing a variety of restrictions on suspects, including 18-hour curfews, bans on unapproved visitors and on access to mobile phones or the internet, & revoking of passports. These measures, contained in the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, could be taken against anyone, whether a UK citizen or a foreign national, on the instruction of the Home Secretary, with no disclosure of the evidence against them, no trial and no right of appeal.

Control Orders received a predictably bad press, the official anti-terrorism watchdog Lord Carlile QC, saying that they fell *'not far short of house arrest, and certainly inhibit normal life considerably'*. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights was also strongly critical of their use, and in April 2006, a High Court Judge, Mr Justice Sullivan, condemned the use of Control Orders in very strong terms: *'The thin veneer of legality ... cannot disguise the reality that controlees' rights under the convention are being determined not by an independent court ... but by executive decision-making untrammeled by any prospect of effective judicial supervision.'* [*The Guardian*, 13 April 2006].

The Government rode out this criticism, and subsequent rows about proposals for extending the period of detention without trial led this aspect of the government's anti-terror legislation to slip under the radar to some extent, until the civil liberties pressure group Liberty began a new campaign against them, 'Unsafe Unfair' in 2009. *'One of the worst weapons in the Government's misguided 'War on Terror','* according to Rachel Yates of Liberty, *'are control orders, which are still with us four years on, despite promises that they would be a temporary measure.'*

The Government's response to the London bombings on 7 July 2005 was to propose the extension of the period for which suspects could be held without charge from two weeks to 90 days. This provoked the first Commons defeat for Blair in November 2005, but MPs eventually accepted the compromise of extending the period to 28 days.

The Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 reached the statute book only after another bruising row about civil liberties. The original bill included an attempt by the Brown Government to extend detention without charge to 42 days. Though passed by the Commons in June 2008 by a majority of just nine votes, it was abandoned in October 2008 after it was defeated in the House of Lords by 309 votes to 118. 'Charge or Release', a high-profile campaign by Liberty, had pointed out that even 28 days' detention without charge was far longer than allowed in many other countries, including the USA, which had suffered far greater loss of life through terrorist attacks. It was also four times as long as was the case in Britain in the 1970s when the country was facing a prolonged IRA terrorist campaign. Former Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith also opposed the proposal, arguing that, *'You shouldn't keep people in without trial longer than you need to. It's a basic civil liberty ... I find it hard to see how once you've got to 28 days and haven't found enough evidence to charge them, that things are going to change fundamentally.'*

Restrictions on freedom of speech

Examples of how anti-terrorism legislation could be abused to suppress even mild political dissent multiplied in 2005. At the Labour Party Conference, an elderly delegate, Walter Wolfgang, was forcibly ejected from the Conference and briefly detained under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 for shouting 'Rubbish' twice during a speech by Jack Straw, an act for which the word 'terrorism' seems wildly inappropriate. The following month, Maya Evans was arrested under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 for reading out the names of 97 British soldiers killed in Iraq at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, an act which seemed to stretch the definition of "serious organised crime" to breaking point.

The creation in the Terrorism Act 2006 of a new offence of glorifying terrorism also caused much controversy. Blair argued that this would allow action to be taken against people carrying placards glorifying the 7 July bombers. Civil liberties campaigners, however, claimed that this was an unacceptable curtailment of free speech, which might, for example, make it an offence to praise those responsible for the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, and that those who were genuinely inciting terrorist acts could be dealt with under existing laws. Although the House of Lords rejected this section of the Terrorism Bill five times, the Commons voted by 315 to 277 in February 2006 to reinstate it.

Intrusion into the privacy of citizens

In the same month as the Terrorism Act received the royal assent, the House of Commons passed the third reading of another controversial measure, the Identity Cards Bill. The Labour Government has repeatedly claimed that ID cards and the creation of a national biometric database are vital weapons in the fight against terrorism.

Criticism, led by a one-issue pressure-group, NO2ID, has focused on the cost, the extent of compulsion, the information the state will hold on individual citizens and the efficacy of the measure against terrorists. The recording of details, such as fingerprints and eye or facial scans, and their placing on a national biometric database will, it is argued, give the state far more information about citizens than ever before and *'fundamentally change the relationship between individual and state'* [Liberty]. Moreover, its effectiveness against terrorism is questioned by critics, who point out that the 9/11 terrorists and the Madrid bombers all had valid ID documentation.

There has been a gradual climb-down from compulsory ID cards, culminating in Gordon Brown's promise to the Labour Party Conference in September 2009: *"And so, conference, I can say to you today: in the next parliament, there will be no compulsory ID cards for British citizens."* Despite this, however, every British citizen who renews or applies for a new passport will automatically be registered on the national identity database anyway. NO2ID argues that the programme to build linked databases - the National Identity Register - which will be shared between the passport and identity schemes has not been scrapped.

Complicity in torture of suspects in other countrie

Another issue is the use of evidence obtained by torture in other countries and the CIA 'extraordinary rendition' flights on which suspects were transferred to other countries for questioning.

"The rendition program has allowed agents of the United States to detain foreign nationals without any legal process," according to the American Civil Liberties Union in June 2005, *"and, primarily through counterparts in foreign intelligence agencies, to employ brutal interrogation methods that would be impermissible under federal or international law, as a means of obtaining information from suspects."* A 2007 report by the International Committee of the Red Cross on fourteen people who had undergone this process condemned extraordinary rendition, reported that: *"In addition to causing severe physical pain, these transfers to unknown locations and unpredictable conditions of detention and treatment placed mental strain on the fourteen, increasing their sense of disorientation and isolation."*

In Britain, interest in this issue has centred on whether the British government knowingly allowed the use by CIA aircraft engaged in extraordinary rendition flights of British airports to refuel, and whether it knowingly made use of intelligence gained through torture in other countries. In December 2005, Conservative MP Andrew Tyrie formed the All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition, which has since been very active in pressing for a full enquiry by the government into these flights and their purpose. Ministers' response to these concerns has however been less than forthcoming. In August 2009, the Human Rights Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, published a Report on Allegations of UK Complicity in Torture, which strongly condemned ministers, who *"are determined to avoid parliamentary scrutiny and accountability on these matters,"* arguing that, *"the system for ministerial accountability for security and intelligence matters is woefully deficient."*

Battles to come

In a fringe meeting hosted by Liberty's Shami Chakrabarti at the Liberal Democrat Conference in September 2009, Lib Dem Leader Nick Clegg, claimed that civil liberties had been *"brutally disfigured"* by the Labour Governments of Blair and Brown. *"Individual freedom shouldn't be sacrificed for the collective good,"* he declared, going on to accuse Conservatives of *"flip-flopping"* on the issue. He cited Control Orders, which Conservatives had initially opposed in 2007, but then abstained on in 2008. How fair is this charge against the Conservative party of inconsistency on civil liberties?

Certainly, some Conservatives have been in the forefront of protests against infringements of civil liberties. Andrew Tyrie's formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition and his leading role in campaigning against extraordinary rendition since 2005 has already been mentioned. David Davies' decision in June 2008 to resign and fight a by-election to draw attention to the erosion of civil liberties demonstrated commitment to the cause even if some dismissed it as quixotic.

In 2009, Chris Grayling, the Conservative Shadow Home Secretary, promised that under a Conservative Government *"the ID card scheme will go. I don't think it is the right thing to do. We don't think the nation cannot afford it and it won't happen."* Yet the party has not always been opposed to ID cards. In 1995, John Major's Conservative Government toyed with the idea. Interestingly, it provoked this response from Tony Blair, then Leader of the Opposition: *"Instead of wasting hundreds of millions of pounds on compulsory ID cards as the Tory Right demand, let that money provide thousands more police officers on the beat in our local communities."* More recently, Labour's Identity Cards Bill initially had the support of Conservatives, under their then leader Michael Howard.

Moreover, wide powers which have been condemned by some Conservatives in Parliament have been eagerly seized on and used by Conservative councils. In 2008, for example, it was revealed that the Conservative-controlled Council in Poole in Dorset had used powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, intended for use against those suspected of serious crime or terrorist activity, to undertake covert surveillance for more than two weeks of a family suspected of lying about their address in order to get their three-year-old daughter a place in an over-subscribed primary school.

Furthermore, the position of David Cameron on the Human Rights Act casts doubt on his position as a defender of civil liberties. In a widely-reported speech to the Centre for Policy Studies in June 2006, he announced his party's intention to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with what he called *"a modern British Bill of Rights that also balances rights with responsibilities"*. Liberty in 2008 launched 'Common Values', a campaign to defend the Human Rights Act, and, as the keynote speaker at Liberty's 75th anniversary in 2009, Lord Bingham (former Master of the Rolls and Lord Chief Justice) chose to base his speech upin a robust defence of the Human Rights Act.

After spelling out the rights enshrined in the Act, Bingham asked, *"Which of these rights, I ask, would we wish to discard? Are any of them trivial, superfluous, unnecessary? Are any them un-British? There may be those who would like to live in a country where these rights are not protected, but I am not of their number."* Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg has repeatedly expressed his strong support for the Human Rights Act. Addressing a meeting hosted by Amnesty International in December 2008, he called for *"a clear and responsible stand on the Human Rights Act....Human rights are not something you pick up one day and put down the next. They are the unwavering, unshakeable commitment to the dignity of people. They are the principles by which we can call ourselves civilised."*

So if a Conservative government is elected in Britain in 2010, the debate on civil liberties is likely to focus on the incoming administration's determination to abolish the Human Rights Act. The battle-lines are already forming, with the Conservatives finding themselves, like the Blair/Brown Government during the past thirteen years, opposed by the defenders of civil liberties.

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Germany Calling: The Case for PR

Dan Hough examines the record of Additional Member System in Germany

"PR", claimed the Conservative former education minister Kenneth Baker back in 1992, "is a pact with the devil". Labour has traditionally been less equivocal, but when push comes to shove, a move away from first-past-the-post (FPTP) towards a more proportional electoral system has also tended to leave them cold. "Coalitions are not by definition unstable", Labour's NEC claimed back in 1998, "but the process of forming a government can be time-consuming and divisive". "We do not believe", the NEC went on, "that the electoral system should result in perpetual coalition". With Britain's two parties clearly reluctant to reform the voting system for Westminster elections, it should come as no surprise that – despite Labour promises to the contrary in the late 1990s and a rather shallow discussion about other options in early 2010 – not much has changed in terms of Britain's electoral system for many, many years.

And yet this consensus is certainly not reflected in the broader commentariat. Indeed, in the hallowed halls of university political science departments, there is plenty of debate on the merits and virtues of alternative systems. David Farrell of the University of Manchester has long argued that the Single Transferable Vote (STV), as used in Ireland, has a plethora of advantages over FPTP, whilst others make their own particular cases for their own particular favourites.

One system that has a significant number

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of advocates is the mixed member proportional system (MMP) or, as it is more commonly known in the UK, the Additional Member System (AMS). This system is used in a number of countries around the world, ranging from New Zealand to Hungary, and also for elections to the Scottish Parliament, and both the Welsh and London Assemblies. It's also used in Europe's richest, most populous and arguably most politically stable state; Germany. Can we learn anything from the fact that MMP is used (apparently successfully) elsewhere? If so, what exactly?

MMP in Germany

Germany's version of MMP seeks, as do all proportional systems, to ensure that the overall total of MPs representing each given party mirrors as closely as is possible the proportion of the popular vote that each of those parties has received. There are, as there always will be, particularly nuances and caveats to the German model – a five per cent threshold on parties gaining representation, an über-complex method of lists that are drawn up in each of Germany's 16 regions (*Länder*) – but by and large the system is a relatively straightforward one to understand. More specifically, a German has two votes; the first is to directly elect an MP (or MdB in German parlance) in a given constituency, of which there are currently 299. The second vote, meanwhile, is for a party list. Whilst both voters are clearly important, it is the second vote which really can make a difference as parties – provided they get above 5 per cent – will be allocated a proportion of Germany's 598 MdBs based on the percentage of *Zweitstimme*, or 'second votes', that they get. So, if the German version of Labour – the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) – were to poll 50 per cent of the second vote, then it would in theory end up with half (299) of all MdBs. If it won, say, 170 constituencies then it would simply add additional members (hence the name of the system) from its lists (in this case 129) to round the figure up to 299. Simple.

Defenders of FPTP are quick to point out all sorts of drawbacks in this system that, by definition, leads them to argue that the electoral system to the UK parliament in Westminster should remain as it is. Whilst superficially persuasive, if we test their assumptions against the empirical record we see that the evidence doesn't always stack up.

"MMP will lead to coalition government and that's a recipe for instability"

For the most part, the first half of this statement does indeed ring true. Even though countries such as New Zealand and Scotland have minority governments, this is clearly not a system where one party is intended to govern alone. Indeed, Germany has only had one single party national government since the end of World War II. The link between MMP and coalition government is subsequently often claimed to lead to an inherent stability at the heart of the administration. Parties that openly compete against each other one minute are then expected to miraculously come together, work out a common plan for government and implement a hastily drawn up hybrid agenda. Coalition-sceptics instinctively point to the Italian case, and 61 governments (at the time of writing) in a little over 65 years seems to bear them out.

However, there are two fundamental flaws in the instability argument. Firstly, and to tackle the Italian case head on, the problem there was not one of government *instability*; in reality, it was precisely the opposite. Coalitions came and went, but the politicians active in them certainly did not. The dominance of the Christian Democrats in the First Italian Republic ensured both continuity and relative stability in terms of who ran Italy. The fact that Amintore Fanfini was Prime Minister on five separate occasions and Giulio Andreotti on three, whilst many other politicians were almost permanent members of the cabinet, illustrates this clearly. And, of course, it is worth remembering that the apparently unstable Italy did catch up, and surpass, the UK in terms of wealth by the 1970s. Although Italian politics in the First Republic (and arguably in the post-1991 second republic too) had many deep-rooted, structural problems to deal with, instability in government was not one of them.

The second fundamental flaw is best illustrated by looking at Germany. Germany has had much more 'conventional' coalitions than was the case in Italy. Much like the UK, Germany has until recently had a large centre-left

party, a large centre-right party and a liberal party oscillating somewhere between them. Also, as in the UK, there has been a recent rise in the number of small parties in parliament; for the SNP and Plaid Cymru, Germany has a successful Green Party as well as a socialist 'Left Party'. Even with these new upstarts on the scene, it is normally clear which coalition each party prefers. An election will take place, a coalition agreement will be worked out, and Germany carries on (its very successful way) much as normal.

Although it does admittedly take a number of weeks to work out the nuances of this agreement, it is seen as a normal part of the process. Political hacks may get excited about the details, most other Germans carry on with their lives safe in the knowledge that they know (minus some of the details) within days (and often hours) which parties are going to be governing for the next four years and more or less what they are likely to do. So is this instable government? No, not really - as both the longevity of more or less all German governments reveals, along with the success of the policies they have implemented.

"Under PR, the importance of the constituency link is reduced"

If ever an MP is asked about the strengths of FPTP then it will take them nothing more than a matter of seconds before they begin stressing the importance of the constituency link. They argue that voters like to know who represents them; that they (the MP) can act as a fair and neutral representative for all their constituents in parliament. The MP is therefore to factor voters' concerns in to the political process. Whilst the purity of this link is perhaps not quite as MPs might have us believe (will a socialist Labour voter really be happy engaging with, say, his/her aristocratic Tory MP?), the support that this notion enjoys in the UK means that it would have to be a fundamental part of any 'new' electoral system implemented here. And it is with this in mind that Gordon Brown recently advocated a move to the Alternative Vote (AV) in the UK.

The MMP, as illustrated above, does of course still maintain this constituency link. Germany has 299 MdBs who have been directly elected. A German constituent certainly can, if he or she so wishes, approach his/her MdB to look into a particular issue or complaint for him/her. And this does happen. However, as far as the MdBs themselves are concerned they *all* still do constituency work; they all appeal to citizens in the regions of Germany from whence they come, they all want to look 'Burgernah' ('close to the people') and they all make a real effort to persuade local party officials either to grant them a constituency they might win next time round and/or to get a good place on the party list. Germans therefore have a real alternative in terms of which MdB they turn to; it might be well be the person who 'won' that constituency, but if they so choose they can turn to a politician from another party who entered parliament on a party list. Everyone's a winner.

"*The German (AMS) system creates an inferior class of representative"*

The notion that there are two different types of MdBs in the federal parliament in Berlin is also bunkum; more or less every foreign minister of Germany, for example, does not win a constituency as he (every one has been male), by definition, tends to come from the smaller coalition partner – and they, much as in the UK, don't win many constituencies. And in the case of liberal MdBs, they have only won a constituency outright once since 1957! Germans do not even think twice about whether this is good or bad. As soon as a politician enters parliament, he/she is simply 'an MP', enjoying exactly the same rights and having exactly the same responsibilities as each and every other MP. The fact that the issue of different classes or types of MdB is never raised in the German press should be ample evidence that it is not something that is seen as being in any way controversial. Any belief in classes of MPs is not replicated by what actually happens in practice.

"Small (read extremist) parties are over-represented"

Proponents of FPTP frequently paint horror stories of small – and by definition extremist – parties entering parliament on account of lower barriers to entry. Whilst it is clear that it is theoretically easier for a party to gain 5 per cent of the vote nation-wide than it is to consistently poll, say, 40 per cent in a significant number of constituencies, the empirical record is not nearly as foreboding as one might think. Between 1961 and 1983 only 3 parties achieved representation in the *Bundestag*; and even now Germany only has 5 groups represented in parliament. The far-right has never achieved parliamentary representation (the closest it came was in 1969 when the National Democrats polled 4.3 per cent of the vote), but even if it had managed this, it would arguably have been better to face down this challenge rather than to run away from it.

Perhaps one should also look at Scotland, Wales and London; there has indeed been noise around the edges of their respective party systems, but life has gone on much as normal. If small parties gain representation then – in Germany as in the UK – it is not as if the electoral system is necessarily biasing the outcome; it is more as they are actually articulating sentiments and feelings that the political process may well need to address.

"It's all too complicated …"

Finally, and just when you sense that advocates of FPTP really are getting rather annoyed with those who may challenge their parochial assumptions about other electoral systems, you may well hear the argument that at least everyone understands FPTP whereas they won't understand PR systems. Whilst the basic assumption that people may understand FPTP is easy enough to follow, can we really be sure that everyone has grasped that only a small minority of seats marginal seats matter? Are we sure that if you live in, say, Kensington and Chelsea (strongly Conservative) or Bolsover in Derbyshire (strongly Labour) you might as well stay at home? Maybe, maybe not. There are, however, two much more pressing reasons to be sceptical of this argument.

Firstly, survey data from Germany illustrates that citizens certainly understand the basic gist of what is going on. They may well be hazy on the details, but they get the bigger picture. And they overwhelmingly support it. Second, and more pressing still, are the good citizens of England with the exception of London really so intellectually incapable? For this is, of course, the assumption one must come to – as indicated above, elections to the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and London Assembly already use a variant of MMP! My money is that if they can work it out (and most of them seem to have done, even if this does inevitably take a little time), then England to the North of Watford, West of Heathrow and South of Croydon should also be able to.

MMP in Germany: A Model for Emulation

Germany's experience with MMP has clearly been a good one. It has contributed to helping German politicians form stable, consensual governments. It maintains a constituency link and yet also enables the final result to be much more representative of votes cast. Germany's political and economic successes are clearly not just down to the use of MMP, but it has helped facilitate the development of a culture in which parties deal (for the most part) constructively with whatever the voters throw at them through the ballot box. This is something that, since 1997, politicians in Scotland and Wales have learnt. It is also something politicians in Westminster might want to consider - assuming they were serious about improving our democracy rather than just defending whatever system they think serves them best.

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THE FRENCH FAR RIGHT

David Bell dissects a political force that has had an impact beyond France

One of the more striking features of the last twenty years in Europe has been the rise of the extreme right. It is necessary to be circumspect in labelling such a movement as 'fascist' given the imprecision of that term and the make-over that the far right has undergone since the war. If far-right parties have factions of neo-nazi and neo-fascist sympathisers within them, these parties are still diverse. Some parties have their origins in low tax movements, others in rearguard actions against decolonisation and others are opportunist reactions. England, often portrayed as a haven from extreme right, saw the support for Enoch Powell surge in the late 1960s – though it then subsided.

As with 'Powellism', the focal issue for the extreme right is 'immigration'. Immigration enabled a specific voice to develop and could be linked with other issues – like crime. More specifically, the target has been the Muslim minorities that now live in most west European societies. Hence those parties referred to as 'extreme right' could be classified as anti-immigration

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parties and most are hostile to 'multiculturalism' (a difficult term to define). Except for the Belgian, Vlams Belang and the BNP, most have managed to stay just on the windward side of racialist territory by emphasising the 'cultural' and that anti- semitism is not part of their appeal (their private views are another matter). Most of the parties disclaim any 'racial' outlook and the primary trope is the defence of 'culture'. 'Cultures', it is argued, are equal and mutable. Each country has a right to its own 'culture' but it is an error – or tragic mistake – to try to mix them. In France, Le Pen's Front National has been particularly adept at this rhetorical switch and points to the occasional Muslim supporter.

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If immigration was the starting point, a multitude of problems have been evoked since. Economic problems, particularly in the smoke-stack industries, have of course been a feature of recent years. There has been a renewal of the extreme right since the war and neither fascist economics (corporatism) nor state intervention through planning and nationalisation are features. Most, like the Front National, prefer to emphasise the market, competition and low taxes (gratifying to their initial supporters in small business).

Later, when the extreme right began to pick up working class support they moved to so-called 'welfare chauvinism': defending the welfare state and social insurance, asserting that welfare benefits should be available to 'our people' but not to 'welfare tourists'. There is no worked-out economic programme, but the appeal to protectionism is a contemporary temptation. Europe is, of course, a target for far-right parties, depicted as 'anti-national' and an open door to immigration. The problems of corruption and the failures of the political establishment, the widening gap between the elected and the electorate highlighted by corruption scandals, is also fuel to the parties. Le Pen' s 1988 slogan was 'the outsider' and his campaign handed out bars of soap (stating 'head high hands clean').

The Front National is the most spectacular of the new wave of far-right parties in Europe. It was created in 1972 as a respectable 'front' by the *Ordre nouveau* (later dissolved by government order). *Ordre nouveau* strategists invited Le Pen to become Front national president because Le Pen was seen by them as 'moderate' and a suitable parliamentary face. Yet Le Pen took over the FN and ran it as a vehicle for his own ambitions. Le Pen already had a long experience on the far right in campaigns, mainly against decolonisation, and had been elected to the Assembly in 1956 as a 'Poujadist' (low tax and keep Algeria French).

Le Pen had abilities as an organiser so that the task of keeping the notoriously fissiparous far right together was accomplished. But as a propagandist Le Pen had gained experience over many years; he ran Tixier-Vignancour, the unsuccessful extreme right candidate, against de Gaulle in the presidential elections of 1965. He was also a master of the sound bite. His phrases, often dismissed as 'gaffes' are often sedulously prepared and keep Le Pen on the front pages for days. This is not easy to do (for a small party) and even

the outrage did little harm to the core vote – it perhaps reinforced it. Le Pen is often dismissed as a buffoon. This is a mistake.

The Front national was working and organising in the 1970s. But with the main conflict being between the conservative right and the Communist-Socialist alliance, they had little purchase on the political debate of the time. Le Pen was unable to find enough signatures to stand in the 1981 presidential elections but these elections witnessed the decline of the Communist Party (the right's fox was shot) and the split of the mainstream right into warring sides. A gap opened with the failure of the left to deal with the problems of joblessness, crime and recession. In the 1983 local elections it was evident that the Front National was beginning to move and in the European elections of 1984 its Party List, headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen, won 11%. Le Pen's breakthrough was then followed by a vote of 9.8% at the general elections of 1986 which, as they were run on a proportional system, gave them 35 seats in the National Assembly.

In 1988 the old electoral system was restored and this level of representation was never again achieved. However, in 1988 Le Pen polled 14% in the presidential elections but the party, this time on a constituency system, won only one seat in the Assembly. In the 1990s the FN continued to increase its vote and expanded its appeal to the sections of the population disoriented by the collapse of the Socialist and Communist Parties. In the general elections of 1993 it won 12.4% of the vote and in the 1995 presidential elections of 1995 Le Pen won 15%. But in the general elections of 1997 the FN took 14.9%, even though it only had one deputy elected.

It is evident that the substantial vote for Le Pen at presidential elections is not repeated at the ensuing general elections. There could be a number of reasons for this. Front national candidates have not won local positions. Its local organisation and its funds will not support a general elections spread over the 577 constituencies. Presidential elections also enable Le Pen's talents as a publicist to be made to France as a whole in a single campaign in which he is one of a small number of candidates. But (and this brings up the dispute that was at the heart of a subsequent split with Mégret) what has Le Pen actually won? Apart from some city councils (soon lost), the Front national has not had a taste of real authority. Le Pen's spectacular votes at presidential elections do not win power – no office has been won by the party as a result. Yet Le Pen has put issues onto the agenda and thus given the Front national

an influence beyond any small party pressure in the Assembly. In this sense, the Front national is the dark matter that moves the rest of the political system.

However, in 1999 there was a schism when Bruno Mégret split with Le Pen over tactics and leadership and Mégret founded the Mouvement National Républicain which won 3% in the European elections of 1999. But the FN proved resilient and in the presidential elections of 2002 Le Pen polled 16.9% to come second (while Mégret took only 2.3%). Le Pen's unexpected success in getting on to the second ballot to face a run-off with President Chirac was not the result of a right wing surge but of the collapse of the left; and at the subsequent general elections the FN took only 11.1% and won no seats. At the 2004 regional elections the FN polled 15.1% of the vote, with Mégret's MNR seemingly destroyed by its competition with the FN.

Le Pen's collapse in 2007 came from a double problem: the strategy and Sarkozy. Le Pen's campaign was muted, probably in the expectation that he would go onto the second round and hence need to appear 'presidential'. This allowed others to move onto Le Pen's territory, notably Sarkozy. Nicolas Sarkozy had wooed these voters over some years with aplomb. It seems to have worked, bringing to the fore the problem Le Pen faces *vis a vis* voters: do they want to vote for Le Pen, who can do nothing, or Sarkozy who can do something, even if not what you would ideally want? In 2007 Le Pen came not second, but a distant fourth though, as ever, the FN's capacity for rebounding remained intact.

Who supports the Front National? About party members there is not much that can be said in the absence of precise information. Activists are, however, numerous and committed to Le Pen - and that, at a time of declining ideological divides and falling party membership, is worth noting. Le Pen attracts strong support. But the obverse, that Le Pen is repudiated by a big majority, also has to be remembered.

The Front's national voters are a cross section of French society. Its vote differs from election to election but, broadly, there are no groups or sections really resistant to Le Pen's message. It has become a big working class party (so-called 'leftist lepenism'), it gets support from small business and from urban France. It is a secular masculine movement (although the Front national's is raucous in its opposition to abortion), with women less likely to vote FN than men, and there is less support for Le Pen amongst students than the general average. A typical Le Pen voter might be an unskilled working man living in a big city and the least likely FN voter would be a young very religious woman student living in a rural area. This is, however, a shaky generalisation.

It will be evident from this summary that the success of the Front national has been driven by Le Pen. Le Pen will have to hand over to a newcomer at some time. In the regional elections of 2010 the Front National polled strongly. Although these are secondary elections, and the vote at 11.6% was below the previous 2004 total of 14.6%, they showed the FN's continuing appeal. This vote was strong enough to enable them to stay on the second ballot as a spoiler for the mainstream right and it brushed aside challenges from far right dissidents. Le Pen's daughter, Marine,, standing in the Nord, had a higher vote than in 2004 and was only just in second place to the conservative UMP list. On the second ballot both Le Pen and his daughter came behind the conservative right, and lost 34 councillors, yet confirmed a regional presence with 118 seats.

Not too much should be read into these regional elections (with a historically low turn-out) except that the Front national's capacity for capitalising on discontent remains. These elections also confirmed Marine as potential successor, but left unsettled the problem of the party's future direction. One indicator was the swing towards an emphasis on the 'Islamic threat' to the Republic rather than immigration in general, and the reinforcing of existing institutions. Can the FN ally with the mainstream right (assuming that conservatives would allow such a thing) or can it continue in the wilderness? The persistence of the extreme right movements in countries such as the Netherlands and Austria after the leader's death seems to indicate that the issues raised and the sentiments evoked can be echoed by other political figures with, perhaps, more immediate impact.

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