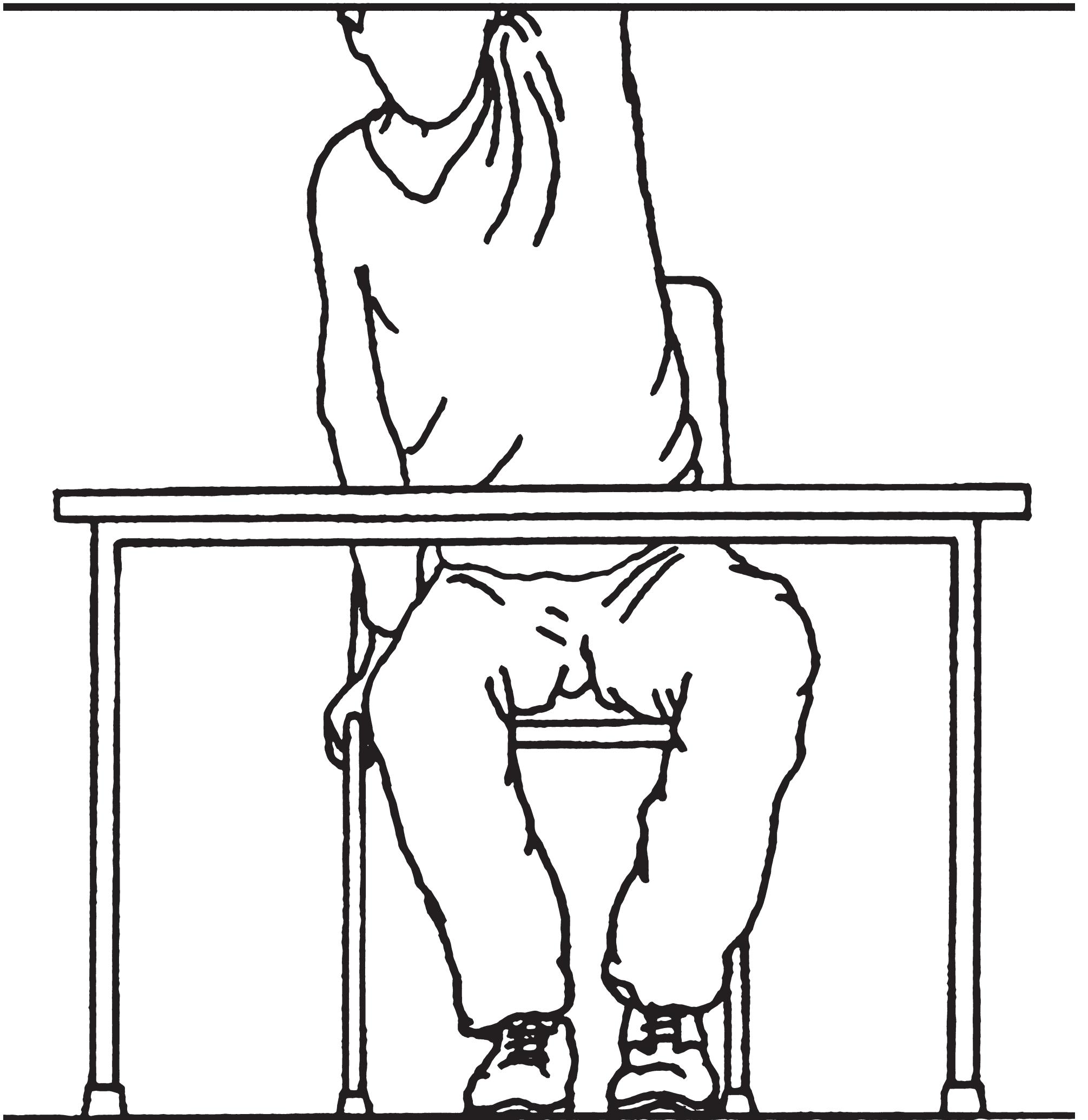


cross currents in culture ●

# variant

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# Comment

## The Progress of Creeping Fascism

Owen Logan

In the 1950 film *Sunset Boulevard* an ill-fated hack writer accidentally finds himself in a gothic Hollywood mansion. At first the mysterious and supercilious mistress of the house wants to throw him out but the writer pauses, "Wait a minute... I know your face ... you used to be in silent pictures. You used to be big!" The ageing star, played by Gloria Swanson, straightens her back and replies witheringly, "I *am* big. It's the pictures that got small." The same might be said of the relationship between Fascism and nations, without any sense of the deluded grandeur which marked the character played by Swanson. Nationalism did get smaller, to the point where the very concept of national sovereignty is now widely regarded in international relations as the relic of a bygone era. If anything, Fascism got larger by disposing of its early romantic stars, leaving many of their followers to go about peddling their somewhat revised ideas about human affairs. As the economist J.K. Galbraith implied when he lamented Albert Speer's undeserved reputation as an industrial "genius of production"<sup>1</sup>, the new men of power in various countries post-1945 were not disinterested.

Very little attention is given to the positive reputation enjoyed by men like Speer. In countries that were not ill-treated by dictatorships with their made-to-order folksy nationalism, anti-Fascists tend to be preoccupied by the overt manifestation of Fascist Parties and politics. The skinhead squad-member from a run-down estate who dwells spiritually in imperial nostalgia and trots out racist hate-slogans might be an enduring characterisation, but this ironic persona is a deceptive icon, as those who have lived through a Fascist State know; its brutish foot soldiers quickly and willingly become its cannon fodder. The disenfranchised and demoralised people who become Fascist supporters make inadequate targets for democrats because the visibility and aggressive popular style of Fascism conceals a far more subtle ethos at the heart of the ideology. It is the subtle aspects of Fascist ideology that remain standing and develop their forms and continue their onward march despite all the military defeats suffered by Fascism's historic regimes.

The corporate monopolisation of markets is the symptom and outcome of this onward march, but not the cause, which is the monopolisation of public reason. For Benito Mussolini this depended on stealthily "plucking the chicken one feather at a time."<sup>2</sup> His preferred name for the system was corporativism and a fuller understanding of this so-called 'friendly Fascism' and its pre-history provides a vital means to oppose the whole Fascist phenomenon.

Fascism ought to be understood as an ideologically sophisticated and creeping set of political relations that undermine free contest and the full expression of different material and class interests within society at large. From this perspective, the general geopolitical failure of Fascism only marks the end of various formally authoritarian States and certainly not the end

...the ideology of enforced co-operation & managed national solidarity provided the underlying logic of Fascism.

of authoritarian State politics at a number of levels. Fascism's more subtle progress is the true 'clear and present danger' to the development of democratic society or to whatever integrity democracy might still possess. The danger arises partly because one of the historical preconditions of Fascism, as theorised by Mussolini, has now been achieved thanks to the adventurism of the U.S. empire. The war on terror has given us the state of permanent, unbounded war originally dreamt up by the Italian dictator to bring about a specific economic and ideological order at home and military expansionism abroad.

That the Italian Republic, supposedly founded on the defeat of Fascism, has re-embraced the ideology under the guise of "Post-Fascism" within a parliamentary democracy is alarming. But, perhaps more alarming is that elsewhere, with no mention of any sort of Fascism, we also see the triangulation of policy towards "single purpose government", as it is now called in Scotland. This widespread and neo-totalitarian sense of purpose favours corporations by gearing all policies towards existing markets or their creation where they do not already exist. In return, States are blessed with various stamps of approval from big business and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Despite their reputation for imposing deadly market orthodoxies across the world, the power of these controversial institutions appears to be unassailable.<sup>3</sup> These developments are connected to the progress of Fascist ideas and opposition to them is a matter of great urgency.

### A Living History

Mussolini envisioned the corporative nation in biological terms as a body of non-competing and co-operative functions. In 1934, Fascists from different European countries agreed that this was the defining element of their international movement. As Francis Mulhern notes in 'Culture/Metaculture', the functions of corporativism, or corporatism as it is now known, are all imagined to make "their necessary, mutually non-exchangeable contributions to the health of the whole. It is accordingly anti-individualist in temper (the notion of competition between parts of the body is absurd) and also anti-socialist (the notion of a struggle between the hands and the head is equally absurd – as are democracy and equality)."<sup>4</sup> While this mythic idea of the nation as the body coincided with the racial policies pursued by the Nazis, the bodily doctrine cannot be reduced to its most murderous convulsions. In Nazi Germany, *Gleichschaltung* also aimed for the co-ordination of the life of the nation and it is the deep-seated ideology of enforced co-operation and managed national solidarity which provided the underlying logic of Fascism.

Although independent trade unions were politically disabled and outlawed in Italy, top-down organised labour and welfare policies were reborn in the image of Fascist corporatism, which, if nothing else, adhered to the aristocratic ideal of *noblesse oblige*. According to Gaetano Salvemini, an exile from the Italian system and one of its most sensitive critics, the impact of this policy to disorganise and manipulate the autonomy of labour was to effectively nationalise it, making labour into the State's bargaining chip in its dealings with capitalists. Imagine being threatened by your boss for using the word "ballot" in communicating with fellow trade unionists because that word alone was

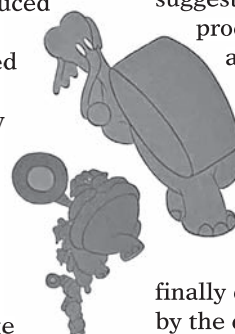
Fascism ought to be understood as an ideologically sophisticated & creeping set of political relations...

an incitement to industrial action. Sadly this is not an example of legalised bullying under 1930s Fascism but the experience of a member of the Public and Commercial Services Union in Britain today. One only has to think for a few moments about nation-States with their normalised anti-labour laws and activities and see these policies in the context of international capitalism to begin to see the triangular outlines of the renewed repression.

In Fascist Italy of the 1930s, public institutions called corporations were to support co-operation and consultation between different interest groups, between labour and capital and between various economic sectors. In reality they were unrepresentative talking shops, the real function of which was to dignify a range of coercive policies. Followers of the Marxist, Antonio Gramsci would call this passive revolution, whereby "in lieu of attaining support for what it is doing, a government instead decides to act as if it alone were the origin of social change."<sup>5</sup> Yet the rhetorical element of co-operation and consultation remained central to Fascist practice. So attractive was the ideal of corporatist State to its proponents that they wrote admiringly of its company-like functions before the public corporations were even brought into dubious existence. Perhaps the reality is best summed up by Salvemini in his 1936 book 'Under the Axe of Fascism'. For Salvemini, to find real co-operation and genuine consultation taking place through corporatist institutions was like "looking in a dark room for a black cat which is not there."<sup>6</sup>

With this history in mind the obvious question for trades unions and other pressure groups in civil society today is how far has advanced capitalism adapted itself to the same logic of disempowered, disabled yet highly symbolic communication? There is a growing body of research on international development which suggests that the outcomes of participatory processes and public deliberation about policy are in fact preordained by the wisdom of the international financial institutions such as the World Bank.<sup>7</sup> It should be asked, therefore, how far do citizens become institutionally formed and incorporated by processes that allow us the pleasure of expressing our views, and sometimes taking action, but only in return for the finally demoralising experience of being overcome by the carefully structured imbalance of actual power?

But if such a bleak perspective is valid, it is too easy to lay the blame on big business or some overly abstract notion of "the system" when corporatism is a particular rot that can set in almost anywhere. It can be seen in the paternalistic ethos of politicians, and in the dealings of "sweetheart" trade unions that function more like an arm of management, or in any number of individuals and *ad hoc* groups that grasp opportunities to represent or to lead the



course of policy without examining the issue of meaningful democratic accountability.<sup>8</sup> However compelling one may find Naomi Klein's account of the 'Shock Doctrine',<sup>9</sup> shock tactics are not necessarily required to ignite the slow burning processes of corporatism. Trying to address these difficult issues here leads gradually towards a key distinction between freedoms of expression, on the one hand, and how the terms of communication may or may not be defined by the public interest, on the other. We live in an era that rather robotically celebrates individuals: individuals as spokespeople for the 'voiceless'; inspired, creative and visionary individuals; individuals as over-achievers, enlightened benefactors, and celebrity of all kinds. But has an actual individualism, of the kind that historians and sociologists have found at the heart of Bourgeois revolutions against feudalism, been subtly replaced by mere persona in consumerist society? Are the beneficiaries and descendants of social and political flux in the 1960s now at one with an entrepreneurial ideology which downplays the new 'feudalism' perpetrated by a remarkably like-minded corporate power elite?

### Technocorporatism

For anyone who has been subjected to mind-numbing processes of fake consultation – in the workplace or in civic deliberation on matters like housing, health, urban planning or culture – Salvemini's metaphor of the darkened empty room minus cat has a certain poetic resonance in relation to the way the appearance of consensus is constructed in a political and ideological vacuum. Often, this is done with the aid of key unelected personnel who, we are endlessly told, have expertise although they often appear to have descended upon us from another lifeworld where everyone gets along and power goes unquestioned. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to immediately draw a line from the original Fascist ideology of co-operation to the dispiriting operations of technocrats and today's neo-corporatism. Moreover, the Fascist-spawned British National Party knows only too well how to exploit the void opened up by the legitimate and widespread public contempt for what passes for democratic process in Britain. The response from mainstream parties has been to co-ordinate their campaigning to exclude the BNP. If taken in good faith, this response from mainstream politicians, would be more convincing if they were able to demonstrate a genuine commitment to unfettered public reasoning.

Undoubtedly, public discussion has been substantially dumbed down by the adherence to neoliberal ideology by all the main parties and their favourite 'opinion-formers'. The truth is that far-right populists have arguments that cannot be properly answered without raising the ghost of anti-capitalist counter arguments which, however unpopular they have become in consumer societies, remain extremely relevant. In the face of the ongoing financial crisis, witness the media silence about the continent-wide reforms to the financial system underway in Latin America.<sup>10</sup>

Part of the problem of restricting public discussion along narrow ideological lines is the way that primitive xenophobia gets branded as Fascist and racist, sometimes as if those were quite simply one and the same. We should remember that Italian Fascism *became* officially racist, it did not start out that way. Moreover, Fascist identity politics were not quite as exclusivist as often painted. In keeping with the history of liberal imperialism they were, and remain, all about reinforcing a variegated, and historically variable, racial pecking-order. More blindly xenophobic voices today are rather too hastily ostracised for their proto-Fascist tendencies when the crucial Fascist lineage is far more likely to be the ongoing development of coercive rationalism, certainly not confined to matters of 'race'. Paradoxically, when brought to public discourse it is this branch of rationalism that would coercively exclude the

BNP. And in doing so it implicitly reduces Fascism to its most primitive party-political manifestation and therefore misrepresents or ignores its true philosophical scope. It is also this branch of rationalism that can be seen adapting centrist politics to totalitarian-like policies such as torture, the derogation of key laws, support for undue or unaccountable police powers, and the attack on civil liberties in general. If all this is not enough to demand that we take the philosophical basis of coercive rationalism seriously, then polling evidence, suggesting that a majority of Britons agree with far-right policies when they are not known to be those of the BNP, should make us pause for thought.<sup>11</sup>

It is far too easy for opportunists to replace the complex politics of space with the technocratic management of cultural nationalism.

### Philosophy and the Technocratic Turn

The coercive branch of rationalism celebrates the power of the mind and self-will. It neglects the social and historic complexity of the development of modern societies along with the most troubling aspects of everyday life in them. This ideological vanishing trick draws us back to the key philosophical split of the European Enlightenment: "on the one hand [there is] the Enlightenment's association of progress with autonomous and critical self-reflection within a society based on the principles of equality, liberty and the participation of independent and rational individuals, and on the other, the identification of progress with the development of scientific/technical reason and the subordination of society to the requirements of this process."<sup>12</sup> This is no abstract philosophical matter. As Val Plumwood argues in her book, *Environmental Culture*, "reason has been captured by power and made an instrument of oppression, it must be remade as a tool for liberation."

Both egalitarian and technocratic branches of rationalism have classical roots in Athenian democracy and various studies describe how the latter branch (rooted in anti-democratic Platonic philosophy) provides a "foolproof way to blame the losers – in terms of their alleged deficiency of reason, demonstrated by their being losers."<sup>13</sup> When it comes to capitalist industrialisation, the basic truth of capitalism, namely that the system generates and gives power to capitalists, must somehow be denied. Fascism's modern obfuscation of this absolutely essential truth was described by Salvemini as *Homo Corporativus*, or the self-conscious corporative individual. Yet, against his/her supposedly co-operative instincts *Homo Corporativus* merely substituted class struggle with a wholly bureaucratic struggle between the offices and the categories of his/her own authority. Nevertheless, the myth of corporativism gave a new, entirely self-contained plane of politics its very reason for being and, with it, a struggle over categories replaced struggles for democracy. For ordinary citizens to participate in technocratic politics at all, demands that, to some extent, they master technocratic rationalism and, therefore, place themselves on the ladders of its discursive

As it was under classical Fascism, Socialism has been turned into the plaything of the rich.

power. In many instances, this may already be an act of submission. To summarise all this more bluntly, if the Fascist thugs are notorious for putting the boot in when you're down, this desk-bound rationalism is their philosophical sidekick.

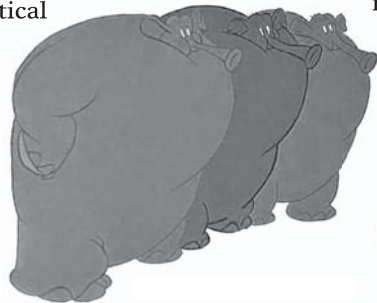
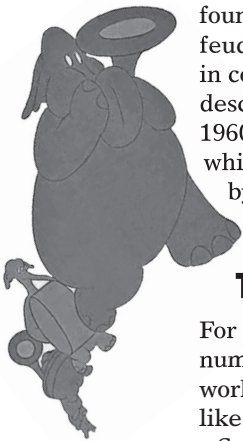
The heirs to the technically reductive version of the Enlightenment are legion! They provided the personnel required for the upward transfer of power during the Cold War. In many countries, widespread support for anti-imperialism, meaningful social democracy and socialist policies was immanent in 1945. Yet, if one looks into the working class movements internationally it is hard not to conclude that, while they were not exactly beaten to the ground, many were ideologically weakened and organisationally depleted by the combination of total war, the division and betrayals within Left politics, and what may well be seen as the technocratic turn in the Soviet Union – those repressive Russian influences still too casually ascribed to Stalinism alone.<sup>14</sup>

By the 1950s and '60s, U.S. sociologists C. Wright Mills and G. William Domhoff and the economist J.K. Galbraith were mapping the rise of a neo-corporatist system in which technocratic power and prestige was increasingly accumulated in Western democracies. In this neo-corporatist world, decision making shifted from the holders of political capital to a skilled technocratic class that mediated power and ultimately shielded elites from political pressure from below. In his study of "technocorporatism" today, Frank Fischer argues that the nexus of technocratic expertise and corporatist ideas continues to rest on a set of undemocratic "beliefs about how the world works, a conception of the way it should work, and a set of tactics for changing it. [...] Democracy is taken to be an inappropriate, inferior decision-making system for the emerging post-industrial society".<sup>15</sup> Indeed, in place of democratic public reasoning the so-called advanced democracies rely on technocrats and think-tanks for policy formation, heavily slanted consultation processes from which technocrats extract their monies, and a system of "revolving doors" through which formal State authority and informal political power is kept in the hands of the same people; and finally, unsurprisingly, massive democratic deficits with ordinary citizens playing walk-on parts in what many on the Left will regard as the greatest show on earth: the mass media's "manufacturing of consent".

Before his adaptation to the same habitat, the British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, well described the insidious qualities of technocracy. Giddens wrote: "it is not just the application of technical modes to the solution of defined problems, but a pervading ethos, a world view which subsumes aesthetics, religion and customary thought to the rationalistic mode."<sup>16</sup> The key question which thinkers like the now ennobled Baron Giddens and many other upwardly mobile well-wishers have failed to answer is how can superficial democracy be democratised without any serious commitment to democratic radicalism; how can the egalitarian values of democracy be realised with little or no cost to the ruling elites and their order of things? For the cultural engineers who have made careers out of technocorporatism, radical politics appears as an obstacle to "partnership".<sup>17</sup> Only deliberately naive intellectuals can be blind to the way this order is worsening and becoming more disreputable by the day. As it was under classical Fascism, Socialism has been turned into the plaything of the rich.

### The Knowledge Economy

One of the key universal justifications defined by UNESCO for the State support of higher education is that universities are, or should be, intellectually autonomous. To understand why, one needs to be able to appreciate knowledge as a process of production rather than one of consumption or a mere delivery mechanism. The ancient Greeks did this by differentiating the *techne* and *episteme*, effectively drawing a line between instrumental or practical knowledge on one hand, and the larger epistemological task of making sense of reality on the other. However idealistically reasoned,

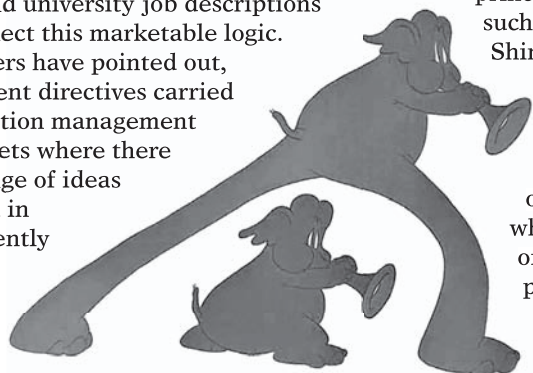


the autonomy and epistemological scope of universities is supposed to ensure that the public gets value for its money and that these institutions serve the broad public interest. If the common good is to be served this would of course include a holistic understanding of labour interests. There have certainly been technocratic plots against any such universal regulation. In a 1983 confidential report a Department of Education official wrote: "We are in a period of considerable social change. There will be unrest, but we can cope with the Toxteths... but if we have a highly educated and idle population we may possibly anticipate more serious conflict. People must be educated once more to know their place."<sup>18</sup>

Given the extent of deindustrialisation under Conservative governments and the conversion of Britain into a retail society with finance capital and defence as its last great industries, New Labour's original mantra 'Education, Education, Education' might be more honestly described as 'Training, Training, Training' for an extraordinarily technocratic Knowledge Economy. Symptomatic of this are disputes over academic freedom in higher education where the entrepreneurial mindset has become managerially enshrined. Not enough that this skews the culture of institutions towards research and teaching in favour of the business ethos as if that were synonymous with the public interest (an idea which Adam Smith would have objected to) but it has even been demanded, in at least one university, that academics demonstrate their commitment to the new philosophy in their bodily comportment too. Less explicitly elsewhere, individualism is increasingly measured against the development of amenable corporate personae. In the face of mounting university bureaucracy, totally unrealistic workloads and job insecurity, these compliant characters are expected to exude casual efficiency and pragmatism with just the right dash of creative individualism – an entrepreneurial balancing act no doubt reflected in the appalling reports of mental health among academics.<sup>19</sup>

There is, however, a more eerie reminder of Fascism to be gleaned from a spasmodic crisis of consciousness in higher education. The pervasive campaign for an entrepreneurial economy centred on knowledge and cultural products in support of urban renewal provides a mirror image of Mussolini's campaign to regenerate Italy's rural economy and resurrect traditional peasant life. In both cases, the first victim has been the critical autonomy required to create a balanced economy based on social co-determination rather than fictional co-operation and technocratic zeal. In Britain now, as in Italy of the 1930s, the actual impact of technocratic policy creates increased dependency on corporations and big business. Italy's countryside became less typically "rural" and more monopoly bound under Fascism, just as Britain's cities have become far more economically homogenous and indistinguishable than might have been envisaged by New Labour's technocrats. Like the Fascists, who believed that Italy's problems would be solved by regenerating a peasant lifeworld, New Labour's semi-independent technocracy of think-tanks and consultants have behaved as if the regeneration of Britain's cities along the lines of their Yuppified dreams was a policy that would solve an amazing range of socio-economic and political ills caused by neoliberal globalisation.

Of course, bolstering consumerism and a feel-good factor based on fictive capital has been the key aspect underlying these now threadbare technocratic fantasies. Yet in perfect synergy with Fascist philosophy, the mindset of neoliberal expertise sees the mass spirit and self-belief as everything. Mission statements in higher education and university job descriptions overwhelmingly reflect this marketable logic. As many other writers have pointed out, neoliberal government directives carried out by higher education management seek to create markets where there is still a free exchange of ideas and knowledge, and in doing so they frequently appear to have utterly abandoned universal standards.



Rather than supporting the broad public interest by defending criticality and free thought, their promotional mode of address reflects the unrelenting ideology that markets and business values are best: "Our vision is for a more dynamic, entrepreneurial and internationally competitive Scotland", reads the Scottish Funding Council's mission statement.<sup>20</sup>

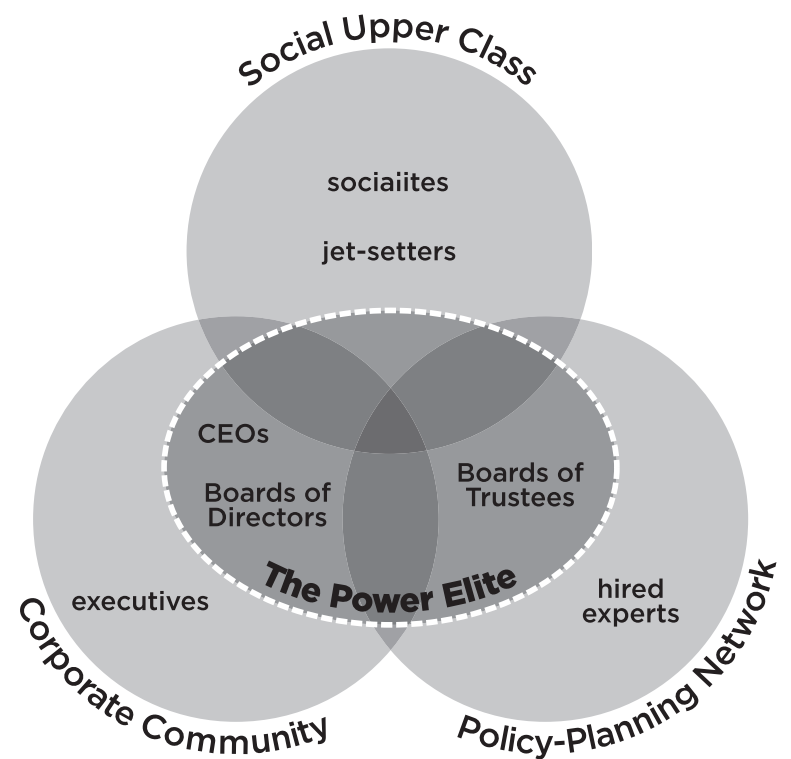
Yet most people are not employers or self-employed in their possession of an enterprise, they are instead employees and/or dependents. In a Danish international survey in 2000, Brazil came out on top with a rate of under 17% of the population involved in entrepreneurial activity. The UK registered around 6% of the population gaining from any sort of entrepreneurial livelihood.<sup>21</sup> Even if such figures were quadrupled one would still expect higher education to be geared far more positively towards an even-handed analysis of the interdependent relationship between public and private interests, accountability in public services, contemporary labour and social studies, and so on. After all, the common experience is not entrepreneurial but membership of an increasingly flexible and casualised labour force. Given this demographic reality, the technocratic commitment to envisaging the public interest in quite the opposite terms is an extraordinary ideological achievement of which any Fascist myth-maker could be proud. Nonetheless, it should be a matter of shame in primary schools where nine year olds are softened-up in classes that make the likes of Richard Branson into a hero comparable to Martin Luther King, and in secondary schools where Business Studies creeps in to replace economics classes. The response from any democrat should simply be where's the equilibrium? Where, for example, is that new secondary school course on trade unions and social movements? Clearly the widespread abandonment of social truth and a consequential unpreparedness for 'your place' appears to be what 'knowing it' is all about.

In the campaign for an entrepreneurial economy centred on knowledge & cultural products... the first victim is the critical autonomy required to create a balanced economy based on social co-determination rather than fictional co-operation & technocratic zeal.

### Reining in Culture

Culture, that vague and fought over term, might be the most slippery issue to rescue from creeping Fascism. Freedom of expression, with its interwoven rights and responsibilities, appears to lie at the ideological centre of contemporary cultural policy as a key human right and "pillar of democracy". Yet freedom of expression is *contingent* on freedom and equality in communication, or what was called *Isegoria* under Athenian direct democracy. Although modern representative democracies have not ignored this principle, different studies by academics such as Clive Barnett and Roger A.

Shiner show how freedom of expression under neoliberalism has been increasingly commercialised and steadily trivialised.<sup>22</sup> This degradation came at the expense of piecemeal but hard-won legislation which, in keeping with the principle of *Isegoria*, promoted equalities in public discourse. Although this most democratic principle helped to deepen public reasoning in



modern democracies, that is not what politicians seem to now want as they put their efforts into the construction of a rather unreasonable, ill-educated and corporate friendly culture.

The difficulty of giving democratic weight to freedom of expression is only too apparent in Scotland. In a number of announcements, politicians and cultural technocrats have pinpointed artists as the flag-bearers of cultural freedom. But this individualistic emphasis looks like a rhetorical sleight-of-hand trick when compared to their insistence on a business-led approach to cultural matters which will reduce the autonomy of the already fragile infrastructure on which many artists and cultural workers depend. The thin end of the notorious financialisation wedge is the imposition of loans with grants becoming only one part of a "light touch [...] funding system."<sup>23</sup> The policy of structural adjustment here is being implemented by the Scottish Government's own Frankenstein's monster, Creative Scotland 2009 Ltd., with a board made up mainly of ex-bankers and businessmen.

With the typically corporatist metaphor of "Team Scotland" appearing as their guiding ethos (the bodily metaphor wishfully reborn with a sporting twist), Creative Scotland seems set to narrow the scope of free expression by forming an "entrepreneurial organisation". One doesn't have to take an overly pessimistic view of the future to predict the consequences of this move as it is already apparent how little time Scotland's new promotional culture has for anyone who is not a card-carrying supporter of this entrepreneurial mindset. An example very close to home was the interference with the distribution of *Variant* by Culture and Sport Glasgow, in part, for showing the city, and thereby the brand, in a bad light.<sup>24</sup> As with the adaptation of Higher Education to the Knowledge Economy, the project of single purpose government seeks to blend arts and culture within an entrepreneurial "spectrum", to use the specific term deployed by Mike Russell MSP, the minister currently overseeing culture and constitutional change. It would be naïve to think that what doesn't fit comfortably into this single purpose spectrum won't be squeezed out, as we have already witnessed with CSG. Essentially, the function of entrepreneurial ideology today appears to be all about dispersing risk away from corporate concentrations of capital – "investing in people", as one slogan goes. In this instance, making individuals and organisations more fearful of the political risks that go with exercising freedoms of expression.

Perhaps it is no surprise that, in a country which pillaged much of the world, many people still adhere to a highly objectified sense of culture. The imperially influenced reification of culture might be detected in the often repeated words of the Victorian, Mathew Arnold, for whom culture was "the best that has been thought and said in the world." Commercially revamped, it is just a short step for politicians to begin thinking about culture not as communication and process but something more like the best that has been done and sold, or

Diagram of composition of the power elite, *Power in America: Power at the National Level*, G. William Domhoff, April 2005.

in the language of Creative Scotland, its “economic contribution fully captured.” Again, this purposeful drive, under the banner of the creative industries, brings governments to the limits of 20th century universal rights and standards, which state that “cultural goods and services [...] cannot be considered as mere commodities or consumer goods like others...”<sup>25</sup> It is worth recalling the circumstances in which universal rights and standards came into being under the auspices

of the United Nations after World War II.

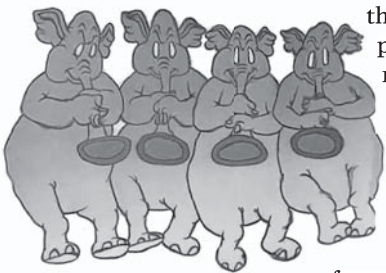
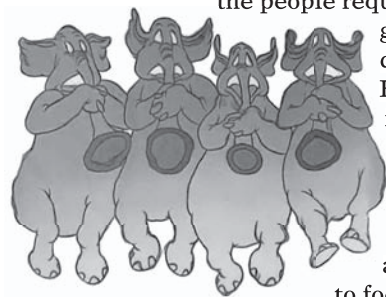
Undoubtedly, Fascism forced Liberal capitalism to face up to its weaknesses and the dictatorial outcomes of its own oligarchic and imperial tendencies. Confronted also with the threat of geo-politically backed Communist insurrection, Liberalism appeared to require ethical reinforcement from a more genuinely democratic script if it was to survive at all. In today's circumstances of capitalism's monopolistic ascendancy, it would be foolish to imbibe the mood of parochialism projected by so many politicians and neglect those international legal instruments intended to provide democratic leverage for both ordinary citizens and States. Moreover, rulings against countries such as the UK and Austria in the European Court of Human Rights show that citizens can sometimes make rights to Freedom of Expression work in their favour and, in the process, reveal corruption of the public interest on the part of governments.<sup>26</sup>

This is especially important because in the absence of any serious historic threat to capitalist oligarchy, Universal Declarations and their subsequent conventions are being casually suborned by the political class. In the domineering managerial spirit of Scotland's cultural policy formation, the key distinction between culture and commerce at the heart of the ‘UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions’ is being obscured by Orwellian doublespeak. On the part of a nationalist Scottish government, this is a supreme case of cherry-picking. It is the same convention that lends support to policies to promote Gaelic across Scotland, yet in its nationalistic drive the government has suborned the anti-commercial reasoning of the convention that lends support to such a policy. In the context of globalisation, what UNESCO recognised, against U.S. wishes, was that language is one aspect of culture which is broadly threatened by the reification and commercialisation of life. The formation of Creative Scotland and its business-minded pronouncements seem to be an expression of this very problem.

### Walled Gardens

Perhaps the most significant argument that nationalists may pose against their various ideological critics is that the sovereignty of the people requires a socially meaningful geographical/legal space for democracy to be realised.

However, this implies critical issues about how a trans-national economic system might be made accountable to the citizens of supposedly sovereign spaces. One would expect any sincere and nationally-minded democrats to focus, first and foremost, on these questions of democratic process and open-ended public reasoning. It is far too easy for opportunists to replace the complex politics of space with the technocratic management of *cultural nationalism*. Indeed, it is the manipulation of cultural identity and a commanding form of nostalgia that characterises the vociferous neo-Fascist tendencies apparent in regional autonomy movements in countries as different as Italy and Bolivia.<sup>27</sup> For its part, the Scottish Government's tourist campaign *Homecoming Scotland 2009* was an embarrassingly chauvinistic exercise in cultural assimilation and historical amnesia that shows many of the same traits. *Homecoming* was managerially constrained and commercially orientated. As such, it was an



## There is little value opposing Fascist Parties unless the essential core of coercive rationalism is exposed wherever it creeps in to monopolise public reasoning.

entirely predictable expression of myopic cultural nationalism. More problematically, for an avowedly outward-looking campaign that set its sights on people overseas who could claim Scottish ancestry, it demonstrably blocked out the history of Scottish participation in transatlantic slavery.

Robert Burns is said to provide the inspiration for *Homecoming*, yet any full appraisal of Burns' life shows the bard in a less romantic light than do his words. In fact Burns took up the position of an overseer on a slave plantation in Jamaica but was persuaded to abandon going. However, his decision to seek such a job recalls Scotland's development on the back of transatlantic slavery. But *Homecoming* brushed over much more than Burns' morally ambiguous pragmatism. The campaign appears to take after James Wedderburn who shut the door in the face of his *mulatto* son who had travelled from the Caribbean in 1779 to announce himself on these shores – likewise the promotion of *Homecoming* treated Scotland's African-Caribbean relatives as nothing more than the nation's bastard offspring. In a highly advertised racial pecking order they were made all but invisible. This may have something to do with the fact that Scotland officially takes its lead from Ireland in defining “who belongs” to its diaspora.<sup>28</sup> So why the mismatch with Scotland's history? The answer seems to lie in a long running desire of Scotland's political class to replicate the business networking of Ireland's now defunct boom time. In the words of a Scottish Government summary which deals with this policy development, “Scotland has already made significant progress in connecting with its diaspora and has been cited by the World Bank as an exemplar of best practice in the area of business networks”.<sup>29</sup> From this angle, the true inspiration for *Homecoming* looks more like the World Bank than Robert Burns.

As Stephen Mullen reveals in this issue of *Variant*, the Scottish Government's promotion of *Homecoming*, in its neglect of duties under the Race Relations Act, would, no doubt, give succour to BNP supporters. *Homecoming*'s narrow historical construction also suggests a thinly veiled contempt on the part of the political class for broad-based knowledge. Evidently, this is what happens when commerce and culture are merged.

## *Homo Corporativus* is the ideological outcome of the absurd metaphor of the nation as body that the original Fascists projected onto the public. It is high time it was buried once & for all.

### Disposing of the Body

Scotland's *ad hoc* cultural agenda has developed from a long and typically costly technocratic process which easily started as early as 2000 and took in the year-long Cultural Commission in 2004-5. Why is it that, after years of consultation, debate, deliberation and report writing, a government is cynically suborning UNESCO

conventions and is very likely breaking the law?

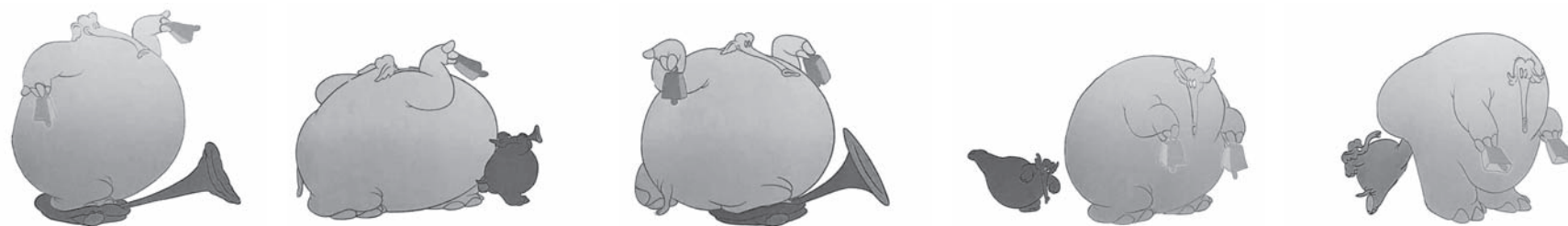
Overall, the answer to this question is creeping Fascism and, specifically, the Scottish Government's denial of well-founded differences over key matters of the public interest. Instead of acknowledging complexity and the negative influences of commerce (as is still possible in Scandinavian cultural policy), governments which have completely given way to creeping Fascism gush out vacuous promotional pronouncements that overwhelmingly favour big business. We live in the era of a hyper-mobile global money-making machine and, on the balance of probability, this machine will devour us and our planet if left to its own devices. Of course, old-fashioned Socialists and radicals would argue that this is precisely the nature of capitalism, and those politicians who, in a spirit of moderation, allude to “an arc of prosperity” and “sustainability” are indulging in hubris and selling their fatal fantasies to the public.<sup>30</sup> But, in place of ideological diversity in debating and co-determining how the broad public interest is served, we are ruled by the directives of a new *Homo Corporativus*. He or she comes in all shades, from all classes, speaks in many languages and accents, and has any number of high-sounding liberal beliefs. But just like the original Fascist prototype, the new *Homo Corporativus* cares nothing for real accountability and bottom-up democratic organisation although, of course, the masquerade of public engagement is absolutely crucial just as it was in the classic Fascist State. Indeed, in perfect continuity with classical Fascism, our *Homo Corporativus* bestows upon the public the wholly bureaucratic “struggle of the categories” as a substitute for more rigorous and meaningful debates about how the common good can be pursued.

Our new *Homo Corporativus* is the present-day ideological outcome of the absurd metaphor of the nation as body that the original Fascists projected onto the public. The body metaphor, so essential to Fascism's coercive rationalism, is today based on an even bigger lie about the relationship between nations and capitalism. It is high time *Homo Corporativus* was buried once and for all. There is little value in opposing Fascist Parties unless the essential core of coercive rationalism is exposed wherever it creeps in to monopolise public reasoning.

An example of this trend was the 2008 Lothian Lecture given in Edinburgh by Professor Tom Nairn, one of the original members of Britain's New Left intellectual elite, introduced by Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond, a former Royal Bank of Scotland economist. Nairn, sporting a tartan tie, and Salmond in his more soberly managerial attire, envisioned Scotland as a “nimble nation light on its feet” and “possibly out-smarting heavyweights” like the U.S. or China. A critical question that finally came from the audience about how such an idea has any bearing on a world dominated by global corporations was sidelined by Salmond and ignored by Nairn. Nevertheless, it's worth setting the record straight here. It should be immediately obvious to all that nation states are not mobile bodies within the international juridical system of sovereignty and, unlike corporations, banks and other businesses, which *are* mobile, nations do not enjoy the option of bankruptcy. But, as outlined here, the subtler aspects of Fascist ideology have moved centre stage. Scotland's cultural nationalism appears absolutely at one with the stream of neo-corporatist myths like “UK PLC”. As in the past, the progress of Fascism is being helped along by the opportunism of those who would like to call themselves democrats, and the insincerity of nationalists who have no commitment to realising the sovereignty of the people.

### Notes

1. Albert Speer was Hitler's Minister of Armaments and War Production. Friedrich von Hayek's explanation for Speer's rather glamorous reputation for technical expertise (despite the Nazi reliance on slave labour) was that unlike his counterparts in wartime Britain and the U.S., “Speer was a brilliant self-taught amateur...” See Gitta Sereny's, *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*, (1995) Picador, p551.
2. See Philip Morgan's, *Italian Fascism 1915-1945*, (2004)



- Palgrave / Macmillan, Basingstoke, p80.
3. The whistle-blower Davison Budhoo, an IMF economist, wrote in his 1988 resignation letter that, "I may hope to wash my hands of what in my mind's eye is the blood of millions of poor and starving peoples." Two independent studies commissioned by the government of Trinidad lent support to Budhoo's accusations that the IMF fabricated statistics to enforce economic liberalisation against the interests of developing nations. Despite many campaigns and calls for the abolition of the World Bank and IMF, Budhoo felt these would not succeed. See Naomi's Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, (2007) Penguin, p260.
  4. See Francis Mulhern's, *Culture / Metaculture*, (2000) Routledge, London, (glossary).
  5. See Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey's 'New Labour's neoliberal Gleichschaltung the case of higher education' <http://sys.glotta.ntua.gr/Dialogos/Politics/New%20Labour%20HE%20White%20Paper.pdf> (Accessed May 2009.)
  6. Gaetano Salvemini, *Under the Axe of Fascism*, (1936) Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, p114.
  7. See, 'Stones on the Road: The politics of Participation and the Generation of Crisis in Bolivia', by John-Andrew McNeish, (2006), *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol.25, No.2, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, p230.
  8. The problem of incorporation is hardly new in representative democracy although its contours have changed with the development of universal suffrage and the accompanying legal twists and turns that limit the political power of the workforce. *The History of Trade Unionism*, (1912) by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, recalls the activities of the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee from 1875-1885 which lobbied the House of Commons. To the Webb's, the erosion of the labour movement's original demands for full democracy through this well established lobbying group showed the "extent the thoughtful and superior workmen had, at this time, [instead] imbibed the characteristic ideas of middle class reformers." p352
  9. <http://www.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine>
  10. An exception to this silence came when the former World Bank economist and Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, lent support to the foundation of *Banco de Sur*, the Latin American bank which has set out to reform the fractional reserve banking system and create a new regional development bank. Stiglitz said this was "a welcome shake-up to the Western lending institutions" and thought it will "reflect the perspectives of those in the South" and help counter "the American strategy of divide and conquer, a strategy trying to get as much of the benefits for American companies," and "little for developing countries..." reported by Associated Press 11/10/2007.
  11. A YouGov survey in 2006 suggested that although many British people would lend support to policies associated with the BNP once the policies were known to be those of the far-right party support fell.
  12. See, 'Theories of industrial society', by Richard J. Badham (1986), *International Series in Social and Political Thought*, published by Croom Helm, p19.
  13. Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture, The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, (2002) Routledge, London, p20.
  14. As early as 1920, the poet Aleksei Gastev, director of the Central Institute of Labour in Moscow, was implementing Taylorist methods with a mass utopian zeal that paid scant regard to the incompatibility of "scientific industrialisation" with the independence of the Soviet Union or its workforce. Gastev's ideas about fusing society into a bodily machine were typically corporatist. In trivialising any questions of working class autonomy and democracy, Gastev's vision was in fact proto-Fascist in character. He acknowledged that the Taylorist transformation of the Soviet Union would depend upon foreign capital investment and would enslave Soviet industry to capitalists – a necessary evil which appeared not to obstruct his more poetic vision of a single-minded mass society. Gastev was proud that Lenin had one of his Taylorist charts hung in his office. See Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe, The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, (2002) MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p107. For a recent study of the breakdown of workers democracy see, *The Russian Revolution in Retreat, 1920-24, Soviet Workers and the New Communist Elite*, Simon Pirani, (2009) Routledge, London.
  15. See, Frank Fischer, *Technocracy and the politics of expertise*, (1990) Sage, London.
  16. Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, (1973) Harper and Row, New York, p258.
  17. Charles Landry, author of *The Creative City*, (2000) was one the key proponents of the insidious idea that politics is a failure of true partnership, which has been Landry's great goal. In this Landry has been among those who dangerously trivialise the deeply unequal politics of participation. See, *Beyond Social Inclusion Towards Cultural Democracy, Cultural Policy Collective*, p38. <http://www.variant.org.uk/20texts/CultDemo.txt>
  18. See, Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey, op. cit.
  19. In April 2000 the BBC reported that "more than half of academics [in the UK ] believe themselves to have 'poor psychological health'. And over a quarter reported that they had suffered from a 'stress-related' illness in the past year." See, 'Academics' poor mental health', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/712391.stm> (Accessed May 2009.)
  20. Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Fiona Hyslop MSP, wrote to the Scottish Funding Council on 18th of November 2008 underlining the SNP's government's 'single purpose.' Hyslop wrote that "the Council occupies a unique position and I believe has a vital role to play, as an agent of change, in realising our vision. There is no other organisation, which can so significantly drive the contribution of our colleges and universities to the delivery of economic, social and cultural change." For their part, the corporate friendly mission statement of the Council says "Our vision is for a more dynamic, entrepreneurial and internationally competitive Scotland, whose people are amongst the most skilled and educated of any of our competitors, and whose colleges and universities are world-class contributors to economic, social and cultural development." <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/index.htm> (Accessed May 2009.)
  21. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 'Danish National Executive Report – 2000' <http://www.ebst.dk/publikationer/rapporter/gem/kap5.html> (Accessed May 2009.)
  22. See Clive Barnett's, *Culture and Democracy, Media Space and Representation*, (2003) Edinburgh University Press, and Roger A. Shiner's, *Freedom of Commercial Expression*, (2003) Oxford University Press. Perhaps the most infamous example of the subversion of freedom of expression is the US Supreme Court judgement on campaign finance in 1976 the Buckley v. Valeo case which found that "money is speech." This judgement effectively renounced the classic principle of *Isegoria* which was implicitly expressed by the findings of earlier cases and acts.
  23. See 'Culture Minister speaks about Creative Scotland, April 28, 2009', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7dM7ykSUMg>
  24. Following a complaint from Culture & Sport Glasgow (CSG), Variant were informed that the magazine had been removed from Glasgow venues managed by CSG following the publication of 'The New Bohemia', an article by Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt that critically mapped the political network of CSG. The interference with the distribution of *Variant* would appear to contravene the author's rights to free political expression as determined by the European Court of Human Rights in cases such as *Lingens v. Austria* (1986), *Oberschlick v. Austria* (1991). See, 'Freedom of Expression on Trial: Caselaw under European Convention on Human Rights', by Sally Burnheim, <http://www.derechos.org/koaga/i/burnheim.html> (Accessed May 2009.) See also, 'Comment' in *Variant*, issue 33. An extract from CSG's complaint to *Variant*, 23/7/08, states: "The images you chose to illustrate the piece are in no way representative of Culture and Sport Glasgow and the work that it does. They would appear to have been chosen to illustrate the city of Glasgow in a negative way and thus associate Culture and Sport Glasgow with negative imagery."
  25. From the Ten Keys to the 'UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions', UNESCO 2007.
  26. See, 'Freedom of Expression on Trial: Caselaw under European Convention on human rights', by Sally Burnheim, <http://www.derechos.org/koaga/i/burnheim.html> (Accessed May 2009.)
  27. For an example of the local or regional "democracy" that now expresses profoundly anti-democratic and authoritarian instincts through the manipulation of cultural identity, see 'Spectacles of Autonomy and Crisis: Or, What Bulls and Beauty Queens have to do with Regionalism in Eastern Bolivia,' (2006) by Bret Gustafson, *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, Vol 11, No.2, University of California Press.
  28. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28141101/0>
  29. See, 'The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland' <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28141101/1> (Accessed June 2009.)
  30. In his classic study, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy – Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, the historian Barrington Moore Jr came to consider the outcomes of Anglo Saxon moderation as "totally inadequate ... to make democracy work". Based in a strong sense of practicality, the moderate position "tries to solve issues by patently ignoring them" (p139). Taking the long view that hindsight permits, Moore writes: "As I have reluctantly come to read this evidence the costs of moderation have been at least as atrocious as those of revolution, perhaps a great deal more." Penguin Books (1974), p 505.

# Ae Fond Kiss, and Then We Sever!

Stephen Mullen



Coca-Cola Enterprises' limited edition iconic 'Coke' glass bottle designed for the Homecoming Scotland campaign: "The design aims to combine the tradition and heritage of a cultural icon with the contemporary nature of a modern brand." The launch of the Homecoming bottle is expected to drive demand for the 'Coke' brand. Scotland has been one of the few countries in which a domestic brand, Irn-Bru, outsold the US product.

The term *diaspora*<sup>1</sup> refers to any movement of people from their homeland to another country, where they share a common ethnic identity or community. The word has its provenance in Greek, meaning, literally, a scattering or sowing of seeds. Perhaps the greatest of all Scottish exports has been its sons and daughters. Their legacy has left an indelible mark across the globe.

Of course, like many nations, there is a selective view of Scotland's Diaspora. There are numerous tales of men, women and children being transported from these shores as indentured servants due to economic conditions, Covenanters due to religion, for political reasons like the Jacobites, or simply being forced from the land in the Highland Clearances. The story of Scots forcibly transported to foreign shores is maintained in the national psyche through popular literature.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, there are several well-known tales of more fortunate and heroic Scots venturing abroad. It could be argued that Scots seem to revel in either "victim or hero" history. But why is this?

The popular history of the nation is one of subjection and tyrannical rule by its larger neighbour, England. The "greatest of all heroes", William Wallace, has long been lionised as dying in a vain attempt to free Scotland from under the English yoke. After the Incorporating Union of 1707 with England, it has been almost casually accepted that Scotland was the victim of colonial rule. Yet the Union undoubtedly opened up a dazzling array of riches in the plantations of New World and allowed Scots to become collaborators in Empire.

Until fairly recently, a selective view has been underpinned by lack of systematic academic examination. However, historians such as Prof. Tom Devine, Dr. Eric Graham and Dr. Stuart Nisbet are now actively examining the role of Scots in Empire as never before. There are many grey areas and unpalatable truths omitted from general historical texts and subsequently from popular mindset and culture, whilst the noble glories and popular tragedies in Scotland's past are celebrated with great vigour. This is particularly evident in modern tourist initiatives, and it could be argued that Scottish history is defined by a split personality. For every aspect of the Dr. Jekyll version, there is a reprehensible Mr. Hyde interpretation of events waiting to be told.

The role of Scots in slavery remains a contentious issue. However, it is undeniable that the nation was historically dependent on trade with North America and the West Indies. This was enabled by the infamous Triangular Trade which involved three stages of commodity transportation. The main commodity was human life transported via ships on Middle Passage from the West coast of Africa to near certain death in the New World. The captured Africans were subjected to the most lethal form of slavery in the plantations. Chattel slavery, an English concept, was established in Barbados in 1661 and many versions and slave codes rooted in this most lethal form of slavery were subsequently adopted across the colonies. The term *chattel* has its provenance in French and means literally *property*. That is indeed what the slaves became. They had no human or legal rights and murder as a form of punishment was prescribed.<sup>3</sup>

Scotland had comparatively low levels of direct involvement in the maritime trade in slaves from Africa to the New World. From 1706 until 1766 there are 31 recorded slave voyages from Scotland. Of these, 19 left from Glasgow's satellite ports at

Greenock and Port Glasgow. The direct voyages from Scotland are estimated to have carried around 4,000 to 5,000 souls into chattel slavery. Exact quantification, however, is impossible; the Custom Records from Port Glasgow and Greenock are incomplete for the crucial years between 1742 and 1830. Scotland's limited direct involvement, however, is attested to by other circumstantial evidence<sup>4</sup>, and the recorded 31 voyages over a 60 year period is atypical when compared with the prominent slave ports in England; from 1790 until 1799 the prolific port of Liverpool cleared 1011 slave voyages. It is further evidenced by considering the total estimated number of slaves transported on direct voyages from Glasgow with the total slaves exported by British ships from Africa; circa 1.5 million souls in the period 1710 until 1769.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, there are several recorded slave traders from Glasgow, such as the infamous Richard Oswald of Auchincruive who owned a slave trading fort at Bance Island off the coast of Sierra Leone in West Africa from 1748 until 1784.

This lack of direct involvement in the maritime trade in slaves has made it all too easy to view England as the guilty nation while depreciating the economic benefit to Scotland from slavery. Local merchants did not dominate in the maritime trade in slaves but later excelled at the trade in plantation grown produce. At times, Scotland traded more than all English ports together – and the majority arrived and departed from Glasgow's ports.<sup>6</sup>

Glasgow was the premier Scottish trading port and the city's merchants monopolised the produce grown by slaves, in particular tobacco. From 1740 to 1790, Glasgow was the leading *entrepôt* of tobacco in the world. Indeed, this period is known as the city's Golden Age.<sup>7</sup> The incoming wealth initiated vast social change as an *arriviste aristocracy*, the Tobacco Lords, became Scotland's richest men. They built magnificent townhouses in testament to their status. Some examples, such as the Cunninghame Mansion, now the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), remain intact today. The early townhouses built by extravagant slave traders were designed in a Palladian style which came to define Glasgow's architecture. The grandiose locations, which placed the townhouse at the end of an avenue, set a *point de vue* urban grid which is clearly identifiable in the Merchant City area today. The city still has Virginia Street as an urban reminder of the importance of the tobacco trade.

The merchants bought surrounding estates and embarked on a process of Improvement. Some historians suggest that the beginnings of the agricultural revolution in the West of Scotland can be identified to this period. The tobacco trade also promoted the growth of a complex urban economy in Glasgow. There is an ongoing debate about the impact of slavery-tainted wealth and how far this provided the impetus for the Industrial Revolution. In any case, Scotland was one of the poorest countries in Western Europe in the 1690s, and by 1850 was on the way to becoming one of the leading industrialised nations in the world. Historians, and city boosters alike<sup>8</sup>, have been quick to recognise the entrepreneurial attributes of the Tobacco Lords, yet at the same time have neglected to address the reality that this trade was built almost exclusively on black chattel slave labour.

The colonial merchants also traded in sugar, which was similarly dependent on black chattel slavery. This was facilitated by trading





Homecoming Scotland 2009 Events Guide graphic:  
 FAR LEFT:  
 First Minister Alex Salmond holds the original version of the graphic.  
 ABOVE LEFT:  
 detail of the original version.  
 BELOW LEFT:  
 detail of the amended version

relationships which from the 1640s linked Glasgow and the Caribbean.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the colonial merchants in the city were dependent on sugar for a longer period than tobacco, although this was not quite as lucrative. There were several sugar houses built in Glasgow from 1667 onwards, and the trade continued after slavery was abolished in 1838. West Indian merchants such as James Ewing accrued vast fortunes which seeped into Glasgow. There are still many indications in the city today of the long connection with chattel slavery for those who care to look. It should be noted that many distinguished scholars, part of the Scottish Enlightenment, played a key role in the abolition of the slave trade. Later, many local campaigners also had a direct role in the abolition of slavery in the British colonies and the Campaign for Universal Emancipation.<sup>10</sup>

It is indisputable that the merchants in Scotland were involved in colonial trade. Clearly, there is no absence of evidence. But there is an absence of acknowledgement. The nature of the trading relationship has allowed a myth of detachment from the brutal realities of chattel slavery to evolve. It could be argued that there is a distinctive “*It wisnae us*” mindset in modern Scotland. This is particularly evident in the role of Scots in the colonies in the New World. Indeed, there is a lack of contemporary acceptance of the extensive role as plantation owners and the legacy of these sojourners.

Scotland had legal access to English colonial markets after 1707. India, however, remained the monopoly of the English East India Company until 1801. Whilst a large number of Scots served with the Company via the patronage system, there was no mass invasion of the Glasgow merchant fraternity that occurred in the Americas. The loss of the American colonies in 1775 narrowed the focus of their activity to the West Indies and British hegemony was established by 1815.

Sugar was a mainstay of the Scottish economy for over 200 years. This promoted long term trading relationships and a huge return of wealth, principally to Glasgow. There was a Scots plantation grab in Jamaica and St. Kitts after 1711, and from 1763 in Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, Guyana, Antigua, and Trinidad and Tobago. This facilitated the emigration of up to 20,000 sojourners in search of their fortune in the period 1750 to 1800.<sup>11</sup> These were typically young men in their twenties who travelled to the slave islands. This added to already established communities who had settled there as exiles and indentured labourers. Scots adopted a unique role in the plantations as doctors, plantation owners, lawyers, merchants... and slave traders and overseers. Indeed, the greatest of all Scottish egalitarians, Robert Burns was on the way to become, in his words, “a poor negro driver” in 1786 before unexpected earnings from his poetry intervened. It seems his libertarian sentiments would have been forgotten in order to pursue the proceeds of slavery in a position that Scots dominated. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, although a noted *Scottophobe*,

observed in 1812:

“Of the overseers of the slave plantations in the West Indies, three of four are Scotsmen, and the fourth is generally observed to have suspicious cheek bones: and on the American Continent the Whippers-in or Neger-Bishops are either Scotchmen or the Americanised Descendants of Scotchmen.”

Scots sojourners were involved at the leading heights of the management of the plantations and became established amongst the ruling elite. The premier destination was Jamaica, the leading producer of sugar in the Caribbean. One commentator, Edward Long, estimated that in Jamaica in 1774 around one third of the white population were Scottish or of Scottish descent. There are many documented examples of Glaswegians owning plantations. Alexander Houston and Co. was the largest sugar house in Scotland, although they were declared bankrupt in 1800 in the worst financial disaster in the history of the British slave trade.<sup>12</sup> James Ewing, the Lord Provost and first MP for Glasgow in 1832, owned the Caymanas slave plantation, the largest in Jamaica.

Scottish vested interests in the Caribbean were protected in the British Parliament by Henry Dundas, known as “the uncrowned King of Scotland.” As the MP for Midlothian, he introduced the cynical concept of “gradual abolition” which ensured British slavery continued for 31 more years after the slave trade was abolished in 1807. The role of Scots in the Caribbean is indisputable and there was a pervading Caledonian influence in Jamaica. How does this resonate today?

Scots originally surveyed Jamaica and set the boundaries of the slave plantations. To this day, this legacy resonates in place names such as Glasgow, Hampden, Argyle, Glen Islay, Dundee, Fort William, Montrose, Dumbarton and St. Andrews. Of the 173 place names in Greater Kingston a quarter can be found in Scotland or are based on Scottish family names; for example, place names such as Hamilton Gardens, Sterling Castle, Gordon Town and Elgin Street.

Many of the Scots emigrants in the 18th century were temporary sojourners. However, there are many examples of Scottish men having children with their slaves. The husband of one of Robert Burns’ mistresses chose to remain in Jamaica on his plantation with his “ebony women and mahogany children”. Many Jamaicans are therefore directly descended from Scots and this is reflected in surnames. Former slaves also adopted the surnames of plantation owners after Emancipation in 1838. Scottish surnames are prominent across the Caribbean and in particular Jamaica. Common Scots-Jamaican names include Campbell, Douglas, Reid, McFarlane, McKenzie, MacDonald, Grant and Gordon. Despite all this, the descendants of Scots in Jamaica have been termed “the Forgotten Diaspora”<sup>13</sup> by Scots-Jamaican, Prof. Geoff Palmer at Heriot-Watt University. Indeed, this amnesia is directly played

out this year in *Homecoming Scotland 2009*, a “year-long celebration of Scotland’s culture and heritage” managed by *Event Scotland* in partnership with *Visit Scotland*, funded by the Scottish Government and part financed by the European Union.

This new initiative to develop the Diaspora Market, via a £3 million programme and £2 million of marketing, encourages “Scotland’s global family to come home” to participate in festivities, celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, and to revel in the achievements of Scots emigrants. There is no doubt, *Homecoming* is a strategic vehicle for economic development and profile raising, and for “attracting high quality talent to Scotland”.

The marketing of *Homecoming*, however, has been firmly directed towards the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.<sup>14</sup> In the ‘Plan your trip’ section on the official website the only countries highlighted are in North America, Australia and Europe.<sup>15</sup> There is no mention of the Caribbean islands at all.

Scottish National Party (SNP) Members of the Scottish Parliament are currently on a drive to win international friends by twinning towns. Again, the focus is firmly on North America, New Zealand and Australia, with California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger encouraging co-operation with California in Falkirk.<sup>16</sup> However, it begs the question why the premier Atlantic trading port of Glasgow in Scotland should not have been a priority to develop co-operative relationships with the modern New World? Indeed, Glasgow in Jamaica would seem appropriate given the historic links. This oversight seems strange considering the sugar trade was the mainstay of the city’s development for almost 200 years; Jamaica Street and Kingston Bridge in Glasgow, and the location in Jamaica named by Scots, all point towards these connections. However, place names are not the only aspect that has been overlooked.

Prof. Geoff Palmer has stressed that no-one from Jamaica has been officially invited to any festivities although many view themselves as part of the global Scots Diaspora. Of course, if there is not a full acceptance of the role of Scots in the Caribbean, then how can there be full acceptance of the human legacy? Indeed, it could be argued that the *Homecoming* initiative had no option but to exclude the Scots Diaspora in the Caribbean considering the denial surrounding Scots involvement in slavery. If the Caribbean Diaspora were included it would have represented a sharp challenge to the dominant national mindset.

The selective amnesia is nothing new but the cultural segregation at its heart is now supported by official policy. There has been a clear lack of will in government circles to accept the more inglorious aspects of Scotland’s past. The Scottish Government produced a booklet in 2006-07 that commemorated the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807. The booklet was intended to illustrate a history of the Scottish role in slavery. However, much like the view to who constituted the

*Homecoming* Diaspora, this had a narrow focus. The two historians on the project, amongst the leading authorities in Scotland, were dismissed after discussions about the booklet's content and style. One, the Scots abolitionist historian Rev. Dr. Iain Whyte, stated to the media at the time:

"In my view, they wanted a particular slant that was not historical. I felt that they wanted certain stories that weren't possible to produce, to change the text in certain ways. I wasn't prepared to do that. The government always has a certain agenda and they felt that what we were producing wasn't what they wanted."<sup>7</sup>

Significantly, the two historians suggested that the booklet should illustrate the deep level of Scots complicity in the slave plantations. Both recommended that there should be a follow up study to examine the unique Scottish role. However, the booklet's government editors were resistant to the notion as, they affirmed unironically, the general population in Scotland was unaware of this involvement. Subsequently, the editors of the booklet made 188 changes to the research, which minimised and softened the role of Scots perpetrators. These revisions were not, of course, consistent with the professional integrity of the two academics. After some debate the research was shelved. The Scottish Government eventually produced an official booklet that contained a more palatable, watered down version of the role of Scots. Whilst it was a Labour government who commissioned and censored the research, it is quite clear there has been scant change with the Diaspora focus of *Homecoming*.

Amnesia and 'whitewashing' is further illustrated by the continued lack of acknowledgement of Scottish involvement in slavery within the school curriculum. This is in spite of the establishment of the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies at Edinburgh University under the leadership of Scotland's prominent historian, Prof. Tom Devine, who has been lumped in with "British unionists" by some in the SNP due to his criticism of the "Burns Supper" school of Scottish history.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, the role of Scottish perpetrators in the colonies doesn't sit nicely with the notion of a subjugated province.

History can confront its audience with the unpalatable, but it can also teach lessons from the past. This unpalatable aspect of Scottish history

has implications for the next generation. Indeed, an inclusive history of Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, could aid the process of acceptance in future. But to mitigate the Scottish role in slavery by suggesting it was atypical of the actions of the time does not fit with the continued attempts at obscuring this past. This selective view can be neatly summarised in a *Homecoming* promotional graphic which caused some controversy recently. The compound image is of a large group of people seen celebrating *Homecoming*, with not one non-white person in the assemblage. Six months later, in an updated design to reflect "the diversity in modern Scotland"<sup>19</sup>, an Asian man was airbrushed in, taking up the position of reading Robert Burns' poetry. What this cynical tokenism states loud and clear, to anyone who cares to listen, is that non-white ethnic minorities are historical empty vessels that await assimilation on Scottish terms. This cynicism has the potential to divide the nation and the Diaspora.<sup>20</sup>

Does the *Homecoming* initiative have implications for race relations in modern Scotland? Considering the sensitivities of the issues, should a systematic Race Equality Impact Assessment have been undertaken prior to its launch?<sup>21</sup> As yet, there appears to be no version publicly available. Considering the scale of the *Homecoming* initiative to develop the economy and provide support to businesses<sup>22</sup>, surely an assessment must have been undertaken in order to ascertain its impact on contemporary society?

How damaging – or beneficial – is this loss of memory to Scotland? On the surface, *Homecoming Scotland 2009* is a tourist initiative right out of the "Burns Supper" school of Scottish history designed to encourage increased visitors and spending. According to the Scottish Government, an 8:1 return on core spending is projected, purporting a minimum income of £40 million to Scotland, though business representatives have questioned the viability of the targeted overseas markets.<sup>23</sup> It is also clear the *Homecoming* initiative represents the beginnings of an aggressive policy to cultivate business networks with a wealthy Scots Diaspora. Recent research commissioned by the Scottish Government, 'The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland', points to an impending Scots policy which transcends the previous boundaries between culture and commerce. It is very clear that Scottish politicians have scant regard for any such safeguards and think that culture should serve commerce at every possible opportunity. Significantly, the authors highlight the urgency in defining the Scots Diaspora as one which should be as wide ranging as possible:

"There is merit in widening the definition of Diaspora to include as many constituencies who might be prepared to play for 'Team Scotland' as possible."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the research highlights the commercially defined scope of the Scots Diaspora at present. The economic motive behind Team Scotland is made explicit by a strategy which says, "[...] the wider the net is cast the richer the contributions harnessed will be."<sup>25</sup>

According to the authors, the Scots Diaspora strategy must be both cultural and economic, but at the same time there should be an open view of exactly who the Diaspora consists of. With *Homecoming* we are instead seeing a programme that disguises the cultural exclusion of some through the assimilation of others. This is not simply a matter of forgetting the real life of Robert Burns or airbrushing in the odd 'token other' in order to mask an obviously exclusive invitation. There is an even deeper issue with the mutilation of Scottish history and culture – whether by omission or commission – to suit a commercial agenda. *Homecoming* is a unique national event with an international focus. Given the link with Burns and slavery, this year would have been a perfect opportunity to publicly reconcile ourselves with our real history. Instead, the Scottish Government has severed itself from the complexity of the nation's past and shown how it is keen to adapt to a romantic Disney-like charade based upon the denial of historical evidence. For a country which has a long imperial past, a peculiarly white vision has been authorised and publicised.

## Notes

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2. For example, Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (1886); John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (1969).
3. Asante, M.K., 'The ideological origins of chattel slavery in the British world'. Slavery Remembrance Day memorial lecture (2007).
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5. Richardson, D., 'The British Empire and The Atlantic Slave Trade, 1660-1807, *The Oxford History of The British Empire. Vol. 2: The Eighteenth Century*, (p442).
6. Devine, T.M., *Scotland's Empire 1680-1815*, (p140).
7. Devine, T.M., *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities, 1740-1790*, (John Donald, 1975).
8. "...the Merchant City is Glasgow's cultural quarter. Home to the former warehouses of the 'Tobacco Lords' - the 18th century entrepreneurs who built Glasgow's wealth through international trade - the Merchant City has been transformed into a hip assortment of designers shops, bars, galleries and venues which perfectly compliments Glasgow's cosmopolitan city centre." Experience Glasgow's Merchant City Festival, 13 September 2007, [Merchantcityfestival.com](http://Merchantcityfestival.com) It is salient to contrast this official approach with that taken by Liverpool: <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery/europe/liverpool.aspx>
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10. Whyte, I., *Scotland and The Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838*, (Edinburgh, 2007).
11. Devine, T.M., *Scotland's Empire 1680-1815*, (London, 2004, p231).
12. Thomas, H., *The Slave Trade*, (1997)
13. Available: <http://www.scotland.org/about/history-tradition-and-roots/features/culture/the-forgotten-diaspora.html> (Last Accessed 16.5.09)
14. *Homecoming Marketing Budget*, available: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/pqa/wa-09/wa0311.htm> (Last Accessed 15.6.09)
15. Available: <http://www.homecomingscotland2009.com/plan-your-scotland-trip/default.html> (Last Accessed: 5.5.2009)
16. Available: <http://www.snp.org/node/14969> (Last Accessed: 5.5.09)
17. Available: [http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.1284345.0.executive\\_slave\\_trade\\_booklet\\_sparks\\_criticism\\_from\\_antiracism\\_group.php](http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.1284345.0.executive_slave_trade_booklet_sparks_criticism_from_antiracism_group.php) (Last Accessed: 17.5.09)
18. Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/25/centre-study-scottish-diaspora-controversy> (Last Accessed: 16.5.09)
19. Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/25/centre-study-scottish-diaspora-controversy> (Last Accessed: 16.5.2009)
20. Available: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article5372681.ece> (Last Accessed: 5.5.09)
21. "Equality impact assessment (EQIA) is all about considering how your policy (by policy we mean activities, functions, strategies, programmes, and services or processes) may impact, either positively or negatively, on different sectors of the population in different ways." Available: <http://openscotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1032/0054791.pdf> (Last Accessed: 15.6.09)
22. [http://www.homecomingscotland2009.com/media-centre/forbes\\_forum\\_release.html](http://www.homecomingscotland2009.com/media-centre/forbes_forum_release.html)
23. Jim Mather, Scottish Parliament, Written Answers, Friday 30 January 2009. Available: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/spwans/?id=2009-01-30.S3W-19785.h> (Last Accessed: 15.6.09) 'European and External Relations Committee Official Report 17 March 2009', Col 1059, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/europe/or-09/eu09-0502.htm> (Last Accessed: 15.6.09)
24. Ancien, D., Boyle, M. and Kitchin, R., 'The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland' (p2). Available: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28141101/0> (Last Accessed: 16.5.09)
25. Ancien, D., Boyle, M. and Kitchin, R., 'The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland' (p15) Available: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28141101/0> (Last Accessed: 16.5.09)

BELOW:  
"First Minister Alex Salmond presents relative Susan McLean from New Zealand with a Homecoming certificate when they met at the Scottish Parliament."  
(Uploaded to Scottish Government's photostream on May 29, 2009 by Scottish Government)  
BOTTOM:  
"The Rowan" by Gerard M Burns, which hangs over the desk of the Scottish First Minister at the Scottish Parliament.



# Playing Ball

## Private Business: Public Planning

Monika Vykoukal

The abilities of elite capitalists to shape public policy and government decisions through the power of their philanthropic as well as business activities is not limited to the connections of wealth, power, and government on the level outlined in Michael Barker's considered analysis of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In fact, a cursory look at some recent goings-on in Scotland suggests that the relationship of public benefit to private funds is of a similar nature, if on a smaller scale. In the area of public planning in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen there are two developments which have come to varying wider prominence, Donald Trump's golf-course and housing scheme in Aberdeenshire<sup>1</sup>, and Sir Ian Wood's more recent plans for the city centre of Aberdeen.

"The greatest golf course anywhere in the world"<sup>2</sup> proposed by Donald Trump for Aberdeenshire's Menie Estate was a not entirely welcome pitch for locals in 2006. Trump's plan attracted dismay for its location on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, as well as its inconsistency with the existing overall planning for the area.<sup>3</sup> Emphasised by Trump and also gaining local support – including on the level of residents – was the argument of economic benefit to the region in the context of a lack of planning for the coming decline in the energy sector, the main economic focus of the area, on the part of local and indeed national government. Against this background, Trump's outline planning application went through the established decision-making channels, to be rejected by the Infrastructure Services Committee of Aberdeenshire Council with a narrow vote in November 2007.<sup>4</sup> The committee chair, Martin Ford, cast the deciding vote, and has since been seen as the key

personality in this rejection.

While Trump chose not to undertake the established route of appealing the planning decision, the decision over the development was called in by national government in an unprecedented manner<sup>5</sup> after a series of meetings between government officials, including the First Minister, Alex Salmond, and representatives of the Trump organisation. Following a subsequent inquiry by the Local Government and Communities Committee in early 2008 into the handling of the planning application, as well as a public enquiry on the planning application itself, the development eventually received outline planning permission by the Scottish Government, where the decision rested with Scottish Ministers, in November 2008.<sup>6</sup> In the scrutiny of the call-in, Salmond's involvement was legitimised by the point that he did not intervene using his position as First Minister, but in his role as MSP for the constituency concerned<sup>7</sup>, and that an application rejected at the local level can be called in by Scottish Ministers if they consider it of national importance and if this is done prior to the planning decision notice being issued by the local council.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the widely communicated dismay and the subsequent removal of Ford from the Infrastructure Services Committee, and the gradual suspension of other councillors who opposed the development<sup>9</sup>, left the overwhelming impression that it was Trump's wealth and the threat of taking his business elsewhere<sup>10</sup> that had allowed him to directly shape local planning by his investment, which influenced public decisions at the highest level. A key role of government would arguably be that of regulating private and economic interests in relation to other values. However, the contested claim that Trump's project will significantly further the local economy<sup>11</sup> in this case clearly overruled previous planning policy and in particular concerns such as environmental sustainability. Issues surrounding the political fall-out locally, in terms of the position



Will ye  
no be  
leavin' a  
tip fur  
The Driver,  
Sir?

### Notes

1. "The proposed development included two 18 hole links golf courses: a golf clubhouse; a golf academy; golf maintenance building and caddy shack; a short game area and driving range; a 450 unit resort hotel, conference centre and spa; 36 golf villas; 950 holiday homes; staff accommodation; parking areas; access roads and two future private residential housing areas for 500 houses in total", Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 1, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>
2. TIGLS Donald Trump Precognition, pg. 2, Precognition Statements, Aberdeenshire Council, Menie Estate Public Enquiry, <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/inquiry/index.asp#statements>
3. Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 1, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>
4. The tie was moreover not between granting permission or refusing it, but over refusing or deferring the decision; see Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 14, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>
5. Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 35, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>
6. See Menie Estate Public Enquiry, Aberdeenshire Council, Decision letter dated 3 November 2008 to the applicants' agent, <http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/inquiry/index.asp>
7. See e.g. The Scottish Government News Release, Proposed golf resort in Aberdeenshire, 20/12/2007, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/12/20091903>
8. Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 7-8, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>
9. Ford and three other Liberal Democrat councillors have since left the Party, after they were suspended or investigated in relation to their opposition to the Trump development, to form an independent group. Most recently Ford has joined the Green Party, while the Trump organisation has reported his colleague Debra Storr to the Standards Commission for alleged trespassing on the Menie Estate. See Gillian Bell and Jamie Buchan, 'Lib Dem party suspends trio who quit council group', *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 2/3/09; <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1101662?UserKey=>; Shona Gossip, 'Trump reports Storr to watchdog', 16/4/09, <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1173221>; Jamie Buchan, 'Disgusted councillor quits party', *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 22/5/09, <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1228375>; 'Trump politician to join Greens', BBC News, 31/5/09, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north-east/8075787.stm>
10. See e.g. Local Government and Communities Committee; 5th Report, 2008 (Session 3); Planning Application Processes (Menie Estate); Volume 1, pg. 15 and 26, <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S3/committees/lgc/reports-08/lgr08-05.htm>. Trump had also stated in an interview (prior to the negative decision in November 2007), that "because I am who I am... I'm going to get it." Alex Shoumatoff, 'The Thistle and the Bee', *Vanity Fair*, May 2008, <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2008/05/trump200805>
11. See e.g. 'Trump's Scottish venture. Birdie or bogey?', *The Economist*, 6/11/08; [http://www.economist.com/world/britain/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12564699](http://www.economist.com/world/britain/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12564699)
12. See e.g. Gillian Bell, 'Tycoon to fund Trump golf resort protest', *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 13/5/2009, <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1214366?UserKey=>
13. Calum Ross, 'Public cash may be used to buy land for Trump compulsory purchases not ruled out by council', *Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 9/5/09, <http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1208996>
14. Hamish MacDonell, 'Downturn makes for not-quite-so-rich list', *The Scotsman*, 27/4/09, <http://news.scotsman.com/latestnews/Downturn-makes-for-notquitesorich-list.5207228.jp>
15. See <http://www.woodfamilytrust.org>; Sir Ian Wood was

of the opposed councillors, and the continued concerns of opponents to the scheme, in particular from an ecological perspective, continue as the development is set to take its course.<sup>12</sup> In a further twist of events, Aberdeenshire Council are now 'not ruling out' compulsory purchase orders to acquire land for Trump's scheme with public funds.<sup>13</sup>

Emerging just before the favourable decision in the Trump case, Sir Ian Wood intervention in Aberdeen City's public planning was in many ways analogous to Trump's more widely reported efforts. In this case, Wood – a local businessman who as founder of the Wood Group is now one of the richest individuals in Scotland<sup>14</sup>, and has created his own charitable foundation, The Wood Family Trust<sup>15</sup> offered the city £50 million towards the development of a square in the current location of a city centre park, a scheme he has championed in previous incarnations for decades.<sup>16</sup> Thus, an earlier version of the scheme formed part of 'Aberdeen Beyond 2000', a report in 1987 by "a self-appointed committee of local interests, including Wood, dominated by the business sector"<sup>17</sup>, including oil corporations, construction, local businesses, financial institutions, local government representation, as well as the University of Aberdeen and local media. As pointed out in a critical review of this report in 1988, the 'Aberdeen Beyond 2000' group and its plans "[ran] contrary to... [the] democratically accountable planning system"<sup>18</sup>, and the report "undermines the position of the local authorities involved", constituting effectively "an attempt by unelected and unaccountable interests to appropriate those [democratic planning] functions."<sup>19</sup>

In a return to 'Beyond 2000 of 1987', the current scheme was first publicly proposed in the form of a press conference Wood gave in Aberdeen in November 2008 in the company of Alex Salmond, in his function of First Minister on this occasion. While the details of the scheme are still unknown, Wood's offer has, for the time being, halted a previously granted planning application for the same site for a new contemporary art centre proposed by Peacock Visual Arts.<sup>20</sup>

Since Wood's donation would have to be more than matched by public funds – anything approaching actual cost is at this point conjecture, although the figure most recently reported is £140 million<sup>21</sup> – his generosity is, in effect, influencing not only public planning but also expenditure. Thus, local citizens will have contributed to an as yet not clearly communicated scheme they have, so far, have had little if any opportunity to influence and which does not appear in any way a response to politically identified priorities, be they in terms of public provision at large or more specifically in public planning.<sup>22</sup> Wood's ambitions are, if his plan is implemented, set to reconfigure a central, if currently little used, public space through an initiative stemming not from any tangible public interest but from his private wealth. In this context it is notable that the development of his scheme towards planning permission and its ultimate realisation is steered by local private-public body Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ASCEF)<sup>23</sup> and has most recently been propped up by Scottish Enterprise, who, in another twist and turn of events, also support the art centre scheme.<sup>24</sup>

Beyond the steering of public planning by private business in North-East Scotland, a more structural analysis of corporate influence on the Scottish government is carried out by David Miller, Professor of Sociology at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, and one of the founding editors of spinwatch.org. Amongst the cases cited in his diagnosis of a "general orientation towards business interests"<sup>25</sup> and "the progressive neutering of processes of democracy"<sup>26</sup> is the role of Sir Ian Byatt who runs the Water Industry Commission for Scotland (WICS) – who's ostensible role is to make sure Scottish Water is run efficiently within the public sector – which employs the consultancy Frontier Economics, and Byatt, while in his role at WICS, is in turn employed by Frontier Economics as a senior associate pushing for the privatisation of Scottish Water.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, both The Scottish Parliament's 'Business Exchange' (SPBE) and the Scottish Government's Management group and Financial Services Advisory Board are, as outlined by Miller, populated by lobbyists, business representatives and executives from finance capitalism, respectively.<sup>28</sup>

The developments around Trump and the emerging Wood saga are thus clearly not isolated events of a somewhat amusing reverence before the powerful and generous. Rather, they highlight the often much less blatantly visible integration of Corporate and Public Sectors: from the framing of personal philanthropy as an acceptable substitute for public welfare provision<sup>29</sup> to the rather more prominent and spectacular public financing of private losses currently taking place on the world-wide scale of the global financial system.

chairman of Scottish Enterprise from 1997 to 2000 and is currently chancellor of The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.

16. See Mike Wade, '£13m Aberdeen arts plan loses cash to rival scheme', *Times Online*, 24/4/09, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6164665.ece>; and M.G. Lloyd and D.A. Newlands, 'The "Growth Coalition" and Urban Economic Development', *Local Economy*, 3:1, pg. 31-39, 1988
17. M.G. Lloyd and D.A. Newlands, 'The "Growth Coalition" and Urban Economic Development', *Local Economy*, 3:1, pg. 31-39, 1988, pg. 35; this version was not the first, but resurrected "a previous proposal to redevelop part of the city centre, decisively rejected by the District Council", *ibid*, pg. 27.
18. *Ibid*, pg. 37
19. *Ibid*, pg. 38
20. For the record, I worked as curator at Peacock Visual Arts from 2004-2009. For more information on this scheme see, e.g. <http://www.peacockvisualarts.com/new-building/>; on the implications of the Ian Wood scheme on the previous plans, see, e.g. Council Additional Agenda 17 December 2008, Union Terrace Gardens and Peacock Visual Arts - Report by Corporate Director for Strategic Leadership, Aberdeen City Council, [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?ID=19935&ID=8635](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?ID=19935&ID=8635) [pdf download]
21. Ruth Bloomfield, 'Aberdeen row over rival plans,' 15/5/09, *Building Design Online*, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3140541>
22. See Aberdeen Local Plan (2008), Chapter 3, pg. 59, [http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Planning/sl\\_pla/pla\\_LocalPlan\\_home.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Planning/sl_pla/pla_LocalPlan_home.asp); Union Street, Conservation Area Appraisal, Strategic Leadership Planning & Infrastructure, Aberdeen City Council June 2007, pg. 27, 29, 32-33, [http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Conservation/sl\\_cns/pla\\_conservation\\_areas.asp](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/Conservation/sl_cns/pla_conservation_areas.asp)
23. See 'ACSEF leads on vision for new city centre heart', <http://www.acsef.co.uk/ezoneItem.cfm?theID=1&itemID=5> The ACSEF board's majority is constituted by private sector bodies, including North-East construction magnate Stewart Milne. It would seem ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum) has recently renamed itself the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic FUTURE.
24. Mike Wade, '£13m Aberdeen arts plan loses cash to rival scheme', *Times Online*, 24/4/09, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6164665.ece>
25. David Miller, 'Corporate Power and the SNP Government', 2/4/08, <http://www.spinwatch.org.uk/articles-by-category-mainmenu-8/70-british-politics/4778-corporate-power-and-the-snp-government>
26. David Miller, 'Spin, corporate power and the social sciences', Autumn-Winter 2008/2009, pg. 1, <http://www.dmiller.info/popular-journals>
27. David Miler, 'Corporate Power and the SNP Government', 2/4/08, <http://www.spinwatch.org.uk/articles-by-category-mainmenu-8/70-british-politics/4778-corporate-power-and-the-snp-government>; see also, 'Water quango gave £275,000 to chairman's organisations', *The Sunday Herald*, 14/2/09, [http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.2489312.0.water\\_quango\\_gave\\_275\\_000\\_to\\_chairmans\\_organisations.php](http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.2489312.0.water_quango_gave_275_000_to_chairmans_organisations.php)
28. David Miller, 'Spin, corporate power and the social sciences', Autumn-Winter 2008/2009, pg. 2-3, <http://www.dmiller.info/popular-journals>
29. See, 'An evaluation of Corporate Community Investment in the UK, A research report by the International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, Nottingham University Business School for CAF (Charities Aid Foundation), December 2006, pg. 8, [www.cafonline.org/pdf/CCI%20research%20report.pdf](http://www.cafonline.org/pdf/CCI%20research%20report.pdf): "With the growth of the welfare state, much of this social provision was carried out by Government agencies and industrial paternalism declined leaving business philanthropy as the dominant mode of CCI. This continued until the 1980s, since when successive governments have increasingly leveraged the support of charities and businesses to address social, environmental and economic problems. These multi-partner initiatives are characteristic of a more networked model of governance."

# Bill Gates, Philanthropy, & Social Engineering?

Michael Barker

Like many of the world's richest businessmen, Bill Gates<sup>1</sup> believes in a special form of democracy, otherwise known as plutocracy. That is, socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor. Following in the footsteps of John D. Rockefeller's and Andrew Carnegie's charitable foundations, Gates, like most capitalists, relies upon the government to protect his business interests from competition, but is less keen on the idea of a government that acts to redistribute wealth to the wider populous. For powerful capitalists such as Gates, the State is merely a tool to be harnessed for profit maximization, and they themselves, having acquired their wealth by exploiting and manipulating the economic system, then take it upon their own shoulders to help relieve global inequality and escalating poverty. As one might expect, their definitions of the appropriate solutions to inequality neglect to seriously challenge the primary driver of global poverty, capitalism. For the most part, the incompatibility of democracy and capitalism remains anathema. Instead, those capitalist philanthropists fund all manner of 'solutions' that help provide a much needed safety valve for rising resistance and dissent, while still enabling business-as-usual, albeit with a band-aid stuck over some of the more glaring inequities.

With huge government-aided financial empires resting in the hands of a small power elite, the ability of the richest individual philanthropists to shape global society is increasing all the time, while the power of society to influence governments is being continuously undermined by many of these powerful philanthropists. This situation is problematic on a number of levels. Democratic governments rely on taxes to stabilise existing structures of governance. Yet, profiting from specifically designed legislation, billionaire capitalists are able to create massive tax-free endowments to satisfy their own particular interests. This process in effect means that vast amounts of money are regularly 'stolen' from the democratic citizenry, whereupon they are redistributed by unaccountable elites, who then cynically use this display of generosity to win over more supporters to the free-market principles that they themselves do their utmost to protect themselves from. Bill Gates' Microsoft Corporation and his associated liberal foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (the largest of its kind in the world), is only one of the more visible displays of capitalism's hypocrisy.

## I – Capitalists cum Philanthropists: the roots of Gates' philanthropy

At this present historical juncture, neoclassical free-market economic doctrines are the favored means of promoting capitalism by business and political elites. In many respects this neoliberal dogma has been adopted by a sizable proportion of the citizenry of the world's most powerful countries, arguably against the citizenry's own best interests. This widespread internalisation, but not necessarily acceptance, by the broader populous of the economic theories that consolidate capitalist hegemony over the global market did not happen naturally, but actually required a massive ongoing propaganda campaign to embed itself in the minds of the masses. The contours of this propaganda offensive have been well described by Alex Carey who fittingly observed that: "The twentieth century has been characterised by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate

power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy."<sup>2</sup>

There are many reasons why corporate giants engage in liberal philanthropic endeavors: one is to have a direct influence on political decisions through what has been termed political philanthropy<sup>3</sup>, but another important reason is that such charitable efforts help cultivate a positive image in the public's mind that serves to deflect criticism while also helping expand their market share. However, although liberal foundations like the Gates Foundation may engage in ostensibly 'progressive' activities, this does not mean that the capitalist enterprises from which their endowments arise (e.g. Microsoft) refrain from engaging in common antidemocratic business practices. So while the Gates Foundation directs some of its resources to progressive grassroots initiatives, its corporate benefactor actually works to create fake grassroots organisations (otherwise known as astroturf groups) to actively lobby through covert means to protect corporate power.

For instance, in 1999 Microsoft helped found a group called Americans for Technology Leadership – a group which describes its role as being "dedicated to limiting government regulation of technology and fostering competitive market solutions to public policy issues affecting the technology industry."<sup>4</sup> In 2001, Joseph Menn and Edmund Sanders alleged that Americans for Technology Leadership orchestrated a "nationwide campaign to create the impression of a surging grass-roots movement"<sup>5</sup> to help defend Microsoft from monopoly charges. The founder of this front group, Jonathan Zuck, also created another libertarian group in 1998 called the Association for Competitive Technology, a group which was part sponsored by Microsoft to fight against the anti-trust actions being pursued against Microsoft in the United States. Such antidemocratic campaigns waged via front groups and astroturf organisations, however, were just one part of Microsoft's democratic manipulations. This is because, as Greg Miller and Leslie Helm demonstrated (in 1998), this was just one part of a programme that Microsoft and PR giant Edelman had been planning as part of a "massive media campaign designed to influence state investigators by creating the appearance of a groundswell of public support for the company."<sup>6</sup> None of this should be surprising as in 1995 it was also revealed how Microsoft were using "consultants to generate computer analyses of reporters' articles, enlist industry sources to critique writers they know and – less frequently – provide investigative peeks into journalists private lives."<sup>7</sup> In the rare spate of critical articles surfacing in the late 1990s, it was also shown that Microsoft had made a \$380,000 contribution to the conservative corporate-funded astroturf group Citizens for a Sound Economy (now known as FreedomWorks).<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, these examples only represent the tip of the iceberg of Microsoft's democracy manipulating activities.

## II – The Gates Foundation: Microsoft's 'Charity'

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has its roots in two of Gates' earlier philanthropic projects: the William H. Gates Foundation and the Gates Library Foundation. Understanding the complete backgrounds of the Gates Foundations' is critical to comprehending the political nature of their work.

Formed in 1994 by Bill Gates and his wife,

Melinda Gates, the William H. Gates Foundation was managed by Bill Gates' father, William H. Gates Sr.<sup>9</sup> Presently acting as the co-chairman of the Gates Foundation, Gates Sr. has had a successful career establishing one of Seattle's leading law firms, Preston Gates and Ellis (which in 2007 became K&L Gates), whose work is closely tied to Bill Gates' corporate/philanthropic network. Gates Sr. is also a director of the food giant Costco where he sits on their board of directors alongside Charles Munger, the former vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. In 2003, Gates Sr. co-founded the Initiative for Global Development, which is a national network of business leaders that ostensibly champion "effective solutions to global poverty." The dubious level of commitment this group has to truly solving global poverty can perhaps be best ascertained by the fact that the two co-chairs of the Initiative's leadership council are the two former Secretaries of State, Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell. Albright, Powell, and Gates Sr. also serve as honorary chairs of another arguably misnamed 'democracy'-promoting project called the World Justice Project which happens to obtain financial backing from two key weapons manufacturers, Boeing and General Electric. This project also receives support from Microsoft and the Gates Foundation, amongst others.

In 1995, Gates Sr. invited the longstanding birth control/population activist Suzanne Cluett to help him distribute his foundation's resources. She then remained with the Gates' philanthropies as associate director of global health strategies until her death in 2006. Prior to joining the Gates' philanthropies, Cluett had obtained much experience in population control related programming as she had spent 16 years as administrative vice president for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). The Gates Foundation's focus here places it in a direct line with that of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations', which have a long history of promoting population control research around the world in line with U.S. imperial interests.

Describing itself as an "international, nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health", PATH had, in 2006, a total income of just over \$130 million, of which 65% was derived from foundations – most of which it obtained from its major funding partner, the Gates Foundation. In 1995, PATH's president, Gordon Perkin, was first approached by Gates Sr. for his advice on family planning issues. This relationship then blossomed over the years and eventually, in late 1999, Perkin stepped down as PATH's president and became the head of the Gates Foundation's new Global Health Program. This was not the first time that Perkins had directly worked on population control issues for liberal foundations, as in 1964 he joined the Planned Parenthood Federation of America as an associate medical director – a group that was well supported by Ford and Rockefeller monies – and just two years later he moved to the Ford Foundation to work on population issues in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Mexico and Brazil, where he stayed until he created PATH in 1977.

Given that the two key policy advisors recruited by the William H. Gates Foundation first worked with the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), it is interesting to note that another PATH board member, Steve Davis, who formerly practised law with Preston Gates and Ellis, presently serves as a director of Global

Partnerships. Global Partnerships is yet another group that says it is dedicated to “fight[ing] against global poverty,” in this case through microfinance schemes, and has recently begun working closely with the Grameen Foundation, another microfinance group that receives major funding from the Gates Foundation.

The second of Gate’s initial two foundations was founded in 1997 as the Gates Library Foundation, in the foundations own words, to “bring computers and Internet access to public libraries in low-income communities in the United States and Canada.” In 1999, the foundation then changed its name to the Gates Learning Foundation. Prior to the merger into the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Learning Foundation was headed by Patricia Stonesifer, who is presently the CEO of the Gates Foundation; Stonesifer previously worked for Microsoft Corporation (1988-97), and also ran her own management consulting firm.

Board members of the Gates Learning Foundation also included Gilbert Anderson, who at the time served as a trustee of the Seattle Public Library; Vartan Gregorian, who was, and still is, the president of the Carnegie Corporation; and William H. Gray III, who was the president of the United Negro College Fund from 1991 until 2004, and presently sits on the public advisory committee of the Population Institute, and has been a director of the Rockefellers’ JPMorgan Chase since 1992. Considering the extensive links that exist between Gray’s United Negro College Fund and various liberal philanthropists, it is important to briefly consider the history of the Fund’s work:

Founded in 1944, with critical aid provided by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,<sup>10</sup> the United Negro College Fund describes itself as the “largest and most successful minority higher education assistance organization” in the U.S., having distributed over \$2.5 billion of grants since its creation. Crucially, the Fund has obtained massive support from liberal foundations and in 1999 alone they received over \$1 billion from the Gates Foundation. In 2000, UNCF received \$1 million from the world’s leading military contractor, Lockheed Martin Corporation. The recently retired chairman of Lockheed Martin, Vance D. Coffman has also served on the board of directors of the Fund.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to the Gates Learning Foundation, their former director of strategy and operations, Christopher Hedrick, formerly managed the national philanthropic programs for Microsoft, and was “responsible for developing the growth of the company’s partnership with the United Negro College Fund”, and also happens to be a former treasurer of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health. In 1999, Hedrick founded the consulting firm, Intrepid Learning Solutions. Nelson A. Rockefeller Jr. acts as their executive vice president, while their board of directors includes amongst their members Steve Davis, who, as outlined in relation to the population control focus of the William H. Gates Foundation, is also on the board of PATH and a director of Global Partnerships. Finally, in late 1998, the director of finance and administration of the Gates Learning Foundation was Terry Meersman who, amongst his many jobs in philanthropy, formerly served as the Venture Fund Program Officer for the Pew Charitable Trusts – a major funder of environmental projects which has been heavily critiqued by progressive commentators.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

In 2000, Bill and Melinda Gates established the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which is based on the stated belief that “every life has equal value,” to “help reduce inequities in the United States and around the world.” The Gates Foundation points out that its 15 guiding principles “reflect the Gates family’s beliefs about the role of philanthropy and the impact they want this foundation to have.” Thus it is important to briefly examine these principles to get an idea of the type of work that the foundation believes it is



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by Gordon Tait  
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engaged in.

Many of those guiding principles suggest that the foundation respects the role of the community in dealing with social problems, thus they observe that: “We treat our grantees as valued partners, and we treat the ultimate beneficiaries of our work with respect”; “We treat each other as valued colleagues”; “We must be humble and mindful in our actions and words”; and crucially they note that, “Philanthropy plays an important but limited role.” Yet, as one might expect of the world’s largest foundation, there are limits on the respect they have for the beneficiaries of their work, as although they suggest that philanthropy should play a “limited role” this is not borne out by the fact that in 2007 alone the Gates Foundation distributed over \$2 billion. Indeed, other principles that guide the foundation’s work which suggest their acknowledgement of a social engineering role for the foundation include: the foundation will be “driven by the interests and passions of the Gates family”; “We are funders and shapers”; “Our focus is clear”; “We advocate – vigorously but responsibly – in our areas of focus”; and “Meeting our mission... requires great stewardship of the money we have available.” Thus, given the huge amounts of money involved, it is hard to reconcile the foundation’s vision of itself as “funders and shapers” with their final guiding principle, which is: “We leave room for growth and change.” Clearly the Gates Foundation is a powerful force for change, and, judging by the previous historical achievements of the major liberal foundations, it is likely to be a rather antidemocratic and elitist force for change.

#### People and Projects

Since the formal consolidation of the Gates philanthropies in late 1999, the most significant change at the Gates Foundation has been the massive influx of capital that they received from Warren Buffett. Warren Buffett is the CEO of the investment company Berkshire Hathaway Inc. (a position he has held since 1970) and presently serves alongside Melinda Gates on the board of directors of the Washington Post Company.<sup>13</sup> This Gates/Hathaway/media connection is further bolstered by the presence of Thomas Murphy and Donald Keough on Berkshire Hathaway’s board, as until he retired in 1996 Murphy was the CEO of Capital Cities/ABC (which was bought by Disney that year), while Keough presently serves as a director of IAC/InterActiveCorp. Bill Gates also joined the Berkshire Hathaway board of directors in 2004, while former Microsoft employee Charlotte Guyman presently serves on Hathaway’s board as well. Finally, Charles Munger, who has been the vice chair of Berkshire Hathaway since 1978, currently sits alongside William H. Gates Sr. on Costco’s board of directors.

In part, the close working relationship that exists between the Gates family and Warren Buffett helps explain why in 2006 Buffett announced that he was going to leave most of his substantial personal earnings from Berkshire Hathaway – that is, \$31 billion – to the Gates Foundation. To put this donation in perspective, at the time of the announcement the Gates Foundation, which was already the largest liberal foundation in the world, had an endowment that was worth just under \$30 billion. Thus, as one might expect, Buffett now plays an important role in helping direct the work of the Gates Foundation.

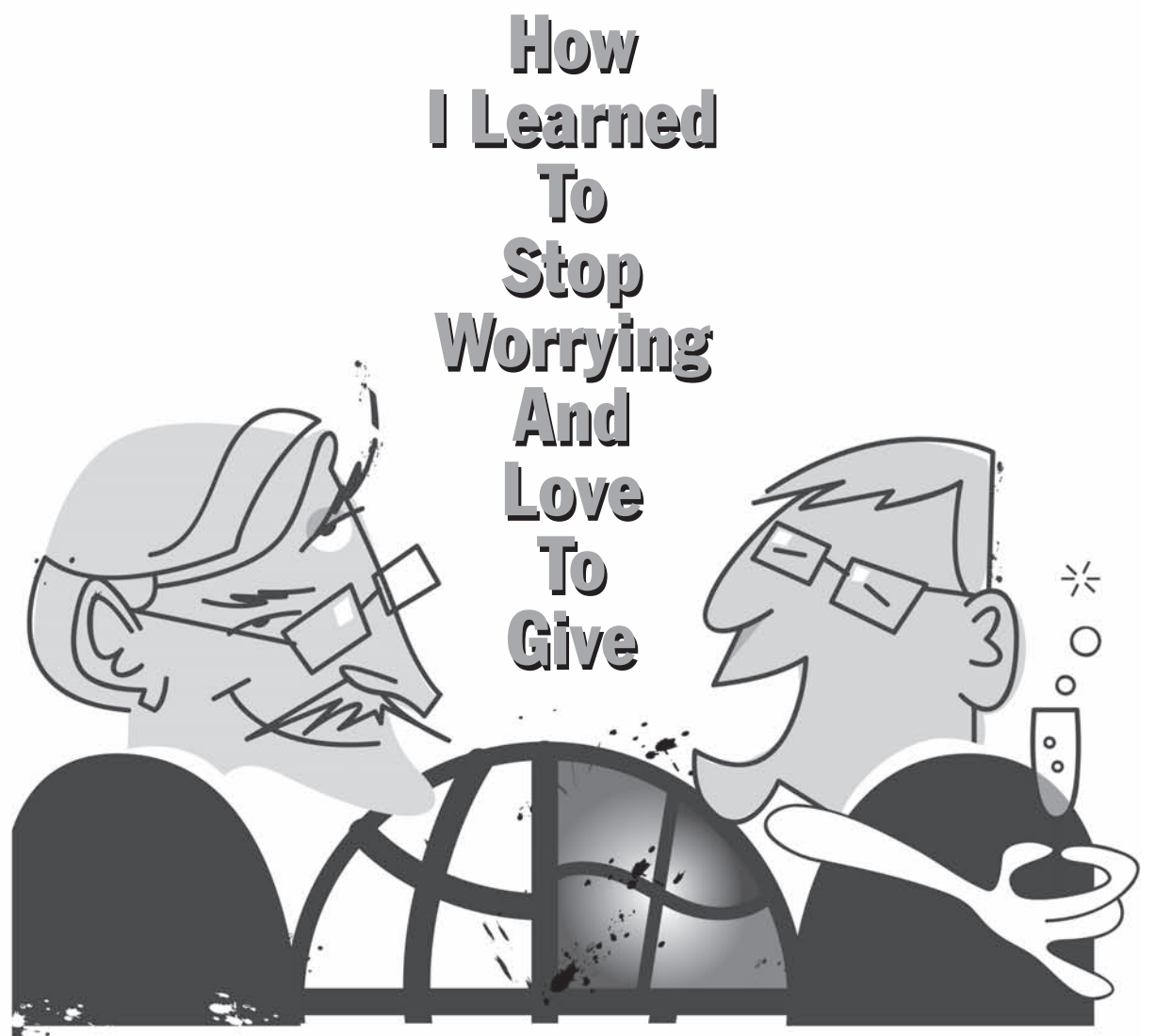
### III – Bill Gates Engineers Another Green Revolution

In late 2003, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was strongly criticised by international charities, farmers' groups, and academics<sup>14</sup> as a result of a \$25 million grant it had given to "GM [genetically modified] research to develop vitamin and protein-enriched seeds for the world's poor."<sup>15</sup> This money supported research by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, and the International Food Policy Research Institute, two groups which played an integral role in the first Ford and Rockefeller Foundation-funded (so-called) Green Revolution. Both of these organisations are also part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a group of global public institutes that is "widely accused of being a creature of its two major funders – the US and the World Bank."<sup>16</sup> However, although linked to the World Bank, CGIAR was formed as a result of a "series of private conferences held at the Rockefeller Foundation's conference center in Bellagio, Italy", and its work has been strongly supported by all manner of liberal foundations. As John Vidal points out, there are also "reasons to believe that the Gates food agenda is now being shaped by US corporate and government interests."<sup>17</sup> This is because in regard to their support for CGIAR the Gates Foundation chose to partner with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID; "two of the most active pro-GM organisations in the world."<sup>18</sup>

Given this corporate influence it is poignant to reflect on the large number of ties that the Gates Foundation's current leadership has to various biotechnology ventures: Melinda Gates has served on the board of directors of drugstore.com; the president of the Gates Foundations global health programs, Tachi Yamada, formerly acted as the chairman of research and development at the global drug company, GlaxoSmithKline (2001-06); the president of the Gates Foundations global development program, Sylvia Burwell, is a director of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa; their chief financial officer, Alexander Friedman, was the founder and president of Accelerated Clinical, a biotechnology services company; the Gates Foundation's managing director of public policy, Geoffrey Lamb, formerly held several senior development positions at the World Bank and is the chair of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative; while Jack Faris, who formerly served as the Gates Foundation's director of community strategies, has since February 2005 been the president of the corporate lobby group the Washington Biotechnology and Biomedical Association.

In addition, given the key role played by liberal philanthropy (most notably the Rockefeller Foundation) in promoting the initial Green Revolution, it is noteworthy that many important people at the Gates Foundation are directly connected to the Rockefeller philanthropies: Tachi Yamada is also a former trustee of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; the two chairs for the Gates Foundations advisory panels for their U.S. Program and their Global Development Program, Ann Fudge and Rajat Gupta, respectively, both serve as Rockefeller Foundation trustees; while Henry Cisneros, a former Rockefeller Foundation trustee, sits on the Gates Foundations U.S. Program's advisory panel. Those connections to both the Rockefeller philanthropies and to the biotechnology industry cast an ominous shadow over the Gates Foundation's activities in this area.

Former Rockefeller Foundation president, George Harrar, has been credited as being the "architect of the Foundation's agricultural programs, beginning in Mexico during the 1940s, and was in large part responsible for the so-called Green Revolution".<sup>19</sup> Harrar also played a key role in the founding of the aforementioned Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Summing up the problematic ideology of the Green Revolution and Harrar's position, Eric Ross wrote in 1996 that:



"The threat of Malthusian crisis [that population tends to increase faster than food supply] justified the central premise of the Green Revolution, that, if there was not enough land to go around, peasant agriculture could not yield sufficient increases in food. In the process, it side-stepped the important question of whether land was truly scarce or just unequally distributed. It also concealed another agenda. J. George Harrar... observed in 1975 that 'agriculture is... a business and, to be successful, must be managed in a businesslike fashion.' Thus he was acknowledging that the Green Revolution was not just about producing more food, but helping to create a new global food system committed to the costly industrialization of agricultural production. Throughout much of the world, Malthusian logic, hand in hand with the new technologies of the Green Revolution, helped to put land reform on hold."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, the whole idea of the Green Revolution is problematic because although the "chief public rationale" for it was supposedly humanitarianism, a good case can be made that the logic undergirding this revolution was Malthusian not humanitarianism.<sup>21</sup> As critical scholars like Eric Ross have pointed out, the Green Revolution should be considered to be an "integral part of the constellation of strategies including limited and carefully managed land reform, counterinsurgency, CIA-backed coups, and international birth control programs that aimed to ensure the security of U.S. interests."<sup>22</sup> This little-known critique of the Green Revolution is supported by the work of other writers (e.g. Susan George and Vandana Shiva) who have demonstrated that the so-called revolutionary changes promoted by the Green Revolution actually increased inequality, and in some cases even hunger itself. Ross concludes that support for the 'new' Green Revolution only serves to "accelerate the emergence of a globalized food system" which will ultimately "only enhance a world economy in which the rural poor already have too little voice or power."

Bearing this history in mind, it is consistent, but alarming nevertheless, that the president of the Gates Foundation's global development program, Sylvia Burwell, is a director of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa – an Alliance that was founded in 2006 by the Rockefeller and Gates Foundations. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa describes itself as a "dynamic, African-led partnership working across the African

continent to help millions of small-scale farmers and their families lift themselves out of poverty and hunger." Yet in a manner eerily reminiscent of critiques of the initial Green Revolution, in 2006 Food First observed that: "Because this new philanthropic effort ignores, misinterprets, and misrepresents the harsh lessons of the first Green Revolution's multiple failures, it will likely worsen the problem" it is supposedly trying to address.<sup>23</sup>

It is critical to acknowledge that, in large part, the modern day environmental movement grew out of the population control movement in the late 1960s and so environmental organisations are also well enmeshed in this web of philanthropic causes and democracy manipulators.<sup>24</sup> These links are best represented through the person of Walter Falcon. From 1979 until 1983 Falcon chaired the board of trustees of the Agricultural Development Council – a group that was established in 1953 by the influential population control activist John D. Rockefeller 3rd. When this group merged with two other Rockefeller-related agricultural Programs to form what is now known as Winrock International, Falcon continued to serve on their board of trustees.<sup>25</sup> The Falcon-environmental connection, however, comes through his presence on the board of trustees (from 2001 until 2007) of the Centre for International Forestry (CIFOR), a CGIAR member organisation whose mission suggests that they are "committed to conserving forests and improving the livelihoods of people in the tropics." In 2006, this group had a budget of just over \$14 million, of which just over 9% came from the World Bank (their largest single donor), while in the same year the Ford Foundation provided them with just under \$0.4 million in restricted funds.<sup>26</sup>

Since 2006, CIFOR's director general has been Frances Seymour, who is a member of the elite planning group the Council on Foreign Relations, and prior to heading CIFOR had been responsible for providing leadership for the World Resources Institute's engagement with international financial institutions (like the World Bank).<sup>27</sup> Earlier still, Frances had spent five years working in Indonesia with the Ford Foundation, and had also worked on USAID-funded agroforestry projects in the Philippines. Another notable trustee of CIFOR is Eugene Terry, who was formerly the director general of the West Africa Rice Development Association before going on to work at the World Bank. Terry is also chair of another CGIAR member organisation called the World Agroforestry Centre that was founded

in 1978 and obtains funding from the World Bank/Ford/Rockefeller/USAID/World Resources Institute funding consortium. Moreover, Terry is now the implementing director of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), a Nairobi-based group that was formed in 2002 with Rockefeller and USAID<sup>28</sup> funding to lobby for greater uptake of GM crops in Africa. Although not advertised on their website, the Foundation receives support from four of the world's largest agricultural companies: Monsanto, Syngenta, Dow AgroSciences, and DuPont.<sup>29</sup>

Other than via Eugene Terry, the Centre for International Forestry can be connected to agribusiness giant Syngenta through CIFOR trustee Andrew Bennett who is the former executive director (now just board member) of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture. Terry joins Bennett on the Syngenta Foundation board of directors. Another notable director of the Syngenta Foundation is the president and CEO of the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, Klaus Leisinger. The Novartis Foundation joins the Gates Foundation and World Bank/Ford/USAID types in funding the work of a key population control group, the Population Reference Bureau. This US-based group was founded in 1929, a period in history that fully embraced the necessity of eugenics, and is now headed by William Butz, who had previously served as a senior economist at the imperial think tank, the RAND Corporation.

Last but not least, Syngenta and their Syngenta Foundation, along with USAID, Dupont, and the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, support a global project called the Global Crop Diversity Trust which aims to "ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide." The aims of this project are somewhat contradictory, because the attempts of the aforementioned groups to foist a GM monoculture upon the world are already working to endanger the regular supply of adequate food resources into the future, and are threatening the livelihoods of the majority world's farming communities. Thus it is clear that the main reason why this project aims to safeguard genetic diversity – by safeguarding seeds in an underground vault buried beneath a mountain on the island of Svalbard (Norway) – is first and foremost to protect the profits of the agribusinesses that are forcing GM crops upon the world.

The person who currently chairs the Global Crop Diversity Trust's board of directors is none other than the former president of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations' Population Council, Margaret Catley-Carlson<sup>30</sup>; other directors include Lewis Coleman, who since 2001 has been a director of one of the world's largest military contractors, Northrop Grumman, and is vice-chair of the controversial GM-linked environmental group Conservation International; Ambassador Jorio Dauster, who is the board chairman of Brasil Ecodiesel; Adel El-Beltagy, who serves on the executive council of CGIAR; and Mangala Rai, who is a trustee of the International Rice Research Institute, a former member of CGIAR's executive council, and a former trustee of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center; while the Global Crop Diversity Trust's executive director, Cary Fowler, is also a former board member of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center is yet another key group that pushed along the last Green Revolution as it was established in the 1940s in co-operation with the Mexican government by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. One of the main proponents of the Green Revolution, Norman Borlaug, was director of this Center's International Wheat Improvement Program, and, in reward for his 'revolutionary' work, Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.<sup>31</sup> Borlaug has also long been connected to the population lobby, as from 1971 onwards he served as the Director of the U.S.'s Population Crisis Committee (now known as Population Action International)<sup>32</sup>, and he presently serves

on the international advisory committee of the Population Institute.

## Conclusion

Social engineering by elite philanthropists of any hue is not a phenomenon that is compatible with democracy. In fact, the ongoing, and escalating, philanthropic colonisation of civil society by philanthropists poses a clear and present danger to the sustainability of democratic forms of governance. The Gates Foundation only represents the tip of the iceberg of the world of liberal philanthropy, and thousands of other foundations pursue similar agendas across the globe, albeit on a smaller scale. For example in 2006, in the U.S. alone, there were over 71,000 grant making foundations which together distributed just under \$41 billion. This massive figure also represents the greatest amount of money ever distributed by foundations, a figure that has been rising steadily over the years, and had just ten year earlier only amounted to some \$14 billion.

Consequently, given the longstanding influence that all manner of philanthropic foundations have had on global politics, it is concerning that most political scientists have downplayed their importance in shaping the global polity, while others sometimes admit to the power they exert but simply consider it to be a good thing. By examining the backgrounds of many of the people involved with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and by demonstrating the Foundation's involvement in promoting the new Green Revolution, the world's most powerful liberal foundation, while professing to promote solutions to global poverty, can be seen to pursue an agenda that will aggravate such systemic problems.

These 'solutions', however, do exist, and the social engineering of elites is not always all pervasive. Indeed, one important way in which concerned citizens may begin to counter the insidious influence of liberal elites over civil society is to work to dissociate their progressive activism from liberal foundations. At the same time it is critical that they also work to create sustainable democratic revenue streams to enable their work to continue. This of course will be the hardest part for progressive activists who have long relied upon the largess of liberal philanthropists, but it is a necessary step if they are to contribute towards an emancipatory project that is separated from, and opposed to, the corrosive social engineering of liberal elites.

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The original version of this article was presented as a refereed paper at the 2008 Australasian Political Science Association conference, and, with much greater detail on the connections and roles of individuals, corporations and philanthropic organisations, can be accessed in full on Zmag:

<http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/18198>

## Notes

- For further details and individuals and organisations throughout this article see e.g. [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org)
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- Sims estimated that the "corporate outlay on political philanthropy in the 2000 election cycle in the U.S. was... a minimum of \$1-2 billion. This compares to roughly \$200 million on PAC contributions and \$400 million on soft money contributions" (pp.167-8). Gretchen Sims 2003, 'Rethinking the political power of American business: the role of corporate social responsibility', Unpublished PhD Thesis: Stanford University.
- See <http://www.techleadership.org/sections/view/About%20Us> (Accessed April 2009.)
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- Microsoft representative, Thomas Hartocollis, serves on the board of directors of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship – a group that is funded by various conservative foundations and to teach children about the benefits of capitalism.
- In 1999, the William H. Gates Foundation was renamed the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the foundation moved from offices located in Bill Gates Sr.'s basement to a site in Seattle (Washington).
- Gasman, M., 2004, 'Rhetoric Vs. Reality: The Fundraising Messages of the United Negro College Fund in the Immediate Aftermath of the Brown Decision.' *History of Education Quarterly*, 44, p.74.
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- John Vidal, see above.
- John Vidal, see above.
- John Vidal, see above.
- John Vidal, see above; for a critical overview of the U.S. involvements in GM developments, see Brian Tokar, *Gene Traders: Biotechnology, World Trade, and the Globalization of Hunger*, Burlington VT: Toward Freedom, 2004.
- [http://www.rockfound.org/library/annual\\_reports/1980-1989/1982.pdf](http://www.rockfound.org/library/annual_reports/1980-1989/1982.pdf)
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- From 1991 until 1998, Falcon directed Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and although he only presently serves on their executive committee, the Institute's current deputy director, Michael McFaul, is presently involved with two well known democracy manipulating organizations, Freedom House (where he is a trustee), and the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies (where is a board member).
- See CIFOR Annual Report 2006: Building on success. CIFOR Annual Report. 60p. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia. ISBN: 978-979-14-1216-2, <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Publications/Corporate/AnnualReports/> (Accessed April 2009.)
- The World Resources Institute is a corporate-styled environmental group, whose founders included Jessica Tuchman Mathews who served as their vice president from 1982 through to 1993, and is now the president of the misnamed Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and is a member of both the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. Jessica also served on the editorial board of *The Washington Post* in the early 1980s.
- USAID states that U.S. foreign aid helps in "furthering America's foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world." Mukoma Ngugi, 'African Democracies for Sale,' 7/2/07, <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/2109> (Accessed April 2009.)
- See Justin Gillis, 'To Feed Hungry Africans, Firms Plant Seeds of Science,' *Washington Post*, 11/3/03, <http://www.grain.org/bio-ipr/?id=303> (Accessed April 2009.)
- For details about the Population Council's elitist work, see Michael Barker, 'The Liberal Foundations of Environmentalism'.
- Norman Borlaug is connected to various other groups including the International Food Policy Research Institute (where he served as a trustee between 1976 and 1982), Winrock International (where he is a trustee between 1982 and 1990), and Population Communications International (where is he was the director between 1984 and 1994).
- Norman Borlaug presently serves on the Population Action International's council alongside Robert McNamara, an individual who in 1968, while serving as a Ford Foundation trustee Robert S. McNamara "emphasized the central importance of curbing population growth" in his inaugural speech as the World Bank's new president.



# Parcels of Rogues

Tom Jennings

In the wake of the Westminster expenses scandal, public disenchantment with British parliamentary politics – at least measured by current affairs punditry and perpetually declining election turnouts – appears to have hit an all-time low unmatched since late-eighteenth century disgust eventually prompted the Great Reform Acts. Lasting images from that period would include William Hogarth's paintings wallowing in the dissolute arrogance and greed of power, and a characteristic soundbite – albeit in nationalist guise – Robert Burns' 1791 summary dismissal of "Such A Parcel of Rogues" selling out Scotland for "English gold". Even then, however, it seems that the substance of the loyal opposition's objections to prevailing conditions revolves around moral judgements on individuals (even in their thousands) who suborn in their own selfish interests what would otherwise, by implication, be essentially neutral structures and processes of government. The common intuition that the latter institutions had always been devised and developed precisely to safeguard such private agendas – thus requiring a move back to the political drawing board – is then obscured by the clamour of reformist (and revolutionary) programmes seeking to strengthen the State, ostensibly to safeguard its potential efficacy but incidentally rendering fundamental change even harder to envisage.

Now, with collapsing international financial mafias rescued with astronomical hand-outs into corporate balance sheets even more blatant than the preceding drip of deferred government debt scheduling in Private-Public-Partnership and Private Finance Initiative scams – now largely propped up with 100% public funding – it seems astonishingly parochial for attention to divert to the minor creative accounting of MPs shaving a few thousand off the taxman. Perhaps, though, it signals a manageable, if displaced, acknowledgement of the obscenity of wagering the futures of millions of lives on us accepting depleting incomes, dissolving welfare, and generally harsher prospects – when the only visible benefits reliably accrue precisely to those plotting the wholesale plunder of collective resources. Yet politicians in all mainstream parties parrot the mantra of 'no alternative' to a vain hope for trickledown from globalised profiteering – jostling to ridicule, suppress and criminalise dissenting expression and action – so it's only right that they're all tarred with the same brush. Meanwhile the chattering classes satisfy



An Election Entertainment, William Hogarth, 1754: The scene is of an election 'treat' given by the Whigs to gain voters' support. In 1752 the Whigs decided to contest the Oxfordshire seats, heralding a two-year campaign characterised by unprecedented levels of bribery and corruption.

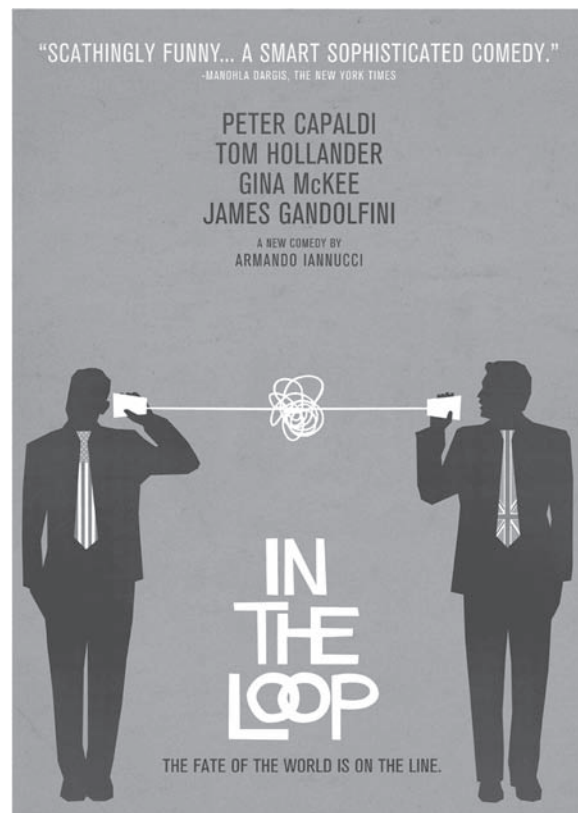
themselves with hand-wringing and crocodile tears bemoaning the supposedly sudden loss of faith in liberal democratic platitudes, tremulously wondering if further modernisation and regulation can bodge it together. So where are contemporary visions of government equivalent to those of Hogarth and Burns, focussing the righteous ire of the masses in withering critiques of such an abject here-and-now? Or, put more cynically, how do sophisticated postmodern media recuperate and neutralise popular discontent while purporting to represent it?

## From the Ridiculous ...

Stepping up from safe television comedy sketch shows sneering at easy targets of low-brow culture, Armando Iannucci's hilarious BBC 4 sitcom *The Thick Of It* (2005-07) viciously satirised New Labour's spin machine, showing the gymnastic contortions of information massaging and packaging necessary for variously venal, vacuous, mendacious and malicious activities and utterances comprising 'affairs of state' to resemble slickly-managed 'joined-up' policy. Harassed aides duck and dive delivering this conjuring trick from the heart of government to media interfaces, bullied into arbitrarily transient Party-line by Downing Street enforcers. Magnifying the premiss to cinema, *In The Loop* (2009) abandons banal bungling bureaucracy in a minor Ministry for big-budget geopolitical gravity as Iraq war propaganda is prepared in London and Washington DC. The fly-on-the-wall, on-the-hoof, faux-documentary style persists from television, as do archetypes of vacillating British politicians and squabbling, squirming assistants – with Peter Capaldi's No.10 PR supremo surviving in all his foul-mouthed sociopathic glory. Finally, as per usual, he gets his warlike way – any residual principles, ethics and decency comprehensively vacating the UN building – along the way culling those who won't play ball by hyping trivial scandals and leaking them to the tabloids.

Iannucci's primary strategy is to fashion screwball comedy from the petty vanities, conflicts, indignities and tyrannies of office politics married to the euphemistic inanity of modern business practices. Egotism, incompetence and communication breakdown perpetually threaten conformance to bigger pictures which the protagonists are only dimly aware of, busily chasing ever-shifting agendas and deadlines. This effectively updates *Yes, Minister's* (BBC, 1980-82) caricature of traditional patrician government, with Thatcherism's brutal diktats filtering through elite civil servants to humiliate hapless junior ministers, as well as *House of Cards*' (BBC, 1990) Machiavellian high-Tory distraction. *The Thick Of It* instead skewers politically-correct Orwellian fantasies of contemporary statecraft as benign 'better management', exposing a hysterical class-based underbelly of barely-suppressed macho posturing, rage and shame – the symbolically violent regression of its wit cathartically mirroring the disavowed dirty deeds barbaric neoliberalism wreaks in the real world. *In The Loop*, however, bursts this hermetically-sealed pre-Oedipal bubble in the pragmatic US corridors of power – which are portrayed as, in their own way, just as ad-hoc a muddle of opportunistic rancour as ours even if their perks, pomp and circumstance are correspondingly grander and more grandiose.

Curiously, however, the film's US career politicians are given ideological co-ordinates underpinning their efforts, which their connivances, complacencies and flaws are genuinely mobilised to serve. Unlike the Brits, personal advancement is not their primary concern, moreover the Yanks have no equivalent of the dictatorial puppetmaster orchestrating apparatchiks, thereby allowing a freer play of the balance of forces rather than top-down fixing. Whereas the Blairites learned their rhetorical Third Way trade at Washington Consensus seminars precisely to sacrifice authentic commitment on the altar of corporate



culture. So inadvertently projecting vestiges of noble 'battles of ideas' back across the Atlantic seems a monumental failure of nerve and/or imagination – symptomatic, perhaps, of cynicism's concealed conservatism shading satire into farce. Nevertheless, at least *In The Loop* injects some riotous bile into its fictional power mechanics, pissing on the overblown saccharine complacency of *The West Wing's* (1999-2006) White House, or, for Westminster and Whitehall, the pseudo-documentary *New Labour: The Project* (BBC, 2002), and *The Deal* and *The Government Inspector* (Channel 4, 2003 and 2005) pandering to celebrity obsessiveness, and – most dystopic as well as soporific – the yuppie student narcissism of *Party Animals* (BBC 2, 2007).

Entry-points for audience identification in *The Thick Of It* and *In The Loop* lie with the legions of underlings getting bossed around, not really knowing what's going on, at the mercy of decisions made elsewhere and having to take them on board in getting the job done. This parallels the situation for ordinary folk faced with the practical consequences of deliberations conducted far above our heads – yet these protagonists are mere cogs in an apparatus of mediation, in the business of dealing only with how things appear. So while their struggle for coherent understanding in order to act can stand for our own confused paralysis in the face of the apparent insanity of the world, its empathic effectiveness depends on viewers embracing the perspectives of middle-level, middle-class bureaucrats, professionals or managers – who, to get this far, must have already aligned their sense of personal interest and integrity with the tasks of simulation and dissimulation in the service of institutional power. Conversely, the living, breathing ultimate objects of its circuits of abstraction and rhetoric have to deal with concrete outcomes – whether in foreign wars or the routine juggernauts of domestic governance – where violation is likely to be visceral as well as discursive and directly physical brutality accompanying the moral dehumanisation state-sanctioned perpetrators feel obliged to reproduce. Here, though, we are safely segregated from those in charge, cocooned off-screen along with underlying rationales for the policies or strategies imposed, and from all those unaccountably victimised. The latter only ever minimally impinge as expedient symbolic fodder for pre-existing plans or narratives – whereas writer David Peace builds from the blood, guts and imaginations of those at the sharpest end.

### ... to the Anti-Sublime ...

Based on Peace's 'Yorkshire noir' novels *1974*, *1977*, *1980* and *1983* (Serpent's Tail, 1999-2002), scriptwriter Tony Grisoni's three *Red Riding* films (directed by Julian Jarrold, James Marsh, and Anand Tucker) paint a compelling picture of time and place, and retain much of their source's hellish intensity. Screening in March this year and representing a substantial wedge of Channel 4's drama budget, the superb design, filming and acting drip with grey-brown authenticity, showing 1970s/80s decay, depression and desperation in Northern England's rapidly postindustrialising pit villages, rotten boroughs and collapsing communities breeding the solipsistic barbarism neoliberalism would soon legitimise in this sceptic isle. But its seeds were sown long before, exemplified in the period's notorious sexual violence sagas, and in each of these intricately-linked stories a deeply-flawed protagonist gets to the bottom of botched cases of abducted schoolgirls and butchered prostitutes. A naive *Yorkshire Post* hack, supercilious Manchester DI and wretchedly ineffectual local solicitor dig into stalled police investigations – including the Ripper hunt – convinced of incompetence, frame-ups and cover-ups, their faltering progress hindered at every turn by out-of-control coppers whose obstruction readily shades into outright intimidation. Recurring throughout unremitting menace and brutality are seedy property developers, vengeance-seeking rent-boys, creepily ubiquitous priests, paedophile rings,

and disintegrating detectives trying belatedly to do the right thing surrounded by unredeemable W. Yorks Constabulary colleagues. The latter's endemic corruption extends beyond collusion and parasitism to running vice and pornography operations as well as enforcing for local Big Money, underlining their thorough integration into 'polite' society and establishment hierarchies. And the deeper we get, the more desperate the agents of authority become to paper over the cracks with torture and death-squad tactics.

Unfortunately the missing story (cut when the money wouldn't stretch) emphasised the author's primary concern to represent the struggle to understand the horrors that surrounded him while growing up in the area – helping to orientate confused readers, but not now available to viewers. Thus the controversial fictionalisation around real events (with names and details changed) given the most nightmarish spin is developed in *1977's* loose theme of collusion between cynically-bent journalists and marginally well-meaning and slightly less-compromised cops – representing the cream of professional 'truth-seekers' – during the punk era's crystallisation of hopeless fury. Peace's own feverishly obsessive boyhood fears and imaginings around the Ripper were later supplemented by sources such as the 'parapolitics' of *Lobster* magazine which – however outlandish in respectable discourse – made what happened potentially intelligible. Nevertheless he insists that his 'occult history' doesn't in principle exaggerate the scale of official wrongdoing – recommending doubters read high-profile accounts of police foul-play such as Tony Bunyan's *The History and Practice of the Political Police in Britain*, Chris Mullin's *Error of Judgement*, John Williams' *Bloody Valentine*, or books by Paul Foot (we might add Stuart Christie and Robin Ramsay, among others). So it's not as if he's ploughing a lonely furrow here – and his masterpiece about the miners' strike, *GB84* (Faber, 2004), required less psychotic hyperbole because the political machinations were themselves sufficiently monstrous. Meanwhile the *Red Riding* quartet ties together in literary form the philosophical, psychosexual, visceral and political corollaries of wading into such morasses – hoping to emerge with sanity intact.

Peace's fractured hyper-modernist writing juxtaposes styles from expressionist exposition to pared-down pulp prose and noirish dialogue, diary entries, mental lists, streams of consciousness and incoherent ravings, with different kinds of texts breaking any naturalistic flow. Inspired by science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick's paranoid existentialism, the effect is precisely to blur times gone by into now, actuality into distorted perception, downright hallucination and fantasy. In the *Red Riding* novels, apprehension of the awful situations dealt with then evokes and resonates with repressed sexual and violent impulses – with neither characters nor readers sure of distinctions – which then circulate and materialise in exaggerated figures and actions in the narrative. We are not necessarily meant to interpret the results as objective reality, but are at least obliged to ponder what framework of knowledge could account for the facts such as they are. Crucially, the complete – and continuing – failure of official accounts to give satisfactory explanations of these most appalling events brings into question conventional disavowals placing such 'inhumanity' outside the purview of both normal society and official structures. Ultimately the TV version timidly shirks this final imaginative leap in favour of exactly those recognisable crime-procedural and conspiracy-thriller genre clichés that the author transcended – its grubby specificity then generating scarcely more explanatory power than a Da Vinci Code or James Bond.

Reducing to offscreen allusion the body counts and actual depictions of the heinous crimes further censors the voices of victims previously given due weight. Instead, the narrative arcs are "made more distinct than those in the novels", privileging minor heroic gestures which otherwise drown in the implacably malevolent logic and interchangeably vicious complicity of serial killers and erstwhile pursuers. Wanting "to be released



from that hell by the end", and stressing that Peace "doesn't save anyone. Whereas I needed to"<sup>1</sup>, Grisoni gropes for what the books refused – an overall solution, redemption, and an identifiable locus of organised evil pulling the strings to excuse the State from ultimate culpability (if only its guardians lived up to ideals). So the story's salience no longer radiates from past to present throughout the land, merely envisaging bad apples infecting this particular barrel of northerness – just like G.F. Newman's earlier *Law & Order* quartet (BBC, 1978) did for the contemporaneous Met and London's criminal justice system. Anyway, mainstream critical responses eagerly followed suit, working overtime to refuse any wider persistent real-world relevance, able to blame the author's intransigent interpretive idiosyncracies on his own maniacal genius/perversion – just as the general prevalence of socialised and sexualised abusiveness is peremptorily dismissed as so much personalised sickness with none of the intimate relationship to respectable patterns of power we might suspect. With the most subversive elements of the novels thus lost, the net effect here is to consign *Red Riding's* 'dark Satanic' costume drama to pretty much as conservatively remote a terrain as *Life On Mars*.

Tackling the centrality of the police monopoly of violence in the hidden abusive logic of government, Peace pursues parallels between masculine insecurity and malevolence and motive forces permeating social and institutional networks but repressed from awareness at all levels. Thus acquiring all the more motivating force they coalesce in specific crimes of sexual violence as well as the general habits and lifestyles of vice-ridden officers and municipal patriarchs, which the police are constitutionally incapable of resisting or recognising. So while it looks as if specific devilish conspiracies are solely responsible, actually the norms and rules circumscribing official structures and processes nurture such outcomes – the 'wrong-uns' and fuck-ups on both sides of the law and their comprehensive entanglement with local conduits of money and power. But the TV trilogy's more didactically conventional trajectory dismisses these insights as mere contributory factors allowing specific baddies in blue their hegemony, implying that enlightened reform can weed them out. This historical closure is reinforced if organised police violence originates purely in base impulses at lower levels seeping upwards over time – so that the long-established rank-and-file culture of racism, class hatred and elite exclusivity, also prevalent elsewhere, takes root all the more severely in the absence of public oversight and with special suitability in fuelling sadistic excess

and all manner of corruption.

Suppressed from explicit expression by protocols of political correctness and minimal controls afforded by complaints procedures, these patterns, of course, persist. For example, the BBC's *Secret Policeman* (2003) exposed white racist Manchester recruits, and the Jean-Charles de Menezes and Ian Tomlinson cases demonstrate the systemic neglect of safeguards against misconduct also seen in an Enfield Crime Squad recently disbanded for torturing suspects and looting possessions. However, the meshing of police hierarchies with surrounding institutions has accelerated since the 1980s, using New Public Management corporate models and 'fast-tracking' university graduate officers. Tinpot dictatorships of Chief Constables rising from the ranks were never really the core problem. Instead, privatised lack of accountability visible in rogue units throughout the country of varying degrees of scale and viciousness – or gangsterism versus freemasonry – now reconstitutes centrally in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), which has no obligation to consult or inform anyone of its activities co-ordinating nationwide strategic planning and implementing resulting policies. Meanwhile successive governments underwrite escalating *carte blanche* to arrest anyone on suspicion of anything, inevitably encouraging – indeed, if anything, insisting upon – out-of-control policing. With crime itself recast as anti-social individual thought and communication as well as action, proliferating surveillance and biocontrol technologies provide infinite evidence. Institutions, though, are, almost by definition, innocent. So if the War on Terror reflects awareness among the political classes of their impotence, perverted psychopathy potentially attributable to all is both a perpetual alibi for the health of the state and an eternal reminder of its sickness. Hence the recurring fascination with compromised politicians, now rehashed on both sides of the Atlantic in *State of Play*.

### ... and from Rogue Statesmen ...

Kevin Macdonald's passably entertaining blockbuster *State of Play* sees a young likely-lad gunned down in a professional hit, whereupon Cal McCaffrey (Russell Crowe), intrepid chief reporter at *The Washington Globe*, investigates. Immediately afterwards nearby, a political researcher falls under a commuter train, with her Congressional Committee boss Stephen Collins (Ben Affleck) tearful at an ensuing press conference arousing Monicagate-style tabloid suspicions. However, McCaffrey discovers that his victim phoned the dead woman immediately before the murders – after a bagsnatch yielded surveillance material on her, having obviously tried to flog it back to the killer. So McCaffrey commandeers the now-merged story, helped enormously by being the Congressman's old college-buddy. Repelling interference from police, his editor and colleagues, and, with the assassin running amok, he unravels a plot further thickened by revelations that the monolithic private security contractor Collins was probing ran the researcher as a mole – planted, moreover, by his own Party grandee mentor. Touching all the tainted bases of the contemporary military-state-industrial complex, the film thereby neatly fits current ultra-cynical (or, arguably, realistic) Hollywood fashions.

Abandoning increasingly tired international espionage templates, 1970s US conspiracy thrillers exploited greater awareness of high-level hi-jinks among Big Money and Power – with well-meaning reformers, journalists and citizens victimised by government and corporate agencies in *The Parallax View* (1974), *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), *Winter Kills* (1979) and *The China Syndrome* (1979). Then, after a protracted cinematic truce, Jonathan Demme's *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004) conservatively revised John Frankenheimer's 1962 Cold War mind-boggler, with benign intelligence services and traditionalist politicians now deploying patriotic dirty tricks only against the multinational menace, while John Sayles' equally transparent anti-Bush sentiment in *Silver City* (2004) resuscitated countercultural heroics to thwart naked neo-con pollution. And whereas the Bourne series and its ilk pit macho postmodern solipsism against schizophrenic secret-state apparatuses, the more sophisticated *Syriana* (dir. Stephen Gaghan, 2005) sketches parapolitical convergence among conflicting powerful interests overdetermining apparently insane global events. Yet throughout – however strident the rhetoric – generic resolution looms via public exposure of the evil exceptions infecting otherwise robust body-politics.

*State of Play* reproduces clichéd individual corruption despite twisting its tale to also indict the Democratic good guys, whose righteous crusade derails after adopting methods usually attributed to the other side. Incipient critique is, however, undercut by displacing dispassionate checks-and-balances onto a heroic independent press – albeit with capacity all-but hamstrung by modern downsizing imperatives favouring profitable cheap tat like celebrity chitchat and the opinion-peddling bloggery that McCaffrey so derides. But then our film's low-rent blown conspiracy hardly measures up to its explicit cinematic inspiration either – the *Washington Post* Nixon-busters classically portrayed in *All the President's Men* (dir. Alan J. Pakula, 1976), naffly referenced by locations in Watergate and sinister underground carparks. But here the ruling echelons escape scot-free, with even the shocking scoop the screenwriters conjure – a Blackwateresque privatised monopoly of state security – already yesterday's news (except it has never been reported properly). Plus the story was in any case sleuthed by the congressman, not the newshound – thus representing a remarkably tepid testament to the virtues of old-school investigative journalism. In effect, if this is the fourth estate's best shot, it's hardly surprising the sector faces terminal decline.

All the more ironic that the source material for such a disappointing cop-out was so provocatively intelligent. The BBC's 2003 six-part drama

directed by David Yates shattered a similar hiatus in UK intrigue after some doom-laden mid-Thatcher prognostications – sundry Cold War throwbacks, nuclear nightmare in the *Edge of Darkness* (1983), and Chris Mullin's *A Very British Coup* (1988) embroidering Wilson-era aristocrats plotting soft-socialism's overthrow. Presumably later Tory megasleaze (rather than penny-ante expenses chiselling) rendered fictitious finessing superfluous, after which Blair's new deal took time to fester – but Paul Abbott's *State of Play* emphatically puts the boot in. His script implicates Cabinet-level machinations arranging the espionage (by the energy lobby) of their own rising-star MP, specifically undermining the adversarial posture which simultaneously furnishes the government's public-interest alibi. The resulting policy stitch-up represents a prescient metaphor for New Labour's entire neoliberal trajectory, boosting heavyweight economic agendas, socialising risks and privatising profits – disingenuously concealed under vapid spin complemented by the newspaper's proprietorial Murdoch/Maxwell amalgam riding shotgun. Whereas the film's lone crooked politico conniving a corporate paymaster's advantage pales infinitely limply in comparison.

Worse, Macdonald's cardboard cut-out cast's stereotypically wooden acting cements a complete lack of believably rounded human intercourse matching entirely unconvincing institutional settings. Conversely, the television series fully incorporates personal biography into political allegory, fleshing out threadbare idealism, compromised loyalty and troubled maturity into fractures and divergences in professional and intimate relationships and ambitions. The intricate social nuances work effortlessly thanks to impeccable dialogue and performances, so that even weaker plot points pass muster – as does the microcosmic contrast of conflict, morale, scheming and suspicion in the newsroom and at Westminster. The humble utopian core of Abbott's vision is his fully-functioning reporting ensemble – representing, at a stretch, any genuine collective of ordinary folk. Diverse skills and flaws meld in their relatively egalitarian endeavour to transcend systemic collusion characterising an official public realm constitutionally riddled with corrosively alienating manipulative duplicity – the writer's lack of interest in superhuman saviours and liberal grand narratives of journalism's lofty nobility obvious in playing its management as farce. Meanwhile, Hollywood's contempt for honest dirty work – and final clinching evidence of Macdonald's all-round botch-job – surfaces in Collins' objection to a privatised military based on its employees only showing 'loyalty to the pay-packet'. So much for the honour of wage-slaves everywhere – but what on earth does he imagine motivates the low-rank-and-file to enlist in the armed forces in the first place? From all wide angles, therefore, *State of Play's* pretensions to contemporary relevance break down into a bungled bog-standard retro-rump fingering absolutely none of the president's men. Whereas *The Wire* damns them all and their entire bankrupt system.

### ... to Failed States

Widely acclaimed as the best television ever, US crime saga *The Wire* finally arrives on freeview in Britain, continuing on BBC 2 into the summer. "A political tract masquerading as a cop show"<sup>2</sup>, the first season introduces central characters and situations in the inner-city narcotics trade and its policing in Baltimore, Maryland – or in local street argot 'Body-More, Murdaland – intended to represent any decaying second-tier rust-belt metropolis (or, less seamlessly, the 'developed' world generally). The self-defeatingly stupid but electorally compelling 'War on Drugs' focuses the five seasons' test-case of the dysfunctional amorality of postmodern government – subsequent narratives expanding these narrowly-delineated parallel micro-worlds into the contemporary social complexity of a tragically ailing urban America and the terminally failing institutions nominally charged with its welfare. The net effect is a





forensic fictionalisation of economic ruination in the docks and trade unions, corruption and bureaucratic degeneracy in municipal politics, chaotically incompetent and helpless leadership in the police department and school system, and comparably cynical sociopathic management in local media and drug-dealing franchises – with great pains taken to demonstrate the convergent operation of power as all these contexts interact in prioritising the establishment and reproduction of personal gain and the protection of privilege.

Beginning in early-90s West Baltimore, yet another teenage gangbanger is murdered and, as we encounter his peers and police investigators, the suspected ‘corner-boss’ culprit wriggles free after witness intimidation. A frustrated detective persuades the judge to pressure the brass into tackling the gang who, despite running things for years, are unknown to official ‘intelligence’ because City Hall prefers paramilitary tactics to pack crime-stats. Loaded with dead-weight from sundry divisions, the new squad nevertheless makes headway via telephone intercepts, and glimpses into the targets’ social and professional networks thereafter intercut with those of the taskforce. The range of idiosyncratic personalities involved grows, manifesting varying degrees of strength and weakness, wit, intelligence and compassion, malice, violence and selfishness – with the significance of conduct for personal gratification, misery and effectivity depending on position and impact upon wider interests. Conversely, ongoing activities are regularly disrupted by banal, brutal and/or arbitrary twists of fate, mistakes, external forces, and decisions and conflicts higher up both foodchains. Final outcomes are provisional compromises, minor defeats and victories, in the drug trade and its law enforcement mirror – the overriding message being ‘the game remains the same’, reinforced by concluding roving pans around successive generations of city districts and organisations negotiating their way through each manifestation of its dialectics.

The plotlines and arcs crowding sixty *Wire* episodes in five series originally emerged from meticulous journalistic research by David Simon (former police reporter with the *Baltimore Sun*) and Ed Burns (ex-city detective and secondary schoolteacher). Filmic forays first followed documentary books *Homicide: Life on the Killing Streets* (with Simon embedded in murder investigations; Barry Levinson’s television adaptations running from 1993-9) and *The Corner* (from hanging out with drug-dealers and their milieu, portrayed in a 2000 mini-series<sup>3</sup>). The resulting material organised into a guiding vision was spun by a top-notch script team, including crime novelists George Pelecanos, Richard Price and Dennis Lehane, cementing a seamless literary sprawl and verisimilitude of dialogue and relationships among an impressive

and massive ensemble of relatively unknown actors and amateurs. Repudiating good/bad guy simplification and capturing the everyday humour and pathos of protagonists at all levels constrained by circumstances allowing only limited ethical and practical options, the resulting Dickensian specificity attracted fierce partisan loyalty – among the cast but also local and (inter)national viewers in the ghettos and lower reaches of officialdoms depicted, seeing aspects of their lives detailed realistically for once. Meanwhile the non-naturalistic economy and meticulous artfulness of narrative execution, condensing full-spectra societal conflict into unflashy visualisations a few hours long, fascinated cultural commentators, media pundits and intellectual fans amenable to the show’s ideological and artistic ambitions.

In its multilayered refusal of individual or collective resolution, the creators conceived series 1 as “a training exercise ... to watch television differently” so as to appreciate their relentless “deconstruction of the American Dream” – namely, the postwar consensus whereby supposedly “everyone gets to make a living”<sup>4</sup>. The show then proceeds as a modern equivalent of Greek tragedy – except that capricious late-capitalist institutions rather than omnipotent gods orchestrate hierarchies and systems according to their interests, agendas, whims and fancies, “hurling lightning bolts, hitting people in the ass for no reason”<sup>5</sup>. However, rather than mythical fairytale stereotypes, actual city characters and events are woven together with their contours and logics intact, including the most apparently outlandish figures and developments. But then reality is more bizarre, as Simon sketched in a *Guardian* essay last year<sup>6</sup> concerning a major criminal justice scandal which recently propelled Baltimore’s mayor to Maryland governorship but was never publicly analysed – yet all its salient features repeatedly skew *The Wire*’s prognoses. Thus, being “separate, unequal, and no longer even acknowledging each other”, the “two Americas” can connect in this TV ‘entertainment’ but not in “the stunted political discourse ... eviscerated, self-absorbed press ... [or] any construct to which the empowered ... comfortable and comforted America, gives its limited attention”. Yet beneath the bluster of belligerent broadsheet broadsides about public accountability and media morality, uncertainty hovers about exactly whose attention and action – beyond cable channel and box-set sales – is being courted.

Flouting film and current affairs conventions to question fundamental tenets of mainstream US discourse, this is surely a refreshing and magnificently sustained artwork. Yet it is restricted by working assumptions consistently privileging objectifying observers – the title itself and its eavesdropping metaphor underlining the nature of knowledge acquired. Even the most vividly well-rounded characters are perceived through the

policing prism, in terms of salience to identifying and solving ‘problems’ defined and acted upon by external others. So, however tangential to the drugs scene, neighbourhood residents only appear in that context – and myriad additional social and cultural interactions and dimensions are neglected, ruling out their own understandings, relative independence and collective potential. Whereas the filmmakers’ mission – like the authorities – renders the world intelligible in terms amenable to the agency allowed in their field, and thus the questionable binary “two Americas” firmly reinstates passive victims in traditional positions. The creators’ honest anger about the complacent indifference of power to the suffering and wasted human energy of millions is palpable. But so is nostalgia for a time before current trends in political economy when life was (or might have been) better – unmistakable in the affectionate tribute to old-time newspapermen; with union boss ‘Frank Sobotka’ in series 2 encapsulating the fantasy best: “You know what the trouble is? We used to make shit in this country; build shit. Now we just put our hand in the next guy’s pocket”. Whereas such dreams of national unity through social-democratic prosperity were yesterday’s illusions incubating today’s fiascos – *The Wire* equally, in the end, being ‘a cop show masquerading as a political tract’.

Throughout its storylines, thoughts of reform are commonly expressed in humble aspirations to decent behaviour, but also further up the ladder as exasperated functionaries try to marry rhetoric with effect. An underlying humanism – in stark contrast to *Red Riding* – posits originary benevolence and genuine interest in meeting social needs, all other things being equal. But the latter never holds – the exercise of domination intended specifically to prevent it – any such manoeuvres being nipped in the bud as soon as potential autonomy is noticed by superiors. Correspondingly, prospects for real change are tied exclusively to leading figures in the hierarchies, in the absence of collective grass-roots bonds forged in explicit opposition to the status quo rather than mirroring it – whether in the drugs game’s bloody adolescent sociobiology or *In The Loop*’s infantile sociolinguistic circularity. Pressure from below relies wholly on hitching to bureaucratic, corporate or electoral careers, with no communal activity with remotely political potential visible outside church and charity ‘NGOs’ plugged awkwardly into the gravy train. Unravelling the synergistic failure of the system by exposing exemplary travesties, as in *State of Play*, then not only spectacularly misses the point but inoculates ruling discourses with illusion of protection from the evils which are in fact intrinsic to their power. This possibility is at least hinted by the almost instant redundancy of *The Wire*’s titular investigations, even if its protagonists are given no wherewithal to react – beyond, that is, shrugs of the shoulders before returning to the serious narrow individualism of selfish concerns that the paradigms deployed to produce the series disproportionately concentrate on. No wonder Hogarth and Burns still resonate.

<http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk>

#### Notes

1. Cited by Nick James in ‘Bloody Yorkshire’, *Sight & Sound*, March 2009.
2. David Simon, interview with Lauren Laverne, *Culture Show*, BBC 2, 15th July 2008.
3. And new Simon & Burns’ Blown Deadline Productions exploiting similar reportage-based strategies for fine-grained television serial fictions are *Generation Kill* (2008) about US marines in Iraq, and *Treme* (due to air in 2010) about local musicians in post-Katrina New Orleans.
4. David Simon, interviewed by Oliver Burkeman, *The Observer*, 28th March 2009.
5. *Culture Show*, see note 2.
6. ‘The Escalating Breakdown of Urban Society Across the US’, 6/9/08.

# Artist as Executive, Executive as Artist

## Kirsten Forkert

Cultural policy is marked by certain contradictions, which are at the heart of our definition of culture. One of these contradictions is between, on one hand, the belief in creativity as a certain indefinable *je ne sais quoi* that is the property of unique, exemplary individuals (which cannot really be fostered by policy or even arts education) – and on the other hand, the imperative of policy to manage collective entities such as cities, regions or populations (such as, for example, how culture was historically positioned in relation to public health or a unified regional or national identity).<sup>1</sup>

These contradictory dynamics have existed for a long time, at least since the 19th century. In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu describes what he calls the “charismatic ideology”, which directs attention to “the apparent producer, the painter, writer or composer”, allowing the “cultural businessman” to “consecrate a product which he has ‘discovered’ and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the authenticity of the unique genius must exist in order to be ‘discovered’ and promoted. Nor has this dynamic fundamentally changed through the industrialisation of culture in the twentieth century. Written in 1989, Bernard Miège’s *The Capitalisation of Cultural Production* is one of the earliest analyses of cultural production as at the heart of fundamental changes in the management of labour in Western capitalist societies. Miège cites a 1983 speech by Jean-François Mitterand (then-Prime Minister of France) made almost fifteen years before the election of Tony Blair: “creativity is becoming a development factor, and cultural activities are establishing themselves among the expanding sectors around which the future is being organised.”<sup>3</sup> According to Miège, the capitalisation of cultural production does not really disrupt the genius myth or the figure of the artist as a representation of authenticity, as this myth provides some continuity between more traditional definitions of the arts and modern-day celebrity culture. This is why, according to Miège, the industrialisation and commercialisation of production, to the extent that it is connected to the reigning economic and social model, will not lead to its democratisation.

It is one of those obvious, even dumb, but important questions to ask why the genius myth remains so firmly intact despite over a hundred years of avant-garde experimentation, artist-led spaces and art collectives; despite proclamation of the author’s death; despite the challenges of feminism and other social movements to the figure of the genius as predominantly white, male and middle class; and despite the models and practical possibilities offered by free software and copy culture. Is the individual author one of Ulrich Beck’s “zombie categories”, which are kept alive after they have outlived their relevance out of force of habit, structural dependencies or because they serve powerful interests? Or is it that these challenges are far more marginal than we would like to think, reflecting a gap between theory and practice? To fully answer this question is outside of the scope of this text; but it is one I feel it is necessary to raise.

However, if the genius myth has not really been seriously destabilised, I am arguing that, through neoliberalism, it has merged with economic concepts such as ‘human capital’, or, as we will see, aspects of management culture. The concept of human capital actually dates back to Adam Smith; defined as “the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society” which, although they cost “a certain expense, [repay] that

expense with a profit.”<sup>4</sup> However, the term itself did not really come into use until the 1950s, when Chicago School economists such as Gary Becker, as well as early Economic Development Studies economists such as AW Lewis and Arthur Cecil Pigou began to make use of it.

Although ‘human capital’ is not a new concept, what is significant about its use under neoliberalism is that the development of personal skills and abilities become seen as an investment in a potential future salary, whether this means schooling or even parenting. In other words, there is an expectation to be an ‘entrepreneur of the self’<sup>5</sup>: each individual is meant to be responsible for his/her continued employment; keeping ‘employable’ through continually investing in oneself (such as through skills or training), continually adapting oneself to the latest job market demands, which change all the time (bringing to mind the pervasive modernisation rhetoric around ‘keep up to date’, or threats about being ‘left behind’). If individuals fail to do so, they only have themselves to blame. This is part of a wider tendency to reduce everything to its economic usefulness, as part of

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neoliberalism’s “application of an economic grid to social phenomena”.<sup>6</sup> An obvious question is what happens to skills or abilities that are not seen as economically useful, and the people who have dedicated their lives to learning them?<sup>7</sup> What about other forms of learning that do not immediately lead to jobs, and what happens to the arguments to justify them, or (more accurately) the willingness of others to listen to them?

If the ‘human capital’ concept serves as one of the underpinnings of neoliberal policy, then a related discourse that has more explicitly marked recent cultural policy is ‘social exclusion’. In *The Inclusive Society: Social Exclusion and New Labour*, Ruth Levitas describes how social exclusion discourse erases the power relations that produce inequality, so that terms like ‘inequality’ and ‘exploitation’ (terms that suggest a systemic critique, particularly that someone might be responsible for exploitation and might even benefit from it) start to disappear. One is not exploited but simply excluded – excluded from a seemingly homogeneous and harmonious majority; as Levitas says, “poverty and unemployment are seen to be residual rather than endemic

problems”.<sup>8</sup> It is an individualising discourse; being excluded is at least partly one’s own fault – for having the wrong skill set, the wrong character traits or the wrong kind of family life.

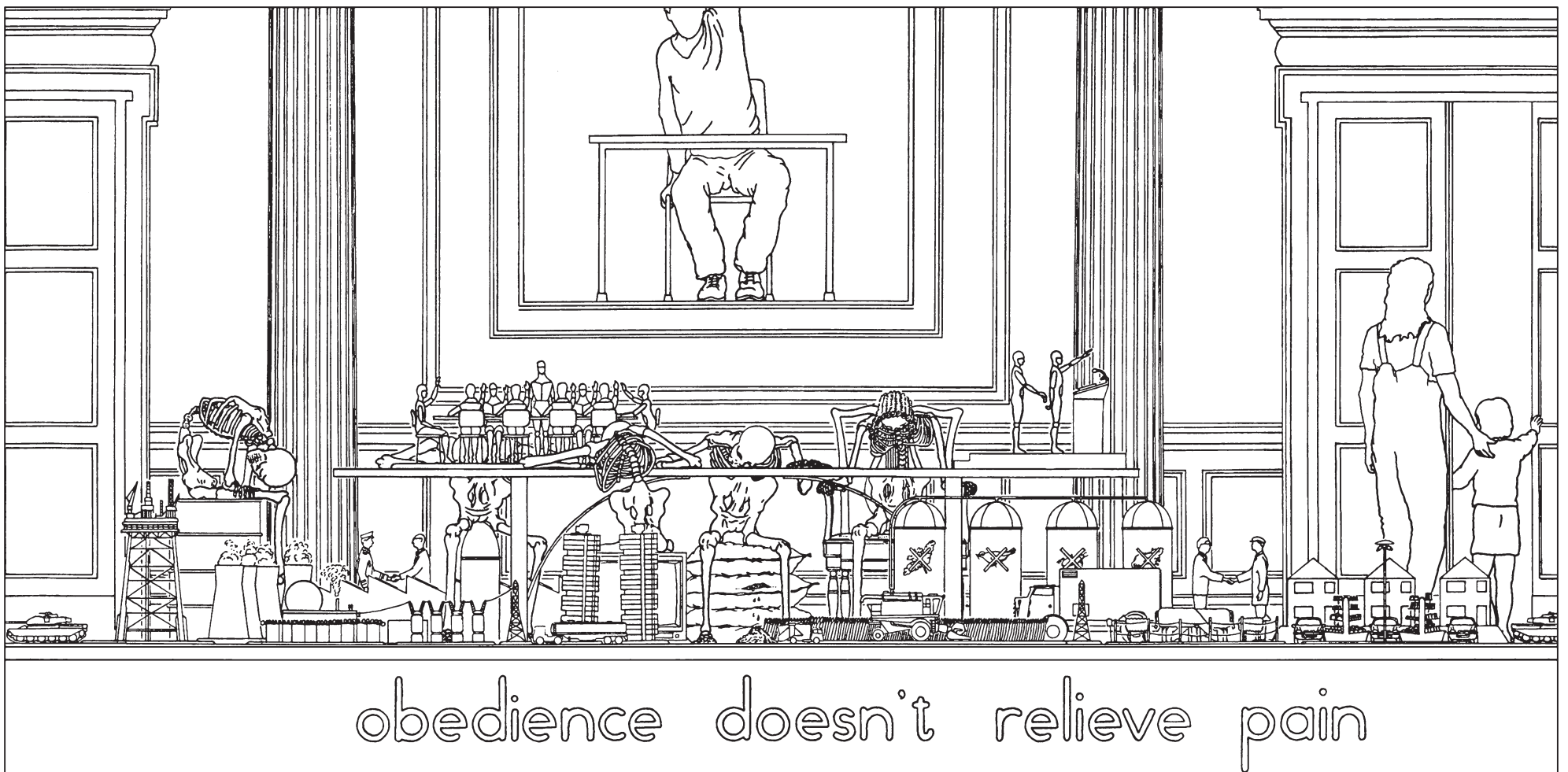
Social exclusion discourse originated in 1960s British critical social policy (which saw inequality as not only social but also cultural), 1980s US right-wing discourse which popularised the term ‘underclass’ (applied, in particular, to unemployed young men and lone mothers) and which stigmatised benefits recipients; and French welfare reform which equated paid employment with participation in society with paid work, which then became influential on EU social policy. As Ruth Lister has described, ‘social exclusion’ discourse was central to New Labour’s shift from “equality to equality of opportunity”, in other words, away from protecting benefits and income redistribution, and towards education and training, and obligations of paid work. Social Exclusion Unit was set up in 1997, as was the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion or CASE. At the launch of CASE, Harriet Harman made a speech containing the following text (which actually presents paid employment as therapeutic):

“We hear a lot about the non-wage costs of work. But very little about the non-wage motivation for work. Work helps fulfil our aspirations – it is the key to independence, self-respect and opportunities and advancement... Work brings a sense of order that is missing from the lives of many unemployed young men.”<sup>10</sup>

Social exclusion policy places artists in a contradictory position in several different ways. The first issue is that, in its narrow focus on the virtues of paid employment, social exclusion does not perceive unpaid labour as real work and “undermines the legitimacy of non-participation in work”.<sup>11</sup> As cultural production can involve, in many cases, activities outside of the ‘day job’ and even identifying with them more than with one’s paid employment, this starts to pose a problem. The irony of course is that the dedication and willingness to work for free on the part of artists, but also others in the cultural and voluntary sectors, are practically celebrated *at the same time as the support structures that facilitate this kind of work are withdrawn* – as in the current Welfare Reform bill which serves to stigmatise benefits even further.

Another issue is that artists are positioned as the agents of social cohesion, usually through community arts commissions where artists are expected to involve marginalised groups in large scale projects. There have been many critiques of this: Munira Mirza has called these policies fundamentally “therapeutic”.<sup>12</sup> The Cultural Policy Collective (CPC) critiqued the top-down nature of their implementation, whereby they “recruit willing representatives from targeted zones without considering the non-participation of far wider sections of their population”<sup>13</sup>; promoting a “a parochial sphere of action that is almost wholly dependent on professionalised community organisations”.<sup>14</sup> This kind of client relationship provides very little scope for communities to determine their own needs and act in their own interests. This is similar in certain ways to the depoliticising tendencies of development NGOs, which positions those in the global South as continually needing the help of trained experts, and in some cases, multinational corporations.<sup>15</sup>

This can also be seen as part of a wider tendency to associate culture with an aspirational imperative, often connected to urban regeneration schemes: that the presence of certain types of cultural activities (art galleries for example) will



give people a taste of a middle class lifestyle, and in doing so, raise their expectations and lead them to participate in mainstream society. Consistent with social exclusion discourse, the only way to improve one's lot is through (individual) participation, achievement and success in mainstream society, (through training and paid employment). Within this context, alternative, and more importantly, *collective* models for dealing with one's personal situation (workplace or community organising, grassroots campaigns, etc.) become inconceivable. In a larger sense, what is politically dangerous about social exclusion discourse is that it creates a kind of inarguable hegemonic logic – to disagree with these schemes is to be 'against aspiration', to be recalcitrantly against change, to want to keep people (or one's self) in the ghetto.

We can see both these concepts of 'human capital' and 'social exclusion' in recent cultural policy, particularly that of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in their emphasis on the 'creative industries' over the past ten years. It could be argued that 'human capital' is present in their very definition of the creative industries, through the emphasis on "individual creativity, skills and talent"; returning to the discussion at the beginning, they define creativity in terms of exemplary individuals – but perhaps closer to the 'leadership' and 'vision' fetishised by new management literature: "those industries that are based on *individual creativity, skill and talent*. They are also those that have the *potential to create wealth and jobs* through developing intellectual property".<sup>16</sup> Imperatives to address the entire population are also present, but increasingly focusing on economic development: "creating wealth and jobs".

### Strategy Documents & Cultural Leadership

'*Culture and Creativity: the Next Ten Years*' (2001) was authored by former MP Chris Smith. It begins with the assertion that "everyone is creative" and that "people in all walks of life... need to develop their creative potential and learn from each other".<sup>17</sup> Reading between the lines, we could see this as an attempt to combine cultural democracy (that "everyone is creative", not only a few), with human capital ("develop their creative potential"). The problem with the UK, according to Smith, are that people from marginalised communities feel that the "arts are not for them" and that there is a general lack of support and encouragement to experience the arts, such as being "taught musical instruments" or making "regular visits to museums or theatres".<sup>18</sup> The proposals outlined

in the document include increased funding for Arts Council England (ACE) and free access to museums (a genuine imperative towards cultural democracy). There is also a strong emphasis on education, including various partnerships between schools and cultural institutions. What is significant is that '*Culture and Creativity: the Next Ten Years*' links the arts, or, more disturbingly, cultural democracy to discourses of 'innovation' associated with science, technology and business; creativity is seen as "at the centre of successful economic life in an advanced knowledge-based economy".<sup>19</sup> All these elements become more explicit in the 2008 strategy document, '*Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*'.<sup>20</sup>

Written seven years later, '*Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*' begins with the argument that the creative industries are a growth sector, expanding at twice the rate of the economy as a whole, but the UK faces competition from other countries (the report does not specify which countries). National competition for comparative advantage within the global economy, in fact, shapes much of the document. The other dominant argument is that many lack the necessary skills to succeed in the creative industries, particularly those from what are seen to be marginalised communities. Exclusion, then, is not about not going to museums – it's about *not having enough employable skills*, particularly in technology; by not having enough skills, one is not employable or adaptable enough within a post-industrial economy. '*Creative Britain*' focuses primarily on skills training and on business development; the arts, when not connected to these two, tend to vanish. Proposals include: 1) the creation of 5,000 formal apprenticeships<sup>21</sup> a year, with a variety of arts organisations; 2) research to promote a "more diverse workforce" (although 'diversity' here means skills ability, not diversity in terms of race, gender or class); 3) closer links between academia and industry, specifically centres in computer games, design, animation and "haute couture"; 4) legislation against filesharing; 5) the development of mixed media centres and live music venues<sup>22</sup>; 6) the development of various funds, programmes and networks for business development.

These sorts of developments: where creativity becomes defined in terms of human capital, particularly those skills (such as IT) seen as marketable within a (pre-crash) post-industrial economy, should also be seen within the context of the raft of new management literature on 'creativity', from Tom Peters (known for phrases such as "thinking outside the box") to Daniel Pink (author of '*The MFA is the New MBA*'); to John Howkins to urban theorist-cum-regeneration consultants such as Richard Florida, who famously

suggested that the old class structure was being replaced by a new meritocracy of knowledge and talent.<sup>23</sup> What is significant about this sort of literature is how certain qualities associated with the Romantic genius are brought into management culture and in some cases projected onto the figure of the manager. In '*The Organisation of Culture Between Bureaucracy and Technocracy*', Paola Merli mentions that post-bureaucratic theories of management discuss the need for charismatic leaders displaying qualities such as 'vision', giving their organisation a 'mission', and being sources of 'inspiration' for their subordinates – though, crucially, not presenting an alternative worldview.<sup>24</sup>

According to Jim McGuigan, management literature began to become popular with the Labour Party in the 1980s and 1990s, in connection with a turn to economic pragmatism, following the 1983 defeat. This meant, among other strategies, the adoption of business lingo, which provoked Simon Frith to ask why the Labour Party was using terms such as "market niche" and "corporate image".<sup>25</sup> The result of these influences on UK policy was that, in addition to privatisation, many publicly-funded organisations were increasingly required to re-organise and run themselves *as though they were the private sector*. This was also a common pattern in many European countries – organisations were not directly privatised, but were required to operate like businesses. McGuigan uses the term "managerialism" to characterise this shift in organisational structure and purpose.

A synthesis of the tendencies I have mentioned so far (the genius myth, individualism, an association of culture with aspiration and employment skills, regimes of professionalisation and managerialism, and the charismatic leader of management theory) can be found in recent policy initiatives towards fostering 'cultural leadership'. These initiatives formalise connections between management discourses and the arts, through a variety of professional development programmes set up to train arts management, and in some cases artists, in leadership skills. It is notable that all these initiatives *propose professionalisation and skills training as a response to a perceived organisational crisis*. In 2002, the Clore Programme was set up in order to offer fellowships to "exceptional individuals who have the potential to take on significant leadership roles".<sup>26</sup> The programme was started in response to what was perceived as a skills gap in arts management and a "crisis in cultural leadership" in the UK, based on a 2002 study commissioned by the Clore Duffield Foundation.<sup>27</sup> The organisation does state that "cultural leadership is distinct

Chad McCall  
*obedience doesn't  
relieve pain,  
'food shelter  
clothing fuel'  
series.*

from management competencies, and that it is generically different from business leadership<sup>28</sup>; however, so much of the language on the website seems indistinguishable. The programme now runs twenty to twenty-five fellowships a year.

In 2005, a review was commissioned by then-chancellor Gordon Brown and led by Sir Arthur Cox, entitled the *'Cox Review of Creativity in Business: building on the UK's Strengths'*. Brown announced that "we must recognise the role of our cultural leaders in delivering [economic] success and ensure the emergence of a talented and diverse group of future leaders".<sup>29</sup> In response to the *'Cox Review'*, the 'Nature of Creativity' scheme was launched, with a goal which "seeks to enhance understanding about the nature of creativity and its relationships with innovation". It was funded by the AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) in collaboration with: Arts Council England, the Economic and Social Research Council, the Dept. for Trade and Industry, and Research Networks and Workshops. In connection with this scheme, Dr Anne Douglas of Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, conducted *'The Artist as Leader'* research project<sup>30</sup>. According to the AHRC's annual report, "Douglas has started to research the role of creativity in culture using the concept of leadership, posing questions such as: When is an artist the leader?, How does the artists critical thinking influence practices of leading?"<sup>31</sup> In 2006, Robert Hewison, writing for the think tank DEMOS, also published a report about cultural leadership, arguing that there is a crisis of faith in institutions.<sup>32</sup> On the one hand, the report is marked by an imperative to show that culture is not equivalent to business; on the other, it still insists that culture has much to learn from business and vice versa.<sup>33</sup> According to Merli, this contradiction has marked other aspects of his writing.<sup>34</sup>

The Cultural Leadership Programme also began in 2006 – a "two-year, £12 million initiative to promote excellence in management and leadership within the cultural sector".<sup>35</sup> The initiative was funded by ACE; the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council; as well as Cultural and Creative Skills (CCS), the "sector skills council for the advertising, craft, cultural heritage, design, literature, music, performing and visual arts". CCS was set up in 2005 to "reduce skills gaps and shortages, improve productivity, business and public service performance, and to reform learning supply, making courses and qualifications relevant to industry".<sup>36</sup> It was launched at EMI Headquarters in West London; at the launch, then-Secretary of State for Culture Tessa Jowell made a speech claiming that the "initiative aims to provide a strategic approach to embed a strong leadership culture that will make Britain's creative sectors *more successful – and more accessible – than ever*".<sup>37</sup> The Cultural Leadership Programme mentions the Clore Leadership Programme, but notes that Clore "cannot be for everyone".<sup>38</sup> The initiative mainly consists of professional development and training programs, with the goal of training artists and arts managers, particularly women, Black and Ethnic Minorities and people with disabilities. More recently, City University, London, launched an MA in Cultural Leadership, in partnership with the Cass Business School.<sup>39</sup> The programme was originally stated to focus on female arts managers, in response to a 'glass ceiling' whereby women were under-represented in senior management positions in culture. It is now open to both genders.

It is worth asking about the way in which these professional development programmes propose to address structural hierarchies of race and gender in arts organisations. There is at least an acknowledgement that "organisational culture can serve as a barrier to professional development" and that "the diversity of sector leaders has not yet been fully addressed".<sup>40</sup> However, leadership is seen as the cure to all problems, and leadership is to be fostered by skills development and networking – but not really any change to organisational structure. It is assumed that if women and minorities have the necessary skills and resources, they should be able to succeed within existing structures and contexts. Actively fighting discrimination, or developing

alternative organisational structures (such as through the long, rich and largely ignored history of feminist art in the UK, which involved setting up numerous organisations and publications), are not really seen as an option, and a concept such as discrimination does not really make sense within this framework. What these sorts of initiatives can be seen as, instead, is as part of a wider regime of professionalisation where artists are continually expected to retrain themselves and where deeper structural conditions are problems to be solved, in a technocratic fashion, through modernising imperatives and management techniques. 'Leadership' becomes a way of merging art and business, combining aspects of the genius myth with the figure of the executive. Jowell's statement, that the creative sector can be "more successful and more accessible", reflects this sort of desire to have one's cake and eat it too – that one can seamlessly combine equality and productivity or efficiency objectives.

Larger questions need to be asked about democratic participation in these organisations, and especially the role for those without management training – what about those lower down in the management hierarchy, not to mention the ever-growing number of unpaid interns who must work for free, in some cases for years, before getting their first paid job?<sup>41</sup> What about the artists who do not work in ways that can be programmatically defined as 'leadership'? What about the audiences, or even the communities targeted by public art programmes? Does this entrench their position as clients continually in need of help to participate in mainstream society, but never able to act on their own situations? Another question is about what happens to alternative models for running organisations, including those modes that would easily be dismissed as inefficient and amateurish, but which are nonetheless important in other ways? Can an organisation be sustained without a conventionally defined 'management ethos', and do these imperatives and discourses risk erasing both the history and the possibility of alternatives? Could the crisis suggested by these policy imperatives, of organisations that do not function (both inside and outside the cultural sector), be read, in some ways, as a crisis of democracy – of frustration at the consolidation of executive control and the inflation of executive salaries<sup>42</sup>, at the endless consultation exercises, or the adoption of the latest new management lingo, and so on? In the current political climate (marked by populist anger at bankers and MPs) now is perhaps a good time to ask ourselves some hard questions about the directions taken by cultural policy over the past ten years. But in a more general sense, it's also important to question the tendency to reward and celebrate exemplary individuals, both within and outside the arts.

#### Notes

- 1 See, Miller, Toby and Yúdice, George. *Cultural Policy*, SAGE, 2002.
- 2 Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia University Press, 1993: 76.
- 3 Miège, Bernard. *The Capitalisation of Cultural Production*. IG, 1989: 38.
- 4 Smith, Adam. *Book 2: Of the Nature, Accumulation, and Employment of Stock. In An Inquiry into the Nature And Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. 1776. Online at: <http://www.adamsmith.org/smith/won-b2-c1.htm>
- 5 Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008:239.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 See Richard Sennett. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. W.W. Norton and Co., 1999.
- 8 Levitas: 1998:7.
- 9 Lister, Ruth. 'From Equality to Social Inclusion: New Labour and the Welfare State.' *Critical Social Policy*, 1998, 215-225.
- 10 Levitas, Ruth. *The Inclusive Society: Social Exclusion and New Labour*. Palgrave-MacMillan, 2005: 151.
- 11 Levitas: 1998:27.
- 12 Mirza, Munira. 'The Therapeutic State'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Volume 11, Number 3, Number 3/November 2005, pp. 261-273(13).
- 13 *Beyond Social Inclusion: Towards Cultural Democracy*. Cultural Policy Collective, 2004: 11.
- 14 *Ibid.*: 33.
- 15 Chakravarty, Paula. 'Governance Without Politics:

Civil Society, Development and the Postcolonial State'. *International Journal of Communication*: 1 (2007), 297-317.

- 16 Department for Culture, Media and Sport website, my italics, <http://www.culture.gov.uk/>
- 17 Smith, Chris. *Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years*. DCMS, 2001: 5 [http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/4634.aspx/](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/4634.aspx/)
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 *Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy*. DCMS, 2008. [http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/3572.aspx/](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3572.aspx/)
- 21 As to how viable this is, see: 'Gordon Brown's apprentice scheme "out of money"', *The Observer*, Sunday 24 May 2009.
- 22 In spite of such a business-centric model having already erred, e.g. see: National Centre for Popular Music, Sheffield; The Arthouse, Dublin; The Media Centre, Huddersfield.
- 23 Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life*. Basic Books, 2002.
- 24 Merli, Paola. 'The Organisation of Culture Between Bureaucracy and Technocracy'. *International Journal of the Humanities*, Vol.3, No.10, 2005-6,143.
- 25 Frith: 1991:36, cited in McGuigan, Jim. *Rethinking Cultural Policy*. Open University Press, 2004: 43.
- 26 Clore Leadership Programme website <http://www.cloreleadership.org/>
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Annual Reports and Accounts, 2006-7: 14.
- 30 <http://www2.rgu.ac.uk/subj/ats/ontheedge2/artistasleader/pdf/2006-07.pdf>
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Hewison, Robert. *What is the point of investing in cultural leadership, if cultural institutions remain unchanged?* DEMOS, 2006.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Merli, Paola. 'The Organisation of Culture Between Bureaucracy and Technocracy'. *International Journal of the Humanities*, Vol.3, No.10, 2005-6,143.
- 35 Cultural Leadership Programme website <http://www.culturalleadership.org.uk>
- 36 Cultural and Creative Skills website <http://www.ccskills.org.uk/>
- 37 Clore Leadership Programme website, my italics <http://www.cloreleadership.org/>
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Cultural Leadership MA, City University. [http://www.city.ac.uk/cpm/cultural\\_leadership\\_programme/index.html](http://www.city.ac.uk/cpm/cultural_leadership_programme/index.html)
- 40 *Cultural Leadership Programme: A Call for Ideas*: p7. [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/clpideas\\_php940QwU.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/clpideas_php940QwU.pdf)
- 41 See: 'No pay, no gain: The reliance on unpaid interns in Britain's industries puts poorer graduates at a disadvantage and makes a mockery of our so-called meritocratic society', *The Guardian*, 19/1/08.
- 42 49% of UK staff have taken a pay cut or pay freeze due to the recession (Ceridian), in addition to more than half working £26.9 billion unpaid overtime in 2008 (TUC), with the UK's income gap the widest since '60s (Dept. for Work and Pensions).

# Never Work!

Karen Elliot

When Guy Debord of the Situationist International (SI) graffitied the slogan “Never Work!” onto the walls of a Parisian street in 1953, he struck a blow in solidarity with the radical current of left communism which locates the wage-labour relation as the central pillar of capitalist relations and therefore the prime locus of attack. It is, of course, a banality that we need to work in order to produce for our basic needs. But what is at question here is the nature of that work, for whom, and to what end? Useful work? Or useless toil? As Raoul Vaneigem of the SI argued, every appeal for productivity comes from above: “It is not from ‘productivity’ that a full life is to be expected, it is not ‘productivity’ that will produce an enthusiastic response to economic needs.” Never mind. The aim of capital is not to produce useful products, or fully-rounded citizens; the chief aim is to augment capital through an increase in profit in a perpetual system of self-valorisation. The means of this valorisation is that peculiar form of commodity: labour-power. Labour power, in contrast to fixed capital (the means of production), creates *surplus wealth for capital* over and beyond the immediate needs of the worker. This is the ABC of capitalist ‘growth’. The drive to productivity and the concomitant tendency to force down wages and conditions at every opportunity is thus clear from capital’s perspective.

That work should be valorised universally comes then as no surprise. The recent welfare reform proposals of the former Work and Pensions Secretary, James Purnell, maintain that work is *the* best route out of poverty. As George Monbiot has recently commented, the political value of any project that claims to produce jobs, especially in times of recession, is given hyperbolic status. Yet, as Monbiot goes on to argue, “the employment figures attached to large projects tend to be codswallop”; the promise of jobs is routinely used “to justify anything and everything”. Jobs, even when they do arrive, are far from guarantors against poverty. As Louis Wacquant in his recent study of advanced marginality has argued, it is a “delusion” to think that bringing people back into the labour market will durably reduce poverty: “[t]his is because the wage-labour relation itself has become a source of built-in insecurity and social instability at the bottom of the revamped class structure”. Wacquant cites Wal-Mart, the largest US employer, as a prime example of endemic “working poverty”. Wal-Mart pays its “sales associates”, the most common company position, \$13,861 (nearly \$1,000 dollars under the federal ‘poverty line’ for a family of three); one half of its employees are not covered by the company’s medical plan. This ensures that thousands of Wal-Mart’s staff must resort to welfare to meet their basic needs on a normative basis (welfare which is effectively a state subsidy to disguise Wal-Mart’s pathetic wages).

As the – ever so faint – spectre of Keynes re-emerges, Wacquant warns against undue faith in national, social-democratic measures of reflation for alleviating entrenched poverty: “[i]t is high time for us to forsake the untenable assumption that a large majority of the adults of advanced society can or will see their basic needs met by lifelong formal employment (or by the permanent employment of members of their households) in the commodified economy”. Wacquant also casts doubt on the ability of the traditional trade unions to deal with the new conditions of urban marginality which effectively cut off large sections of advanced urban populations from macroeconomic trends: “... the trade unions are strikingly ill-suited to tackle issues that arise and spill beyond the conventional spheres of regulated wage work”. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri recently re-iterated this point: “... the old trade unions are not able to represent the unemployed,

the poor, or even the mobile and flexible post-Fordist workers with short-term contracts. ... the old unions are divided according to the various products and tasks defined in the heyday of production ... these traditional divisions (or even newly defined divisions) no longer make sense and merely serve as an obstacle.” Moreover, the trades unions’ narrow focus on issues relating to the workplace has meant their renunciation of wider political demands, and deepened their isolation from broader social movements.

Evidently, the drive to productivity and the valorisation of work is to be expected from the point of view of capital. However, the question is how have social-democratic institutions, nominally of the Left, come to be complicit in the subjugation of labour through the mantra of productivity? After all, socialism is not capitalism and the refusal of the wage-labour relation and the struggle against alienation must be at the heart of all those theories which seek an exit from capitalism.

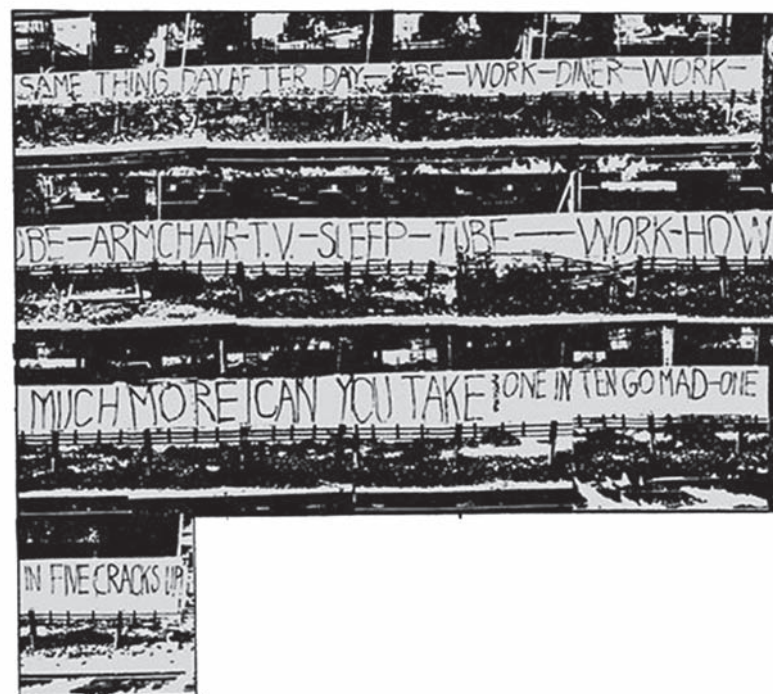
## The Advent of the Industrial Christ

“... every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Benjamin’s most significant disagreement with social democracy was with its technocratic conformism which construed production as beneficial to workers *per se*: “[n]othing has corrupted the German working class so much as the notion that it was moving with the current ... from there it was but a step to the illusion that the factory work which was supposed to tend toward technological process constituted a political achievement”. For Benjamin, the Gotha Programme (which gathered together the two main wings of the German socialist movement in 1875) merely resurrected the Protestant work ethic in secular form by narrowly defining labour as the source of all wealth and all culture. Indeed, the Social Democrat, Josef Dietzgen, echoed Lamartine, the French writer, poet and politician, who had earlier proclaimed the “advent of the industrial Christ” by declaring: “[t]he saviour of modern times is called work”. Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democrat turned war patriot, meanwhile declared that socialism “means working hard”. Benjamin thought this reverence of work without reference to its alienating effects was fallacy and confusion. It amounted to a vulgar conception of labour and its proceeds that privileged distribution over production while downplaying the fact that labour-power was still bought and sold in the marketplace like any other commodity.

Benjamin’s critique of Social Democracy drew from Marx’s evaluation of the Gotha Programme’s resolutions. For Marx, it was a profound mistake to put the principal stress on distribution; on the potential of a ‘fair’ distribution of the products of labour through ‘equal rights’, as long as distribution remained a concomitant feature of the exploitative mode of production itself. In Marx’s analysis, this half-hearted form of socialism merely borrowed from technocratic forms of bourgeois political economy by treating distribution as totally independent of production. This ideological manoeuvre was made possible by disavowing the real relations of production under capitalism which rested then, as they do now (albeit in historically contingent forms), on the ownership and control of the means of production and the exploitation of labour-power for surplus value (profit). The ideological cleavage of distribution from production by the German socialist movement meant that the presentation of socialism would tend to rest thereafter on the minimal question of distribution rather than the



maximal one of production: of reform rather than revolution. In 1875, Marx could already comment: “[a]fter the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again?”. The question remains a potent one.

## The Law of Wages

“Seemingly normal facts: that an individual has nothing to sell but his labour power, that he must sell it to an enterprise to be able to live, that everything is a commodity, that social relations revolve around exchange, are the result of a long and violent process.”

Gilles Dauve, *The Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement*

The basis of capitalism and wage-labour lie in pre-capitalist forms of primitive accumulation, defined by Marx as “nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production”. This transformation in the structure of servitude, from feudal to capitalist exploitation, was no simple progression through homogenous empty time. The expropriation of the immediate producers was accomplished, as Marx observed, with “merciless Vandalism”, and inscribed in the annals of history in “letters of blood and fire”. It is enough to cite the exploitation of gold and silver of the Americas through slavery; the “entombment” of the aboriginal population of Australia in mining operations; and the turning of Africa “into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins” to intimate the “rosy dawn” of primitive accumulation in colonial settings. Closer to home, the Enclosures of England and the Clearances of Scotland are the chief British markers of those violent rounds of primitive accumulation, where “great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled as free and ‘unattached’ proletarians on the labour market”.<sup>1</sup>

The capitalist system *presupposes* the separation of labourers from all property by which they can realise their labour. Once divorced from the means of production, the producer is immediately transformed into a *wage-labourer* and their means of subsistence and production transformed into accumulated capital. This then reproduces the original separation on a continually expanding scale: “[i]t cannot be otherwise in a mode of production in which the labourer exists to satisfy the needs of the self-expansion of existing values, instead of, on the contrary, material wealth existing to satisfy the needs of development on the part of the labourer”.<sup>2</sup> Wealth generated from past, ‘dead’ labour (accumulated in the form of machines, factories, new technologies of production) is set in motion by ‘living’ labour to accumulate more value, which is then invested in new branches, new machinery. New technologies reduce necessary labour power and contribute to a reserve army of labour which holds the pretensions of the prevailing labour force in check: “[t]he greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater



is the industrial reserve army. The same causes which develop the expansive power of capital develop also the labour power at its disposal".<sup>3</sup>

Higher productivity on the part of the worker leads inversely to higher unemployment and higher pauperisation rather than higher wages: "[t]he higher the productiveness of labour, the greater is the pressure of the labourers on the means of production, the more precarious, therefore becomes their condition of existence".<sup>4</sup>

This inexorable fact of capitalism was what led Marx to argue for its supersession, not merely its amelioration through social-democratic means. Reform under capitalism can only ever be partial and piecemeal under

a system whose *raison d'être* is the extraction of surplus value from labour by the owners of capital. This essential system of 'squeezing' is why the workplace has traditionally been the scene of "a constant silent war, of a perpetual struggle, of pressure and counter-pressure".<sup>5</sup> The iron law of value precludes a diminution in the degree of exploitation of labour and a rise in the price of wages that might seriously undermine the continual reproduction, on an ever-enlarging scale, of the relations of capital.

### Distribution or Production: Reform or Revolution

The means of this 'perpetual struggle' between labour and capital has of course been the subject of major discussion, and rifts, within the Left. Crucially, the debate between Eduard

Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century marks a key juncture in the antagonistic relationship between social democratic and revolutionary thought within socialism. Bernstein, Engel's literary executor and one of the most influential figures within reformist Marxism, argued in a series of articles under the title *The Problems of Socialism* (1897–98) that the 'final goal' of socialism would be achieved through capitalism, not through capitalism's destruction. As rights were gradually won by workers, he argued, their cause for grievance would be diminished

and consequently so would the foundation and necessity of revolution. For Bernstein, capitalism had overcome its crisis-prone tendencies of boom and bust: the 'anarchy' of the market, he argued, was being re-constituted by the formation of new mechanisms within capitalism and by social-democratic measures for higher wages. These tendencies proved to Bernstein that the capitalist order was capable of reform through legal and parliamentary means.

Bernstein's ideas were of major significance for the future of the international labour movement. At the turn of the century, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), of which Bernstein was a member, was the largest socialist organisation in the world. His arguments represented the first time that 'opportunist' currents within the movement were given open theoretical expression. Yet for Luxemburg, Bernstein's theory posited the *opposition* of the two moments of the labour movement by emphasising 'minimum' aims (immediate parliamentary reforms) over 'maximum' aims (the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism). It tended to "counsel the renunciation of the social transformation, the final goal of Social Democracy, and, inversely, to make social reforms, which are the *means* of the class struggle, into its *end*". Luxemburg was not a *priori* opposed to social

democracy; instead, counter to Bernstein, she argued that there was an "indissoluble tie" between social reforms and revolution, but that the struggle for reforms was only the *means*, the social revolution the *goal*.

By treating the mode of exchange as independent of the mode of production, Bernstein had fallen into "one of the fundamental errors of bourgeois vulgar economics":

"Vulgar economy, too, tries to find the antidote against the ills of capitalism in the phenomena of capitalism itself. Like Bernstein, it believes in the *possibility* of regulating the capitalist economy. And, still in the manner of Bernstein, it arrives in time at the desire to *palliate* the contradictions of capitalism, that is, at the belief in the possibility of patching up the sores of capitalism. In other words, it ends up with a reactionary and not a revolutionary program, and thus in a utopia."

For Luxemburg, Bernstein's theories led not to the realisation of a new *socialist world*, but to the reform of *capitalism* – not to the elimination of capitalism, but to the desire for the *attenuation* of the *abuses* of capitalism.

The principal instruments for Bernstein's proposed reform of society were the co-operatives and the trade unions; the first to increase wages and lessen commercial profit, the second to do the same for industrial profit. Yet for Luxemburg, co-operatives were merely a hybrid form of capitalism: small units of socialised production remaining within capitalist exchange. They were coercively obliged to take up the role of capitalist entrepreneurs in order to stand up against their competitors in the market. The intensification of labour – exploitation of labour as commodity – is concomitant. For Luxemburg, this contradiction accounted for the usual failure of contemporary co-operatives. They either became pure capitalist enterprises, or, if the workers' interests continued to predominate, ended by dissolving. Bernstein thought the failure of co-operatives in England was due to a lack of "discipline", but for Luxemburg this language merely resurrected the authoritative axioms of the status quo, expressing "nothing else than the natural absolutist regime of capitalism".

Trades unions, according to Bernstein, were another prime instrument in the "struggle of the rate of wages against the rate of profit". While Luxemburg defended unions as an expression of working-class resistance to the oppression of the capitalist economy, she also argued that they represented only the organised *defence* of labour power against the attacks of profit. Trade unions, however, were not able to execute an economic offensive against profit. The activity of unions, she argued: "does not take place in the blue of the sky. It takes place within the well-defined framework of the law of wages. *The law of wages is not shattered but applied by trade-union activity*". Luxemburg argued that the workers share was inevitably reduced by the growth of the productivity of labour. These objective capitalist conditions transformed the activity of trade unions, subject to successive cycles of boom and bust, "into a sort of labour of Sisyphus". Bernstein's theory that capitalism had resolved its inner contradictions was of course mercilessly exposed in the global Depression of the 1930s, not to mention the current crisis.

Trade unions and co-operatives, without challenging the mode of production, provide the economic support for a theory of revisionism. Luxemburg's critique lambasted Bernstein's regression to idealist forms of social justice and his attempts to constrain socialist struggle within the field of distribution: "[a]gain and again, Bernstein refers to socialism as an effort towards a 'just, juster, and still more just' mode of distribution". This problematic tendency in trade unions became clearer with time. In 1948, the Dutch communist and advocate of workers councils, Anton Pannekoek, concisely summarised the role of trade unions as an "indispensable function" of capitalism: "[b]y the power of the unions capitalism is normalized; a certain norm of exploitation is universally established. A norm of wages, allowing for the most modest life exigencies, so that the workers are not driven again and again into hunger revolts, is necessary for uninterrupted production. ... Though products

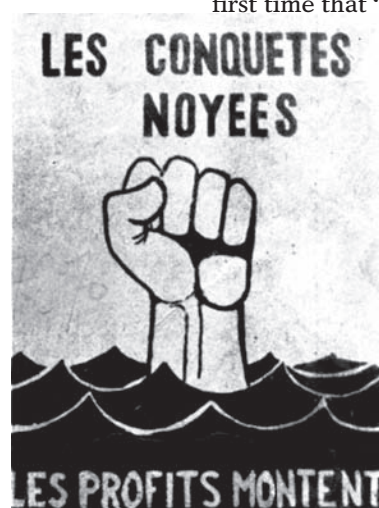
of the workers fight, kept up by their pains and efforts, trade unions are at the same time *organs of capitalist society*".

### Ersatz Marxism

Bernstein and the German and international socialist movement were indelibly shaped by Engels' famous preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France* (1895). Evaluating the French Revolution of 1848, Engels argued that belief in an imminent socialist revolution had become obsolete: revolutionary street fighting had been superseded by parliamentary tactics as the most effective means to socialist change. The text represents a 'classical' documentation of the opinions prevailing in German social democracy at the time, and the tactics Engels expounded went on to dominate German social democracy, in Luxemburg's phrase, "in everything that it did and in everything that it left undone". In 1918, Luxemburg, battling against reformist social-democratic tendencies in Germany, argued that the preface represented the chief document of "the proclamation of the parliamentarism-only tactic". For Luxemburg this was the beginning of *ersatz* Marxism, the 'official' Marxism of social democracy – an ideology which has provided an illusory unity to the socialist movement ever since.

What remained hidden in this seismic shift of socialist tactics was the fact that the preface was written by Engels under the direct pressure of the SPD parliamentary delegation. The delegation pressed Engels, who lived abroad and had to rely on their assurances, to write the preface, arguing that it was essential to save the German labor movement from anarchist and allegedly adventurist deviations. Engels died the same year he wrote the preface, and with him went his protestations at the revision of the document, whose most radical passages were doctored to appease the Reichstag which was then considering a new anti-socialist law.<sup>6</sup> With Engels buried and Marx long departed, the theoretical leadership of the international socialist movement passed over to the social democrat, Karl Kautsky, who still proclaimed revolutionary Marxism even as he led the way on a reformist path. Luxemburg had already come into conflict with Kautsky when he suppressed her insurrectionary article on mass strikes for the sake of party unity and parliamentary grace. Her critique was typically direct: "Marxism [under Kautsky's leadership] became a cloak for all the hesitations, for all the turnings-away from the actual revolutionary class struggle, for every halfway measure which condemned German Social Democracy, the labor movement in general, and also the trade unions, to vegetate within the framework and on the terrain of capitalist society without any serious attempt to shake or throw that society out of gear". With Engels' text wielded with biblical status, Kautsky, "[t]he official guardian of the temple of Marxism", attempted to neuter the revolutionary movement in the name of Marxist orthodoxy. For Luxemburg, the craven capitulation of the German social-democratic movement in the face of German Imperialism in 1914 for short-term political gain was the inevitable result of Kautsky's reformist strategies.<sup>7</sup>

Luxemburg's critique of both Bernstein and Kautsky's social-democratic vision found favour with George Lukács in his early writings. Both attacked 'scientific' Marxism for starting from the assumption that society progresses mechanically and teleologically, and for imagining a definite point of time, external to and unconnected with the class struggle, in which the class struggle would be won. For Lukács, the a-historical view of vulgar Marxism, preoccupied with the isolated 'facts' of the specialist and reified disciplines of bourgeois political economy, lost the *active* dialectical side of Marx's thought wherein theory and action, subject and history could be realised in praxis. Instead, the scientific view preached a contemplative, still ideological faith in scientific progress: a theory of 'evolution' without revolution; of 'natural development' without conflict. Drawing productively from Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, Lukács argued that the scientific view had been seduced by the fetishistic character of economic forms under capitalism. Such forms isolated the various interacting elements of



capitalist relations and masked the contradictory and hierarchical relations between men which lay behind the processes of production: “the reification of all human relations, the constant expansion and extension of the division of labour which subjects the process of production to an abstract, rational analysis, without regard to the human potentialities and abilities of the immediate producers”.<sup>8</sup> For Marx, these formal objective conditions, if understood subjectively and in their *totality* by the working class, would provide the conditions for their eventual emancipation. Far from a static or objective scientific account of history, Marx’s theory, famously given expression in the eleven *Theses on Feuerbach*, was an endlessly relevant call to engagement: “[t]he philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it”.

Beyond the economic fatalism that has always been intimately bound up with the social-democratic project, and which has always left it to arrive on the scene of struggle too late, Rosa Luxemburg saw in the early days of the Russian revolution, especially in the explosion of mass strikes, direct democracy and the formation of soviets (workers councils), the “will to power of socialism”. While Kautsky declared the conditions for revolution “unripe”, Luxemburg viewed the unbridled radicalism of the Russian workers as an exemplary example, evidence that “the masses do not exist to be schoolmastered”. Yet even as she extolled the power of the soviets for crippling Tsarism and for the transformation of all existing class relationships, as early as 1918 Luxemburg condemned the Bolshevik Party for its suppression of direct democracy and the will of the soviets. Despite the Bolshevik Party’s public condemnation of social democracy it would adopt, in crude and distorted form, many of the major flaws of the scientific determinism so typical of orthodox Marxism. Luxemburg, murdered by order of the German Social Democratic Party, would not live to see the results.

## The Russian Tragedy

“The mirage of Leninism today has no basis outside the various Trotskyist tendencies, where the conflation of the proletarian subject with a hierarchical organisation grounded in ideology has stolidly survived all the evidence of that conflation’s real consequences.”

### Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Despite Alexander Berkman’s initial euphoria at being placed in the epicenter of potentially “the most significant fact in the whole known history of mankind”, his analysis upon leaving Russia was that the revolution had already been “done to death” by an authoritarian, dictatorial Bolshevik Party. Like Luxemburg, Berkman saw the significance of the Russian Revolution in the movement that lay behind the slogan “All Power to the Soviets!” For Berkman, the initial power of the revolution lay in the unity of the revolutionary forces against the provisional, reformist Kerensky government. Bolsheviks, Anarchists, the left of the Social Revolutionary Party, revolutionary emigrants, and freed political prisoners had all worked together leading up to October 1917 to achieve a revolutionary goal: “[t]hey took possession of the land, the factories, mines, mills, and the tools of production. They got rid of the more hated and dangerous representatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression”. Immediately after the revolution, as a means to establish direct democracy and workers’ control over the means of production, the organised labour movement formed shop and factory committees coordinated by the soviets.

Berkman, however, would soon watch in horror as the Bolshevik Party declared the autonomy of the shop committees superfluous, filled the labour unions with its own representatives, and banned all public press except Bolshevik publications. Under Bolshevik authority the workers would now be bound by the industrial, scientific principles of productivity, with the shop committees subjected to the ideology of the ruling party. The hoped-for dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie had swiftly moved under Bolshevik rule to a

dictatorship *over* the proletariat. The soviets’ fate under the Party was sealed: “[a]ll who interpreted the Social Revolution as, primarily, the self-determination of the masses, the introduction of free, non-governmental Communism – they are henceforth doomed to persecution”. The brief era of direct democracy was soon crushed under the weight of bureaucratic authority: “[t]he peoples’ Soviets are transformed into sections of the Ruling Party; the Soviet institutions become soulless offices, mere transmitters of the will of the center to the periphery”.<sup>9</sup>

Under the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921, which encouraged private enterprise to trade for profit, the position of the worker was returned to that of the worker under capitalism: “[t]he city worker today, under the new economic policy, is in exactly the same position as in any other capitalistic country. ... The worker is paid wages, and must pay for his necessities – as in any country”.<sup>10</sup> The conditions experienced by the Russian worker replicated the worker’s fate under other capitalist regimes of private ownership: “[s]hops, mines, factories and mills have already been leased to capitalists. Labour demands have a tendency to curtail profits; they interfere with the ‘orderly processes’ of business. And as for strikes, they handicap production, paralyse industry. Shall not the interests of Capital and Labour be declared solidaric in Bolshevik Russia?”<sup>11</sup> To cement these policies, the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Russia in 1921 put a decisive veto on workers’ opposition when the demand to turn the management of the industries over to the proletariat was officially outlawed. The outcome of these authoritarian policies was seen in the infamous crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion by the Red Army and later in the rise of Stalin: “[h]ere with us – or out there with a gun in your hand – but not as an opposition. We have had enough of opposition”.<sup>12</sup>

Berkman was not alone in his analysis. As early as 1920 in his *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*, Anton Pannekoek argued from within the communist movement that the Russian state had developed into state capitalism. The suppression of direct democracy and the soviets in the name of scientific Marxism led to a system of production which Pannekoek, with the benefit of hindsight in 1948, articulated quite precisely: “[t]he system of production developed in Russia is State Socialism. It is organized production with the state as universal employer, master of the entire production apparatus. The workers are master of the means of production no more than under Western capitalism. They receive their wages and are exploited by the State as the only mammoth capitalist. So the name State capitalism can be applied with precisely the same meaning”. In Guy Debord’s later phrase, the Russian bureaucracy resolved itself into “a substitute ruling class for the market economy”.

For Debord, Lenin was simply a faithful Kautskyist who applied orthodox Marxism to the prevailing conditions in Russia. This ideology, asserting that its whole truth resided in objective economic progress overseen by the ideological representatives of the working class, could only ever reflect the specialisation and division of labour inherent within the Party hierarchy: “[i]n consequence the speciality of the profession in question became that of *total science management*”.<sup>13</sup> By usurping the name of revolution for a system of workers’ exploitation, Leninism and Bolshevism made the name of communism an object of hatred and aversion among workers and foes alike. For Debord, the moment when Bolshevism triumphed for itself marks the inauguration of the modern spectacle, the point at which a false banner of working-class opposition was advanced. It was the moment when “*an image of the working class arose in radical opposition to the working class itself*”. The unity that Lenin demanded masked the class divisions and alienating working conditions on which the capitalist mode of production is based: “[w]hat obliges the producers to participate in the construction of the world is also what separates them from it. ... What pushes for greater rationality is also what nourishes the irrationality of hierarchical exploitation and repression. What creates society’s abstract power also creates its concrete unfreedom”.<sup>14</sup>

To the detriment of the working class, the orthodox Marxist line in its Bolshevik form held sway over the international labour movement up until the early 1950s, until the mutinous rebellions against Russian bureaucracy in East Berlin and Hungary helped put the questions of alienation and wage-labour, which lay at the heart of the production process, back on the agenda of class struggle.

## Workerism And The Return Of Class Agency

“From the working-class point of view, political struggle is that which tends consciously to place in crisis the economic mechanism of capitalist development.”

### Mario Tronti, cited in *The Society of the Spectacle*

Tronti was a key figure within the strand of Italian Marxism known as Operaismo (‘workerism’) that emerged in the early 1960s as a response to the conservatism of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Franco Piperno, associated with Operaismo, captured the general perception of the PCI within the movement when he identified the Party as: “the working class articulation of capitalist social organization”. As opposed to the term ‘workerism’ in its narrow sense (evoking the industrial proletariat at the expense of other social groups), Operaismo was concerned with the heterogeneous, ever-changing dynamic of *class composition* in contrast to the eternal, unchanging working-class subject of the Party. As its most famous proponent, Antonio Negri, noted, Operaismo was initiated as an attempt to reply politically to the crisis of the Italian labour movement in the 1950s in the aftermath of World War II. For many workers – after their prominent role in the struggles against Mussolini and the Wehrmacht – the future held out the promise of socialism, or, at the very least, major improvements in work conditions and pay alongside more participation in the production process. Yet Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the PCI, had other ideas. Above all, Togliatti sought a programme to unite the broad mass of people against the group of capitalists yoked to fascism. The decisive arena for political gains, according to Togliatti, was in formal, parliamentary politics where accommodation with other groups was deemed a necessity. The quest for these political objectives, within the Constituent Assembly and the Constitution, led inexorably to the subordination of working-class antagonism and the struggle for fundamental economic change.

Togliatti, saw productivity as the path to Italy’s salvation: the resumption of economic growth within the framework of private ownership would ensure the construction of a “strong democracy”. As the “[t]rue children of the Comintern”, the PCI were willing to concede shop-floor organisation for unitary economic reconstruction through “the restoration of the managerial prerogative” within the factories. Hostage to nationalist ideology and private forms of management technique, the PCI facilitated the extraction of high levels of exploitation from the workers by placing labour discipline and productivity at the top of their agenda. As one Fiat worker put it when Togliatti and Christian Democrat leader De Gaspari came to visit his factory:

“[t]hey both argued exactly the same thing; the need to save the economy. ... We’ve got to work hard because Italy’s on her knees, we’ve been bombarded by the Americans ... but don’t worry because if we produce, if we work hard, in a year or two we’ll all be fine. ... So the PCI militants inside the factory set themselves the political task of producing to save the



national economy, and the workers were left without a party”.

Such compromise had predictable results. In 1947, the historic left was expelled from the De Gaspari government and an intense regime of accumulation was established based on production for international markets, underpinned by low wages, low costs and high productivity. Workplace organisers, disorientated and disillusioned by PCI policy, were mercilessly attacked as Italian capital sought labour docility through the disciplinary law of value. This was the context for the development of autonomist Marxism, which in its most militant sense expressed itself as a radical new rationality counter-posed to the ‘objective’ occult rationality of modern productive processes. Raniero Panzieri’s ‘The Capitalist Use of Machinery: Marx versus the Objectivists’ written in the early 1960s, was, according to Sandro Maccini, “the first demystifying analysis of technological rationality” produced by an Italian Marxist. Against the ruling PCI, Panzieri argued that the struggle for socialism must come from below in the form of “total democracy”. New class formations were required in the economic sphere, “the real source of power”, so that the “democratic road” would not become “either a belated adherence to reformism, or simply a cover for a dogmatic conception of socialism”. Union work, he said, had devoted itself for too long to political questions “with a capital P” whilst ignoring the reality of changing work conditions.

Togliatti, and others within the CPI, following the outline of orthodox Marxism, had led the Italian left to believe that productivity and technological progress somehow stood apart from class antagonism. Instead of accepting the reigning production relations as ultimately rational, beneficial and eternal, however, Panzieri, returned in earnest to Marx (an unusual step at that time for a ‘Marxist’) to theorize machinery as accumulated ‘dead labour’, fully determined by capital which utilised technological development to further the exploitation and subordination of ‘living labour’. Elements of the Italian left, in thrall to social democracy, were obsessed by the productivist idea that technology could liberate humankind from the limitations of environment and surroundings. But for Panzieri, these elements passed over the crucial question of the ownership of the workplace and the role mechanisation and automation played in increasing the authoritarian structure of factory management and organisation.

Panzieri, criticised the Leninist belief that socialist planning was entirely neutral and that science and technique were socially disinterested forces. Instead, for Panzieri, planning was a form of “social despotism” which hid the social relationships of domination and exploitation behind the language of bourgeois political economy. Denied of this understanding by a blind ideological adherence to scientific Marxism, the consequence of Lenin’s policies in the USSR was, for Panzieri, “the repetition of capitalist forms in the relations of production both at the factory level and at the level of overall social production”. The autonomists’ great contribution to debates around the negation of capitalism was to re-instate, after decades of suppression in the name of productivity, the idea of *alienation* and antagonism at the heart of the production process, positing a radical rupture from the ‘golden chains’ of the wage-labor relation in Italy and beyond. News also travelled from abroad. In the aftermath of May ’68 in France, Massimo Cacciari would state that liberation *from* labour, not merely the liberation *of* labour, had become the key aim of revolutionary politics. When young Renault workers in France, during May ’68, demanded



a minimum wage of 1000 francs per month (an exorbitant and impossible demand), Bologna and Daghini saw that the demand, which threatened to “blow up” the labour market, was symptomatic of a desire on behalf of the workers, “to negate their own figure as producers”. The “strategy of refusal” first posited by Mario Tronti in 1965 was now a widespread actuality.

## Mai ’68

“Forward to a communist society without capital or waged work!”

### 10 May Group, 1968

When Rene Resiel of the *Enragés* put forward his demands at the student occupation of the Sorbonne University in 1968 – “the abolition of class society, wage-labour, the spectacle, and survival” – he gave voice to the theory of the Situationist International and its radical critique of everything. Against the reasonable demands put forward by the emissaries of social democracy, the SI and their followers exhibited the greatest of contempt for the “pseudo thinkers of details” and the maximum disrespect for all those who would attempt to find a concord with capital within the left parties. The unacceptable demand became the chief tool of breaking with all the dead generations of the past. Work, for so long the ABC of social-democratic thinking, duly came in for a kicking. In 1967, Raoul Vaneigem declared his opposition to the wage-labour relation thus: “every call for productivity under the conditions chosen by capitalist and Soviet economics is a call to slavery”. With work – “the punishment for poverty” – widely defined as “hard labour”, society as a “racket”, and trade unionists as “cops”, Vaneigem argued that every appeal for productivity is always an appeal from above at the behest of the commodity. In the “post-scarcity” era, the alleged imperative of production under the former imperative of survival was no longer valid: “from now on people want to live, not just survive”.

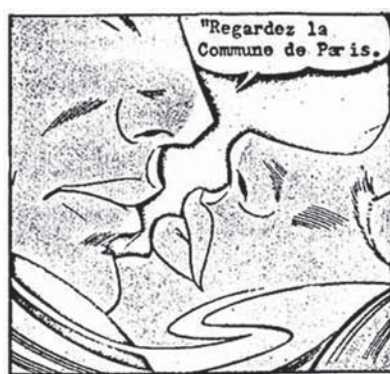
The role of the SI in May ’68 is deeply disputed, but it is clear that the theory of the spectacle, associated first and foremost with Debord, held considerable sway. Debord’s writing, which reworked the ideas of Hegel, Marx and Lukács, among many others, borrowed deeply from Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism, whereby in the production and exchange of commodities the relations *between people* assume the form of relations *between things*. In this he returned to early Lukács who had engaged in a similar project in the late 1910s. In order to produce commodities for exchange, the workers’ labour and what they produce come to dominate their life. Commodity relations take on a mysterious force: the products of labour are turned against the worker, appearing now as an autonomous, alienating power, a “social hieroglyphic” which elides the human labour that produced the commodity. While Marx concentrated on alienation within production, asserting that at least the worker had access to non-alienated relations outside of work, the SI argued that the restless expansionism of

capitalism and its need to secure new markets had extended commodity relations, and thus alienation, into all areas of social experience. No longer a mere adjunct to production, consumption is integral to the circulation of commodities, the accumulation of capital, and the survival of the economic system. For Debord, extending Marx’s original thesis beyond production, modern society had produced The Society of the Spectacle, a “vast accumulation of spectacles” and a concrete inversion of life which created a social relationship between people mediated by images. The SI project embodied a refusal to co-operate with this logic of commodity exchange and a radical negation of the capitalist relations that reproduce the abstract, alienating equivalence of the spectacle.

Much of the language, tactics and expressions of the events of May ’68 seemed to affirm the theories of the SI: “[t]hat the increasing modernization of capitalism entails the proletarianisation of an ever-widening portion of the population; and that as the world of commodities extends its power to all aspects of life, it produces everywhere an extension and deepening of the forces that negate it”. The first signs of what was to come emerged from the student milieu of Strasbourg University in November 1966, when students in collaboration with the SI produced ‘Of Student Poverty Considered in its Economic, Political, Psychological, Sexual, and Particularly Intellectual Aspects, and a Modest Proposal for its Remedy’. The pamphlet, which should be essential reading for the student of today, ridiculed student privileges and the illusory forms of rebellion adopted as specialised ‘roles’ within the milieu. Students must understand one thing, the pamphlet declared: “... there are no ‘special’ student interests in revolution. Revolution will be made by *all* the victims of encroaching repression and the tyranny of the market”. Hastily translated into more than ten languages, the pamphlet encouraged widespread discussion of Situationist analysis. The publication of Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* and Raoul Vaneigem’s *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in 1967 further intensified these discussions. New student agitations persisted throughout the first half of the year including the formation of *Enragés* and the *Mouvement du 22 Mars*, two groups which would have a significant impact on the May events. Yet far from being a mere student revolt, the May events sustained a general wildcat strike of ten million workers alongside a critical position that encompassed every aspect of capitalist life.

In terms of the economic and political analysis of orthodox Marxism, the events were simply unthinkable, yet the general wildcat strike, with three weeks of action, brought the country to a halt. On 19 May, *The Observer* called the revolution “a total onslaught on modern industrial society”. It went on to describe the contemporary conditions: “[i]n a staggering end to a staggering week, the commanding heights of the French economy are falling to the workers. All over France a calm, obedient, irresistible wave of working-class power is engulfing factories, dockyards, mines, railway depots, bus garages, postal sorting offices. Trains, mail, air-flights are virtually at a standstill. Production lines in chemicals, steel, metalworking, textiles, shipbuilding and a score of industries are ground to a halt. ... Many a baffled and impotent manager is being held prisoner in his own carpeted office”. Rene Vignet’s highly subjective *Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May ’68* left the best general account of the events from a Situationist perspective:

“Everyday life, suddenly rediscovered, became the



center of all possible conquests. People who had always worked in the now-occupied offices declared that they could no longer live as before, not even a little better than before. ... Capitalised time stopped. Without any trains, metro, cars, or work the strikers recaptured the time so sadly lost in factories, on motorways, in front of the TV. People strolled, dreamed, learned how to live. Desires began to become, little by little, reality."

The May '68 events presented impossible demands irreducible to higher wages or the details of workplace organisation. The radical critique of existing capitalist relations was evidenced throughout the events: e.g. the Schlumberger factory workers who stated that their demands "had nothing to do with wages" before going on strike for the highly exploited workers at the nearby Danone factory. Similarly, the workers at the FNAC chain of stores declared: "[w]e, the workers of the FNAC stores, have gone on strike not for the satisfaction of our particular demands but to participate in a movement of ten million intellectual and manual workers. ... We are taking part in this movement (which is not about quantitative demands) because ten million workers don't stop work at the same time for a pay rise of F6.30 or 100 centimes, but to challenge the legitimacy of the whole leadership of the country and all the structures of society". The Censier worker-student Action Committee likewise declared: "[i]t's not a case of demanding more of this or more of that. It's a case of demanding something else altogether. ... In this way the *totality* of demands will appear, and their incalculable number will produce the evidence that the capitalist regime cannot really satisfy the least of them". In a strident document signed by 'Some postmen' (usurping beautifully the status of 'roles' endemic to the specialized division of labour under capitalism) the postmen stated with exemplary simplicity that, "open struggle against the ruling class" would be the condition of their emancipation: "[t]he renowned participation that power can afford us is in fact only integration into its system of exploitation. We have fuck all to do with helping them with their profits".

The reaction to all this revolutionary activity by the established unions is shrouded in infamy. Vienet succinctly described the trade-union counter-offensive: "[t]he trade-union strategy had a single goal: to defeat the strike. In order to do this the unions, with a long strike-breaking tradition, set out to reduce a vast general strike to a series of isolated strikes at the individual enterprise level ... the union leadership assumed the task of reducing the entire movement to a program of strictly professional demands". The Communist Party's trade union, the biggest in France, meanwhile played the heaviest counter-revolutionary role in the May events: "[i]t was precisely because the CGT had the most powerful organization and could administer the largest dose of illusions that it appeared all the more obviously as the major enemy of the strike".<sup>15</sup> While the workers, six million by 20 May, soon to be ten million, voted for a perpetuation of the general wildcat strike and the occupation of the factories, the leadership of the CFDT and CGT, the main union organisations in France, were agreed on the basic social-democratic principle of the necessity for negotiations with state and management.

The result of these meetings, triumphantly produced by Seguy, the leader of the CGT, on 27 May at the rebellious Renault-Billancourt factory was the 'Grenelle agreement', concluded by the timeworn social-democratic triumvirate: the unions, the government and the employers. The agreement would raise wages 7% and lift the legally guaranteed minimum wage from 2.22 to 3 francs. The days lost in the strike would not be paid until they were made up in overtime. Given that "[a] higher percentage of French workers than ever before, across every sector and in every region of the country, had been on strike for the longest time in French history",<sup>16</sup> the poverty of the 'gains' agreed by the union leaders was dwarfed by the scale of the movement. The workers knowing full well "that such 'benefits' would be taken back in kind with imminent price rises"<sup>17</sup> famously rained down insults on Seguy and rejected the agreement. The unions learned their lesson. The refusal of the agreement was met with an acceleration of integration by the CGT:



rigged ballots, false information (e.g. informing individual railway stations that the other stations had gone back to work), prevention of secondary picketing, and organised train delays which prevented workers' solidarity. By these methods, and acting in collusion with the hated national riot police (CRS), the CGT were able to bring about the resumption of work almost everywhere. Ultimately, the CGT and the CFDT proved themselves perfect instruments for the integration of the working class into the capitalist system of exploitation.

For Vienet, the future for the radical left would now involve an unequivocal fight against the reformism of its own unions. He criticised many of the groups in May '68 for remaining entrenched in their own stale ideology, drawing proud experience from past working-class defeats and the traditions of the 'dead generations': "[t]hey seemed to perceive nothing new in the occupation movement. They had seen it all before. They were blasé. Their knowing discouragement looked forward to nothing but defeat, so that they could publish the consequences as they had so often done before". Yet May '68 for all that it was defeated, astounded almost everyone by its very existence in modern capitalist conditions. That the unthinkable took place at all suggests that it can take place again.

### Times change

"...the revolutionary organisation must learn that it can no longer combat alienation by means of alienated forms of struggle."

#### Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Capital's response to the show of strength by working-class organizations in the sixties and early seventies marked a shift to what has broadly been termed 'post-fordist' or 'flexible' modes of accumulation, a shift characterised by increasingly flexible labour processes and markets, intensified geographical mobility of capital flows, rapid shifts in consumption practices, and the erosion/destruction of Fordist-Keynesian modes of labour regulation and control. Beyond a few notable exceptions such as the miners' strike, the working-class in the advanced capitalist countries has been in disarray ever since, even if struggles elsewhere, in South America, India, and China for instance suggest that global capital might meet its nemesis in an ever-expanding global proletariat. But if the fight over the global workplace is not just to become, in Panzieri's expression, "either a belated adherence to reformism, or simply a cover for a dogmatic conception of socialism", then we might do well to return to, and update, Rosa Luxemburg, who brilliantly theorised the inexorable destruction immanent to capitalism's incessant drive for self-expansion, and whose intense opposition to reformist compromise suggests a pro-revolutionary, fiercely anti-capitalist alternative to contemporary capitalism.

In her speech to the Founding Congress of the Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus League) in December 1918, Rosa Luxemburg argued that the Erfurt Program, "the founding document of the Second International", authored by Karl Kautsky in 1891, had imprisoned German Social Democracy within a hopelessly reformist paradigm. By placing immediate minimum aims (parliamentary reform) in the tactical foreground, while relegating maximum gains (the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism) to the misty realms of a utopian future, the Erfurt Program created a new dichotomy within the movement. The tactics of piecemeal attrition were now *opposed* to the overthrow of

capitalism; and minimum and maximum aims were presented in separate, distinct realms instead of combined in a productive dialectical tension. By defining themselves in direct opposition to the Erfurt Program, Luxemburg and the Spartacus League expressed their profound disagreement with the strategies of the dominant reformist German Social Democratic movement: "[f]or us there is no minimal and no maximal program; socialism is one and the same thing: this is the minimum we have to realize today".

This tension, between minimum and maximum demands, falsely separated in the Erfurt Program of 1891, suggests a theoretical stratagem that might avoid the illusory hopes of reformist practice, while circumventing the isolating, and isolated, ghetto of 'more radical than thou' Puritanism. Raoul Vaneigem's advice to those seeking a way out of capitalism, prior to May '68, offers a way of understanding which acknowledges that none of us are born 'radical', that solidarity will be central to any mass movement, while at the same time challenging the stasis of purely reformist measures: "it is impossible to go wrong so long as we never forget that the only proper treatment for ourselves and for others is to make ever more radical demands". One such demand, if we are really serious about an exit from capitalism, should return us to the continuing resonance of Guy Debord's salutary statement: 'Never Work!'

#### Notes

1. 'The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation', in, 'Karl Marx: Selected Writings', Oxford University Press, 2001, p.365.
2. Ibid, p.522.
3. Ibid, p.519.
4. Ibid, p.520.
5. Pannekoek, A, 'Workers Councils', AK Press, 2003, p.8
6. Luxemburg, R, 'Our Program and the Political Situation' (1918). At this time, Rosa Luxemburg did not know the full details of the falsification of the document. These only came to light later on. "It was not Engels who wrote the seemingly revisionist views cited here. The Party leaders, arguing that because the Reichstag was considering passage of a new anti-socialist law it would be dangerous to give them grounds to attack Social Democracy, eliminated all the passages in the Preface which seemed too radical. Engels protested, but died before any changes could be made."
7. See Luxemburg's 'The Junius Pamphlet' (The Crisis in German Social Democracy).
8. Ibid, p.6.
9. Berkman, 'A Russian Tragedy', Phoenix Press, p.40.
10. Ibid, p.29.
11. Ibid, p.31.
12. Cited in, Debord, G, 'The Society of the Spectacle', Zone Books, p.72.
13. Ibid, p.68.
14. Ibid, p.46.
15. Plant, S, 'The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age', Routledge, p.85.
16. Ross, K, 'May '68 and its Afterlives', The University of Chicago Press, p.68.
17. Vienet, R, 'The Enrages and Situationists in the Occupation Movement, France, May '68, Rebel Press, p.92.

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Shop; The Bongo Club; The British Council Scotland; WASPS; Word Power • EGHAM: The Media Arts Dept., Royal Holloway, Uni. of London • ESSEX: Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology, Uni. of East London; Essex: Uni. of Essex Gallery • EXETER: Dept. of Drama, Uni. of Exeter; Spacex Gallery • FALKIRK: The Park Gallery • FARNHAM: James Hockey Galleries, Uni. College for the Creative Arts • FORT WILLIAM: West Highland Museum • GALWAY: Galway Arts Centre; Kenny's Bookshop; Public Arts, Galway City Council • GATESHEAD: BALTIC • GLASGOW: Alliance Française De Glasgow; Art History, DACE, Urban Studies, Uni. of Glasgow; Aye-Aye; Bar 10; Bar 91; Rogue bar; Bibliocafe; Blackfriars; Cafe Hula; CCA; Clydeside Press; Collins Gallery, Uni. of Strathclyde; Culture & Sport Glasgow; Dept. of Geography & Sociology, Uni. of Strathclyde; GalGael Trust; Gilmorehill G12, Uni. of Glasgow; Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance; Glasgow Film Theatre; Glasgow Independent Studio; Glasgow LGBT Centre; Glasgow Media Access Centre; The Glasgow School of Art; Glasgow Sculpture Studio; Glasgow Uni. Bookshop; Glasgow Women's Library; Goethe Institut; GOMA / Stirlings Library; Gusto Relish; Halt Bar; Hillhead Library & Learning Centre; Hunterian Art Gallery, Uni. of Glasgow; Intermedia; John Smith & Sons, & learning café, @ Caledonian Uni.; King Tuts; Market Gallery; Mitchell Library, Library Network Distribution; MONO; Nice 'N Sleazy; NUJ Offices; Offshore Cafe; One World Shop; Postgraduate Club, Uni. of Glasgow; Project Ability; Radical Independent Bookfair project; Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama; Russian Cultural Centre; Scotia Bar; Scottish Music Centre; Scottish Screen; Southside Studios; Stables Gallery; Stereo; Street Level Photoworks; STUC; Tchai-Ovna Tea House; The 13th Note; The 78; The Arches; The Doublet; The Glasgow Print Studios, Shop; The Lighthouse; Tramway; Trans-Europe Cafe; Transmission Gallery; Tron Theatre; Uisge Beatha; UNISON; WASPS • GREAT TORRINGTON: The Plough Arts Centre • HEXHAM: Queens Hall Arts Centre • HOVE: APEC Studios • HUNTLY: Deveron Arts • IPSWICH: The Town Hall Galleries • IRVINE: Harbour Arts Centre • JEDBURGH: Woodschool • KEELE: Keele Uni. Art Gallery • KILKENNY: Butler Gallery • Killarney: McBride Gallery • KILMARNOCK: Dick Institute • LANCASTER: Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster Uni. • LEEDS: Foundation Course, Leeds College of Art & Design; Henry Moore Institute; Leeds City Art Gallery; Gallery & Studio Theatre + Sch. of Cultural Studies + Sociology Dept., Leeds Metropolitan Uni.; Art Gallery + Sch. of Geography, Uni. of Leeds; PSL (Project Space Leeds) • LEICESTER: City Gallery Leicester • LEIGH: Turnpike Gallery • LICHFIELD: Foundation Degree in Heritage & Culture, Tamworth & Lichfield College • LIMERICK: Limerick Art Gallery; Real Art Project • LISKEARD: Liskerrett Community Centre, Cafe • LINCOLN: Sch. of Art & Design, Uni. of Lincoln • LIVERPOOL: A Fundation; FACT; News From Nowhere; Open Eye Photographic & Media Arts Gallery; Static Gallery; Tate Liverpool; The Royal Standard • LLANDAFF: tactileBOSCH • LLANDUDNO: Oriol Mostyn Gallery • LOCHMADDY, NORTH UIST: Taigh Chearsabhagh • LONDON: 56a Infoshop; Area 10 Project Space; Arts Council England, London; Artsadmin; artsdepot; Artwords; bookartbookshop; Bookmarks; Bookshop @ Whitechapel Art Gallery; Brady Arts & Community Centre; Camden Arts Centre Bookshop; CARTE, Uni. of Westminster; Centre for International Human Rights, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Uni. of London; Chisenhale Gallery; Cockpit Arts; Conor Donlon Books; Conway Hall; Cubitt Studios & Gallery; Dept Arts Management, Faculty of Continuing Education, Birkbeck College; Dept. of Fine Art, London Metropolitan Uni.; Exhibitions, St Pancras Hospital; FOUR CORNERS FILM WORKSHOP; Gasworks Gallery; Hayward Gallery

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*Question to Mike Russell MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution:*

Creative Scotland is a confusing and self-contradictory set of proposals which smack of Orwellian newspeak.

So we want to ask you about your language, and the real meaning of your cultural policy.

We're told government takes UNESCO legal instruments seriously, yet you also say Creative Scotland is to be "an entrepreneurial organisation" – ignoring the spirit of the UNESCO convention that culture should not be treated like commerce.

You say that you want dialogue, but that the time for talking is over.

You say that artists should be at the centre of Creative Scotland, but the bill overwhelmingly makes artists instruments of government policy – in the words of the bill, artists are to "support the government's overarching purpose."

You say you want Creative Scotland to support sustainable economic growth, but the organisation is being nursed into being by bankers and businessmen who have set back the cause of genuinely sustainable growth.

You say you care about producers, but you want to introduce loans to indebt us even more – a mechanism which has failed elsewhere.

You have even brought into play the old-fashioned and inadequate idea of "art for art's sake" as a fudged safeguard against your own "overarching" policy.

Our key question is: what is to happen to individuals and organisations who do not want to support the corporate-friendly culture you are trying to engineer under the guise of Cultural Nationalism?

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