A DIGEST OF NEWS AND VIEWS ON BRITAIN'S ECONOMY AND OUR ROLE IN OVERSEAS TRADE AND PAYMENTS

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REGIONALISING BRITAIN TO MARGINALISE PARLIAMENT

Extracts from a talk given by Lindsay Jenkins, author and broadcaster, to members of the Economic Research Council on Wednesday 17th March 2004.

Recently I was thinking of standing as a member of the 'London Regional Assembly' but I backed out when I realised that if I became a member of that Assembly my only power would be to write a letter to Ken Livingstone! So what, I wondered, is this all about?

Powerless Regional Assemblies and powerful Mayor-chief executives

Blair's Britain now has 12 regions, each with two layers of government: an elected assembly and a development agency. Both now exist mainly as appointed bodies. Elected Mayors are steadily being introduced and their powers and patronage will be vast. London's Mayor Livingstone is a twenty first century baron. He appoints all 15 members of the Transport for London Board; 15 members and the chief executive of the London Development Agency; just over half of the new Metropolitan Police Authority and many other jobs. But if we are to have 12 executive-controlled regions rather than our familiar democratically accountable counties and cities, what are these 12 areas?

War-time Civil Defence areas

Local Government in this country, dating back to the medieval county structure, has evolved through many relatively minor changes (an important example was the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act) into the more or less logical patchwork of traditional and proud councils which today provide local services from bus shelters to refuse collection and from schools to police forces. Dividing the total by 12 therefore appears to be something of a revolution!

These 12 areas – so we are told – are based on the Commissions set up during the war so that each area of Britain (I believe there were 10) would have the ability to operate alone if for example, London was taken – as was likely in the summer of 1940. These War-Time Commissions continued after the war to organise Civil Defence planning in case of a nuclear attack – but they were never anything to do with local government. That is however the basis for current regionalisation according to John Prescott,

who appears to be in charge. So why should we revive and hugely expand the powers of bodies governing areas of this size?

The Treaty of Rome

The reason is that we actually signed up to having these regions when we signed the Treaty of Rome. The Preamble to the Treaty states '… anxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions'. So the word 'region' came in right at the beginning – and we all know that the Preamble is terribly important in continental law, even if it isn't in British law. And it pops up all the way through. If you do a quick computer search, you'll see lots of Articles citing the word 'regions' – such as Article 39 on Agriculture and Article 49 on the Employment Market.

Things developed from there. For example, in 1961 the European Commission held its first 'Conference on Regional Economics' in Brussels and in the 'First Community Economic Programme' of 1966–70 Regional Policy was an important feature involving senior civil servants from member states who were responsible for 'Regional Economic Policy'. Then in 1969 the Commission produced a very substantial statement on regional policy in which it said that 'All economic and social policy is to be determined at the level of the European Union or at Regional Level but not by the Nation States'. It is quite explicit then in saying 'If the Member States were to remain responsible for Regional Policy then development of the Community would be jeopardised'. This document then went on to claim that harmonious development could not be left to Member States; that only the Community could count the economic and social costs of public policies; that only the Commission can offset the tendency of businesses to gravitate to the most developed part of the EC and, with regard to the European Investment Bank, Member States should assist investment by the Bank in their regions.

Soon the Commission was laying out 'points for regional development' and claiming the right to interfere in Regional Planning so that specific programmes in specific regions were undertaken. The Commission set up a 'Directorate' for Regional Development on a permanent basis and set up large funds to make money available to 'assist' regional development. As every student of government learns, it is the control of finance that determines the power of government.

Finance for Control

So the Commission has this grant system and local authorities here and indeed across the EU turn to face Brussels to get that money- and every single local authority has some sort of European Unit within it. A lot of them have offices or 'embassies' in Brussels. Britain has something like thirty-five, some staffed only with five or six people whilst others, such as those representing Wales and Scotland, are very substantial. So, having shown you the origins of the regions – a political imperative from Brussels which has found, in Britain's case, the old Civil Defence areas useful – how are the lines drawn on the map?

Regions, subregions and sub-subregions

The British government has said 'it is not necessary for a Region to have a strong historic identity … although the boundaries will generate a good deal of fervour … Standard Regional Boundaries are the right ones … because no one will be able to come up with better ones'. 'Standard Regional Boundaries' are set down by Eurostat, the EU's statistical office in Brussels. These geographical units have been developed ever since 1961 and are an expression of political will, appropriate sizes of population 'to carry out the tasks allocated to the territory' etc. Eurostat publishes a nice little table showing that Regions have to have a population of between 1.3 and 7 million – apparently arbitrary numbers that they are quite definite about.

Regional Government is then divided into three levels. There are, at the present time 111 Regions throughout the EU. All regions are described in the same way: 'London in Europe', 'Scotland in Europe', 'Wales in Europe', so abolishing the name of the country but making clear that they are not free and independent. There are subregions and there are sub-subregions. They all come under the very broad heading of NUTS which is Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics. By Brussels Directive this system now has to be applied here. For example, London is Region No. UK1 with two subregions, an outer and an inner, called UK1 1 and UK1 2. Then there are five sub-subregions – Inner London West and East, Outer London East and Northeast, the South, the West and the Northwest. Please note that very recently Ken Livingstone said that *he* wanted to abolish all the (is it 32?) London Boroughs and replace them with 5 Super Boroughs!

No more England, no more counties

So 'Kensington and Chelsea', the 'City of London', even England itself – none of them feature anywhere in this system at all. The County Councils will go because there isn't any need for them any more. For example Devon County Council is now listed as 'subsub-region of the EU UKK43' pending its abolition.

And similarly throughout the EU – except Germany

Now if this is happening in this country and it's coming from Brussels, it is obviously happening across the EU. For example Finland created 19 regional councils with limited powers in 1994 expressly to get the EU grants which they wouldn't have got otherwise. In France there is an enormous battle going on to replace traditional 'departments' with 22 NUTS regions which many say contravenes Article 1 of the French Constitution which states that 'France is a single and indivisible Republic'. Portugal now has Regional Development Agencies which are unelected partnerships of local vested interests very similar to our Regional Development Agencies. Poland had to abolish its 49 provinces and replace them with 16 regions, many of them with old German names replacing the Polish names – which caused a storm of protest. Sweden's existing regions are rather similar to NUTS regions but still they have to make changes – for example by abolishing Scania which has borders dating back to 380 AD.

In fact when you go around Europe and look at the changes, the only country which hasn't had to change is Germany – whose 'Lander' were the blueprint for the system.

Thus absorbing smaller countries

Now if the whole thing is defined in terms of populations, which it is, and you look around at the smaller countries, whether they are technically within or without the European Union, you wonder what sort of future they have. I have been involved in the Channel Islands for example and the Channel Islands will be going in with Normandy (we already know that). The Isle of Man is being lumped in with Northern Ireland. Gibraltar? Well, you wonder, but then the obvious answer must be (because it's not even big enough to be a sub-subregion) must be going in with Spain. Malta? Italy perhaps. Cyprus with Greece? Monaco? Again not technically in the EU, but the EU

thinks it is. And then there is Andorra, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg – all fated to be absorbed by neighbouring regions.

And reopening old conflicts

In addition to the 'NUTS' defined regions, subregions and sub-subregions, the Commission has invented even larger areas called 'Euro-Regions' linking places which have never in recorded history been united and with little in common, or which once belonged to a neighbouring country – so deliberately reopening old wounds.

For example, Kent is linked with Nord-Pas-de-Calais across the English Channel, Rhine-Waal is a predominately German area but includes parts of the Netherlands, and Southern Jutland in Denmark is linked with Schleswig and Holstein in Northern Germany, a sensitive area that the Germans conquered and annexed from Denmark in 1864. These are not just paper plans because funds are available to break down National boundaries under-a thing called 'Interreg 3A' which is used on programmes to build anything that crosses a border such as pipelines, roads and railways. The Channel Islands only just managed to save their coal-fired power stations when plans were unveiled to make them dependent on an electricity cable from Normandy. And in addition to this the German government is working to break down National boundaries through Foundations and so forth which in turn get mixed up with the tactic of reviving and promoting minority languages. Typically, minority languages that fell by the wayside many many years ago cross national borders. Of course there is a cultural interest in reviving old languages but the Council of Europe which is effectively the same as the EU, has chosen to promote just four of Germany's 17-odd minority languages – the four that happen to be next to Denmark where they want to stir things up. Here television and radio broadcast regularly across borders, funded by the EU to build a new identity, although many locals switch their sets off.

A revolution in Government that is anti-democratic and not in Britain's interest

We, as taxpayers, are paying quite a lot for the many 'lobby organisations' created by the EU. They are a nightmare to sort out, but I'll mention just one of them to illustrate the sort of thing that is going on. 'REGLEG' stands for 'Regions with Legislative Power'. So far, of the 111 'Regions' of

the EU, 64 have become members and they are from just 8 countries: Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Finland and this country. Only Regions which have their own legislature, executive and judiciary, can be members of REGLEG – as is Scotland and Wales – and Northern Ireland if it isn't suspended. The REGLEG Regions are campaigning for a bigger role in decision-making within the EU and circumventing the Nation States of which they happen to be a part. Jack McConnell (Scotland's First Minister) is chairman of REGLEG and has recently backed demands for direct Scottish access to the European Court of Justice, thereby circumventing London. This sort of thing is a revolution in Government and, from the tiny portion of things which I have had time to describe tonight, I hope that I have shown you that this is leading us in directions that are not democratic and that are certainly not in Britain's interest.

Of the questions asked following this talk one raised a request for members:

Q. What about 'Regional Defence Forces'? Everything else seems to be being regionalised such as the Fire Service and the Police Force. I have heard 'on the grapevine' that the British Army is going to be broken up into regions and I have seen the map showing where the headquarters are to be in each region. It seems that they are building these headquarters already and that soon there will no longer be British regiments. It is extremely difficult to know what is going on – the army doesn't know and the Chief of the Defence Staff doesn't know.

   It is quite possible to do something like this without it becoming public knowledge. Some years ago a Brigadier told me that he was involved in planning some enormous defence cuts under Michael Heseltine with just four people and nobody knew the scale of the cuts they were planning.

   I am very upset at the idea of the British Army being broken up into regions each with a regional defence headquarters and each with the armaments to control their region's population. Are *we* to be their enemy?

A. I have heard a similar rumour and I agree that it is worrying. I would very much appreciate hearing any further information that you or any other Council member can give me.

TAXATION, BUREAUCRACY AND REGULATORY CREEP

By Damon de Laszlo

The world is heading for a new and exciting economic boom but these are just the sort of conditions in which governments are most tempted to interfere in business with increased taxation and bureaucracy. A few illustrations seem apposite at the present time.

India's fastest growth area is outsourcing for US and UK software companies and providing call centres. Services provided by cable and telephone lines are difficult to intercept compared with goods and are therefore difficult to 'license'. But a recent Indian Government circular has asked the tax authorities to look at foreign companies with a view to getting them to declare their global income. Indian bureaucracy is finding a way of tangling up their burgeoning software industry.

The EU and UK have a history of Government intervention at the micro level, where the law of unintended consequences works with a vengeance. Ministerial intervention in the UK has got to the point where Government Departments are issuing conflicting edicts so that commerce is left wondering what the law means. Under Patricia Hewitt, the Trade and Industry's overweening desire to 'help' produces a stream of legislation that creates legal confusion for corporate management. Current proposed legislation such as the requirement for Directors under risk from unlimited fines to file an operating and financial review is a case in point. Quoted companies will have to give details of factors affecting future and past performance. It sounds simple but the company has to decide what is relevant information in this context and they will be judged in retrospect. This will inevitably lead to masses of fun for DTI inspectors!

In another area, a proposed equality regulator to promote human rights and back legal cases against companies sounds wonderful but is an open door for lawyers and pressure groups to attack the corporate sector. Patricia Hewitt's apparent observation is that it will be helpful to companies as a single point of contact for advice on 'the increased volume of equality legislation'. How helpful!

The German economy remains in the doldrums with its industry in a regulatory straitjacket and its Government raising taxes to meet its ever-growing deficit.

Meanwhile, the US government is allowing its bureaucracy to disrupt the

hi-tech industry by withdrawing security clearances of employees in the industrial areas of science and engineering with overseas relations, and not allowing immigration into the US of foreign students in the science and engineering areas. Graduates from American universities for the hi-tech industry have a high proportion of students of Asian origin, in many areas over 40%. These students, if they are barred from working in the US, will more than likely go to Taiwan and China where there is a desperate shortage of engineers. Taiwan is already actively recruiting on the West Coast of the US.

As an interesting vignette of overarching bureaucratic nonsense, a report in New Scientist of January 2004 said that owing to the heightened security over Christmas, a huge consignment of urgently needed British made smallpox vaccine, due to arrive in the US in December, was denied entry. Movements of biological products were deemed threatening! After extra cost had been incurred the vaccine entered two months later.

Back in the UK, even the House of Lords is becoming concerned. In a Select Committee Report it warns against the danger of regulatory creep caused by an increasing number of industry watchdogs and Quangos. These are largely unaccountable and their powers to impose penalties and fines and create secondary legislation mean an increasing burden on industry. Is this part of bringing us into line with Europe?

But look at the benefits. Of some 480,000 net jobs created in 2002/3, 360,000 were in public administration. The Government is succeeding in holding down unemployment!

THE POLITICS OF OBESITY

By Peter Davison

My title is adapted from that for an essay by George Orwell: 'The Politics of Starvation', published in *Tribune*, 18 January 1946.[1] It could as well be 'The Economics of Obesity'. The Commons Health Committee's report

1 The Complete Works of George Orwell (1998), Vol. XVIII, pp. 42-45. Further references are by volume and page. Much of the data for this short essay comes from The Complete Works supplemented from Longman's Chronicle of the 20th Century (1988).

on obesity stated that two-thirds of the population was overweight or obese and that the proportion of those who were obese had increased by 400% in the past twenty-five years (*Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 2004). A fierce dispute arose as to the way the evidence had been interpreted, particularly as it affected a child alleged to have died because of overweight and it was quickly shown that that child had suffered from a genetic deficiency which causes the failure of leptin to act. Further, some 3,000 unfortunate people in the United Kingdom suffer from Prader–Willi Syndrome causing those afflicted to possess an insatiable appetite. I am not concerned with those who suffer in these ways and, obviously, those with PWS constitute a tiny proportion of the number of the population grossly overweight. In a leader on 10 June, the Daily Telegraph played down the effect on life expectancy of being overweight arguing that 'we are living longer' and that 'the average British life expectancy is still climbing'. This seemed to miss the point: is it the overweight who are living longer?

Many reasons, apart from genetic abnormality, are given to explain why people are getting fatter and much is made of the strain on the National Health Service in order to cater for those who are fat or whose obesity leads to serious illness. A few years ago I saw the result of increasing bulk comically displayed. My wife and I were staying for a few days at an hotel on the south coast of England at which a wedding had been held. At breakfast the following morning, a procession of rotund, but fairly young, guests rolled down and attempted to sit at the breakfast tables. The hotel had provided their best-quality chairs but, alas, these had arms. Several guests forced themselves with a great effort into these, sometimes aided by friends who pushed and shoved – and then pulled hard to get them out of a chair held down by one or two others. It was quite a sight. Eventually the obvious happened. A particularly gross man, in trying to get between the arms, split them away from the sides and collapsed in a heap on the floor. It was comic in an Oliver-Hardyish way, but sad and destructive. The hotel staff scurried around and found less elegant chairs but ones without arms upon which the portly could balance themselves whilst consuming enormous platefuls of bacon, eggs, fried bread, black pudding, baked beans, tomatoes and fried potatoes. When we visited the hotel this year I mentioned this to one of the senior staff. She remembered the occasion and said that now they only provide the more elegant chairs with arms for those at the top table – and only then after carefully assessing the girths of bride, groom, and immediate attendants. Appropriately, there were no chairs with arms this last weekend.

Not only are people getting fatter and fatter but they are – men and women – becoming more willing, indeed keen, to become drunk in public. As a devotee of conspiracy theories, I am more than prepared to believe in the wickedness of those who encourage people, and especially children, to eat what is not suitable for them, who install junk-food and fizzy-drink dispensers in schools, sell off playing fields and encourage those aged between sixteen and thirty-five to drink more – much more – than they can hold. However, I doubt if much will be alleviated by well-meant regulations regarding labelling or laws that relax drinking and club-opening regulations. I doubt whether most of those at risk are able to read and, if they can, that they would bother to take any notice. I write this the day after the Sixtieth anniversary of D-Day having just spoken to an intelligent and very hard-working young woman – approaching forty is very young to me. She had not only not realised it was the sixtieth anniversary, but had never heard of D-Day nor knew what it was. The commemoration yesterday had passed her by: she was shopping. How could she, and the far less well-conducted, be relied upon to read warnings however well-meant, even if not cluttered with e-numbers and obscure constituents?

Why the cult of drunken clubbing has become so vicious is beyond me. It is not as if this were solely male bravado – a defiance of convention fuelled by false courage. Women also seem, unaccountably, as willing to 'let go'. (Note the euphemisms: it is difficult to put down in cold print the words that truly reflect such intemperate action.) No weekend passes in the very small and otherwise quiet town where I live but that wanton damage is done every Saturday night. It might simply be tipping over hanging baskets or the large yellow roadside receptacles that hold sand-and-salt, or, this last weekend, the removal of manhole covers along the sides of roads and throwing them (no light task) into the undergrowth that borders the road, leaving very dangerous holes for the unwary walker or cyclist. I asked a mature, intelligent, German graduate student of mine why she thought we were so addicted to drunkenness. She offered an interesting explanation. Many British people were, she thought, naturally reluctant to express emotions in public. They needed a drink to 'relax'; they then needed more drink to forget that they had 'relaxed', and before long they were out of control. This strikes me as a very generous explanation for what, to me, is a disgusting decline in public behaviour or, as the anarchist, George Woodcock, wrote over fifty years ago, the inability of the masses to 'become awakened and educated to their responsibilities' (*The Writer and Politics*, 1948, p. 182). This from a friend of George Orwell who, like him, was very much on the side of the masses – the proles.

I was particularly sickened, late on the sixtieth anniversary of D-Day, after witnessing some of the commemoration on television, to see a 'Panorama' programme on drunken behaviour in the centre of Nottingham. The contrast could not have been more vivid, more disheartening. Is this what that day sixty years ago was for?[2] Worse than the disgusting and violent behaviour of the men and women vividly depicted on the screen, was the belief by local councils that this was the way to regenerate the centre of their cities, made practicable because no longer is it necessary to show that there is 'need' for additional licensed premises in a city centre or restricting hours of opening; the smug assurance of a representative of a hotel and pub association – 'think of the economic advantages – it provides employment – and what of the tax revenue?'; the 'licensing lawyer' who described how, as he had persuaded a court to allow a breach in the existing conventions for granting licences, had striven to keep a straight face in the court but, once outside, had 'punched the air' in delight at this triumph; and the blind stupidity of a government minister, unbelievably representing Culture, Media & Sport (a Mr Caborn) who explained this was an attempt to bring 'a continental café culture' to our city centres in order to attract overseas visitors: 'Why would anyone come here if they couldn't get a drink after 11 o'clock?' he asked. Is it credible that he believes, in the light of the evidence before our eyes, that in this way politicians can so transport a 'pavement-café culture' from Nice to Nottingham or Milan to Manchester. Does he really believe that the Milanese will delight in enjoying drunken revelry in Nottingham? This is the economics of Beer Street and Gin Lane. 'Culture' indeed.

Government is seemingly operating in two different directions. This is not unusual, of course. On the one hand it is encouraging drinking – 'our café culture' – and reaping the tax revenues, whilst disregarding the cost and strain on police and hospitals – there are 23,000 cases of alcohol-related violence a week – never mind the vomit, urine and faeces deposited in the city centres. On the other, it is trying desperately to persuade people that they should not force-feed themselves and their children with fattening and junk foods. However, telling people that if they are seriously overweight they will shorten their lives will be about as effective with the young as

2 In case it should be assumed that my anger arises in part from my having been on the Normandy beaches, let me make it plain that I was not. My modest – and safe – task that day was, as a member of the Home Guard, to stand atop a tall building near Uxbridge to watch for incoming German planes. There were none, of course, though one week later I was spotting for V-1s.

advising them to save for their old age. Perhaps there is a cunning plot here: eat junk food; get fat; die early – and you won't be alive to demand a pension.

Endeavouring to control my disgust and anger (not very successfully, as the above will show), I later returned to what I am currently working on: an edition of letters written by a wife to her soldier husband between 1942 and 1945. Coincidentally, I found I had to provide notes on wartime rationing to explain the wife's concerns about additional sugar for jam-making and beekeeping. I was simultaneously preparing a list of what was rationed during and after the war. Now, from their photographs it is plain that the couple with whom I am concerned were of what might be called contrasting configurations. He was scrawny and she was – well, generously built. Of course, there were overweight people before the Second World War. I lived with one. During the war she maintained at least a part of her bulk by scooping up my and my mother's butter rations as well as her own. But, thinking again of those old men marching before the Queen at Arromanches, one could not but be struck by how slim almost every one of them was. And, despite all, they had survived into their eighties to be barked at, once again, by a Garrison Sergeant Major and to march and stand in the hot sun for hours. There are doubtless whole departments in our colleges and universities devoted to food statistics and I would be taking my life in my hands were I to tread on their preserves. Safer to get fat. But I could not but be struck by the contrast between the sight of those old servicemen and the implications of the figures I was typing about rationing. Was there a clue to our privations then and our longevity now, as compared to the eat-all, drink-all 'culture' of today? Is this too oversimplified? Perhaps – but possibly, without attempting a full history of rationing, some high points in its development and decline over a decade and a half might be instructive.

Food rationing was introduced on 8 January 1940, three months into the war. Initially each adult was allowed 4 ozs of butter, 12 ozs sugar, 4 ozs of bacon, and $3^1/_2$ ozs of cooked meats. Fresh meat itself was rationed from 11 March 1940 and from that November no more bananas were imported. Clothes rationing began on 2 June 1941 and so suddenly that margarine coupons had to be used temporarily for the purchase of clothes; coal for domestic use on 4 July 1941. From February 1942 only one tablet of soap per person was permitted. I am still adept at using a tablet of soap until it is almost transparently wafer thin without letting it slip down the plug hole. Almost every consumable was in short supply. Relics of my generation will

still use every scrap and corner of paper and re-use envelopes long after the passing of the 'Envelope Economy Label'.

Rationing steadily became more severe, especially when the Battle of the Atlantic was running against us, and, paradoxically, it became even tighter after the war. After all, we had won, hadn't we? Shouldn't we be made to suffer for that? Rationing lasted for *fifteen* years, only being abandoned in July 1954. At the end of the war in Europe (8 May 1945), the basic weekly food ration included 4 ozs of bacon; 8 ozs of butter/margarine/lard; 3 ozs of cheese; 2 ozs of tea; and 1s 2d-worth of meat, some of which was canned, usually comprising twopence-worth of corned beef. 'Luxury foods' such as tinned fruit and meat were rationed by a system of points and the average person could expect three eggs a month. In July 1945, evidently to demonstrate that we had won the war, the tea ration was increased to 2½ oz a week. But that did not last. This is a selective summary of changes in rations, the dates being those of announcement or application:

5 February 1946: Bread rationed – which it had never been during the war

7 February 1946: Wheat content of bread reduced (the 'National' loaf was already a greyish brown; no white bread was allowed after 6 April 1942)

7 February 1946: Butter + margarine + cooking fat reduced from 8 to 7 ozs per week

7 February 1946: Import of rice stopped.

The above measures were taken in part to help provide food for Germany, then close to starvation.

25 February 1946: First bananas imported since November 1940. A sad result of this small relief was the death of three-year-old Dorothy Shippey of Bridlington after eating four bananas given her as a treat, perhaps a foretaste of what eating too much would lead to.

25 April 1946: Loaves reduced in weight by 4 ozs and grain available to brewers reduced by 15% to save on imports

January 1947: Meat ration cut from 1s 2d a week to one shilling
Beer production cut by 50%

June 1947: Canned meat ration cut to twopence a week
Milk ration cut to 2½ pints per week; later restored to 3 pints

August 1947: Total meat ration (fresh and canned) cut from 1s 2d to 1s 0d a week

October 1947:	Bacon ration cut to 1 oz a week
November 1947:	Potatoes rationed to 3 lbs a week; vegetarians were not allowed additional potatoes
March 1948:	Cheese ration cut from 2 ozs to 1½ ozs a week
June 1948:	Because of a dock strike the fresh meat ration was reduced to sixpence a week together with sixpence-worth of canned meat
December 1948:	Jam rationing *ended*
March 1949:	Clothes rationing *ended*
April 1949:	Chocolate and sweet rationing *ended* **but:**
July 1949:	Chocolate and sweets again rationed (at 4 ozs per week) because the demand was so great
	Sugar ration reduced to 8 ozs per week
September 1949:	Milk ration cut from 3 pints to 2½ pints a week
18 Sept. 1949:	The £ devalued against the dollar from $4.03 to the £ to $2.80 This led to further cuts and shortages.

On 14 July, just two months earlier, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, gave an assurance that there would be no devaluation of sterling: 'That, I hope, is that.'

July 1950:	Soap rationing *ended*
January 1951:	Meat ration reduced by twopence. This allowed for 5 ozs of imported lamb chops per week, or, three persons' rations to buy 1 lb of meat for a week.
April 1952:	Cheese ration cut to 1 oz a week
February 1953:	Chocolate and sweet rationing finally *ended*
July 1954:	Rationing ends.

Orwell's concern in 'The Politics of Starvation' was to lay out some of the arguments for feeding and not feeding starving continental Europeans, the Germans in particular. He described the work of the 'Save Europe Now' committee, which had been 'attempting – without much encouragement from the [Labour] Government or help from the Press – to increase the supply of food from this country to Europe'. There were those who feared further cuts in British rations and those like Air-Chief Marshal Sir Philip Joubert who preferred to see British children fed than Germans, 'who may be using their strength to make war on the world again in another generation'. In the UK, our average consumption was about 2,800–2,900 calories a day; in the USA meat available for civilians had risen from a pre-war supply of about 125 lbs to 165 lbs a year by the end of 1945. However, Germans were surviving on 1,200 to 1,300 calories a day in the British

zone in November 1945 and Field-Marshal Montgomery reported that to maintain rations even at that level he was entirely dependent on imports of wheat. Conditions were worse in the French zone where General Eisenhower said that the 'normal ration of 1,100 calories a day for the average consumer was consistently not met'. Wantonly starving Germany, Orwell feared, would make for a vindictive peace; 'raising our own rations, as we shall perhaps be doing before long, while famine descends on Europe' would be evil. Orwell did not need to worry that British rations would be increased. As the figures above show they were reduced and food, especially wheat, was diverted to Germany. That was 'the politics of starvation' in 1945–1946.

Thin though these rations were, many people who had been out of work in the 1930s enjoyed a much better diet and the earnings to pay for their rations during the war. A salutary comparison might be made with the weekly budget of an unemployed miner, Ellis Firth, in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (pp. 85–6). He, his wife, and two children existed on a weekly unemployment allowance of 32 shillings (perhaps £64 at today's values). Of the 32 shillings, just under half, after rent etc, was available for food (say £32 a week for four people). Orwell also reprinted a budget that had appeared in the *New Statesman* and the *News of the World*. As he remarked, he was not sure whether the letter was genuine or a hoax. This showed how a Mr W. Leach of Lilford Road, London, SE, fed himself on four shillings (or slightly less) per person per week. His diet consisted of three wholemeal loaves, 1/2 lb each of margarine and dripping, 1 lb each of onions, carrots, broken biscuits, and cheese (compare the ration above of 1 oz a week), 2 lbs of dates, one tin of evaporated milk, and ten oranges. When I bought these items in 1993 in the Berwick Street Market, Soho, whilst preparing my edition of Orwell, they cost £8.80, comparable with the Firth's £32 for four people. The one item that had increased disproportionately in price was a packet of a cheap variety of dates.

However, despite the hunger of so many people in the thirties, the Annual Abstract of Statistics published on 1 September 1949 showed that, owing to rationing, annual average sugar consumption had fallen over the previous ten years from 103.9 lbs to 79.8 lbs and that for meat from 91.4 lbs to 67.3 lbs. Contrast that latter figure with the 165 lbs consumed by Americans in 1945! The Statistics also showed that although levels of crime were rising, convictions for drunkenness were less than half what they had been in 1939 – and less than one-eighth of those in 1913.

In addition to their rations, many workers could eat in canteens and

there were 'British Restaurants' that offered meals economically to the general public. And, of course, there was a black market, more active in some areas than others. When visiting my wife-to-be near Manchester in 1945 I was astonished at what had 'fallen off lorries' and could be bought in the full sight of the law in the local market. And a few rich people could eat in a number of luxury restaurants where the law imposing a 5s 0d limit (say £10) on the price of meals excluding the cost of alcohol seemed not to apply. However, obesity in the 1930s and 1940s was not a problem. To put it even more harshly: there were no fat inmates of Belsen or Auschwitz. Guards perhaps; inmates no.

The seemingly remarkable statistics that convictions for drunkenness (assuming the police and courts followed the same practices) declined to one half in 1949 from those in 1939, and to one-eighth of those in 1913, are fairly easily explained. From the time of Hogarth's Beer Street and Gin Lane to 1915, drink was freely available at any time of day or night that the publican or shopkeeper cared to sell it. The effect on war munitions workers during the early part of the First World War was disastrous because far more money was being paid in wages and so on drink. Thus, in 1915, Lloyd George introduced the Defence of the Realm Acts which, among other restrictions, introduced hours when and where drink might be sold. The result of 'Dora', as it/she was quickly called, infuriated many people, but it led to making it far more difficult to drink at all hours. Instead of 'business as usual', as Lloyd George put it, what was wanted was 'Victory as Usual'. The decline in drunkenness, and so also the decline in absences from work, was noticeable and there was an immediate drop in recorded convictions. That convictions for drunkenness further declined during the war, when many people might have been excused in the light of the stress of bombing and the absence and death of loved ones from resorting to the bottle, was in part due to the continuation of the restricted hours of opening, but also because drink was not always easily obtained. The government cut back on the availability of spirits and on the production of beer; this continued at least until late 1947. In his War-time Diary for 4 July 1942, George Orwell, then at a farm at Callow End, Worcestershire, on a rare and brief holiday from his work at the BBC, noted, 'Pubs in this village shut quite a lot of the time for lack of beer', though the acreage of hops grown in that area had not been reduced. On 10 July he wrote, 'The "Blue Bell" again shut for lack of beer. Quite serious boozing for 4 or 5 days of the week, then drought … The "Red Lion" in the next village, goes on a different system which the proprietor explains to me: "I don't

hold with giving it all to the summer visitors. If beer's short, let the locals come first, I say. A lot of days I keep the pub door shut, and then only the locals know the way in at the back'" (*CW,* XIII, 383–4). I well remember when serving in the Navy in Glasgow from December 1945 to January 1946 being, with my colleagues, time and again refused entry to pubs because beer was for the locals.

It would be foolish to rely too much on the evidence of rationing or restrictions in pub opening hours to explain our present concerns with obesity and drunken rowdiness in city centres such as those of Leeds and Bristol. One thing is apparent, even a restricted but decent diet that became available to so many people for the first time after the years of depression, especially those in the Distressed Areas, improved people's health. On the other hand, the freedom to drink uncontrollably, whether alcopops or fizzy drinks, and the stuffing of sugar intense products, has had a deleterious effect on the quality of life in our city and town centres and on the girth and life expectancy of many people. The drain on health resources, and the physical attacks made upon medical staff in the ambulance service and in hospitals is too widespread to be ignored. A café culture this is not.

What now of the 'politics of obesity'? Are there lessons to be learned from the privations of the past and the restricted hours allowed for the drinking of alcohol? Do we really want to see the return of that cartoon character, Dora, poking her long nose into our affairs? Should we just go along with the council officers, the licensing lawyers, the advocates for pubs and clubs, and the political representatives of 'Culture, Media and Sport'? Should we continue the drain on the economy and morale, especially of ambulance and police forces and our health services ? Should we ignore the deleterious effects on the health of our people? Should we simply put up with the vandalism, rioting, and vomit, and the urine and faeces sprayed around our streets? Can politics and economics find an acceptable solution? Frankly, I doubt it. 'Let Riot Continue' is the political slogan and attempts to regulate and advise lead to accusations of nanny-stateism.

The typical objections to nanny-stateishness were made strikingly clear when even the *Telegraph* leader of 10th June went so far as to congratulate 'Mr' Reid[3] on giving his approval to the twenty-one-year-old unmarried mother of three living on a sink estate who found her only comfort was smoking despite all the propaganda showing how harmful it was to her and her toddlers – what a correspondent called 'giving the health fascists short

3 'Mr' Reid is surely entitled to his doctorate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism in a West African state.

shrift'.[4] 'In a spiritually impoverished world', the Telegraph wrote, 'the little pleasures of life – a cigarette, a drink, a blow-out meal – are that much harder to give up' for those living in such conditions. Maybe – but the use of 'a' and the avoidance of plurals for the nouns is significant. The *Telegraph* went on to support its argument and 'Mr' Reid by quoting Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, although Orwell was describing the very different circumstances of the thirties:

> A millionaire may enjoy breakfasting off orange juice and Ryvita biscuits; an unemployed man doesn't … When you are unemployed, which is to say when you are underfed, harassed, bored and miserable, you don't want to eat dull wholesome food. You want something a little bit 'tasty' … Let's have three pennyworth of chips! Run out and buy us a twopenny ice-cream! (*text corrected from* p. 88)

We know a great deal more about the deleterious effects of smoking now than in the 1930s, especially on small children. After all, Orwell coughed himself into an early grave in 1950.

Orwell continues with another source of comfort significantly not printed by the Telegraph – drink, but not alcohol: 'Put the kettle on and we'll all have a nice cup of tea!', a source of comfort in times of stress possibly of greater appeal only to the elderly nowadays rather than being of universal resort as it was in the 1930s and 1940s. Whether it is appropriate to liken the unemployed scratching a living on public assistance in the distressed areas of the 1930s with those provided with rather better basic support today is doubtful. Would Dr Reid describe his walking amongst his Glasgow constituents as being like 'walking among a population of troglodytes' as Orwell did of those living in Sheffield because their 'physical degeneracy' was so visible (p. 89)? If he would, is it not a terrible indictment of the Welfare State? And is it surprising that the Telegraph not only did not mention that cup of tea, but did not go on to refer to 'the Yorkshireman, like the Scotchman [sic], [who] comes to London in the spirit of a barbarian out for loot' (p. 101); would that be too close to the knuckle as a description of the Deputy Prime Minister with his several homes and a couple of Jags, and the Health Minister and his compatriots who form our present government?

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4 Perhaps Dr Reid might better devote his energies to his native land, where his constituency lies, and help ensure the elimination of sink estates instead of seeing nearly half-a-billion wasted on feathering Scottish Assembly members' nests in their Assembly building.

Regulation, the 'Nanny State', and Dora are now impracticable. Doubtless regulation would almost certainly conflict with our Human Rights to behave like beasts. Yet somehow, heaven knows how, people have to rediscover self-control, learn to take responsibility for themselves, and be concerned for the well-being of others. Unfortunately, Gin Lane is cool; responsibility is not. Individuals and the state will doubtless have to pay the economic and political costs of obesity, drunkenness, and violence. Unless, of course, those brought into hospitals to be patched up stinking of drink were to be charged for the attention given them. Is that too draconian? Is it too politically incorrect, however economically and socially desirable?

PRINCES OF THE YEN: JAPAN'S CENTRAL BANKERS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ECONOMY

By Richard A. Werner. Published by M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York and London, England, 2003

Conspiracy theories are great fun, but anyone who has tried to devise a conspiracy knows that the chances of getting a large number of people to cooperate fully are nil. But a conspiracy which requires the participation of only a handful of people, and those carefully selected by the founder and his successors, may perhaps succeed. Richard Werner has found such a conspiracy and its members were the self-perpetuating oligarchy which ran the Bank of Japan for the last 65 years.

Richard's book is a thrilling detective story and yet also a textbook which is required reading for any student of 20th century economics. What a remarkable combination! The Japanese version of this book was a number one best seller. Not many writers of books on economics have achieved that status.

Richard was born in Germany in 1967 and studied at the London School of Economics, the University of Oxford and the University of Tokyo. He has had a high level career, and the World Economic Forum, host to the annual Davos summits, selected him in 2003 as 'Global Leader of Tomorrow.' I believe the Forum is right.

The story told by the book commences with a description of the American-style liberalised economy that existed in Japan in the 1920s. Now for many people the fact that there ever was such an economy in Japan

comes as a great surprise. We were taught in the 1970s that Japan's great economic success was due to the eternal nature of Japanese society from prehistoric times to the present day, to something different in the Japanese nation, the result of its separate development away from European influences. The emphasis was on responsible social values, jobs for life, cooperation not competition. Apparently this is complete tosh, and the Japanese economy before about 1938 was as liberal as any freemarketeer or Thatcherite could wish. What changed it? The necessities of a war economy, just as happened in Britain after 1940.

It has always seemed to me that one unusual thing about the Japanese is their willingness to learn from others. Some accuse them of being mere copyists, but my belief is that they always try to improve upon what they copy, and often succeed. Richard shows that the model which Japan copied was that of Nazi Germany, but made to work properly. Nazi Germany would, if it had survived, surely have come to grief because of the stifling effects of corporatism, but I would judge from Richard's picture that Japan avoided the worst of the corporatist system.

Of course after 1945 Britain too continued its version of the Nazi system which war had made necessary, as did many other countries, and some would say France still has a national socialist system. But Britain did not make it work. One difference with Japan is that Britain adopted almost the whole panoply of the Bismarck-Hitler model of the welfare state. Japan did not. That may be significant but I leave it to others to make the analysis.

One would have expected the Americans to re-introduce a free market system into Japan during the period when Douglas MacArthur ruled the country after 1945, but the need to keep Japan as an ally in the growing Cold War, and supportive in the hot war in Korea caused the Americans to keep change to a minimum. The national socialist system survived and prospered.

Richard disposes of another myth about Japan and that concerns the reputation of the Japanese Finance Ministry and the famous 'MITI' the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Delving deep into the Japanese system he finds that the power which ruled Japanese industry was not these Ministries, but the Bank of Japan which ruthlessly controlled the supply of credit and guided the destination of all available credit, giving preference to companies which it judged would best serve the advancement of the Japanese economy. The name for the system of control is called 'Window Guidance.' Banks were told how much credit to create and to whom it should be given.

So why did the system come to grief from 1990 onwards? Why did the bubble-economy created by Window Guidance burst? This leads to the most important discovery of Richard's detective work: that the rulers of the Bank of Japan, 'The Princes of the Yen,' wanted an economic crisis so they could use it to go back to the past, to a freemarket economy. They caused the bubble and then burst it. It seems that their view was that the national socialist economy would ossify and that is must be abandoned. As they were not elected rulers of the country, and not in charge of the Ministries which set policies, the only way they could achieve their purpose was by making sure the existing system did not work properly. Change must then come, they hoped. It has not yet done so but the powers of the Bank of Japan have been increased and it has been made independent of government in accordance with the current world craze. The Finance Ministry has not merely been emasculated, but abolished.

This is a remarkable story. My summary of 360 pages can only give a taste of the arguments and evidence that this book contains. It deserves to be read fully.

There are two things which Richard does not mention which may have strongly supported his theme. I have always wondered why the Bank of Japan was happy to adopt the Basel Accord on capital adequacy for banks when it seemed to me inevitable that it was going to cause a dearth of credit in Japan. The major effect was to wreck the Japanese property market. Japan also has high property taxes, and they too helped the fall in property values. Were not these moves too part of the clever plans of the conspirators? I was therefore surprised that Richard had not mentioned either the Basel Accord or property taxes.

Richard's book was supplied to me by an American working in the Japanese financial markets, and I mentioned to him these two points. He passed on my comments to Richard who replied to the effect that I was right but that they were not the major causes of the crises. He has since suggested that the effects of the Basel Accord should be the subject of an academic paper.

I not only urge readers to study Richard Werner's book, but I would also be interested to know if they support or oppose the objectives of the 'Princes of the Yen'. I express no opinion at this stage. I leave it to someone else to start the debate.

G. G.

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF ECONOMICS

By John Mills, Palgrave 2002/3

Winston Churchill once said that "history will be kind to me – because I shall write it" and it is not entirely surprising to find that this 'Critical History of Economics' leads to conclusions which tend to support policies advocated in other John Mills publications! That said, cynicism must give way to admiration because this relatively short book of some 226 pages manages to cover two thousand years of economic thought, make over 600 references, include a 175 author bibliography and display a grasp of the subject matter which American colleagues might describe as 'awesome'. The works of writers from Aristotle to Paul Krugman and from Adam Smith through Karl Marx and on to Friedrich Hayek, John Maynard Keynes and Milton Friedman, are all mined for their essence, slotted into their intellectual place and allocated their worth. The detail is Satsumaesque but the broad canvas still succeeds in being whole. To the extent to which this is a hundred and more super-short book reviews one is reminded of the theatricals of 'The Reduced Shakespeare Company' except that whilst the latter seemed to me dismally boring this book held both my attention and respect. *A Critical History of Economics* is available in several other languages – most interestingly in Chinese as a student edition.

My candid advice to Council members is to start at Chapter 3. The Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 all discuss current issues and conclusions and restate what to us is now familiar Millsian themes. A glance to start with perhaps, but consider these early pages alongside the concluding chapter for much greater effect.

Chapter 3 'the Pre-Industrial World' is where the story really begins. Oh-so-slowly the basic requirements came into being – the notion of private property, the development of the ability to record transactions, the Roman development of laws allowing contracts to be enforced, the development of money once the concept of debt became accepted, the church's ethical concerns with usury and with 'just' prices and then, moving through the centuries we come to one of the best rationalisations (and criticisms) of Mercantalism and (in contrast) the ideas of the Physiocrats that has ever been written in a few short pages. (In a stimulating passage (page 56) one even realises the close similarities of the beliefs of the Physiocrats to the ideas and social structure of Edo period Japan!)

All this feeds in to Chapter 4 'Classical Economics', where the early

stirrings of the Industrial revolution kindled the thoughts of Adam Smith, Jean Baptiste Say, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. The freedom to trade and to compete within a moral and legal framework set by society and the law (misleadingly and sarcastically dubbed by the French as 'laissez-faire' – a phrase literally meaning 'do anything you like' which is quite a different matter!) gradually evolved into the body of thought which today we recognise as 'micro-economics' – the analysis of the actions of individuals and firms that, whilst acting in their own interests provide an order – without 'orders', to the economic structure. In this chapter one does get the feeling that Mills will later tend to disagree with 'Say's Law' – but that must wait.

Chapter 5 is fascinating. Headed 'Dissent' we learn about such characters as Hegel and Friedrich List, Sismondi and Robert Owen, and then, of course Karl Marx. How very many students there must be today who need desperately to have a concise, pertinent and persuasive assessment of this hugely influential and intriguing figure? Here in just five pages is an account one can trust and one that is revealing. Those Chinese students will have cause to be pleased with their purchase of this book. This is followed by an account of Lenin and of the Soviet experiment which leads Mills into criticising this and other experiments (such as Syndicalism), into acknowledging the value of consumer market disciplines; and to the conclusion that 'The only real solution … is a much higher growth rate, to enable levels of GDP per head to be raised as quickly as possible, providing a sufficiently large resource base to ensure that in future a social security system will be able to operate effectively and fairly'. Again, those Chinese students will understand the point very well indeed.

Chapter 6 begins with the observation that 'About 1870, economics moved away from being a subject which was largely in the hands of non-professionals – businessmen, administrators and civil servants, as well as politicians, revolutionaries and even soldiers – and became largely, though not exclusively, the province of academic economists. The subject changed from being called "Political Economy", and became "Economics".' Not until the 1930s would this subject really return to addressing the political issues of overall performance, unemployment, growth and the distribution of incomes – and even then it would largely shun the analysis of wealth holding and money supply management. Instead economics fled the Marxist challenge and concentrated on the analysis of the processes of production and exchange. We learn about 'marginal' concepts, about the 'Pareto optimum', about the problems of monopoly. We hear of Alfred Marshall,

Colin Clark, Lionel Robbins – and the dissenting voices of Spencer and Veblen, (and there is valuable commentary on the land taxation proposals of Henry George.) The last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century laid the basis for rigorous (often mathematical) analysis but at the expense of severely limiting the subject matter and unfortunately limiting the subject's ability to influence policy making in the real world.

Next we are taken – with skill – through the work, life and times of John Maynard Keynes. I would have added to this passage a criticism of Keynes' 'Treatise on Money' to the effect that he still had a commodity concept of money and I would have pointed out that Keynes's recommendation for solving excessive unemployment – running large government deficits, implied extra borrowing from the banks (and thus an increase in the money supply) rather than extra borrowing from the public. Again, we are then treated to an account of the dissenting voices of the time followed by an assessment of Keynes' impact. One is pleased to read about the contribution of Adolf A Berle and Gardiner C Means with their condemnation of managerial power (though there should, at this point, have been an explanation of the riposte involving the promotion of the 'market for corporate control') and about the contribution of Friedrich A von Hayek with his many publications including 'The Road to Serfdom' (though one feels that Mills inadequately recognises Hayek's qualities as a philosopher moralist and political scientist). Around page 147–8 where the war years are discussed, I was surprised not to find reference to the famous 1944 'White Paper on Unemployment' which set the scene for practical Keynesianism in the post war years. This short White Paper, succinct and easily readable, was signed by all three political parties and stands as a tower of practical good sense based on the insights macroeconomics had brought. It balanced hopes and fears and helped forge the consensus of the early post-war policies as well as warning of the difficulties in measuring unemployment and in avoiding inflation that lay ahead.

If Chapter 7 showed Mills as enthusiastic for Keynes's work, Chapter 8 headed 'Hard Money' amounts to a sharp criticism for the 'Monetarist' reaction that followed. Irving Fisher, the macro-economic side of the Austrian school and Milton Friedman are all given the detailed treatment they deserve but Mills is clearly convinced that their remedies for inflation have caused both an unnecessary constraint on wealth creation and an unwelcome redistribution of income in favour of the better-off. Of this chapter I have only minor criticisms. Surely mention should have been made of Samuel Brittan's concept of 'NAIRU' (the Non-Accelerating

Inflation Rate of Unemployment) and surely, when pointing out that Norway has grown impressively "despite bucking the monetarist trend' mention should also have been made of Norway's magnificent NON-membership of the EU as a contributory factor. More fundamentally, recent work has shown that credit quality is as important as credit quantity and velocity of circulation.

Thus to the final chapter 'Economics and the Future' which links the developments of the past to the points raised in the opening chapters. It is a joy to find, succinctly placed in context, the current works of modern economists – of J K Galbraith, Paul Ormerod, Mark Blaug, Geoffrey Gardiner, Francis Fukuyama, Peter Warburton and many more.

But what is one to make of Mills' overall conclusions – that microeconomics holds few solutions, especially for the overall economy; that each nation's economic performance crucially depends on productivity increases in manufacturing and an appropriately set (low) exchange rate; and that economics as a profession must now focus on the task of facilitating faster economic growth? I would argue that there is more to be taken into account before these points can be unreservedly accepted.

First of all, micro-economics has now spilled over very strongly into philosophy, sociology and business studies, vastly increasing our understanding of competition and of linkages within the economy. For example, Hayek has written of competition as 'a discovery process', Christopher Badcock has spoken of patterns emerging from competitive activity and Michael Porter has discussed 'competitive forces' which affect many more aspects of business than simple product pricing.

Secondly, it seems over-simple to ask poorer countries to set lower exchange rates when their real problems are more matters of inadequate legal facilities and inappropriate banking practices. For them, the work of such writers as Hernando de Soto who in 2000 published 'The Mystery of Capital' and Muhammad Yunus who in 1998 published 'Banker to the Poor' seem so much closer to their needs. And it seems over-simple to ask richer countries – such as Japan – to concentrate on industrial productivity increases when it is that very tactic that for them has simply run out of steam. The best advice for Japan now comes from writers such as Richard Katz who in 2001 published 'Phoenix Japan', a book whose policies will lead to a Japanese recovery through almost anything but increased industrial productivity.

Thirdly, calling for a new direction of economic thinking towards faster

rates of economic growth would sound more convincing if cautionary account in the text had been taken of the work and publications made at times in the past when growth has found itself the top priority on the economic agenda. For example, France between 1945 and 1970 spawned literature to explain her high rates of economic growth, and books by Jean and Anne-Marie Hacket, Pierre Bouchet, Vera Lutz and Stephen S Cohen were best sellers. It is when they look at the controversial realms of 'indicative planning', still hankered after by the EU bureaucracy, that economists realise that policies to promote growth *per se* can easily lead to distortion rather than to success.

In a private letter to me John Mills commented 'I very much doubt if a book like this would have been authorised for publication in China without being vetted at a senior level. If the themes in the book thus move towards being in China the accepted view of the way economics has developed and the explanation for why the Chinese economy is doing so well compared to most others in the world – not least in the West – the influence which the book might have could be significant. This is because the policies which the book recommends are substantially those which China has adopted.'

There is both danger and opportunity here. The danger is of Chinese hubris in finding in this book justification for their economic strategy. The opportunity is for the Chinese to anticipate their own difficulties through the shortcomings of this account.

The conclusion has to be that this a most stimulating and informative short account of all that economics has achieved. Provided that the mind of the reader is both informed and alert it is to be highly recommended – I have not seen any other text that brings so many threads together so effectively.

J. B.

THE CENTER FOR VISIONARY LEADERSHIP (CVL)'S WEBSITE MATERIAL www.visionarylead.org OBSERVED 20/06/04

This California-based think tank – hence the American spelling of' 'Center' – was founded in 1996 as a non-denominational, non-partisan educational organisation. Its stated aim is 'to help people develop the inner resources to be effective leaders and respond creatively to change'. The Center, with its redoubtable Director, Corinne McLaughlin, represents the best of American optimism. It seeks to find common ground between people of varying political backgrounds and resolve some of the most polarising issues in US politics, including cultural questions such as abortion and school prayer. On the latter issue, CVL initiatives have found agreement between religious advocates of prayer and secular opponents. When both 'sides' agree to a moment of silent meditation, in which individual students choose to pray, contemplate or merely think, they cease to be 'sides' and become allies. With the thornier issue of abortion, 'pro-choice' and 'pro-life' advocates can, in some circumstances, be persuaded to come together and campaign for better sex education and access to contraception. In an essay entitled 'Can there be a new politics beyond left and right?', Corinne McLaughlin writes of economic policy:

> A synthesis of conservative and liberal economic approaches can temper free market capitalism with other values such as community, equity and compassion. Balancing market efficiency with social justice could create a better society. Tax incentives could be created for corporations to expand the bottom line from mere profit to profit *and* values (such as greater employee benefits, 'flexi time', or protection of the environment). Competitive markets could be balanced by government policies that provide workers with access to job training, health care and transportation. Or the rewards of a market economy could be distributed through a progressive consumption tax that encourages investment and assures a minimum standard of living for all. The government could create greater opportunities for the poor, but those who receive benefits would then be required to live up to certain obligations and give something back to society.

These solutions are not intended to be perfect, but are assumed to evolve as new questions, and new sources of conflict, arise. This is where the CVL's approach is radical in the true sense. It does not seek to avoid conflict or create a bland consensus, in which contentious issues are avoided.

Instead, it seeks to create 'a new political synthesis', where opposing propositions merge to create something new. The influence of Hegel's dialectic can be felt here, where thesis and antithesis evolve into synthesis. However, California being a place of cultural synthesis itself, there are also influences from Eastern philosophy. The Yin and Yang of Taoism are complementary principles that creatively interact. The Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions encourage a more holistic approach than the linear, mechanistic thinking that has come to prevail in Western thought. Human problems, be they social, economic or spiritual, are better addressed in terms of 'both/and' than 'either/or'. Importantly, the CVL stresses the importance of the spiritual dimension to political and economic thinking, whether expressed in Eastern or Western, religious or humanist forms. The spiritual dimension, precisely because it is impossible to quantify, promotes a more rounded view of the individual and human society.

The CVL is one of a number of organisations, mostly American-based, that is encouraging new approaches to political thinking, in particular the ability to 'think around' issues rather than adopt dogmatic positions. One of its motifs is 'beyond left and right', which matches the original green principle of 'neither left nor right, but in front'. In a world that is increasingly interconnected at one level, increasingly divided at another, this can only be valuable. In particular, the CVL's approach can give hope to an America that seems increasingly polarised on partisan and cultural issues, and where an adversarial approach stands in the way of clear, careful judgement. Visionary leadership is needed more than ever before.

In its layout, the web site is refreshingly straightforward and easy to navigate. It contains a plethora of articles and information, and provides useful links.

The Center for Visionary Leadership is based in San Rafael, California, and has an office in Arlington Virginia, close to Washington, DC.

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ENGLAND FOR THE ENGLISH

By Sir Richard Body, Published by New European Publications, London, 2004, £13.95
with some additional observations

Sir Richard Body MP will be well-known to readers for the many thought-provoking books he has produced since those written with Sir Alan Walters and Lord Griffiths in the 1970s. He has analysed the Common Agricultural Policy, farming methods, Europe after the Cold War, the EU, and, in 1998, *The Breakdown of Europe* in which he argues that a European superstate cannot survive the electronic revolution. His latest book, *England for the English*, is risky in a society when it is not done to mention, never mind speak up for Englishness. He has to tread as delicately as King Agag (and an unhappy end was his), to trip delicately through the tulips without brushing against a single head. One can express Scottishness, Welshness, Frenchness, Any-such-ness, but not Englishness, especially among the would-be intelligentsia. One can too easily be accused of being a 'little Englander' or, even worse, of sympathy with the BNP. There is too careless an association of being patriotic (which Orwell found he was in April 1940) and nationalistic, which he abhorred and against which he wrote.

I began to read Sir Richard's book on a train to Paignton. I cannot say that everyone in the carriage was English, though who, other than the English, would be taking their buckets and spades to Paignton I cannot think. The carriage was packed and peaceful. Then a black man burst into the carriage and advanced rapidly and through into the next carriage. As he passed he shouted at us, pretty vigorously, 'No blacks in here! Where are the blacks then? Why no blacks in here?' Until then I had not noticed the colour composition of the passengers; secondly, no one said a word about the intrusion or did much more, so far as I could see, than raise the odd eyebrow; and thirdly, what, I wondered, would have been the response if the colours had been reversed?[1] Sir Richard is in the delicate position of

1 Since writing this, including the reference to raising the odd eyebrow, Andrew Marr described in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 July, a similar incursion in a London Tube train: 'Into our carriage, an Indian gent of about 60 summers arrived, inebriated, stinking and in a vile temper. "You effing English … Which of you is English, you bastards" he started' – Marr, of course, is a Scot – and he then ranted about 'what a useless lazy bloody country this was, how he wished Saddam had got us all, and so on'. Marr asks, 'Was he lynched? Of course not. No one raised an eyebrow. In

reversing such roles, not only black and white, but Celt and English, EU and UK.

Sir Richard asks 'why should a people with long established values and beliefs be called upon to value and believe differently?' (p. 12), and, in short, argues that the English should not have to do so despite pressure from Celts, immigrants, and Brussels. He points on p. 14 to something already mentioned in this journal – the way that the name of England, unlike those of all other countries, has been excised by Brussels from the EU map of Europe (Spring 1998, p. 19). Wales yes, Scotland yes, Ireland, in various forms, several times, France *et al., bien sur*. But England, NO. England is to be cut up into regions courtesy of Brussels and Prescott and these, as a final indignity, are not described as 'Regions of England' but 'Regions of the European Union'. Why we should want a proliferation of Prescott's Humbersides is beyond me but I can see Brussels' intent. England, if allowed to persist, has, for centuries, been resistant to take-over by foreigners. How simple, therefore, to chop it up and excise its name. If we do not give something a name it does not exist. He examines those political and economic factors that have afflicted England and which have seriously damaged the major constituent of the population of these islands: the English. He puzzles as to why the English should be denied their own representative assembly whilst granting those to three other peoples with combined populations fewer than those of London. The English are now ruled by Celts (mainly Scots) and foreigners. Had there not been such an excess of money relative to population flowing from London to Scotland, Crossrail (desirable or not) would surely have been built by now and certainly the most poverty-stricken boroughs in Britain, mainly in central London, could have had huge sums of money injected for their wellbeing. And now we learn that English students studying in Scotland are to be financially penalised by the Scottish Parliament, an additional £700 per student being levied on each of them. There is nothing new about the financing of Scotland by England. The *Book of Bounty* (1610 and 1619), which was to lead to the first Monopolies Act (1624), was designed specifically to stop the way that King James VI and I 'most unwarrantably diverted the stream of English wealth into the channel of Scotland's well-being'.[2] It is interesting to see in Gordon Brown's proposals for spending over the next three years

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how many other capitals of the world could you board a Tube or bus and scream abuse at the locals, knowing perfectly well you'd be safe?'

2 See P.H. Davison, 'King James's Book of Bounty', *The Library*, March 1973, pp. 26–53 and specifically p. 32.

that of eighteen categories, Wales has the fourth greatest real percentage increase (4%), Scotland the seventh (3.5%) and Defence and the Foreign Office are fourteenth equal (1.4% each). Perhaps Gordon Brown sees himself as a latter-day King James.

Body is very interesting on the significance of Protestantism in the making of Englishness, especially its law, and ponders on what would have happened if England had been annexed to Europe in the sixteenth century as repeated French and Spanish invasions attempted. (It is a common misunderstanding that there was but one Spanish Armada, that of 1588: there were several attempts between then and 1597.) He discusses how the English concept of law has been developed over the past 1500 years and how the Stuarts, with their assumption of Divine Right, and now Brussels (through, for example, its ironically-named Orwellian 'Eurojust') is attempting to undermine the English idea of justice. Farewell *habeas corpus!* King James VI of Scotland and I of England declared to the English Parliament of 1610 that 'the King came to be *Lex loquens*', that is, 'a royal statement *about* the law was a promulgation *of* law'. That meant (like Brussels and its Court of 'Justice', or even the oft-quoted 'What Tony wants …') he 'could overturn courts and statutes'.[3] James, as the historian G.M. Trevelyan argued, 'never became aware of his ignorance' of England and his son, Charles I, never knew or understood either England or Scotland.[4] Is it too much to suggest that our present rulers in Westminster and Brussels suffer from similar ignorance? In brief: we have been here before, financially and politically. In the 17th century it led to Civil War. It would be a terrible irony if the EU's ideal of ever-closer union should lead to strife. As Body puts it, 'though this island people give [*sic*] an appearance of being even-tempered, there is a latent disposition to violence too' (p. 55).

There is a good chapter on English philosophy and the predilection of the Continentals for linguistic gymnastics. One can look back over six hundred years to the problem the English faced when attempting to negotiate treaties with Continentals, the French especially. Consider this in the light of recent debates about the new EU Constitution: the use of 'subtle cloaked words of double understanding', turned and twisted to the negotiator's advantage, employing 'so many coloured words beyond our understanding that, when you will, you make them signify war or peace as you shall choose … dissembling always until you have gained your end'.

3 See Robert Zaller, *The Parliament of 1621* (1971), p. 127; quoted by Davison, p. 33.

4 G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England*, 3rd edn. (1945), p. 383. See also Body, pp. 52–3.

No, not said of Valerie Giscard d'Estaing but by the Duke of Gloucester (later to be murdered in Calais at the order of Richard II) when complaining to Peter the Hermit, the French negotiator of a treaty of peace between England and France in 1383.[5] *Plus ça change* …

Sir Richard has an interesting chapter entitled 'When in Rome …' on the need for those who come to these islands to accept our ways. He reprints two sides of a leaflet of 1995, promoting 'the Khilafah system' (pp. 84–5). It is not clear to me how exceptional is this document. One of the speakers advertised is Omar Bakri Mohammed, who is probably not regarded by all Muslims as a typical representative for what the leaflet describes in a heading as 'Islam … The Future'. The effect of Sir Richard's comments is slightly undermined by his statement, 'Then comes the punchline. "Britain is no place for our families – we must have Moslem laws"', which is not to be found in the leaflet, though it reflects its general tenor. He refers to an ILEA statement that in 1986 'there were 161 different languages spoken in its schools' and that 'in the schools where over twenty different languages may be spoken … the teaching is handicapped' (p. 88). Curiously, on the day I started to read this book, 25 June, the *Evening Standard* reported that the Metropolitan Police, perhaps as one of its reactions to its being castigated as institutionally racist, had introduced a 999 service in 150 of the languages spoken in London other than English. These were listed with their 'favourite areas' from 500,000 speaking Arabic (Westminster) to Luo, 70 (Greenwich) to Kazakh, 10 (Various). One might have thought that half-a-million Arabic speakers would be in 'Various' districts and the ten speaking Kazakh concentrated in one, but that is what the display in the newspaper stated. One result of this attempt to bend over backwards toward immigrants is that many ordinary English people may themselves feel discriminated against. Thus, BBC West TV reported four days later on an English child denied full-time nursery education at St Werbergh's, Bristol, because the Council gave priority to non-English speakers, those who spoke English poorly, single parents, flat-dwellers, asylum seekers, and travellers. What seemed to tip the scale against the residents denied nursery provision was that they were guilty of having a garden, not now a desirable achievement but a social crime. One can see why a Council has to state its policy but summarised like this it is bound to cause resentment amongst the indigenous population.

There are chapters entitled 'The Imperial Interlude' and 'The European

5 Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (1978; 1989), pp. 512 and 513.

Interlude'. Needless to say, Sir Richard has a field day with the latter, from the Hansard Society's assessment that since 1973 40% of our laws are a result of EU membership (p. 122), to his posing the question, 'Do the English wish to exchange their rule of law with the police methods of France, their religious toleration with that of Spain, their courts of law and sense of justice with those of Greece or their view of bureaucrats with the Germans?' (p.126) – not, I think, the most telling choice of exchanges – to the impossibility of an MEP attempting to represent half-a-million constituents when he has difficulty catering for 65,000 as an MP (129-30). As he puts it, 'This staggering democratic deficit should be, for the ordinary people of England, a paramount argument against Europe's "ever-closer union"' (p. 131).

Regarding the democratic deficit, he might have made even more of the inability of the members of the EU to abide by existing Treaties. He might usefully have quoted the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, better known as the author of 'The Ancient Mariner', whose understanding of what a Treaty demands is so different from that of some of those to whom we are allied in Europe.

> 'A Treaty', wrote Coleridge in 1810, 'is a writ of mutual promise between two independent states, and the law of promise is the same to nations as to individuals. It is to be sacredly performed by each party *in that sense in which it knew and permitted the other party to understand it, at the time of the contract.* Anything short of this is criminal deceit in individuals, and in governments impious perfidy.' *The italics are mine.*

In other words, a Treaty is to be obeyed. Our partners see it very differently, whether it is the Stability Pact, which is to be obeyed by smaller and new-joining countries, but not, say, France, Germany, and Italy. Will the EU, having been found to be in error by the Court of Justice in not fining France and Germany for breach of the Stability Pact now fine them? And if so, will those countries pay up? Neither I guess. Then, there shall be 'interoperability and interconnection' of the road and sea networks (Nice 154), yet France can close its ports and roads to the UK with impunity and never pay the fines or compensation awarded. Commissioners may not take any other office, gainful or not (Rome 213), yet Chris Patten can be a Commissioner *and* Chancellor of Oxford University. The United Kingdom has been in breach of one requirement since about 1980: to fix dates for adopting metric road signs. Perhaps it is feared that a petty (if expensive) requirement like this would be decisive in turning UK residents against the EU.

In his final chapter he discusses 'Practicalities'. He rightly argues that the 'drunken louts, with their red, white and blue, who surge down the streets of foreign cities' are no substitute for genuine patriotism (p. 180) but he too easily believes that since the end of the National Front the activities of neo-Nazis 'have been minimal' (p. 93). Alas, this is not so: the BNP needs to be confronted. He looks to 'the exit of Scotland, Ulster or Wales' which 'will form the demise of the United Kingdom' when the English will have to come to terms with what will be 'a fact of history' (p. 155). There is, he says, no 'if' about the end of the United Kingdom, 'though the "when" must remain beyond our ken' (p. 159). Perhaps a union might still be practical were the House of Commons to be reformed to represent England, the other countries having their own Parliaments (Wales's Assembly being upgraded appropriately) and making the House of Lords a UK representative body. Each Parliament would be responsible for raising its own money from those living within its borders and the ex-Lords would be responsible for monies in common – for example, Defence and Embassies. A curious mark of growing English consciousness, he notes, is that hoteliers report that guests 'sign a register as English ten times more frequently than they did a few years ago' (pp. 16-17). Perhaps this in part also explains the disappearance of French wines from the list of the top ten most popular wines bought, even though Body claims that the English are 'not chauvinistic in deciding what to buy' (p. 157). Why do people now buy what the wine correspondent of the *Telegraph*, Jonathan Ray, calls 'dreary wines' rather than those from France? Are people deliberately turning away from things French? Or are many modestly-priced French wines now even worse than dreary?

More might have been made of the way that the dominance of Scots in Parliament, as MPs and as Ministers, has reduced the standing of the House of Commons. Worse, as Lord Armstrong said on the 'Today' programme (16 July), Labour has 'diminished the role of Cabinet'. When Ministers are questioned they too often employ very unpleasant bully-boy tactics. This has been brought to the fore over the invasion of Iraq (and Lord Armstrong contrasted the way Mr Blair had conducted his Cabinet with the way Mrs Thatcher had done so during the Falklands War, totally in her favour). Of course, Labour's massive majority is itself destructive of Parliament and enables Ministers, especially with a Scottish claque that can be shipped down from the north for important votes, to get their way even when there are stirrings of opposition from some Labour backbenchers. Ignoring Parliament is a characteristic of past Scottish rule – the Stuarts and

Scotland's own Parliament before its demise in 1707. The distinguished Professor of Scottish History at Edinburgh University, T. C. Smout, has written that (contrary to what Scottish politicians maintain today) the loss of the Parliament in 1707 'was not nearly so important an event to contemporaries as it seems in retrospect to us'. The reason was that that Parliament was little more than a rubber stamp: 'Scotland never had the bold tradition of Parliamentary initiative which, in England, had been so richly developed from the reign of Elizabeth onwards'. In the reigns of James VI and I and Charles I 'it never dared to promulgate anything offensive to the Crown'.[6] The current House of Commons and the Government's incredibly ill-thought-out 'reforms' (= changes) to the House of Lords are typical of a Scottish government of the seventeenth century, not of England in the sixteenth or twentieth centuries.

Sir Richard then turns to the BBC, 'Once a very English institution, its ethos has transformed it into something very different. Neither "English" not "England" are words used in its programmes unless it is totally impossible to use another, lest a Scot residing somewhere south of the Border takes umbrage' (p. 179). He is, I think, too gentle with the BBC. It is not that 'some Scot' might take offence but that it no longer matters whether the English are disregarded. Nor is the bias only Celtic; it is also very pro-EU and the two attitudes are related. I have a very long list of Celts who present and conduct programmes. Some are excellent – among my favourites of *all* presenters are Huw Edwards (also an excellent church organist), the charming Helen Willetts, both Welsh, and Sally Magnusson, a Scot (unless she is Icelandic). It is commonplace for the courtesy to be extended to visiting cricket and rugby teams to invite a commentator from the visitors, yet it is deemed appropriate to have two Scots to introduce the opening of the refurbished Covent Garden Opera House – James Naughtie and Stephanie Hughes. Will two English commentators introduce the opening of that lavishly expensive Parliament building in Edinburgh or the more modest, and perhaps more stunning, Cardiff Concert Hall? Well, we shall see. I hope my doubts are not confirmed, but, for the former I rather expect to see and hear Ms Wark. It seems very strange to have a Scot, Hammond Marshall, presenting items on BBC West TV, or Ian Watson on English schools as the Education Correspondent for 'Today', or Janet Barry, on MRSA in English Hospitals – hospitals in which 5,000 people are killed a year and presided over by another Scot – on the 8.00 o'clock and 9.00 o'clock news programmes on

6 T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People*, 1560–1830 (1969; 1972), pp. 200–201.

Radio 4. Are the English equally represented in BBC Scotland and BBC Wales? The problem is **not** that they are Scots or Welsh. Some, as I have suggested are excellent. But first that there are so many of them, and, secondly, and much more important, that they seem incapable of bringing an English dimension to issues that affect their countries or the EU. The 'auld alliance' still reigns. Thus, Mr Kinnock was not seriously taxed when Transport Commissioner in ensuring French ports and roads were open to British transport. These presenters never seem to have heard of the World Trade Organisation in the context of trade with Europe**,** nor when Mr Kinnock is interviewed about Britain's trade with Europe is he quizzed about, say, the risk to continental exports to the UK if the EU imposed sanctions against the UK's exports, nor whether much of our exports to Europe of which he boasts, are not exports at all but transhipments via Rotterdam, as Richard Body points out (p. 168). Their own national histories are such that they seem never to have heard of that prince of Presidents of the Board of Trade, William Huskisson, and his Principle of Reciprocity. (Huskisson was, alas, accidentally run down and killed on Barton Moss on 15 September 1830 at the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway.)

The curious blindness of presenters and commentators was well illustrated in a different context on the BBC's London TV programme on 12 July at 6.30. There had been a study showing that equally qualified candidates were many times more likely to be called for interview if they were evidently British than if they seemed to be black or Muslim. Ironically, this programme was presented by three people who were clearly of ethnic origin. Their blindess was not in attempting to tease out prejudice against 'their own peoples' but in failing to ask first whether, say French, German, or Hungarians would not also face similar prejudice, nor did they consider the prejudice English people face when applying for work in Scotland or Wales, or Australia. The real issue is prejudice *tout court*. To make it a colour issue does coloured people no service. Only by showing how such prejudice works against *everyone* will English sympathies be engaged. There was, ironically, as so often happens, an amusing example of anti-English prejudice reported on the following day. A Scottish councillor had been banned from the Jubilee Tavern in Burntisland, Fife, for shouting obscenities at mourners from Yorkshire. His dislike of the English stemmed, he said, from the Battle of Culloden, this battle, as Sir Richard says, being one of those tales retold 'to keep alive sentiments of oppression' (p. 13). Perhaps the Councillor should take care if he visits

Wakefield, source of the medieval Second Shepherd's play in which the villainous sheep-stealer is evidently a Scot: he is called Mak! However, our literature being largely lost to the memories of most of our people, he is pretty safe.

Sir Richard has skilfully analysed the problems affecting England and the United Kingdom today and he has performed a valuable service to us all – all of us in these islands. There are a number of unfortunate slips. Most are insignificant but one is important. I am pretty certain that Dean Acheson did not say, as he quotes on p. 117: 'England has lost an Empire and has yet to find a role'. I do not have Acheson's papers (perhaps they are in the Commons' Library) but the version I know, which comes from the year after Acheson's death, is 'Great Britain has lost an Empire and not yet found a role'. Twice Macaulay is spelt with a penultimate 'e' (pp. 42 and 107); it is Isaiah Berlin, not 'Isiah' (p. 65); and 'unforcible' not 'unforcable' (p. 51). Whether he would be so keen now to refer to Conrad Black's 'immense influence' in Canada, the USA and UK (p. 161) I doubt. Linking the Jews settling in London with Lombard Street and stating that 'Dutch, Germans and French as well as the Jews found toleration in the Square Mile' (p. 59) is rather loose. Lombard Street was the home of Italians and Old Jewry, unsurprisingly, for the Jews by the 12th century. The welcome was not wholly friendly. In 1262 over five hundred Jews were murdered because it was alleged that a Jew had charged a Christian more than the legal rate of interest (foreshadowing *The Merchant of Venice*?). Finally, 'Yeoman of the England' does not come from a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta (p. 33). It is the first number, for Essex and Chorus, of *Merrie England* by Basil Hood and Sir Edward German, first performed in 1902 two years after Sullivan had died. Perhaps he has *The Yeoman of the Guard* (1888) in mind.

For over six hundred years England has resisted invasion and conquest by Scotland, France, Spain, and Germany but it now seems as if this is to be of no avail. The fault is not so much the dark forces of Brussels and its constituent parts, nor that of Scottish politicians. Personally, when younger, I liked nothing more than holidays travelling around France and walking the streets of Paris (something I have delighted in since putting on an international fashion show there forty-five years ago). My feelings towards France and the French are the very reverse of Lord Nelson's: 'You must hate the Frenchman as you hate the devil', and that goes for Europe and Europeans – but not the EU. I simply do not wish to be ruled by foreigners who have reduced England to mere 'regions of the EU'. However, if we

allow that to happen it will be because we have failed to be true to ourselves. As the last two lines of *King John* famously put it, 'Nought shall make us rue / If England to itself do rest but true'. Sir Richard Body has gone some way to ensure that happens.[7]

P. D.

7 I had no sooner sent this review to the Editor but there were three intriguing announcements. Mr Prescott's proposed referendums for Regional Assemblies had been cut down to size – from three to one. The official explanation was uncertainty about the validity of postal voting in two regions (one being Mr Prescott's) but the suspicion must be strong that in the two cancelled or postponed votes the Government feared it might be beaten. Secondly, the European Commission announced that Madame Edith Cresson, former French Prime Minister would have charges of nepotism when a European Commissioner pressed against her (20 July 2004). And thirdly, the EC demanded that France Telecom repay back taxes of about £600m plus interest to the French state (21 July 2004). Perhaps all will be well in the best of all possible Europes. And fourthly, Crossrail is to go ahead. I don't think I can claim to have brought about all these sea shifts!

LETTER

Some thoughts about Latin from Mr Brian Lewis

For two thousand years our language and our civilization has been linked to the Roman world. Even when use of the vernacular began to take over in the 14th century, educated men still used Latin as the best means of communicating all over Europe. Even Sir Isaac Newton was writing about science – still in Latin – in the eighteenth century, only 300 years ago. Indeed, when I went up to Cambridge in 1955 to study Natural Sciences, we had to have passed Latin in the School Certificate. Now that is surely a manifestation of a strong culture when even scientists were expected to know Latin. All that has now gone, and perhaps too late we know we have been over-hasty.

It now looks to me that when we cut Latin out of the school curriculum – was it in the 1960s long after I left school? – we were beginning a process that would slowly and inexorably cast us adrift from the cultural anchor of the past two thousand years of history. Not least, it began to undermine the language of the Bible and of Shakespeare, which has been fundamental to English language since the time of Chaucer. Worse, I suspect it has now destroyed a special link with Christianity – so that it is now up to anyone what they believe. I cannot see that everyone can be right and it matters a lot.

So the voyage that we have launched ourselves upon into the future may certainly be exciting, but without a cultural compass to guide ourselves by, we may be in for some rough times ahead as we search again for certainty in an uncertain world. I have just come across the Greek word 'anomie' that describes our situation well – 'the condition of despair brought on by a breakdown in the rules of conduct and a loss of a sense of purpose'.

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NOTE

This heavy-weight observation is an opportunity for a light-weight aside. In my experience most of what is of practical use from Latin are well known

phrases such as ‘caveat emptor’ or ‘habeas corpus’. Rather than learn inadequate Latin at school I suspect that I would have been better advised to study (and partly memorise) a splendid little hardback book called ‘Say it in Latin!’, subtitled ‘1000 useful phrases for every occasion’ based on ‘A Dictionary of Latin Tags and Phrases’ and published by Robert Hale Ltd. This attractive book is both an excellent reference source and a useful student gift item.

Ed.

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