

FREE LIFE

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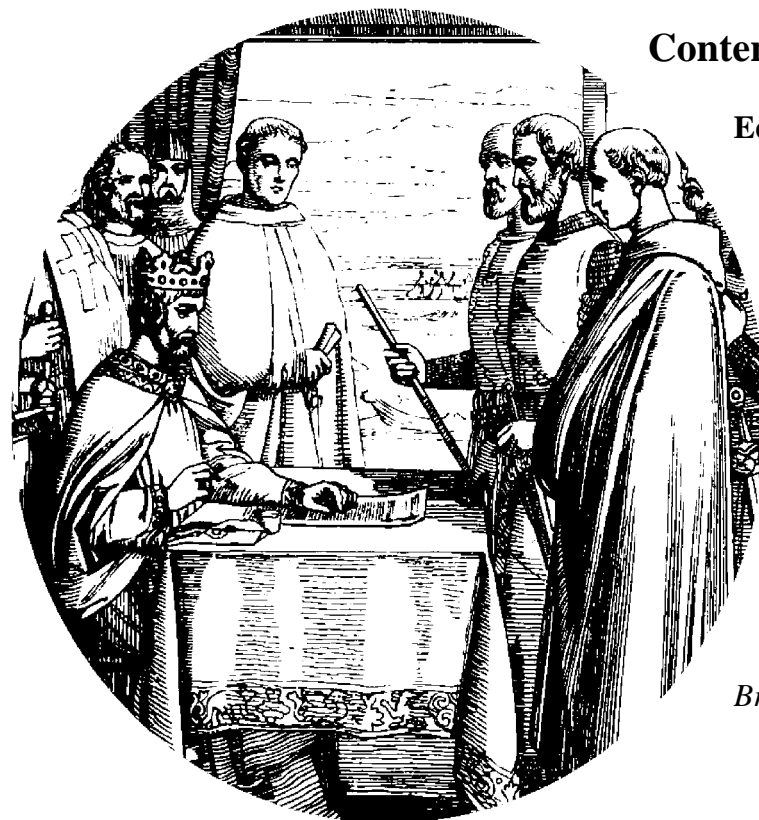
39. No freemen shall be taken or imprisoned
or disseised or exiled or in any way destroyed,
nor will we go upon him nor send upon him,
except by the *Lawful Judgment of His Peers*
or by the Law of the Land.

40. To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay,
Right Or Justice.

Magna Carta, 1215

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No to the European Union!

Free Life

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Free Life welcomes contributions from writers, not necessarily libertarian, provided they address or challenge the issues of reason, progress, freedom, and the open society.

Manuscripts must be submitted typed on paper and double spaced, together with an IBM format computer disk. Or articles can be submitted by e-mail. Unless the author is really important, or no one else has written anything that month, any article sent without some electronic version is likely to end unread in the Editor's bin.

Potential contributors are urged to write to the Editor for a "style Sheet and Guidance for LA Writers" - though it is worth adding that nobody ever has asked for one, and the Editor has not seen one since November 1991.

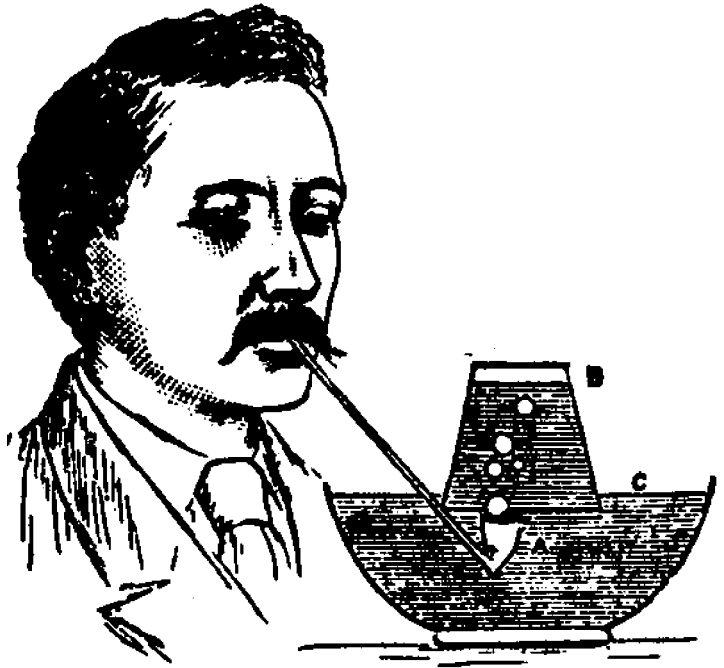
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A Note on Contributors



Sean Gabb is the Editor of *Free Life*. He joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at York University in 1980, in protest at a Cold War with Russia that he did not think in British interests. He was asked to leave in May 1982, because of his support for the Falklands War - something he *did* think in British interests. He has every right to denounce backsliding, hypocritical lefty careerists like Clare Short, Robin Cook *et al.*

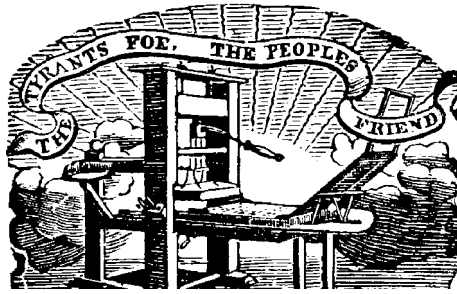
David Delaney is a farmer and is also the Press Officer for the British Weights and Measurements Association.

Roderick Moore is an information scientist who works in the north of England.

Robert Henderson is a political dissident who is taking his vendetta against Tony Blair onto the Internet. Fortunately for him, Mr Blair's taste for an American style of politics does not yet run to lone gunmen.

Madsen Pirie is the President of the Adam Smith Institute. During the past twenty years, he has been one of the most influential men in the country, and is famous throughout the world from China to Peru.

Brian Micklethwait is the Editorial Director of the Libertarian Alliance.



A Vote for Independence

Though it was not intended, the change to proportional representation for the European elections has given us the chance to pass judgment on British membership of the European Union. This is not something that can easily be done at a general election, when a choice must be made on the overall balance of good and evil between two parties of government. But this coming 10th June involves no such choice. It makes no difference to how we are governed whether the placemen we send to Strasbourg wear blue or red rosettes. It will not affect Mr Blair's mandate to rule the country, nor affect the nature of the orders sent him from Brussels. More than any other has yet been, this election can be made into a referendum on Europe.

It cannot be denied that our membership of the European Union is now the most important issue in British politics. It is especially so for libertarians. Nearly all the issues that normally concern us - identity cards, Trial by Jury, the war on drugs and money laundering, and so forth - cannot be decided our way until they are unset from the cement of treaty obligations. Even those issues on which membership has tended to enforce a more liberal policy cannot be used to justify continued membership. I know that some libertarians continue to disagree on this matter. But it seems plain to me that there is no point in concentrating on purely libertarian campaigns when a political order that, for all its imperfections, we understand and can try to influence is being replaced by something more remote and alien, and therefore less open to our efforts at influence.

This being so, the question is which party deserves the anti-European vote. We can dismiss Labour without examination. Enoch Powell was mistaken in 1974 about Labour as led by Harold Wilson. No one of even the meanest intelligence could take Labour as led by Messrs Blair and Brown for anything but a party of New World Order satraps. But the Conservative Party deserves a more detailed examination. Attempts are being made to persuade us that only Mr Hague stands between us and a European Federal State. In reality, the Conservatives are doing nothing to resist the destruction of our independence. They took us into the European Economic Community. They helped turn it into the European Community, and then into the European Union. One of its present leaders signed the Treaty of Maastricht Its MEPs have even voted for the infamous *Corpus Juris* - which

requires the abolition of Trial by Jury and the whole Common Law.

The leadership is at last bowing to frantic pressure from ordinary Party members and its usual electorate, and has moderated its former enthusiasm. But the sceptical noises made are just that - noises. There is no commitment to withdraw from the European Union. There is no commitment even to keep the pound beyond the lifetime of the next Parliament. On this, as on every other issue, the Conservatives are lying. They talk of "being in Europe but not ruled by Europe". Banality aside, this claim is the rhetorical equivalent of lithium salts - it is intended to sedate its victims without addressing their genuine fears.

So which party should libertarians support? I shall be voting for the United Kingdom Independence Party. For all its talk of inclusivity, this is made up overwhelmingly of Conservative dissenters. It is a sort of Conservative Party in exile. It is not perfect. Its leaders are often rather strange. They have done little to prevent the infiltration of their Party by security service agents who will start making national socialist noises as soon as ordered. But the Party is a single issue group a vote for which cannot be mistaken for anything but a vote against Europe.

I would end my editorial here with a general endorsement of UKIP. However, I have recently discovered that many readers of *Free Life* are not conservative libertarians, but libertarian socialists. I will therefore mention the Socialist Labour Party led by Arthur Scargill. I never thought I should ever say a kind word about a believer in armed Marxist revolution. But Mr Scargill is a patriot who has always campaigned against membership of the European Union. At this moment of supreme national danger, there can be no divisions between "left" and "right", between "liberal" and "socialist". The only meaningful difference now is between New World Order fascists and those who believe in a world of sovereign nation states.

Now that we have the chance, let us send our political masters a message that even they will not be able to ignore or forget.

Sean Gabb

Clare Short: La Pasionaria of the Serbian War

Sean Gabb

Ever since it started in late March, right through to the sort of finish it seems to have reached in early June, I have been denouncing British involvement in the Serbian War. Our Government has joined in attacking a country that has not raised a finger against any legitimate British interest. This attack has been horribly expensive, at £35 million a day. It is almost certain to bring endless further expense in British money and eventually in British lives. It has been conducted by means equally incompetent and vicious.

All this would be the case no matter who was in the British Government. But what adds to the immorality of our involvement in the War is the hypocrisy of those who have involved us in it. A few weeks ago, I sat myself down at a computer terminal and called up a service called FTProfile. This is an electronic database containing the text of just about every newspaper article published in this country during the 1990s, plus a large number published during the 1980s. To keep my search within reasonable limits, my key words were "Clare Short" and "War". I could have been less specific, and I could have looked up everything said over the past two decades by other Ministers. Even so, my findings were very interesting. I could digress here into asking why the real journalists - the ones with degrees in the subject and full time writing jobs - have not gone looking. But it is obvious why they did not. Toilers in the Ministry of Truth know what to do when old news comes out of the memory hole: they stuff it back in and carry on with the new stuff. So let us forget about the journalists and get on with the news.

For those who do not know her, Clare Short is the Secretary of State for International Development. She is also absolutely committed to fighting the Serbian War. She has spoken in its defence even when her duties did not require her to do so. On the 24th April, speaking in the House of Commons, she declared it a "just war". A week earlier in the same place, she had attacked her fellow members in the Parliamentary Labour Party who did not share her opinion. She was "ashamed" of them, she said. They were no better than those who had appeased Hitler in the 1930s.¹

The day before, she had also defended the bombing of the Serbian television studios in Belgrade. This had happened after the Serbs had refused to carry six hours every day of NATO propaganda. The bombing killed at least ten people, including Yelitsa Munitlak, a 27-year-old makeup artist who was so badly burned that her body was only identified by the rings she was wearing. Tony Blair had immediately welcomed the bombing, making his usual IRA style shift of responsibility to the Serbian authorities - they had brought it on themselves, he said, by not doing as they were told by NATO.² Miss Short agreed, adding to some sceptical journalists:

You work in the information business. You know how powerful information is. And the constant stream of completely false information in Serbia is prolonging the war. It's as simple as that.³

When further pressed, she was unable to explain why the NATO bombs had fallen on a studio building crowded with media people rather than on unmanned transmitting stations - especially since this might have kept Serbian Television off air for longer.⁴

In her active support, Miss Short is almost the La Pasionaria of the Serbian War. Whenever NATO bombs another



civilian target, there she is, giving comfort to NATO, smearing her opponents as cowards and fascists. Anyone seeing her in action for the first time these past few months would think her a longstanding militarist - a veteran, indeed, of the battle fought by the Labour leadership in the 1980s against the pacifist and unilateralist wing of the Party. A veteran she is - though not, oddly enough, of the pro-NATO faction. Half an hour in the memory hole of FTProfile reveals for those who cannot or will not remember a very different Clare Short.

She was a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the 1980s. Nor was she against only nuclear war. She seems to have opposed war in general. In 1984, I find, she attended a vigil in Trafalgar Square to draw attention to the thousands of "peace workers" and conscientious objectors held in prison throughout the world.⁵ Later in the decade, she opposed efforts to reverse Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Most famously, she was one of the leading opponents in this country of the 1991 war against Iraq. She was then a member of The Supper Club, a group of 30 Labour MPs who met regularly to coordinate opposition to the leadership's support for the war. In those days, she was very concerned about civilian casualties, and the widening of war aims. Accusations of "appeasement" were the last things she seems then to have been avoiding. Take, for example, this from the 14th February 1991:

It's the nature of the bombing that I'm worried about. People not having water and food.... The continual bombing of Iraq goes well beyond preventing them having the capability to supply their troops in Kuwait. It's about smashing a country to bits and terrorising the people.⁶

Or take her accusation in Parliament on the 19th February 1991, that the Allies were breaking the Geneva Convention by continually bombing Baghdad.⁷ Or take her stated revulsion after its end at the human cost of the war:

We have to face this. We have to look at the coffins and mourners and say: What we did includes all this.⁸

Why this change of stated opinion? Why this maturing from a virtual pacifist into a warmonger?

For an explanation, we must now widen our view to take in her colleagues, for Miss Short is not alone in her shedding of principle. Her opposition to the Gulf War was shared by Robin Cook, John Prescott and George Robertson. All these now sit beside her in the Cabinet, and are with her now among the chief projectors of the Serbian War. For every pacific statement by Miss Short made in the past, I can find another by each of her colleagues. See, for example, this warning from Mr Cook - now Foreign Secretary - on the 14th February 1991:

There must be a real danger that last night's bombing will inflame Arab opinion and make it more difficult to achieve peace and security.⁹

Or, coming closer to the present war, look at this from Mr Robertson - now Defence Secretary - in 1993, following an earlier call for armed intervention in the Balkans:

The Labour Party believes in the Washington agreement to protect safe areas which include Sarajevo and that the appropriate troop levels should be put in place. But force can only be used in self defence.¹⁰

All this reminds me of the famous shift made by the Comintern in June 1941 over the Second World War. The

day before Russia was invaded, they were denouncing a “war between capitalist states”; the day after, they were demanding every ounce of resolve in a “war against fascism”. Or there is the parody in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four*. This present change of stated principle is not so famous, but it does stem from similar motives of cowardice and moral turpitude. I suggest two explanations:

First, these people are now in the Government. They have nice salaries and official houses and cars. They have status. They have everything they have ever schemed and clawed their way towards. So what if the price is unconditional obedience to every American whim? Principles are for opposition. This can be seen in Mr Straw’s adoption at the Home Office of every police state measure that before the last election he attacked Mr Howard for bringing forward. It can be seen in foreign policy - something in which no British Government since the 1950s has had more than the shadow of independence from Washington.

I have Labour friends who find this deeply upsetting. I find it scandalous, but a long familiarity with Conservative politicians has hardened me to hypocrisy. I do not know any politician who has more regard for honour and decency than the average crack-addicted rent boy. Is it so shocking that Miss Short is no different from people like David Mellor and Jonathan Aitken?

Second, this is a lefty war. Though it was really about maintaining a big military-industrial complex, the Cold War was at least in public a crusade against Communism. The Gulf War was at least partly about oil concessions. But this war against Serbia is a war for the New World Order. As such, it is about raising up an edifice of unshakable international power and status for people like Miss Short. To quote from an article ghosted by Mr Blair for *Newsweek*,

[i]n this conflict we are fighting not for territory but for values. For a new internationalism where the brutal repression of whole ethnic groups will no longer be tolerated. For a world where those responsible for such crimes have nowhere to hide.¹¹

That is, we are fighting for a world in which an *élite* of unelected, canting tyrants can tell the rest of us exactly what to do. If, by some democratic upheaval, they can be cleared out of one country, they will remain firmly in control elsewhere, ready for when the democratic impulse fades or can be beaten down again. In this respect, they are like bedbugs in a cheap hotel. No one in the Government cares about the Kurdish repression against Turkey, or what the Americans are supporting in Colombia, or what British arms exports are enabling in Indonesia. Moral condemnation is reserved for little countries like Serbia and Iraq that can be safely bombed into the stone age and made an excuse for politically correct imperialism.

I like to think that Miss Short is a deeply unhappy woman. After all, she is committing what she and her friends would once unhesitatingly have called war crimes. Perhaps she is. As she herself has said,

I think the quality of politics depends on how political recruitment takes place.... [A]t the moment it’s only triggered among abnormals. If you start being politically active and they make you and officer, you end up with a meeting to go to every night. So the only people who can be political activists are people who don’t love anybody and nobody loves them.¹²

Looking through FTProfile, I noticed that her private life has not been entirely fortunate. Bearing in mind how many murders she has aided and abetted in the past few months, I hope she rots for a long time to come in her own private little Hell.

Notes

1. “Public Back ‘Just War’ Despite Press Doubts, Says Short”, Press Association, London, 24th April 1999.
2. Julian Manyon and Ben Rooney, “TV attack entirely justified, says Blair”, *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 24th April 1999.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Mark Lawson, “Flattening a few broadcasters”, *The Guardian*, London, 24th April 1999.
5. Paul Brown, “CND vigil in Trafalgar Square”, *The Guardian*, London, 21st August 1984.
6. Patrick Wintour, “The Gulf War: Short quits front bench in protest”, *The Guardian*, London, 15th February 1991.
7. “Parliament and Politics: Short accusation”, *The Financial Times*, London, 20th February 1991.
8. Janet Watts, “Voice of the People: Doubts that linger beyond the slaughter”, *The Guardian*, London, 3rd March 1991.
9. Philip Webster, “Short fifth casualty as Ruddock and Cook escape”, *The Times*, London, 15th February 1991.
10. Patrick Collerton and Nancy Daniel, “Saving Sarajevo: MPs join call for military intervention”, *The Independent*, London, 29th July 1993.
11. Tony Blair, A New Generation Draws the Line, *Newsweek*, New York, 19th April 1999.
12. Lynn Barber, “Clare Short: Labour’s Everywoman”, *The Observer*, London, 5th January 1997.*

A Brief History of Compulsory Metrication

David Delaney

In 1965 Harold Wilson, in an effort to appease President De Gaulle, told him we would go metric. George Brown put this in the National Economic Development Plan but stated it would be voluntary.

In 1972, again to appease the Europeans, Edward Heath published a White Paper saying we would go metric voluntarily.

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher said it had gone far enough, and we would never go metric voluntarily, and abolished the Metrication Board.

In response, in 1980 the EEC issued a draft Directive, EEC 80/81, making metrication compulsory.

This was approved in 1989 by the Council of Ministers. The UK was represented by the Foreign Office with Douglas Hurd, Linda Chalker

and Francis Maude who again saw it as a sop to please the EEC. The Department of Trade and Industry was not represented. A senior DTI official said: “We are forever following the Foreign Office with a bucket and shovel clearing up their messes”.

There was a minor amendment to the Directive 89/617.

A Statutory Instrument was approved in a Standing Committee of the House of Commons in November 1994. It was nodded through without proper discussion, just some jokes about the length of cricket pitches!

The European Union has drafted another amendment this year which has not been ratified giving a further ten year derogation for supplementary indicators.*

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

To those members of the electorate, if there are any, who still look to the Conservative Party for salvation from the European Union, it must be clear by now that the Party is hopelessly mired over the issue. Only yesterday, William Hague condemned as “fanatics”, advocates of withdrawal from the European Union.

In today's issue of *The Daily Telegraph*, an article by Alan Judd more or less recommends Conservatives in favour of withdrawal to vote for the United Kingdom Independence Party in the European elections next 10th June. This is the only course open left to Euro-sceptics.

The reasons are:

Mr Hague needs to be persuaded that his supporters and would-be supporters want the Party to regain its historic role as defenders off the nation.

Mr Blair needs to be persuaded that he will lose if he holds a referendum on the single currency.

Under the proportional representation system adopted for this election, the return of UKIP members is credible. A recent MORI poll showed that 25 per cent of the electorate said it would vote for a party advocating withdrawal from the European Union.

The election of UKIP members will raise the profile of the Euro-sceptic movement as a whole and compel the broadcast media to treat the Euro-sceptic case with seriousness and not the flippancy that it has hitherto displayed. The outcome would be “a proper debate” on the single currency, and the whole European Union miasma, something which the Euro-federalists have always claimed to want that have so far managed to avoid.

I am sure it is superfluous to point out that, for all sorts of reasons, the European elections are meaningless in party political terms, and therefore your vote should be cast worried will do the greatest damage to the Euro-federalist cause. It is for this reason that I am asking you and your readers to cast your vote us for the UKIP in the European elections next 10th June and persuade as many others as possible to do likewise.

Yours sincerely,

Fabian Olins,
London NW4

Sir,

In his “Thoughts on the Serbian War” [*Free Life* No.29, April 1999], Sean Gabb asserts that the aims of this war are undefined. Wrong! NATO has clearly stated that the bombing will continue until Yugoslavia accepts the Rambouillet Accord - that is, the evacuation of Kosovo by Yugoslav forces, followed by autonomy (not independence) for the province enforced by an occupying force of NATO troops; then a referendum on independence three years later. NATO leaders declare that it is not their aim to overthrow the Yugoslav Government nor invade the country, but that war criminals will be brought to justice (a self contradiction!). Mr Blair, incidentally, denies ever having been a member of CND, unlike Robin Cook.

Helen Szamuely also misrepresents the situation. The ideal of Greater Serbia has always been supported by public opinion, and not just the academics. That sentiment was a cause of the First World War. It also helped Mr Milosevic (a Communist turned nationalist) to become democratically elected President, first of the Republic of Serbia and

then of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The basic tragedy is that NATO caused the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo by announcing in March this year that he would intervene and Bahrain (effective) bombing, but would not use ground forces. That gave Mr Milosevic the chance to expel all the Moslems from Kosovo, protected from intervention by the Islamic powers.

Unless NATO leaders have the courage to invade Kosovo this summer, the refugees will disperse in the autumn and Mr Milosevic will emerge victorious. In any event, he will not be overthrown, and will not be brought to trial as a war criminal.

Yours despondently,

Cllr Edward Goodman LLB
Surrey

Sir,

I write regarding Edward Hume's comments on the Lead Shot Regulations [*Free Life* No.30, May 1999]. Unfortunately, this is not a limited phenomenon.

In the mid 80s, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Adam Smith Institute together published a compendium of inspectors' powers of entry, finding over 200 separate pieces of legislation under which such powers were created for various categories of regulatory officials.

When I was at the Institute of Directors some while after, I wrote a response by the Institute to a set of draft regulations on the energy efficiency of hot water boilers. In response to an EU directive, hot water boilers had to be labelled with a CE mark and efficiency code. The relevant inspectors could enter property, seize boilers, any material potentially relating to boilers (including business papers etc) and a host of other things, all without warrants.

What seems to happen is that “off the shelf” language covering enforcement powers is added to the regulation without much thought as to what, if any, specific enforcement powers are needed. All the pressures from the officials, pressure groups etc add to this phenomenon, and the whole thing never gets scrutinised by anyone.

This whole issue adds greatly to my irritation with the “constitutional reform” theme - current scrutiny by the Commons of legislation, and of secondary legislation in particular, is woefully inadequate, as are the mechanisms for removing poor legislation once on the statute book. No-one seems to worry about this.

Yours sincerely,
Iain Smedley
bmg@pollyanna.demon.co.uk

Sir,

I thoroughly enjoyed your attack on Peter Lilley [*Free Life* No.30, May 1999]. As an observer, through the newspapers, of British politics, it is disturbing that the Conservatives seem intent on rolling back the advances of Thatcherism that helped save the British economy.

Your views struck a chord with me, as I am probably what Mr Lilley would call an “anarcho-capitalist”. I am a doctor in New Zealand, and have seen what sort of substandard service a public health system offers. I am also the co-deputy leader of the New Zealand Libertarian Party (*Libertarianz*) and am standing for parliament on a staunchly anti-taxation, anti-statist platform later this year. My biggest influence over the years has been the writings of Murray Rothbard.

Keep up the great work. Long live anarcho-capitalism!

Yours sincerely,
Richard McGrath
mongrel@winz.co.nz

Sir,

I have just read your article "How Not to Stop the London Bombings" *Lilley* [*Free Life* No.30, May 1999]. What an excellent essay! While there are still people around in England with your good sense and eloquence, I still believe we have some hope. I just hope that there will be enough to stem this tide of ignorance and emotional indulgence before we are hounded underground.

All the best,
Paul Spring
pjspring@snip.net

Sir,

I liked your "How not to stop the London bombings" immensely [*Free Life* No.30, May 1999]. However, I would issue one word of caution: if it is accepted that certain speech or writings may not be freely available, as you suggest, but only by private request, a thin end of a very large wedge is driven under the concept of free expression. Although under the conditions you propose, anything could be published, the conditions would breach the principle that anything may be said at any time. The principle that some things should only be available privately could easily be perverted, and most certainly would be perverted, and used to prevent access to the mass media and mass distribution of anything deemed not acceptable by those with power.

Freedom of expression is absolute: the choice is between it and a range of permitted opinion. My own feeling is that no restriction should be placed on free expression, but that incitement to violence should be

punished when the circumstances are so explicit that it constitutes a conspiracy to commit a violent act. However, prosecution should only occur where violence has occurred and should be proportional to the damage and injury incurred. For example, if the assault on a person results in injuries occasioning grievous bodily harm, make the charge a conspiracy to commit GBH; if the injuries are those of common assault, charge the inciter with that. If criminal damage occurs, charge the inciter with conspiring to commit criminal damage; if arson, with conspiracy to commit arson.

The idea that a man should be prosecuted for simply inciting violence is a dangerous one, because it is subjective in its application. As judges in America have found on occasions, even "fighting talk", is no excuse, for violence because the violence only arises from the inability of others to control themselves.

By the way, I would be careful about accepting the response of Gerry Gable of *Searchlight* as indicative of the reality or otherwise of the White Wolves. I heard Mr Gable on Radio 5 a couple of months ago. Listeners were invited to phone in with questions. Someone raised the matter of Mr Gable's appearance in a court case last year in which he had to admit to involvement with members of the Far Right. Strangely, he became incredibly flustered by the question. I say strangely, because his normal riposte to questions about his involvement with the Far Right is that he is working undercover in the "antiracist" cause. There is more to this fellow's involvement with the Far Right than meets the eye.

I still lean towards the view that the White Wolves is a piece of dirty propaganda put out by either the Security Forces or "antiracists". It is just too neat, too convenient.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Henderson
philip@anywhere.demon.co.uk



Reviews

Should Developing Countries Have Central Banks? Currency Quality and Monetary Systems in 155 Countries

Kurt Schuler

Research Monograph No. 52,
Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1996, 126p., £10.00 (pbk.)

(ISBN 0 255 36382 6)

The Institute of Economic Affairs is best known for publishing books about the free market, but this particular work is about improving the efficiency of nationalised industries. To be exact, it argues that some countries would be better off if they imported the product of a foreign nationalised industry than if they used the product of a domestic nationalised industry. The product in question is money. According to Kurt Schuler, central banking in developing countries has usually failed to provide sound money, and those countries should seriously consider either using a foreign currency or linking their own currency to that of a more advanced country.

Dr Schuler has carried out a thorough study of the monetary history of every country in the world, whether independent or not, which existed as a separate political unit at any time between 1951 and 1993 and had at least a million inhabitants in 1993. (Countries with less than a million people account for less than 1 per cent of the world's population and less than 1 per cent of its economic output.) Out of the

155 countries in his study, he counts 136 as developing (including all the communist and ex-communist countries as well as the Third World) and 19 as developed. All the developed countries had central banking throughout the period in question, but many of the developing countries did not. In an Appendix which takes up more than half the book, he presents data on economic growth and several different measures of currency quality, including inflation, convertibility, the rate of exchange with the US dollar, and currency confiscations (in which an old currency was replaced by a new one at different rates of exchange for different amounts). He concludes that, by all these standards, central banking in developing countries has performed worse than central banking in developed countries and worse than other monetary systems in developing countries.

The alternatives to central banking which Dr Schuler discusses include foreign currency (formerly used in several independent nations as well as colonies), and a number of systems in which the domestic currency is linked to a foreign anchor currency at a fixed exchange rate. These include currency boards, monetary institutes and private banking monopolies. Currency boards, which were formerly common in British colonies, are state institutions which issue currency backed 100 per cent by assets in a foreign currency with which they are required to maintain convertibility at a fixed rate. Unlike central banks, they cannot conduct open-market operations or impose reserve ratios on banks. Monetary institutes, which were formerly common in French colonies, differ from currency boards in that they are not required to maintain a 100 per cent reserve ratio, although they must still maintain a high ratio (e.g. 50 per cent), and they may conduct open-market operations if their reserves

David Landes

Little, Brown and Co, London, 1998, 650pp., £19.99 (hbk)

(ISBN 0316 90867 3)

permit. In some cases they may also have the power to regulate banks. In some French, Belgian and Portuguese colonies, there used to be private commercial banks which held a statutory monopoly of note issue in which they were required to maintain a fixed exchange rate between their currency and that of the ruling power.

Despite the faults of central banking, it became increasingly common during the period of the study. In 1950 there were 70 central banks in the world, but in 1993 there were 145. Dr Schuler suggests that this was partly for theoretical reasons and partly due to political factors. The consensus among economists is that a central bank is necessary because a banking system needs a lender of last resort, although Dr Schuler argues that this causes more problems than it solves and there are actually more banking crises in countries with central banking. In the political field, a central bank serves as a national status symbol, and it is also a useful way of funding budget deficits. Once established, central banks continue to exist because they are powerful lobbies.

The reasons for the difference between developed countries and developing countries make interesting reading. One factor which Dr Schuler points out is that all the developed countries in the study were democracies except Spain under Franco, and elections enabled the public to put pressure on politicians to keep inflation down, while many of the developing countries were ruled by dictators who were able to ignore public opinion. However, there are also more subtle factors relating to differences in wealth. Inflation harms private creditors but benefits the government and the central bank, because it reduces the value of debt. In developed countries there are millions of people who are rich enough to have substantial investments, so they, or the institutions in which they invest, can lobby the government effectively enough to counteract the influence of the central bank. Developing countries, on the other hand, are poorer, with less private wealth, so the central bank is much more dominant in the financial system, and no other institutions are big enough to challenge its power. Developing countries also find it harder to borrow money on financial markets, because they have a poorer record of repayment, so their governments have a stronger incentive to fund budget deficits by using the central bank to print money.

A significant new development is that three developing countries have recently gone against the prevailing trend and abandoned central banking, replacing it with what Dr Schuler calls "currency-board-like systems". (What he means, although the text does not make this completely clear, is that their central banks are still called banks, but are required to act like currency boards by backing their issues with foreign reserves.) Argentina was the first to do so, in 1991, when it linked the peso to the US dollar. Estonia followed in 1992 by replacing the Soviet rouble with the kroon, which was linked to the Deutschmark. Both countries succeeded in stopping hyperinflation, and their example inspired Lithuania to link its currency to the US dollar in 1994. Dr Schuler ends by advising other developing countries to do the same thing.



The ideal solution to the problem of inflation would, of course, be privatisation of money. Dr Schuler mentions this in passing, and he has written about it at greater length elsewhere. (See *The Experience of Free Banking*, edited by Kevin Dowd, published by Routledge, London, 1992.) However, this is too radical an idea to be politically possible today, and it will remain politically impossible for a few years yet. In the meantime, anything which reduces inflation is better than nothing. Dr Schuler's proposals have been shown to be feasible in practice. Although they are not applicable to British conditions, they could do millions of people a lot of good.

Roderick Moore

As my old history master never tired of saying, Wealth Is Power! That is the reason why the cause of nations becoming rich or staying poor is so fundamental a political and social question. It is also an infinitely intriguing subject, being in principle beyond a definitive answer because any ascription of importance to any quality or event judged relevant to the matter is by its nature subjective. However, objectively unanswerable as it may be, it is important to continue to address the subject because it has become a central part of the ideological battleground between the First World and the Third World, East and West, Left and Right.

To this ideological battle David Landes brings an antidote to the anti-western forces which are so strongly entrenched in the Third World and amongst the *élites* and ethnic minorities of the First World. Driven by a deep knowledge of the subject, he refuses to take uncritically the "right-on" party line on colonialism, slavery and, indeed, the causes of national wealth. In fact, this book is an abattoir for sacred cows dear to the progressive mind. As Mr Landes is an American academic, this is a particularly brave stance to adopt in the hysterical atmosphere of the typical modern US campus. On that count alone he is to be congratulated.

Two themes dominate Mr Landes' thinking. The first and lesser is the colonial experience, particularly of European colonialism, since the fifteenth century: the second is industrialisation.

Mr Landes dismisses the claim that colonialism was the primary cause of the wealth of European powers or their cultural offshoots such as the United States, by pointing to inconvenient facts such as the experience of Spain, the greatest power in Europe between 1500 and 1650, and Portugal. Despite the immense wealth generated by their American possessions, as societies they remained poor even during their period of greatest material gain from the Americas. Nor did their rulers achieve financial respectability - the Spanish Crown managed to go bankrupt in 1557, 1575 and 1597. As for the slave trade, one may point to the wealth of Britain at the time of abolition and in the century which followed. In 1807 Britain's GNP was approximately £200 million. By 1914 it was over £2 billion. (Prices in 1807 and 1914 were approximately the same as far as these things can ever be judged) At most, Mr Landes allows that the wealth received by Britain from the slave trade, India and the Americas may, but only may, have slightly accelerated the first Industrial Revolution.

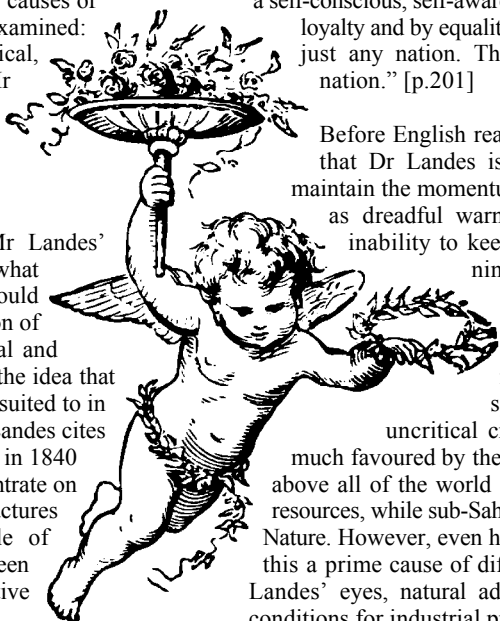
The Industrial Revolution drives the book. For Mr Landes, the question of the wealth or poverty of nations only becomes important after the onset of industrialisation: "The industrial revolution made some countries richer, others (relatively) poorer; or more accurately, some countries made an industrial revolution and became rich; and others did not and stayed poor." [p.168] Prior to industrialisation, the disparity in wealth between states, regions and even continents was relatively small. Come the Industrial Revolution and massive disparities begin to appear. For Mr Landes, it is to the success or otherwise in industrialising which is the primary cause of present disparities in national wealth.

Mr Landes' general interpretation treads a well worn path. He views the historical process of industrialisation as twofold. First, comes a pre-industrial preparatory period in which irrationality of thought is gradually replaced by scientific method and what he calls "autonomy of intellectual inquiry" [p.219], *ie* thought divorced from unquestioned reliance on authority, irrationality, especially superstition. At the same time technology begins to be something more than by-guess-and-by-God. This gives birth to industrialisation by creating both the intellectual climate and the acquired knowledge, both scientific and technological, necessary for the transformation from traditional to

modern society.

Those are the bare bones of Mr Landes' argument. He backs it with considerable detail. All the usual suspects for the causes of the Industrial Revolution are paraded and examined: technological, intellectual, cultural, social, political, legal, economic, natural resources and climate. Mr Landes gives greatest weight to intangibles such as intellectual development, political maturity, legally enforced respect for private property and a sound system of money and credit.

One of the great strengths of the book is Mr Landes' refreshing determination to pay attention to what actually occurs rather than what theory says should happen. Thus he goes against the economic fashion of the age and questions that shibboleth of classical and neoclassical economics, comparative advantage, the idea that countries should manufacture what they are most suited to in the circumstances of the international market. Mr Landes cites the instance of the Englishman John Borrow, who in 1840 urged the states of the German Zollverein to concentrate on growing wheat, and sell it to buy British manufactures and comments: "This was a sublime example of economic good sense: but Germany would have been the poorer for it. Today's comparative advantage...may not be tomorrow's."



among the prime causes precocious English nationhood viz: "To begin with, Britain had the early advantage of being a nation. By that I mean not simply the realm of a ruler, not simply a state or political entity, but a self-conscious, self-aware unit characterised by common identity and loyalty and by equality of civil status...Britain, moreover, was not just any nation. This was a precociously modern, industrial nation." [p.201]

Before English readers get too bigheaded, it should be added that Dr Landes is distinctly critical of Britain's failure to maintain the momentum of their initial industrialisation and cites as dreadful warnings to others such failures as Britain's inability to keep the lead in the chemical industry in the nineteenth century and the dismal story of our car industry since 1945.

There is one part of the book which the reader should treat with caution. Mr Landes spends the first two chapters lending rather uncritical credence to the distinctly contentious idea, much favoured by the Left and the Third World, that Europe was above all of the world especially favoured by climate and natural resources, while sub-Saharan Africa was especially disadvantaged by Nature. However, even here he redeems himself by refusing to make this a prime cause of differences in national wealth. At best, in Mr Landes' eyes, natural advantages are necessary but not sufficient conditions for industrial progress.

At a time when casual and gratuitous public insult of the English is commonplace, the book is a salutary reminder of how disproportionate an influence this country has had on the world. Two of the chapter headings will give a flavour of this: "Britain and the others" and "Pursuit of Albion". In the latter Mr Landes is emphatic on England's importance: "The Industrial Revolution in England changed the world and the relations of nations and states to one another...The world was now divided between one front-runner and a highly diverse array of pursuers. It took the quickest of the European "follower countries" something more than a century to catch up". [p.201] In other words, without England, industrialisation would have been at best greatly delayed and at worst have never occurred. (To that immense influence, may be added the Empire, the founding of the United States by involuntary proxy, the development of parliamentary government, the international success of the English language and the individual likes of Newton, Locke and Darwin.)

In the end David Landes, like every historian, economist and sociologist before him who has considered the subject, of necessity fails to provide an absolute explanation for the phenomenon of the wealth of nations. What he has achieved is a work of very considerable scholarship, which describes and analyses the multifarious possible causes of disparities in national material success as comprehensively and intelligently as any work the reader is likely to put their hands on.

Readers afraid that economic history is dry stuff should put their fears behind them. David Landes has an easy literary style and litters his text agreeably with anecdotes and surprising facts in the manner of Fernand Braudel's *Capitalism and Civilisation*.

Robert Henderson

Tax Freedom Day 1999

Gabriel Stein

Adam Smith Institute, London, 1999, 23pp., np (pbk)

(ISBN 1 902737 02 4)

For Sale

- One pound of salt - £0.50
- A piece of wood four feet in length - £2.50
- One English gallon (160 fl oz) of tap water - £1
- Twelve ounces of apples (wrapped) - £0.75
- One Troy ounce of silver - £8
- One scruple of vitamin C - £0.30

Interested persons may apply in writing to the Editor of *Free Life*.

Following a series of European Union Directives - one of these assented to by Francis Maude, who now fancies himself as the next Leader of the Conservative Party - all enacted into the laws of this country, it is a criminal offence to offer goods for sale in English weights and measurements. The maximum penalty for disobedience is six months imprisonment.

There are some laws that it is our public duty to disobey. Compulsory metrication is one of them.

Tax Freedom Day is arrived at as follows: take all direct and indirect taxes paid by the average British family, and then turn the percentage of income taken into an equal fraction of the year. The result can be regarded as the time spent working for the government, the rest of the time spent working for oneself. The last day of the first period becomes Tax Freedom Day.

Commissioned by the Adam Smith Institute, Gabriel Stein has made the necessary calculations for Britain in 1999. His conclusion is that we work an average of 147 days for the Government, and therefore that our Tax Freedom Day fell on the 27th May this year. This is somewhat earlier in the year than was in 1982 (11th June), and indeed lower than in any other of the whole years during which Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. Even so, it is later than the 2nd May on which it fell in 1965, and it has been rising since 1993, and it is expected to continue rising throughout the term of this present Government.

But whether we talk about May or June, a Tax Freedom Day so late in the year is a scandal - an outright burning scandal. Though with the

great progress of wealth in the past two centuries, we are able to bear weights of taxation that would once have reduced millions to eating grass, what we now bear is still an immense and damaging burden. On page 21, Mr Stein suggests that the Americans are more dynamic in the economic sense than we are because their Tax Freedom Day comes 18 days earlier, and that the inhabitants of Euroland are less so because theirs comes 24 days later. This must be true. Nevertheless, a far greater harm is done to the less easily measured social and political structure of our country.

If we want to enjoy the levels of consumption that we now consider acceptable, most of us are left with almost no financial surplus. What little we do accumulate can only amount to anything substantial if we give up control over its investment to skilled persons to one more correctly to be seen as trustees than agents. We have no control over the use made of our savings. Those who have control look mostly - and rightly - for the best combination of security and high return, and pay no attention to other considerations.

The result is a corporatised and cautious pattern of investment, combined with much personal insecurity. Because we have so little left after living expenses and contractual savings, we are not able on average to take risks for ourselves or be generous to those who do take risks. There is also a sad but natural tendency to look on life as a zero-sum game - where one person can rise only by treading on others - and to take pre-emptive action against those whose opinions or general behaviour might somehow result in their rising higher than the average.

There are times, I grant, when far heavier weights of taxation might be justified as on balance in the public interest. But we are neither in a war of national defence nor trying to avert some great natural disaster. Our money is taken from us and is then used in ways quite obviously against the public interest.

We have all been exposed to the whining propaganda about how the old, the sick and the poor would suffer unendurable hardships if we were to keep more of our own money. Even supposing it were a good reason to collect taxes, this would be a lie. During the past two decades, the Adam Smith Institute alone must have published over a hundred reports on how to deliver public services to better standards and lower costs. It has been shown repeatedly that we do not need the National Health Service to ensure medical treatment for those unable by themselves to afford it. We do not need a vast educational bureaucracy if we want the children of the poor to be sent to school; nor a vast local government sector to do what local government does for us. Yet these reports have been subjected to hysterical abuse by those whose salaries come out of our pockets; and the recommended reforms - privatisation, contracting out, internal markets, and so forth - have been systematically corrupted in the few cases where they could not be prevented altogether.

The natural conclusion must be that the purpose of our taxes is not mainly to provide public services, but to provide salaries and status for a class of parasites. Such public services as are delivered comes simply as a by-product. That is why services are the first and often the only victims of the few budget cuts ever applied. That is why in places like Lambeth and Hackney pensioners die for lack of home visits and the roads fall into potholes, yet neither the salaries nor the numbers of the town hall officials are ever reduced.

This last point being so, I would suggest that Mr Stein has been actually rather optimistic in his calculation of Tax Freedom Day. He takes into account only the admitted taxes that we pay. He overlooks the hidden taxes that have been imposed



If you like *Free Life*, you might also like another journal of libertarian thought called

The Individual

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over the past 20 years.

In 1979, I remember that most dental and much optical treatment was free at the point of use, that public transport was heavily subsidised, that the public libraries were filled with useful and interesting books, that university tuition fees were paid automatically by the State, and that full grants were paid to the majority of students, that the value of state pensions was linked to average earnings, and that other welfare benefits were almost equally generous. Today, all has changed. These entitlements have been either reduced or withdrawn. I will not lament their loss. I have always supported and still desire a more thoroughgoing purge of government spending on welfare. But these reductions of service have not been balanced by reductions of taxes: Tax Freedom Day fell on the 25th May in 1979 - two days earlier than in 1999 - and I pay £2.50 to swim in Eltham Baths, rather than the 30p in today's prices that I paid in 1979.

I have not Mr Stein's skill at finding and interpreting economic data; but I do strongly suspect that Tax Freedom Day falls not near the end of May, but some time in July or August. We are comprehensively ripped off by our masters; and I am not surprised that they have been so eager in the past generation to take away our guns. Revolutions have started over tax rates far lower than the ones we now live with.

But none of this is to deny Mr Stein any of the gratitude that he deserves for having gathered up and written so valuable a pamphlet. And the Adam Smith Institute is to be congratulated and thanked for having published him. I have sometimes written in very harsh terms about the Adam Smith Institute. But its heart is often in the right place. As I left the reception at which Mr Stein's pamphlet was introduced to the public, I said to a gentleman who was bidding us farewell at the door that it would be nice to see Tax Freedom Day come forward in the year.

"I would have it fall on the 1st January" he replied.

That is not a statement I feel at all inclined to argue with.

Sean Gabb

Star Wars: Episode One

Lucasfilm Entertainments, 1999

Collectivists will not like the new *Episode One* of Star Wars. It has been widely panned by critics for its thin characterization, heavy reliance on special effects, and implausible story line. To some extent this misses the point. One does not go to see a *Star Wars* movie to appreciate Stanislavsky Method acting; one goes to enjoy the experience.

Firstly, let it be said that *The Phantom Menace* is visually dazzling. Just as Phil Spector invented the Motown "wall of sound" by having every aural frequency occupied, so George Lucas has produced the visual equivalent. Every frame is packed with detail. There is so much

going on in every scene that one simply cannot take it all in simultaneously. Indeed, cynics have suggested this is a deliberate ploy by Mr Lucas to make his audiences see the film several times.

Much more interesting, and unsettling to its critics at a deeper level, is the message which emerges. The original *Star Wars* blew apart the merging of good and evil, the consensus that everything was in shades of grey, and the moral equivalence which painted selfishness and honour in the same colours. Here, suddenly, were heroes and villains, courage and sacrifice, loyalty and redemption. It satisfied needs long denied and deep within the psyche of its audience. And it was great fun.

The new *Star Wars* reinforces that message in spades. Firstly, notice the ineffectiveness of government. This is not the Evil Empire we are talking about. This is good government, democratic government, and it is of no use to anyone. It imposes taxes upon trade. Ridden by factions and personal advancement, clogged and stalled at every turn by its bureaucracy, it is powerless to help. If Naboo had depended on government, aggression would have triumphed.

Instead it is individuals who count, people with moral force and conviction, people who stand ready to fight personally for what they know is right. It is Queen Amidala, the Jedi master Qui-Gon Jinn, his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Jar-Jar Binks, who overcome the odds to win one more battle for freedom. It is also 9 year-old Anakin Skywalker.

Yes, we all know that he will later turn to the Dark Side and become Darth Vader; but we also know that, at the end, he will earn redemption by a final act of sacrifice which restores freedom to the galaxy and wins him back a place in the pantheon of heroes. In the prequel, however, he is 9 years old and a role model to children. His concerns are not with environment, community, or social justice. They are with meeting challenge with fortitude, with being a dependable and resourceful friend, and, most of all, with making difficult and painful choices out of a sense of duty.

Children in the audience go very quiet when he leaves his mother. She is the only relative he has, yet he makes the choice to leave. There is a painful farewell, but he leaves on the starship with the two Jedi Knights because he thinks he ought to.

He is brave. He takes part in the incredibly dangerous pod race because the new friends whose cause he trusts need the prize money to repair their ship and proceed on their mission. The race is a remake of the chariot race from *Ben Hur*, but at 20 times the velocities, and with a 9 year-old instead of Charlton Heston in the hot seat. Most of the

contestants are killed, yet he does it, not for reward or fame, but because he *can*, and because his friends need it.

They need the prize money because the Republic's credits are no longer good on Tatooine. Barter is good, but not the fiat currency of a distant government. It looks as though inflation might have taken its toll on the credibility of the Republic's money, yet another blow against government.

Anakin faces a hostile and suspicious Jedi council, afraid, and knowing that his fear can be seen and counts against him, but faces them resolutely nonetheless because this is what he wants to do. In the final battle to liberate Naboo, he plays an heroic and decisive role, using courage, skill and judgement. The legions of social reformers and counsellors would surely not wish 9 year-olds to aspire to these qualities, or to look to Anakin Skywalker as a role model. Yet he is, and he teaches them lessons concerning personal responsibility and the values which make a person worthwhile.

Some on the left might paint the sinister Trade Federation as the embodiment of cardboard capitalism, characterized by greed and aggression, but this is hard to sustain in a universe where the good guys are in favour of free trade and free choice. It is the bad guys who support taxation, trade embargoes, and conquest. No, this is a universe which collectivists and planners do not like, one in which motivated individuals can make a difference and achieve worthwhile things.

It is a more rational universe than that of the original trilogy. The force loses some of its mysticism when we learn that it derives from a sub-microscopic life form, named midi-chloridians, which live symbiotically within the cells of other species. Someone who is host to large numbers of them can, with training, enhance his or her sensitivity and learn to use them.

Our final shot of young Anakin is revealing. He stands at the victory celebrations alongside the newly qualified Jedi master, Obi-Wan Kenobi. The Macaulay Culkin moppet hair is gone, and in its place is a passable imitation of the Ewan Macgregor crew cut. He wears the rough linen jacket of the Jedi apprentice. Even though this is a moment of triumph, he looks uncertain, not knowing quite how to stand, or how to react. The future itself is uncertain. He has made the choice to be trained as a Jedi, and knows that years of sacrifice, effort and discipline lie ahead. All he has are the values which can sustain a person through hardship and uncertainty, and which ultimately define them. The eyes stare into a future of unknown challenges, a future which will be made by the choices and actions of individuals.

Madsen Pirie

Final Jottings Brian Micklethwait

One

From time to time in these jottings I mention the output of the Institute of Economic Affairs, almost always praising it. But now I mention *An End To Welfare Rights - The Rediscovery of Independence* (Choice in Welfare No. 49), by David G. Green, the blurb on the cover of which made me laugh out loud:

David Green recommends that all entitlements to benefit should be abolished and replaced with an obligation on government to prevent hardship without undermining the spirit of independence.

Or to put it another way:

David G. Green recommends that all government plans to make pigs

fly by attaching wings to them be replaced by a government obligation to make pigs take to the air by other means.

This is not the first time I have found myself likening recommendations from David Green to pig aeronautics. In a piece I wrote years ago (*How And How Not To Demonopolise Medicine*, Political Notes No. 56, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1991) I quoted Mr Green's suggestion that medical regulation

... should do more to protect the consumer against the capture of the regulatory agency by self-interested producers.

The General Medical Council, he said, should be abolished

... and replaced by a new agency whose members would have the status of trustees, forbidden to gain financially from the performance

of their duties and be liable in law for failure to discharge them properly.

Why does Mr Green keep coming up with these flatulent recommendations, the silliness of which could be spotted at once by any other IEA writer picked with a pin? Perhaps part of the answer is that Mr Green is afflicted by the misguided notion that criticism is only excusable if it is constructive. Mr Green seems more interested in the facts of what is now wrong with the world, and the facts of what used to be more right with it, than he is interested in *why* these facts are and were facts.

He thus lacks the intellectual attitude needed to speculate intelligently about the future, because in the future there are no accomplished facts, only what are now fancies. Fair enough. Nothing wrong with that. Unless you insist on pretending that it isn't so, and on attaching at the end of your fact-ridden writings some ill considered phrases to the effect that virtue and wisdom must in the future be made to triumph over vice and folly.

Two

I had a conversation at my last Friday evening *soirée* with Tony Vander Elst, who is Philip Vander Elst's better dressed brother, and a Libertarian Alliance Gold Subscriber. Tony tells me that my opinions about phonetics (as spelled out in my *The Harm Done by Look and Say: A Reaction to Bonnie Macmillan's Why Schoolchildren Can't Read*, Educational Notes No. 29, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1998) are all wrong, and that you can teach babies to read by waving flash cards at them, for just one second at a time. The cards say "CAT" and "DOG" and "CUP" and "MICROWAVE OVEN", and so forth, in large red letters (red because of something to do with neural pathways) and as you flash them you say "cat" and "dog" and "cup" and "microwave oven". Ten years later your offspring collects its Nobel Prize for Literature. Tony did this to his daughter, he says. Look-and-say works, he says, with infants. Phonetics is merely a remedial teaching method for those feral children who have not had flash cards flashed them in their babyhood.

I told you all about this ten years ago, said Tony to me indignantly. Weren't you listening? Of course I was listening. I just forgot about it. Why, I said, didn't you write this stuff down? For someone so

gung-ho for literacy, Tony does indeed seem to have a circuit missing when it comes to putting things in writing. I repeated what I remembered of what Tony said to me to another friend, who insisted that look-and-say for babies is really phonetics, because the baby spontaneously deduces the way that the individual letters on the signs each refer to individual sounds, and that's why babies exposed to flash cards go on to be better at reading. It's my understanding of Tony's opinion about what he did to his daughter that he vehemently disagrees with my other friend's interpretation of what was happening.

Which just goes to show how important it is to get these kinds of confrontations written down and published, so that each of us can react to exactly what the other person really thinks, instead of merely to what we think he thinks. Verbal chit-chat that isn't even tape recorded is useless. It sinks into the sands of oblivion in the space of a few days. I forgot what Tony told me ten years ago, and would have forgotten it again, if I hadn't at least written down my immediate recollections of it here.

It occurs to me that Tony is a film producer, a man for whom a script isn't finished until it has been turned into a picture. He may accordingly be blessed with a superb memory for what is merely acted out and spoken in front of him, because that's what he thinks really matters, and accordingly doesn't feel the need for arguments to be written down. They need only be had. Because we all have photographic memories and perfect sound recording systems inside our heads, don't we? And maybe his enthusiasm for the process of recognising complex patterns as opposed to deducing noises from mere strings of abstract symbols (seeing CAT as one pattern rather than as three separate symbols), explains his attitude in the look-and-say versus phonetics debate.

I hope Tony Vander Elst rises to this speculative bating. He's probably not up to writing a Libertarian Alliance pamphlet, but he is surely capable of stringing together a letter to *Free Life*, at whatever length he can manage. The *Free Life* correspondence column has recently, I think you'll agree, acquired an air of genuineness. A reply to this from Tony would reinforce that atmosphere. Well maybe not, what with his odd surname, but I would nevertheless love to have his harangue to me immortalised in writing, so that we can still be ruminating on his educational opinions in ten years time, however wrong-headed these may prove to be.

Three

This one will probably be cut, because I no longer put *Free Life* together and cannot therefore be sure of elbowing sufficient space for all my jottings. Here's a thought, prompted by Manchester United's amazing injury time triumph over Bayern Munich, and subsequent celebrations. Suppose you had gone back a hundred years and whispered in the ear of some political enthusiast that in a hundred years time the streets of Manchester would be filled with a million cheering people, most of the socially unelevated sort, and asked said enthusiast what he thought the cheering was going to be about. Would he have guessed: football? Would he not have surmised that it was some kind of socialistic political demonstration of the sort later filmed by Sergei Eisenstein? A celebration of the Fall of Capitalism, perhaps? Yet now, political demonstrations seldom muster more than a few thousand. The last big demonstration in Western Europe similar to the Manchester jamboree was when France won the World Cup. Football is where socialism has gone to die. No doubt when our Editor first read this he muttered about Old Rome, in the declining days of which political affiliations derived from which team of charioteers you backed. Presumably the next step is for football managers to go into politics. But if they're wise, they'll stick to real life.

The next issue of *Free Life* will be published on the 1st July 1999. The Editor apologises that several contributions submitted last month have not so far appeared. The reason is the need to keep this issue to no more than twelve pages.

