# Blueprint

Michaelmas Term 2016

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# Michaelmas Term 2016

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## President's Foreword

It is a daunting prospect to write the foreword to such an impressive edition of *Blueprint*. The fact that the Oxford University Conservative Association is able to give students the opportunity to write on such a wide range of issues as you see in this issue alongside senior figures in Conservative and national politics reflects the fundamental aim of our Association, which is to promote Conservatism at the University of Oxford. OUCA therefore fosters and encourages political debate and discussion as the medium through which conservative ideas can be shared among the student body.

This is perhaps as relevant now as ever before, with a developing culture and attitude across many universities that is distrustful of freedom of debate and freedom of expression, and it is important that OUCA, through works like *Blueprint*, are able to continue to spread and articular ideas on the centre-right of the political spectrum.

Students are more engaged now with politics than they have been for some time, with 2016 seeing a vote to leave the European Union, a new Prime Minister and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, and OUCA can serve as a forum where students interested and concerned with what the future hold politically can come together to discuss ideas.

A minute book was just recently returned to the Association, which contains records of OUCA's actions from 1973 to 1977. Forty years ago, OUCA was very much involved in those

debates as part of the student body. Then, as today, we campaigned and raised money for charity, and provided an atmosphere where conservative-minded students could meet and work together for mutual aim.

OUCA ran candidates for positions in OUSU and the NUS delegation in alliance with the Democrats, and even produced policy papers, such as one from February 1977 that recommended that the Conservative Party should support a move from First Past the Post to the Single Transferable Vote system for general elections. In his introduction to the report, Anthony Fry, then *the President, Magdalen College*, wrote '…OUCA does not take firm lines on policy, but if this research generates informed discussion, then I believe OUCA will have made its contribution to the battle of ideas.' OUCA still does not take firm lines on policy, and it has also stopped producing policy reports. But through publications like *Blueprint*, it continues, thirty-nine years later, to still make its contribution to the battle of ideas.

Harrison Edmonds
*University College*

## Introduction

*The Publications Editor, Magdalen College*

As a student of the classics, I have often wondered at the seemingly infinite power wielded over the greatest of authors by their editors, and have long wished to taste of this elixir myself. Though I have found the experience closer to that of Heracles than of Eurystheus, the reward, while not quite apotheosis, has been considerable.

This term's *Blueprint* contains the customary articles by guest writers and Members of the Association. I am especially pleased to be able to include an article by the Lord Tebbit, a distinguished servant of Party and of country. His experience of more than a quarter of a century in the upper House of our country's legislature allows him to speak with authority on its strengths and its weaknesses, and his proposals will prove instructive for those of us who believe the Lords to require reform.

Dr Lilico's article outlines suggestions for altogether more radical changes, and will, if nothing else, serve to expand the intellectual horizons of our readers. I am a firm believer in the virtue of political audacity, and it is scarcely contentious that at this time more than ever imagination is of the essence in charting Britain's future course. It is, of course, a pleasure to see my own native Australia included in these discussions.

I have endeavoured to feature articles on a diverse range of topics, and trust that the reader will smile upon the product of

my striving. Specific Government proposals, foreign affairs, and reflections on current developments in our political discourse are all considered. I am particularly glad that I am able to include several articles discussing the philosophical position that our Party should take as its underpinning. We often congratulate ourselves on being a broad church, of no particular ideological position. While this certainly has something of the truth in it, we cannot recuse ourselves from the discussion of that most necessary of questions – what it is that we stand for.

In addition to *Blueprint*'s usual contents, I set out to improve and expand on the excellent work done for the Association by my predecessors. To this end I have endeavoured to enliven the publication with a number of illustrations, and have also included some cartoons by Mr Ioan Phillips, of Corpus Christi College, in the hope that they might give our readers some respite as we move toward the end of term, and increase interest in *Blueprint* for my successor. I am pleased to have been able to secure paid advertising for the Association – a feat which all Publications Editors must attempt, but which has not been achieved in recent memory.

Only two things remain. First, I must add the caveat that while I trust nothing in this small volume will cause offence to its readers, no opinion expressed herein can be taken as reflecting the view of the Association or any other of its Members. Second, I should like to encourage all Members of the Association to seek publication in our blog, for which purpose

they should my successor – a third successive Publications Editor, Magdalen College, Mr Edward McBarnet.

T.P.D.
*Magdalen College*
*All Souls' Day 2016.*

## The House of Lords

*The Rt Hon. The Lord Tebbit CH PC*

Amidst all the rather silly shouting about the future of the House of Lords the first question to be answered is 'do we need a second chamber of Parliament in any form at all?' In my view the need has never been greater.

The House of Commons now sits 'family friendly' hours. That is, it has become a part-time legislature. That does not mean that MPs are all idlers. Many are very active welfare workers, they are smothered in emails from constituents, they are cursed by the demands of the 'social media'. They have little time left for their duties as legislators.

All Bills are now timetabled and in consequence the time given for the Committee and Report stages is often grossly inadequate. On a Bill's arrival in the Lords, peers frequently have to face not only pages of complex legislation unconsidered at all by the Commons, but hosts of Government amendments. In addition, there are normally a good number of amendments tabled by the Official Opposition and other peers of all parties or none. Our task is to return to the Commons a workable draft piece of legislation for their approval.

The second matter raised, usually by those who have given little thought to the matter, is that the Lords is an unelected chamber. Of course, as such the Lords always defer to the Commons in the end, but would that be so if it were an elected

chamber? More likely by far that the two chambers would finish up in conflict.

Being an unelected House also confers a number of other advantages. The overwhelming majority of us have no further political ambition. The party whips have nothing to give us, so disciple is weak and good arguments have to be made to persuade us to vote on party lines.

We have an extraordinary array of men and women of great experience in fields outside party politics. On the cross benches in particular we have distinguished doctors, scientists, lawyers (including judges), Generals, Admirals, and Air Marshals, senior civil servants, local government people, religious leaders and the like who bring knowledge, experience and insights to complex medical, scientific and moral issues.

That would be useful at any time, but when, as today, fewer and fewer Members of the Commons have much experience outside of school, university and the Westminster bubble it offers a most welcome illumination of our debates and select committee proceedings.

None of that justifies the present size of the House, nor the poor quality of some of those recently nominated by Prime Ministers Cameron and Blair.

Mr Cameron sensibly observed that the Lords was not only too large but also that it should be broadly representative of the votes cast at the immediately past general election.

Unhappily, after the 2015 election in which the Liberal Democrats polled only 2.4 million votes against UKIP's score of 3.9 million he then stuffed the place with Liberal Democrat peers but not a single one from UKIP.

Indeed, in his six years in office he added 245 to our numbers, a record average in modern times and in sharp contrast to Margaret Thatcher's 201 in eleven years.

As Prime Minister May contemplates the issues facing her administration I doubt if she is anxious to add the matter of the reform of the Lords to the agenda. That gives us in the Upper House the responsibility and the opportunity to do the job ourselves.

We should start by aiming for a House of between 600 and 650 in which our numbers would broadly reflect the votes cast at the immediately preceding General Election, but in which the governing party (or parties) would not have an overall majority.

Within the new House there should be provision for peers of:

a) The governing party or parties
b) The party of the Official Opposition
c) Other parties with substantial electoral support
d) Crossbench peers
e) Independent non-aligned peers
f) The bishops of the Church of England

We should aim to make the transition after the election of 2020 to ensure that broadly speaking the peers sitting in the new House following that election should be elected from amongst those sitting in the present House.

At present we have 92 of the hereditary peers who until recently would have had seats in the House who are now elected by their fellow hereditary peers. Under my reform proposal they, like all other peers, would be able to stand for election by their fellow party members to fill the quotas set out below.

Of the peers of the governing party (or parties) 20 should be nominated by the Prime Minister and 240 more by the existing peers of their party or parties making a total of 260.

Similarly, the Leader of the Opposition in the Commons should nominate 20 peers and a further 225 be elected by existing peers of their respective parties in proportion to the votes cast at the General election for their parties. The remainder would be elected from amongst the existing peers of that party.

The post 2020 House would then consist of 260 Government peers, 240 Opposition peers and twenty bishops who would be nominated by the Synod or the Archbishop of Canterbury and 75 crossbenchers elected by the sitting Members of that Group to make a total of 595 sitting peers. Those would be designated active peers and those not elected would be designated reserve peers.

That would give flexibility for the creation of up to an additional 10 peers a year throughout the life of a Parliament whilst replacements for peers dying or choosing to retire would be made in a similar manner.

If we could reach a consensus now, we could have all in place for the reformed House to be in place just after the 2020 election.

**CANZUK – What Britain did next?**

*Dr Andrew Lilico*

Medium-sized countries like the UK can achieve more in the world if they combine with other medium-sized countries with similar values and similar geopolitical goals to collaborate on the international stage. For many years, the UK had such a relationship with France, Germany, Italy and various other EU partners. Now, however, we are going to the leave the EU. Should we seek some new geopolitical partnership with new medium-sized countries with similar values and similar geopolitical goals to our own?

Some folk hope that we can cling on to our EU partners. But one of the key arguments those that favoured leaving the EU offered was that our erstwhile EU partners want to deepen their political connection with each other much more than with us. They have already formed the euro and the Schengen area and in future will have other ventures such as border guards, an army, a common treasury and a president. The EU political union will have its own priorities, which will differ very materially from the UK's, and in any event is far too large, relative to us, for the UK to be in a partnership of equals with it.

Similarly, the vast scale of the US economy means that any new geopolitical partnership for the UK cannot include the US. We would simply be signing up to be dominated. The EU and US are likely to be our most important trading partners

and we should certainly seek good trade deals with each of them. But they cannot be geopolitical partners.

We are leaving the EU because, although for many years we benefitted by being members, in the end (rightly or wrongly) we have felt unable to go the final steps with our EU partners down their path of ever-closer political integration. We felt (rightly or wrongly) that we didn't have quite enough in common with them, in terms of our constitution, legal and political traditions, and culture. It didn't help that, towards the end, we ended up linked to members of the EU with much lower GDP per capita than ours, creating tensions over issues such as free movement.

If we accept that that is why we are leaving the EU and we also agree that the UK would benefit by having a geopolitical partnership with medium-sized countries with similar values and goals, a question naturally presents itself: What other countries are there, with similar values and goals to ours, with whom we might have more in common, constitutionally, legally, politically and culturally, and in terms of GDP per capita? Put that way the question answers itself: Canada and Australia are very similar to the UK in all those dimensions. If we add in New Zealand, we get a nice acronym for the country group: CANZUK.

It is beyond dispute that these countries share a great deal in the relevant dimensions. The term "CANZUK" is believed to have been first coined by diplomats to reflect the tendency for representatives of these four countries to vote together in

global fora. They share Parliamentary political systems and traditions, come under the same Head of State (the Queen) and the Common Law. Their GDPs per capita are fairly similar (in 2014, the U.K. had a GDP per capita of about US$46,000, versus US$44,000 for New Zealand, US$50,000 for Canada and Australia a little higher at US$62,000).

Canada, Australia and New Zealand are also the countries Britons like most, by a large margin. A 2011 survey by the research firm YouGov found that Australia, New Zealand and Canada are regarded as "especially favourable" by 48, 47 and 44 per cent of Britons. The next most-favoured country, the U.S., was way behind at 31 per cent, and the most-favoured EU member, the Netherlands, had only half the favourability of those three countries, at 24 per cent. The feeling is fairly mutual. A 2014 survey found 80 per cent of Canadians and 73 per cent of Australians regard the U.K.'s influence as "mainly positive."

Together, these four countries would have huge geopolitical clout. Between them they would control a surface area of more than 18 million square kilometres, the largest in the world, exceeding even Russia's 17 million. Their combined population, at 128 million, would be the world's 10th largest, just ahead of Japan. Their combined military spending of around US$110 billion would be the world's third largest, behind the U.S. and China but well ahead of Russia. At US$6.5 trillion in combined GDP, the CANZUK countries would constitute the fourth-largest group in the world, behind the U.S., EU and China. At nearly two-thirds the combined

GDP of China, no one could deny that a CANZUK economic grouping would be economically significant. Total global trade of these four countries would be worth more than US$3.5 trillion, versus around US$4.8 trillion for the U.S., US$4.2 trillion for China, or US$1.7 trillion for Japan. These are big numbers.

To repeat a point made earlier, we should not expect that the CANZUK countries would be each other's largest trading partners. For the UK that would be the EU and US. But geopolitical partnerships don't need to be the main trading partnerships. When the UK joined the EEC, less than 20% of its trade was with the EEC6. This would be a geopolitical partnership.

It key initial elements would be a free trade agreement, a free movement agreement (freedom to migrate to live and work) and a mutual defence agreement. If that worked well, we could consider building other, closer ties. Whereas the EU needed many harmonising measures to force differing countries together, natural affinities in CANZUK mean we might need much less. But to emphasize that this is not a new British Empire, we should locate any EU-style governing institutions outside the UK – probably in NZ.

A CANZUK alliance would allow its peoples to assert their very similar culture and values in the world as a major global player instead of secondary regional players ultimately subservient to others. It would allow enormous opportunities for mutual reinforcement and protection, trade growth, the

flow of people and weight in global economic, regulatory and geopolitical decision-making. When CANZUK speaks, all would listen. Shall we try?


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## Grammar Schools – The Great Dividers, or a Tool for the Strivers?

*The Secretary, New College*

Theresa May's premiership has put at the top of its agenda tackling the 'burning injustices' that continue to pervade our society. Her Downing Street statement on her first day as Prime Minister sought to tackle the reality that those born poor live shorter lives, that white working class boys are the group least likely to go to university, and that those students who went to a state school are less likely to reach the top professions than those who were educated privately. However, as the vision of a country that works for everyone is pushed forwards, educational inequality is a systemic problem dragging it back every time. Region and income levels continue to dictate academic performance. In the Isle of Wight, only 17% of children go to a good or outstanding school – opposed to 100% in areas such as Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. Only 33.1% of students receiving free school meals (FSM) achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, opposed to 60.9% for all other students.[1] Worse performance at school makes children more likely to go to prison, less likely to go to university, have a lower lifetime income, and die sooner. This is inequality and injustice at the deepest level, holding back hardworking people before they have even started their professional life. This article will seek to examine whether the proposal to lift the ban on grammar school

[1] According to 2015 data from the Department for Education.

conversion and creation may help to solve this burning injustice.

Grammar schools have much appeal. They appear a way to provide a private school quality education to children from all levels of income. Their proponents often claim that they will turn Britain into a great meritocracy, by giving children from low or middle income backgrounds a chance to thrive in an outstanding school and by reducing the attainment gap between rich and poor students. Finally, their proponents in part support them for their perceived role in aiding overall educational excellence.

However, grammar schools as they have existed have failed to increase overall standards. The Education Policy Institute estimates that whilst those who attend grammar schools benefit by around 0.3 grades in each GCSE, whilst those left behind lose out by 0.1 grade per GCSE. So surely grammar schools can improve overall standards in schooling and thus benefit more pupils simply by expanding and creating more selective places in a region? Sadly, not quite – in the most selective areas of the country there is only a benefit of 0.1 grade per GCSE for going to a grammar school, whereas the loss for students who do not go to a grammar school expands to 0.2 grades per GCSE. This takes place as more teachers move to grammar schools and there are fewer academically successful children in comprehensives, harming comprehensives, and the dilution of talent at grammar schools makes them less effective. Therefore, grammar schools as they have existed will either benefit the privileged few and harm

the vast majority, or will marginally help a larger minority and hurt a smaller majority more dearly. In both cases, overall educational standards will not improve.

Furthermore, grammar schools as they have existed have failed to bring about social mobility, having in fact generally hindered educational equality between income groups as opposed to helping it. Fundamentally, this is because of the class segregation that takes place in grammar schools. Only 3% of pupils at grammar schools receive free school meals, opposed to 18% of pupils in non-grammar schools in the same area. This is likely a contributory factor to areas with grammar schools having a wider gap between the level of FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils attaining 5 A*-Cs at GCSE. Furthermore, the argument that grammar schools reduce the attainment gap between children from wealthier and poorer backgrounds is not an especially strong one, as when only a tiny proportion of the very brightest pupils from working class backgrounds are taken, then of course when you only look at difference in attainment by parental income then you will find greatly reduced difference than you would find between all FSM pupils and all non-FSM pupils – but this is in large part due to the underrepresentation of FSM pupils, as opposed to the role of grammar schools in reducing the attainment gap.

However, there are encouraging signs in Justine Greening's grammar schools Green Paper[2] for proponents of social

[2] 'Schools that Work for Everyone', Department for Education, 12.9.16

mobility. The selective schools will be encouraged to have fair access strategies in place to encourage access from all social groups, and will only be allowed to expand if they help to ensure good quality non-selective places locally, for example by establishing a feeder primary school. Such moves are a positive step and will likely make new selective schools work better than the old grammar schools model did. However, this seems to be merely a move to paper over the cracks – given that 60% of educational inequality has already taken place by the end of primary school, and given the difficulty of producing a test impossible to be tutored for, it is difficult to conceive of a grammar schooling system that does not disproportionately favour what May may call 'the privileged few'. Furthermore, as converting to grammar schools and establishing new grammar schools will require local support, it seems likely that most new grammar schools will be expanded and built in areas in which they already exist. This is a problem as while grammar schools will have to help the local community in some way, the problems intrinsic to expanding selection in areas which already have selection – of further teacher flight, of talent dilution in grammar schools, and of a loss of role models in non-grammar schools – will not disappear. Fundamentally, it is likely that selection will increase in the areas where its benefits will be smallest, and it is unlikely that problems intrinsic to grammar schools of disproportionately accepting wealthy students and worsening the quality of education for the majority of children in our country will disappear.

What should be noted, however, is that the grammar school policy is unlikely to be hugely important. Most parents do not support grammar schools as the children of most parents will not go to them. As selection needs local support, and as there are so many hoops for schools to jump through in the Green Paper, it is unlikely that selection will be expanded much. Therefore, this policy is unlikely to have much impact. Furthermore, grammar schools, whilst harming most students and benefitting brighter ones, seem to do neither to a huge extent and makes a smaller difference than schools converting to other types of schools, such as Blair's sponsored academies. In effect, while grammar schools do harm social mobility, and further selection will likely further harm social mobility, the lack of a revolutionary impact of a grammar school coupled with the likelihood of very few grammar schools being created means that the impact of this bill will likely be small. In fact, the largest impact of the controversial and highly publicised reintroduction of grammar schools may in fact be the loss of legislative time to talk about other, more important ways to tackle educational inequality, such as making school governors more accountable and enriching early years education.

## An Age of Decline?

*The Political Officer, Magdalen College*

America, claim the pessimists and the naysayers, is dead. A series of failed interventions, gridlocked government, ballooning debt and growing international impotence have all robbed the largest, the richest and the greatest democracy on Earth of its superpower status. This idea is fundamentally false. The Obama era, while it has undoubtedly seen major social reform, has been something of a cul de sac for foreign policy. NATO members quiver at his 'leadership from behind' in Libya and the failure of the 'line in the sand' over Assad's chemical weapons. However, eight years of relatively uninspired foreign policy should not be taken as indicative of an overall malaise in the power of the States, rather they should be viewed as little more than a pause, a step back from the world which has not fundamentally altered the realities of American power.

The first basis on which American power remains pre-eminent is simple - its military strength. American military spending currently stands at a massive $600bn per annum, more than twice the budget of China ($205bn) and Russia ($66.4bn) put together. Not only is this sum huge, it amounts to no more than 3.3% of American GDP, compared to the 5.4% of Russia's output which is channeled to the military. This sum is divided in two ways. First it is spent on direct military assets (the army, the navy, the airforce etc.), and second it is spent on Research and Development. The $79.1bn poured into this part

of the budget has ensured that the American armed forces remain the best equipped force for its size anywhere in the world. Compare this to Russia's rusting Soviet-era navies, trapped in dock because they aren't safe to take to sea.

American military power is also greatly supplemented by its deployability. The 10 carrier groups currently in service provide the opportunity to bring overwhelming force to almost any part of the globe within days, meaning that in any conventional war America begins with an advantage that no other country has. It is however worth considering that China's policy in the South China Sea of building naval and airbases is an attempt to set up similar, though more geographically limited power projection capabilities.

The final aspect of American military power which should not be forgotten is its nuclear deterrent. America maintains a total stock of c. 7300 nuclear warheads. This underpins the policy of mutually assured destruction which means that America is not likely ever to enter an existential war with another nuclear power. If Britain's superpower status was ended by winning World War II, France's by losing the Napoleonic Wars and, to look far further back, Athens' by losing the Peloponnesian War, it is not clear how, in a world with Nuclear weapons, America could fall into the same trap. Therefore it is clear that not only is American foreign policy (defined by Roosevelt as 'speaking softly while carrying a big stick') in fundamentally good health despite recent neglect, but also America does not face an existential threat to its position as superpower, as

unseating it from that position is impossible in a world with nuclear weapons.

‘But’, say the naysayers, ‘Donald Trump is an isolationist, and besides how long can America continue to pay given its declining growth rate and ballooning debt?’ This once again is a misreading of the situation. Trumpism, if it takes hold, may see a return to some form of isolationism, but it would be a brave president who significantly reduced the size of the armed forces considering the impact on unemployment, and it would be a lucky president who got such a measure through both houses, even if the Republicans achieve a clean sweep in the forthcoming elections. Similarly, claims of declining American economic might are based on a failure to observe long term economic and demographic trends. America is a young country, with a median age of 37.6 years. These workers should have a net positive effect on the American economy for decades to come, while other developed nations struggle with slowing birth rates and even declining populations. Crucially, these workers should be able to pay for the great pensions crisis emerging among aging populations across the Western world, maintaining the viability not only of the American economy but also of the American government’s budget.

Furthermore, even if America’s economic size is shrinking in relative terms, it is well worth noting that this does not equate to an instant loss of power. The United Kingdom’s industrial sector was outstripped by both Germany and America as early

as the 1870s, and yet it remained the premier world power at least until 1918, and arguably for another 30 years after that.

It is clear therefore that the two cornerstones of American power, its military and its economy, remain strong despite moderate headwinds emerging from the last eight years and from concerns around the presidential election. As long as these remain in place America's strength is left undiminished in meaningful terms, and its position as superpower is not under threat.

A moment should be taken to think of those threats to the American state which cannot easily be defeating using conventional methods. These come in two forms. First there is the threat of Islamic terrorism. While the 9/11 attacks and their ilk were extraordinary moments of tragedy in America, and while the deaths of thousands of innocents for an ideology they do not accept is undeniably a bad thing, terrorism has not yet proved itself capable of proving an existential threat to the country. As long as the government maintains funding to the CIA and NSA, the government should be able to contain this threat and prevent it at least from spiralling into too severe a threat. The second problem is cyber warfare. This is insidious because it is extremely hard to prevent, and can be used both to undermine confidence in the government and attack the private sector. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any information of existential importance could be stolen. All information relating to nuclear weapons for example is disconnected from any other network, meaning it can only be stolen directly from its geographical location. It is therefore

unlikely that cyber warfare can pose a severe enough threat to undermine the basis of American power.

In conclusion then, it is hard to see how America's superpower status, tarnished and muddied as it might currently be, is under fundamental threat, given that its pillars remain as firm as ever they did. It is telling that the end of American power was called after Vietnam, after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and after Iraq, and its eventual decline was predicted in the face of Soviet, then Japanese, then Chinese economic and/or military development, and yet it has not occurred. America remains a rich and strong state, and, crucially, does not face an existential threat, meaning that its position as a superpower, indeed as the superpower, does not seem likely to change any time soon.

## Why Conservatism needs an Ideology

*The Social Secretary, Christ Church*

Ideas are perhaps the greatest force for historical change in which individual agency has a significant role to play. Voltaire, for instance, in his small room in Versailles, held more power in his pen than the magnates that towered above him; Gramsci, huddled in his prison cell, could have an influence that far outlasted that of his Fascist persecutors. But it is a power to which conservatives have, to their great detriment, largely, been blind. For the last sixty years, the Conservative Party has dominated the electoral system, but the left, whose ideas captured the great commanding institutions of Britain, from academia to education, has succeeded in implementing their agenda in everything except for economics. The conservative party, created in order to defend British institutions, has ended as the defender of little, except its own pursuit of power, due to its inability to articulate the eternal principles that it aims to defend. The end result has been a weathervane that moves wherever the ideological winds take it- even if this means turning its back on the entire tradition of conservative policy, as Cameron did when he attempted to abolish the remaining hereditary peers to solidify his electoral pact with the Liberal Democrats.

When most conservative voters are asked why they support the party, the response will be something typically vague, like, ‘for a stronger economy’, or ‘lower taxes’ or because Labour are ‘incompetent.’ An image of competence has great uses, but

it reduces the job of the conservative party to an administrative exercise, to a mere implementation of the ideas and writings that truly shape the public consensus. An appeal to the humanity's baser instincts can only have so much power: after all, 'man does not live on bread alone.' The presentation of a technocratic vision of efficiency cannot contend with more emotive ideas of liberation and compassion. A negative campaign focusing on the risks of alternative governments, as was used against Miliband, can only succeed for so long. Nor can an increasingly fragile image of pragmatism command the same influence as the intellectual systems propounded by an academia largely dominated by the left.

The potency of a conservatism driven by ideology and moral force was revealed during the Thatcher years. Made articulate, by the intellectual rigour of Hayek and Friedman, Thatcher was able to do what few Conservative governments have ever done: propose a systemised ideological framework within which to make policy. This allowed Thatcher to not just show a more moderate and effective way of implementing the views of others, but to present a new vision of what the British economy should look like. In short, it meant that the implementation of a socialist order was not just slowed but actually reversed. Unfortunately, the creed of Thatcherism was a narrow one, and its exclusive focus on economic matters meant that Thatcherism also undermined the enduring institutions that the Conservative Party was meant to protect. It left a legacy of a party that could only talk in the language

of economics, and unwilling to challenge the left on wider issues.

However, a more holistic conservative creed could challenge the left in other spheres as well, and reverse their pernicious undermining of national institutions and ideals. Such a creed already exists, based upon the ideas of an eclectic range of thinkers from Burke to Coleridge, and Oakeshott to Scruton. It presents a vision of humanity as fundamentally and ineradicably flawed, and only liberated by the institutions and norms which the left believe are at the heart of man's oppression. It argues that human reason, rather than being perfectly rational, is weak, fallible and woefully inadequate to the task of creating a new and better world from scratch. It defends traditions and institutions as the sources from which practical and social knowledge spring, as well as the foundations of the moral order. It views politics as a gradual process of reconciliation and reform that should be made congruent to a pre-existent institutional, intellectual and social framework, improving systems of government, preserving the stability that is necessary for evolutionary growth. Most potently, it argues for man as a communal being, embedded within particular loyalties and cultural networks.

That such an ideology has wide resonance, even when the principles are not clearly articulated, is demonstrated by the victory of Vote Leave in the Brexit referendum. YouGov polling shows that for most people, the most important reason to leave was sovereignty. In other words, the referendum was a vote in defence of the most important British institution of

all: the nation-state. The fact that many voters were willing to leave even if it made their material circumstances worse demonstrates the power of such ideas, above and beyond, economic interests. The second most important reason for leaving was immigration, which, similarly, suggests the potency of conservative ideas around community, culture and the preservation of British values. Just as significant is the fact that the strongest predictors of voting leave were positive views on traditional institutions like the death penalty. Thus there is clearly a strong support base for a wider more holistic defence of British values and heritage. As globalisation and atomisation intensifies, this reaction will no doubt grow stronger. The job of the Conservative Party must be to communicate this reaction, and forge a new consensus around patriotism, community and fundamental British institutions.

If the Conservative Party does not succeed in doing this, the alternative is bleak. In the last thirty years, there has been a clear decline in trust in politicians, a decline in public-spiritedness, a general decline in social trust and identity with national institutions, and an increasingly polarised politics. With the decline of patriotic fervour and community feeling, society has fractured into smaller units. The modern Briton is, therefore, presented with a brave new world of anomie and atomisation, devoid of community and higher ideals. As modern bureaucratic and fiscal systems are dependent upon a common feeling among a people to promote sacrifices for the common-good (such as fiscal transfers), this new era will have just as pernicious an effect upon political structures and their legitimacy. Thus, if, the Conservative Party does not present a

holistic, ideological defence of British institutions, traditions and ideas, we shall, like Burke, live only to mourn the fading away of: '…all the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart knows and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked and shivering nature...'[3]

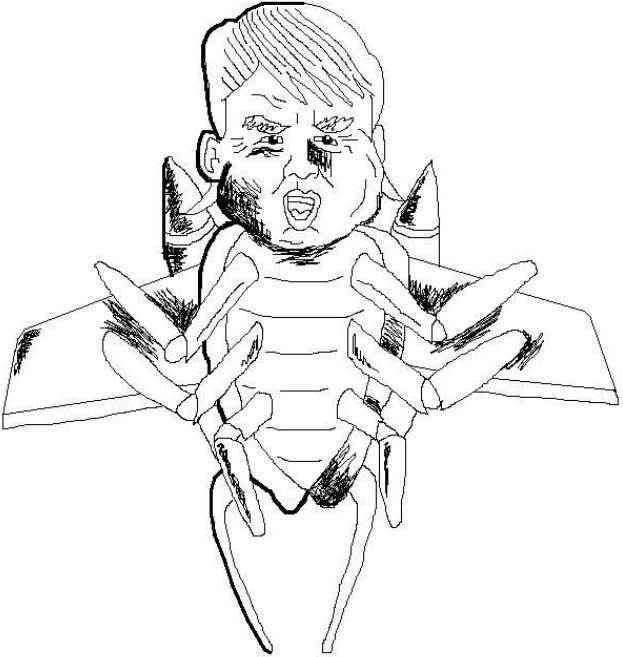
[3] Burke, E., *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (Penguin 2004), 171

## The Left

*The Communications Director, Corpus Christi College*

It is with a heavy heart that one observes the turmoil which has beset the Labour Party in the period since Jeremy Corbyn was made leader more than a year ago. It has demoted the only other viable party of government into an ineffectual talking shop or a cesspit of intolerance and abuse (depending on how 'pure' your particular brand of socialism happens to be). Labour struggle to put a meaningful shadow cabinet together, and every significant failure of the government in the last 12 months has gone unnoticed in the burning building of traditional opposition. The Liberal Democrats (though there is much to like about them) have become as vanilla in their policy proposals as their penny-farthing leader who managed to be seemingly absent in a referendum where the Liberal Democrats should have made a name for themselves. One should not count on the SNP to provide constructive opposition to the government. They have no interest in improving policy outcomes. All they want is independence for Scotland and Westminster’s failings work in their favour, as things that can be weaponised on the doorstep. They are the ultimate party of the demagogue, and they have shirked their responsibilities in truly governing Scotland for far too long.

Some contributors to this fine edition of Blueprint may salivate like an overly excited pug at the prospect of seemingly perpetual Conservative rule. I cannot say I share those sentiments, for we are a party of humans and humans are



*~ The rare American Trump beetle, With Oragainstus ~*

prone to error. Especially those of us who operate under the mask of ideology, that counterbalance to the critical faculties and free thought held so dearly by the Enlightenment thinker. Thus it is necessary that the moderates of the party must play themselves against its more radical/reactionary elements. The draw of the Hegelian dialectic is just too strong. Progress does not appear from the ether, but is the product of the interaction of opposing ideas. Theresa May provides a welcome arbiter between these two party factions, but what I seek to provide is a model for how the best aspects of the Left can be 'borrowed' by the one nation crowd and be furthered in what can only be described as 'a new kind of politics'.

One sincerely hopes that the admission of the Left as a force for good is not too controversial. There will be some who deplore even this concession. Socialism should be seen for what it is, not what it can be made to be. There are so many decent members of the Left who seek not to enslave people but to ensure that they are free from suffering and misery. No more noble pursuit than this can be found in the arena of politics. The socialist will tend to have a vision of what ought to be. This is the first thing that moderates need to find. Pragmatism and an awareness of political constraints are vital, but we must dispel the myth that to be a moderate is to be somehow 'spineless' or without conviction. The Conservatives have to learn to abandon the pursuit of the Golden Age and seek to create a nation where people are substantially, as opposed to merely formally, free. This vision is what David Cameron so badly lacked. The political functionary does not capture the public imagination.

The other big thing we have to borrow from the Left is the ability make a moral case for some cause or another. One should not be afraid of pointing out the ability for capitalism to emancipate hundreds of millions of those who would have otherwise faced a poorer quality of life. We should not be ashamed to note that the neglect of the elderly and the vulnerable has gone on for far too long, often under the watch of a Conservative government. When Labour moderates like Tom Watson note that there are people out there who need a Labour government, then it is time for the Conservatives to pull up their socks and get to work. We should not be ashamed of advocating opposition to a policy because there are losses which cannot be measured in economic terms. Statecraft is not merely ensuring that economic metrics are good. Economic security should be merely the platform for graduatist, but impactful, reforms. Politics should never descend into the poverty of amorality.

With these things in mind we can make a forceful and coherent case for the future of the Party. There are many who would rather revel in the individualism which had been exercised a lot in the last thirty years. This trend must be fought, if only because we owe it to the people of this country to provide them with a society they can be proud of being a part of. Maybe that makes us a bit less free market. Maybe that makes us take risks, and admit that many mistakes have been made which need to be rectified. It may even need a revision of British political history. But, in the pursuit of a better and more engaged polity, none of these is necessarily a bad thing.

## The Art of Conservatism

*The Non-Executive Publicity Officer, Wadham College*

What does it mean exactly, when we say an artwork is conservative? It is a term loaded with connotations, of implicit criticism. It proclaims the piece under scrutiny is not daring or 'forward-thinking'; worse, it claims the artwork as part of the establishment, within the boundaries of bourgeois aesthetics. For over 260 years now, art has had to be part of the *avant-garde*, to upset sensibilities, for it to reap critical success. Just as the language of the left has co-opted 'progressive' and 'regressive' into its terminology, establishing a paradigm where to be conservative is to be negative, similarly the linguistics of art has morphed into the opposition of 'innovative' and 'conservative'. In a Western context, a conservative artist, it is alleged, is an unthinking transmitter of the dominant (oppressive, capitalist) ideology, while the innovative artist deconstructs society, critiquing it through a lens situated somewhere on a left-wing continuum.

So who are these small 'c' conservative artists? It's complicated. Many of the artists now criticised for their regressive politics, for being misogynistic or colonialist, were deemed radical in their day. Eugène Delacroix is a classic case; as a Romantic in the 1820s and '30s, his aggressive brushwork and colouring drew strong rebukes from establishment critics. In terms of form and technique, Delacroix was a far-reaching, original artist. Yet in contemporary scholarship, pioneered by Edward Said in his

work *Orientalism* (1978), Delacroix is a figure of oppression, exploiting imperialist desires in works like *The Massacre at Chios* (1824), presenting the Turkish as exotic barbarians. This dissonance between style and substance - progressive and reactionary simultaneously - has always made dealing with Delacroix difficult for analysts. Lee Johnson highlighted his proto-modernism, while Nissan Perez, Alina Sajed, and Fatema Mernissi have argued he deployed an aesthetic of subjugation of women and Arabs. These kind of ideological debates now range from Renoir to Picasso (a member of the French Communist Party). What was once radical is now establishment, displayed in the National Gallery, collected by the Qatari Royal Family (who bought one of Cézanne's *Card Players* for c.$250 million).

However, before the ruptures of modernism in the mid-19th century, most European artists stayed inside the Academy, experimented inside conventions of style and subject. There was no contemporary artist like El Greco in 16th century Spain, but are his themes any different to Michaelangelo, the painter to Pope Paul III? The

Delacroix, *Massacre at Chios* (1824)

Roman Catholic Church's centrality and the depiction of key Biblical scenes, is never questioned. In part it was because the only patrons of the arts were the church and the aristocracy, who rigorously dictated what was to allowed to be depicted, art's ideology symptomatic of society, rather than disturbing the social order. The art market, even without considering legislative binds, was a very effective tool of censorship by being a monopoly in the hands of the power-wielding monarchy and church. There was no space for an artist *not* to be a conservative. Even in the liberalised world of art in the Dutch Republic, where the bourgeois merchant class was the prime patron, as opposed to the secular or religious authorities, genres like the *memento mori* or the *vanitas* emphasised Protestant morality, the immaculate surfaces of a Willem Kalf still life a mirror of the cleanliness Dutch homes were meant to aspire to. Despite the Netherlands being a country without a monarchy, a notion so radical as to be heretical, the moral ideology of its art was determinedly Christian, warning against avarice, greed, and materialism.

Kalf, *Still Life with Drinking Horn* (1653)

We can observe therefore, that fundamentally breaking with conventions of style is not *intrinsically* progressive (and thus left-wing), as can be seen in the criticism of the Romantic art of Ingres and Delacroix, and

even more clearly in the fascist allegiances of Italy's Futurist movement in the early twentieth century. The Futurists not only awakened the previously moribund state of art in Italy, but they united Cubism and Fauvism in an influential modernist style that inspired England's Vorticism. Yet they were the favoured artists of Mussolini's regime. Far-right modernism might be unexpected when considering the Nazi's regime's intentionally archaic and classical symbolism, but also recall how the International Style has been embraced by despotic governments as a status symbol.

Yet I would propose that none of the art so far discussed is actually conservative in the Tory sense of the word. They were either constrained by their cultures or were radical but are now judged as not progressive enough. Neither are conservative by choice. There was no sense that painting in the 16th century like Caravaggio was anachronistic, nor would Baudelaire have agreed that Delacroix was reactionary. No; to be truly conservative as a painter is to be unconcerned with the radical *de jure*; to find the wisdom of the past to be sufficient, its artistic application far from exhausted.

Bonnard, *La grande baignoire* (1937)

As such, allow me to highlight one artist as the conservative painter *par excellence*: Pierre Bonnard.

Bonnard began exhibiting paintings in the 1890s just when the Post-Impressionists emerged; initially drawn to the Symbolists, he soon settled into a definite vein of Impressionism, unconcerned by the 'advances' of Van Gogh, Gauguin or Toulouse-Lautrec. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, as movements became more abstract and daring, Bonnard was happy to paint his chiefly domestic, Impressionist scenes in the south of France. His pulsating colour and the exuberance of his brush makes him almost an ally of the Romantics. It is hard to think of more *pleasurable* works than *La grande baignoire* (1937-9); such works capture the intense beauty of the Mediterranean light like few others. He had no need for Cubism or Dada - Impressionism served his needs amply.

However, whether an artist is a Bonnard or Delacroix, it matters not. They are now judged by art historians, for differing reasons, to be 'conservative'. If Picasso's ideology is now sexist, then, as the saying goes, 'the establishment always wins' – what was once revolutionary is made reactionary. Given time, all art becomes conservative.

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## A Written Constitution: Why Bother?

*The Committee Member, Hertford College*

Unlike many other constitutional issues, such as repealing the Human Rights Act, dealing with legal contingencies produced by the devolution, and building a post-Brexit constitutional framework, creation of a written constitution is neither in the centre of public discourse nor on the forefront of the main political parties' agenda. In fact, it remains a prerogative of academics to discuss it, and hence model constitution projects like the ones developed to mark the 800-year anniversary of Magna Carta rarely enter the policy sphere. In this article, I will make an attempt to challenge the treatment of this question as 'out of touch' with the real world needs and make a case for entertaining the idea of a written constitution not only in theory, but in practice, while recognising the associated risks.

First, a written constitution will resolve uncertainty on two levels: defining legal rules themselves and establishing a hierarchy of them in a legal system. The current law appears to be tainted by uncertainty over what can be regarded as 'constitutional statutes' and 'constitutional principles', mainly developed through the common law in cases such as Thoburn v Sunderland City Council. As Lord Neuberger stated,[4] a single document is likely to have primacy over other sources of law, thus resolving any such collisions that might occur

[4] At the Legal Wales Conference, 2014

within the existing system as well as reaffirming sovereignty before the international bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights.

Secondly, as the constitutional law is significantly changed following current and future Conservative reforms ('English votes for English laws', and a proposal to abolish the Human Rights Act), a new written constitution might be able to encompass and conceptualise these alterations. As they touch on key matters of legal interaction within and outside the UK, a written document might, again, resolve any confusion that arises.

Thirdly, as highlighted by the Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee in one of its reports,[5] there is a strong public support for a written constitution (with a small caveat that this question as a whole was not treated as particularly important by the electorate) and creation of such a document might increase legitimacy endowed in the government institutions. More legal certainty and transparency will make the intricacies of government operation more accessible and thus more trustworthy.

However, it should not be denied that adopting a written constitution might pose some objections. It can be rightly argued that the current constitution is working well in being flexible, and gradually accommodating all social and political changes (and thus putting organic model of constitutionalism

[5] 'A new Magna Carta?', HC 463

into practice). Therefore, it might not pose any risks such as previously discussed, unlike the written constitution, effects of which might be unpredictable.

For example, a written constitution might be forced to crystallise certain rules and principles, which might constrain the future generations as the context and conditions surrounding them change. Likewise, making a written constitution would force us to have a certain and clear stance on controversial political questions such as the scope of parliamentary privilege that remains a point of tension between the judiciary and the Commons (Barber, 2008) which would otherwise be subject to interpretation and debate. In this regard, the current organic model is much more favourable for society to progress and avoid collapsing into constitutional crises.

Most importantly, a written constitution is very likely to skew the balance of powers in favour of the unelected judiciary as opposed to the Parliament, since the document and its judicial interpretations will have higher priority than the Parliament's will. This can be regarded as particularly problematic in the light of democratic principles and parliamentary sovereignty (the latter at least in 'continuing' rather than 'self-embracing' theory, i.e., when a single parliament is allowed to bind future parliaments with its decisions).

Therefore, while a case for a written constitution continues to be strong and worthy of examination, so is the argument in favour of status quo. It can be argued that while a written

constitution might be considered an important and useful development, it is still ‘a leap in the dark’, since the effects of it will significantly alter the political framework. After all, there is a reason why this idea has not been treated well by the policymakers and the unwritten constitution has been in place for centuries - let it be.

## The EU's Migration Crisis – A test for conservative values?

*Mr Alexander Illingworth, St Anne's College*

Unless, like Diogenes of Sinope, you've been living in a large ceramic jar for the past few years, you will be aware of the migration crisis sweeping Europe, as well as its origins, and the policies being implemented by the EU to try and tackle it.

Perhaps the most topical point of contention is the question of what is to happen to them during the UK's negotiations for leaving the EU. The issue is complex, and raises a number of different possible scenarios; from sharing the burden of migration should we choose an EEA style post-Brexit deal, to not taking on any whatsoever. Closer to home are the Calais migrants, whom France has vowed – and has begun – to relocate, but is, it is very clear, struggling. There has been some speculation that Theresa May's government may have to face the migrants both being used by others, and potentially even by Britain itself, as bargaining chips – and straight away, we find a reason to despair even now at the moral degeneracy that Brexit will make both parties stoop to.

No matter which side of the debate you stand on, whether you oppose migration on culturally conservative grounds or economic grounds, or whether you wish to welcome them with open arms, it cannot be denied that the wars in the Middle East and the displacement of people forms not only one of the most challenging political crises of our time, but also one of the most tragic human crises too. As with all

humanitarian crises, especially those on such a large scale as this, we are faced with a dilemma: do we do what seems to be morally right and help as many people as we can, allow them to relocate to our countries, even temporarily to escape their suffering? Do we err on the side of caution and place a blanket ban on accepting migrants from war torn countries? Or do we try to find a balance between the two? British politics is polarised, with sizeable portions of the population backing the first two solutions. What has dismayed me is the lack of discussion of the third option.

On the one hand, I am a conservative, this much is true, and many associate the conservative standpoint with opposition to immigration, especially that which is perceived to be mass immigration. In one sense this is correct: a sovereign nation should have control of its borders, and immigration, whilst it certainly can be economically beneficial, should not be pursued to an excessive degree. I certainly do not agree with any kind of "open border" policy which some like to proffer from time to time – that, however, is another story. Despite all this, true one nation conservatives should always try to reconcile the pragmatism of their ideology with a sense of morality and care for the vulnerable. If Theresa May is to lead a truly one nation Conservative government, she must seek to do the same.

On the one hand – would it be practical to accept all migrants in an open door style? I would say no. Not only would it be a great economic cost merely to organise the admission of so large a number of people at a time of relative economic

hardship, but it would include a threat to national security, and given the recent instability in Europe, I do not think such a move could ever be considered wise. On the other hand, using human beings as bargaining chips in a political game of monopoly is not something that can ever be condoned. We must remember that the vast majority of migrants are ordinary people, and as such ought to be treated with respect and have each of their circumstances considered. Many are also desperate, which adds to the urgency of finding a solution.

I doubt we will see the Calais border moving despite some feathers being ruffled in France, since the treaty establishing the border on French territory is bilateral between the UK and the French Republic, and that would need to be renegotiated between those countries before it could change. So what can we do? Well, Britain will leave the EU at some point, with some kind of deal, either with or without freedom of movement.

If Britain is to retain freedom of movement, we will have to share the common burden of migration; that is a foregone conclusion. Not only is it an obligation of such an agreement, but it would simply be impossible under the circumstances not to participate in distributing migration across countries under the agreement. If, as is becoming increasingly clear, and I personally believe will happen, we will not retain freedom of movement, then whilst we may not cooperate directly with European countries in relocating the migrants, we must not cut our ties with these allied nations in helping them deal with this crisis. We still have a heart, and British charities and

organisations must continue to, as they do now, help those who are desperately in need of basic humanitarian supplies and comfort.

We must consider which option we are more prepared to choose, both morally and economically. The facts are out there, and both have their advantages and disadvantages, it is merely a case of seeing what the EU is willing and is not willing to work with us on during this process. One thing is for certain – never can we ignore the suffering of human beings, and never is it acceptable to make war on other human beings save for our own national defence. Such wars sow the seeds for the suffering that we are seeing seep into Europe even now. Perhaps action to try and bring the conflicts in the Middle East to a close could be a start.

## The Free Market and Social Conservatism

*Miss Louise Kandler, Lady Margaret Hall*

There is a growing movement on the right, a movement full of people who who moan about the growth of mental health as a medical field, who whine about the 'big pharma' selling people 'happy pills'. They grumble about fashion companies choosing to start clothing lines specifically aimed at those who identify as outside the gender binary, not to mention Facebook offering 71 genders as an option when you sign up. They complain about all of this, and in the same breath describe themselves as unashamedly pro-capitalism, without even the tiniest hint of irony. The name of this movement? The alternative right (or alt-right).

The alternative right is, fundamentally, a contrarian movement. They base their views on opposing the hard left, dubbed 'social justice warriors' (or SJWs) by the right, on every single issue they can. These so-called SJWs have an extremely insular world view for the most part – they are so assured of their moral superiority that they do not attempt to engage with opposing views, instead staying in their 'safe spaces' – where everyone agrees and they don't have to deal with the outside world, which is full of people who are immoral (translation: disagree with them). I know their way of thinking very well, as I used to be one. As a result of this refusal to engage with differing political views they have a very poor understanding of what constitutes right wing, which

in all fairness is partly due to the left-right spectrum being an enormous oversimplification of the huge variety of political beliefs that one can hold. They believe capitalism and social conservatism to be not only totally compatible, but virtually equivalent. This incredibly flawed perception of right wing views is what the alternative right base their entire ideology on – and therefore end up with inconsistent and sometimes even nonsensical opinions themselves.

The truth is that a free market and social conservatism are fundamentally incompatible ideas. The industrial revolution saw a massive change across the UK, and ever since then capitalism has continued to be all about change and progress. Responding to the needs and wants of the consumer, otherwise known as general society. As views progress to become more tolerant and accepting of those who are different – gay people, transgender people, those who suffer with mental health difficulties – there become gaps in the market to sell products specifically aimed at these people. The large pharmaceutical companies are working on hormone treatment to help those who identify as transgender transition (a development which would be moving a lot faster if it we had a privatised, social insurance healthcare model, similar to France's, rather than a nationalised health service). Clothing lines start releasing clothing specifically aimed at non binary people, those who identify as neither female nor male. Facebook increases the number of gender options for its users in order to appeal to a wider range of people. Businesses and companies scramble over each other to come out in favour of LGBT rights. This all reflects a social progression towards a more tolerant society,

and it is undeniable that our society is becoming more tolerant over time if we look at the overall trends, in spite of the recent rise of right wing populism.

I have many socially conservative friends who, while I disagree with them, do have well thought-out, nuanced opinions, and always remain respectful in debates. But the truth is that to maintain a socially conservative country, you need a more protectionist economy – a free market will continue down the trend of social progression, right behind the middle class activists consumed by class guilt. I am not pretending that capitalism in its current form is a utopia – it needs to be reformed to ensure that social mobility becomes much more achievable than in its current form, but you would need a great deal of state intervention in the economy in order to prevent companies from creating products and services which fill the gaps in the market created by the acceptance of new minority groups.

In short, the alternative right pose themselves as anti-establishment conservatives, a massive oxymoron which makes absolutely no sense as a political ideology. While the movement may have helped Trump's rise to power somewhat, the main influence the alternative right currently wields is the ability to be mildly annoying within Facebook discussion groups. I sincerely hope it never goes any further than that.

**Only a new empathetic politics can save the political nation**

Mr Leo McGrath, Lady Margaret Hall

Britain in 2016 is wracked by division, uncertainty and mistrust. Momentous events, identity politics and reliance on social media are opening up new fault lines and have revealed ugly and dangerous fissures. What we have seen over the past weeks and months has transcended the boundaries of ordinary political discourse and revealed the dark underside of our public politics. It has happened in recognition of the importance of recognising national political institutions as intrinsically important, and a breakdown in the ability of the electorate to consider each other with that most basic and most civilised emotion: empathy. This an existential threat to this most basic characteristic of democratic politics, and we need to direct all our energies into considering what we can do to create a more healthy and sustainable political culture.

The idea of 'One Nation' is employed frequently by Left and Right, and is perhaps the best antidote to these worrying developments. This is because it engenders an understanding that democratic political culture relies on the active pursuit of understanding and empathy between those of different political positions. It relies on the assumption that a common spirit is essential for the coherence of the nation, and a belief that current political systems should be preserved. Above all, it requires a respect of the rights to political rights of legally co-equal citizens.

Our new Prime Minister on the steps of Downing Street set her rhetorical course by this ideal. Yet I fear her daunting task will be made all the more difficult by the nature of modern politics. If we look at the origins of the phrase in Disraeli's novel *Sybil*, we begin to understand the problem:

[There exist] two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.

Sound familiar? Like the Victorian society Disraeli described, our political culture is increasingly devoid of the capacity and willpower necessary for empathy between those of different social worlds. We are witnessing the final destruction of the sense of common nationhood that has survived since the Second World War.

The electorate is marked, perhaps more than ever, by fundamental social and economic divisions. Politically, this process has been accelerated by social media as a forum for political discourse. Facebook and Twitter have made it easy for people who think alike to surround themselves with each other to the exclusion of others. Algorithms have created echo-chambers millions strong. Such closed social circles make for political shocks, as many Labour supporters found to their cost in 2015, as did Remainers this year. But those

parallel universes of which Disraeli wrote, the sheer ignorance, arrogance, and lack of empathy some feel for those who do not subscribe to their view of the world, cannot be healthy for a modern parliamentary democracy.

Arrogance and lack of empathy can be seen among all age-groups in society, but it is most common among Millennials and 'Generation Z'. In a typical example, I discovered in a recent discussion with a colleague the word 'woke' (adj. describing someone 'awoken' to enlightened 'progressive' views), a phrase now common in some circles. It casually implies those who disagree with them are to be pitied, are lesser human beings, and altogether should be subjected to a decent education (indoctrination). It is a symptom of the vacuous identity politics that is becoming the norm. The callous assumption of intellectual and moral superiority should have no place in our political discourse. Not everyone is guilty of such talk, of course, but it is a sign of things to come as a product of social media politics. Group-think of this kind simply makes empathy between groups impossible.

Some might say I am too pessimistic about our political participation. Take the Internet: surely it widens political participation? Well yes, but such participation! The environment and method of political engagement affects and directs how we think about other people. If people only experience politics on a platform geared to give you what you want to see, this will affect *how* we have political discussions, and what we expect from them. Politics will become about

identity and conformity. All political colours are susceptible, and we are in danger of creating a nastier society because of it.

The aftermath of the Brexit referendum exposed the implications for our political culture of this lack of empathy. The vitriol the young and entitled metropolitan few poured out over those who dared to disagree with them was truly shocking. Many observers noted how few of them really understood the motivations and reasons behind the vote. Lots of people did indeed vote as a protest against immigration, the establishment, or on the back of false promises. But many voted because they were politically helpless and hopeless, and felt they could do no other. Many people wanted change because they were desperate, and wanted those who lived in another world to hear them.

After the vote, someone of my acquaintance wrote a veritable essay on Facebook describing how everyone who voted to leave was racist, scared of change, resentful of the young and those with opportunities. We all saw such posts. It contained all the arguments one might expect, expressed in the most vitriolic and condescending of tones. This person expressed a loathing and a blind rage for those people who (for the most part) were much less lucky in life than they. The essayist, and many like them, simply failed to engage with those who disagreed with them at a human level. Devoid of understanding, they resorted to insults and petulance. In the words of Disraeli, Brexiteers and Remainers were (and are) so often ‘ignorant of each other’s habits’ and ‘inhabitants of different planets’.

Apart from being deeply unpleasant, a by-product of using doubt of the good motives of those who disagree with us as a political weapon, this is immeasurably dangerous for the health of our society. No polity driven by identity politics and riven with such an unwillingness to empathise is inherently stable or secure. As Conservatives, at a time when a divided Left has abdicated its duty to represent the views of the electorate, we need to encourage a form of political conversation which attempts to get beyond simplistic assumptions and personal judgements. This will be the path to electoral victory and a better Britain.

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