



NICK CLEGG MP
on Brexit, Trump and
the threat to liberalism

PROF VERNON BOGDANOR
on how populist politics has
fuelled a surge in nationalism



The end of the establishment?

Social reform

Bright Blue is generating fresh thinking about the purpose, design and financing of the UK's education and welfare systems to boost life chances and national prosperity. To compete in the global race, Britain needs to significantly improve the skills of its workforce and broaden access to high quality academic and vocational education. As the economy becomes more globalised, competitive and automated, Britain's social security system also needs revamping to improve its effectiveness and popularity.

Green conservatism

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RESEARCH THEMES

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Editor's letter



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2016 has been a political whirlwind: Brexit left political commentators stunned. The politically motivated murder of Jo Cox MP shocked the nation. Matteo Renzi has stood down as Italian Prime Minister after losing a constitutional referendum. And the controversial Donald Trump was elected the next President of the United States. Politics as we know it (or knew it) is changing.

Over the past year, populism and anti-establishment sentiment has flourished around the world and illiberal forces are on the rise. On the continent the populist right continues to gain support with many far-right parties leading in the polls. These movements promote nativism and threaten liberal values and institutions.

Deep discontent with the status quo has been expressed through the voting booth. Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, we should not have been surprised. Parts of society have felt left behind by globalisation and people face genuine challenges as a result of technological and economic upheaval. In a political arena where emotion trumps rationality, and fear trumps facts, liberalism seems to have become a scapegoat. But instead of just accepting bigotry and discarding liberal values, we need more sophisticated policy-making and a smarter role for the state if we are to respond effectively.

It is worrying to witness the trend of increasing distrust in members of the 'establishment'. Seeing how politicians, judges and other public servants are now frequently subjected to contemptuous abuse online and in print, one wonders why anyone would ever want to enter public service. A concern must be that this anti-establishment rhetoric will deter many people from trying to reach top positions. In a meritocratic democracy everyone should be able to aspire to join the establishment, and be proud of doing so.

In this edition of *Centre Write*, we explore this rise in anti-establishment politics. **Professor Vernon Bogdanor** (p.13) explores whether we have seen a resurrection of radical populism. Amidst the rise of anti-elitism, **Philip Collins** (p.8) makes the point that there will always be an 'elite' in representative democracies. **Liam Booth-Smith** (p.27) defends elites by arguing we cannot have a meritocracy without elitism.

Against this backdrop, we interview the former **Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg MP** (p.20). He argues that the heart is a stronger organ than the brain, and that liberals need to start to learn how to appeal to emotions.

Shortly after the US presidential election, Donald Trump supporter and CNN commentator Scottie Nell Hughes declared the end of facts. The Oxford English Dictionary

declared 'post-truth' to be their word of 2016. Bright Blue member **Charlotte Henry** explains why liberals have found themselves at a disadvantage in this post-truth era (p.19) whilst **Professor Jonathan Grant** (p.25) highlights the need for experts and facts. **Andrea Jenkyns MP** (p.28) tells us why it's important politicians should say what they think and believe, even if that goes against popular opinion.

What is behind these trends? Academic **Dr Clodagh Harrington** (p.16) discusses the remarkable turn of events in America and explains how Donald Trump managed to win the support of the disenfranchised. The Government's social mobility tsar **Alan Milburn** (p.6) tells us that whole sections of society feel they aren't getting a fair chance to succeed and argues we need new approaches to improving social mobility. And, by the way, Former Minister for Schools **David Laws** (p.9) demonstrates that more grammar schools are not the answer to this.

With all this hostility towards the 'elites', how do we encourage people to be involved in the political process? Professor **Tim Bale** (p.31) explores recent trends in political party membership, and the Minister for the Constitution, **Chris Skidmore MP**, (p.24) lays out the Government's plans for increased voter engagement. There is a lot of concern about the young not being engaged in politics, and Bright Blue member **James Kingston** (p.11) explores why millennials are disaffected.

Amid all this negativity, there is a silver lining. Swedish author and historian **Johan Norberg** (p.29) assures us the world is better than most think and that we are witnessing the greatest ever improvement in living standards. He cites the lack of recognition of this fact as a cause of the rise in nativism and populism that is threatening to undermine our progress.

With the UK's departure from the EU likely to be at the top of the political agenda for at least two years to come, we have decided to introduce a special 'Brexit corner' to this magazine. In this edition, the Dutch MP **Anne Mulder**, European Affairs spokesman for the Dutch Liberal Party, tells us why the Netherlands is likely to suffer more from a Brexit than most other EU countries and how he fears the UK does not have a negotiating strategy (p.39). **Mark Field MP** (p.40) writes on the importance of strengthening relations with our European allies, whilst **Jonathan Isaby** puts forward a positive case for leaving the single market (p.41).

I hope this edition of *Centre Write* can help shed some light on the dramatic changes and trends we have witnessed. If the last year holds any lessons for 2017, it's to expect the unexpected. ●

Director's note

Ryan Shorthouse



RYAN SHORTHOUSE is *the*
Director of Bright Blue

What are the causes of the political earthquakes – particularly Brexit and Trump – in the West this year?

Some say it's the economy, stupid. People have finally had enough after years of little or no growth in their real incomes. And, especially after the global financial crisis in the late noughties, an elite that purportedly caused it seems to have sailed on while everybody else has suffered. Others look to unwanted cultural changes, specifically unprecedented levels of immigration.

But ideas and narratives influence and inspire people too. A common and winning one is anti-establishmentarianism: the scapegoating of senior and successful people – especially politicians, financiers and journalists – for coming together and pulling strings that cause social ills.

Some on the Left have long argued this. Jeremy Corbyn has said that those who voted Brexit were rejecting a “broken economic model” of “neoliberalism” that is enforced by and only benefits the rich. Ask yourself: is it really the case that a majority of the electorate, who only a year before voted in a General Election for continued austerity, suddenly felt so angry with their lives and ‘the system’ that they also voted to leave the EU? Let's face it: for years, the status quo in public attitudes has been against the EU. The campaign to stay in the EU was lost before it even started.

This notion that everyone but the elite is losing out is fantastical.

Looking at the datasets on different desiderata – educational attainment, levels of health, living standards, reduced criminality, lower divorce rates, reduced discrimination, job opportunities, reduced worklessness and the list really does go on – there has been over several decades significant improvements for the majority of people in this country and across the world.

Ignore the artificial anger of some politicians, commentators and virtue-signallers on social media: most people in this country are fairly or very happy with their lives. “You're out-of-touch”, they howl, “Get out of London and go and listen to some real people”. Well, I can't speak to everyone. But the folks at the Office for National Statistics speak to an awful lot of people each year, in their annual survey on personal wellbeing, and most Brits – even those in the least affluent areas – say they are generally happy with the state of their lives. Actually, a recent study has found that across 40 developed countries, an average of 86% of the population say they are.

These liberal, democratic and capitalist societies are hardly dystopian, are they? And, as history teaches us, let's just remember how lucky we are to not live in alternative political systems; how grateful we should be to past generations who fought for the society we now enjoy.

Yes, without doubt, there are too many people who are genuinely struggling in our society and deserve more support. But this requires a smarter state seeking to reduce hardship, not a political revolution based on nothing but rousing rhetoric and abstract principles. The Left are wrong about capitalism. It does not automatically foster human greed, abuse and exploitation; when such vices exist, they can be – and indeed have been – mitigated by democratic and political power.

Surprisingly and disappointingly, those on the Right have also joined the chorus against the establishment. A disconnected and devious elite is blamed for imposing mass immigration, social liberalism and political correctness on society. But this notion that society has simply become an elite and a people, each with unified views and interests, is a Marxist myth. Every day, for example, there are newspaper stories of politicians disagreeing with one another.

Vigorous debate and disagreement are essential ingredients and signs of a healthy democracy. But it is now commonplace to hear senior decision makers and opinion formers indulge in conspiracy theories that question the very trustworthiness, intentions and legitimacy of people in fundamental institutions – institutions such as parliament, the independent judiciary, businesses and banks that have taken decades to build and which enhance our peace and prosperity.

Of course there are bad eggs who sometimes reach the top of these institutions. But the clear majority of them are good, hard-working people. Indiscriminately criticising them is, frankly, the politics of nihilism and envy. The Right should be celebrating rather than condemning them, and fighting and finding ways for those from a more diverse range of backgrounds to become part of the elite.

Beware of those who seek to blame complex and stubborn problems on particular social groups – rich or poor; strong or weak. We should reject such ugly and divisive identity politics.

Instead, now more than ever, the Right needs to defend liberal, open, democratic and meritocratic values and institutions. And work harder to ensure more people, including those who are vulnerable and ‘just about managing’, are benefitting from such values and institutions. ●

Ensuring a level playing field of opportunity

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn proposes new approaches to improving social mobility in Britain



THE RT HON ALAN MILBURN is Chair of the UK Government's Social Mobility Commission

Britain's social mobility problem, for this generation of young people in particular, is getting worse, not better. The Social Mobility Commission's State of the Nation 2016 report highlights that those born in the 1980s are the first post-war cohort not to start their working years with higher incomes than their immediate predecessors. Home ownership, the aspiration of successive generations of ordinary people, is in sharp decline, especially among the young. The twentieth century expectation that each generation would be better off than the preceding one is no longer being met.

The divisions in Britain today impact upon many more people and places than either the bottom decile in society or the few thousand youngsters who miss out on a top university. The gap is growing between our great cities, which are pulling ahead, and too many towns and counties in Britain that are falling behind.

The twentieth century expectation that each generation would be better off than the preceding one is no longer being met

Critically, this generation of low and middle-income earners are running harder and harder but simply standing still. These 'treadmill families' have jobs but often don't have careers. For a decade their earnings have been frozen

or falling. Only one in ten low-paid workers at the start of the last decade had escaped the low pay trap by the end. Whole tracts of Britain feel left behind. Whole sections of society feel they are not getting a fair chance to succeed.

The history of our continent tells us that when the majority feels they are losing unfairly while a minority gain unfairly, things can turn ugly. Across the world political populism, of Right and Left, is on the march. Attitudes both to wealth and poverty are changing fast. So too are public attitudes towards immigration - and not necessarily for the better. The public mood is sour, and decision-makers have been far too slow to respond to the fact that untrammelled wealth for a few at the top, growing insecurity for many in the middle, and stalled life chances for those at the bottom is not a viable social proposition for Britain.

The growing sense that we have become an 'us and them' society is deeply corrosive of our cohesion as a nation. The EU referendum in June this year exposed deep divides that go well beyond the box that people crossed. Public concern - even anger - about issues of identity, immigration and inequality found a voice on 23rd June and a target to aim at. Of the 65 parts of the country our Commission identified as being 'social mobility coldspots' - those with the poorest education and employment prospects - only three areas voted to remain in the European Union.

It is very welcome that the new Prime Minister has made it her mission to heal the profound social and economic fissures which the EU Referendum

laid bare. The best way of doing so is by restarting Britain's social mobility engine. Higher social mobility can be a rallying point to prove that modern capitalist economies like our own are capable of creating better, fairer and more inclusive societies.

Whole sections of society feel they are not getting a fair chance to succeed

Achieving that, and making Britain feel one again, will need a new way of approaching social mobility. Broadly there have been two traditional schools of thought - one has focused on improving life chances for the very poorest families and the other on lifting bright children into top schools and universities. Each has had its own specific policy agenda. Both are important and should continue. But a broader approach to social reform is needed: One which focuses on people who are not in extreme poverty but are usually in work. Those struggling to make the sort of progress that previous generations did should be at the heart of a new government-wide drive to open up opportunities to meet their aspirations.

In our education system, for example, the long-held assumption that better-off children will naturally excel while their poorer classmates will naturally fall behind has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Little has been done to stop the drift of the best schools and teachers into better-off communities and away from poorer ones. The consequence is a deeply



>> divided schools system that is denying too many youngsters the educational opportunities they need to succeed in an increasingly skills-hungry labour market. And while higher education has enjoyed relentless focus and growing resources, vocational education has been starved of both. It is time to challenge the assumption that Britain can succeed economically or socially with such a divided education system.

The assumptions underpinning much of labour market policy for the last few decades have also proved wrong. The theory has been that if enough people could be taken off welfare and helped into work, progress would follow. This assumption ignored the new reality of millions of low-paid workers being trapped on the wrong side of a bifurcated labour market with little likelihood of escape. If this fundamental divide is to be overcome, employers and government will need to agree a new deal on workforce proficiency, productivity and progression to make it possible to move millions of people from low pay to living pay. A more

active labour market policy is needed.

The same is true in housing policy, where the assumption has been that the market will match supply with demand. However, not enough homes are being built, with the consequence that owner-occupation – one of the foundations for higher levels of social mobility – is in free-fall among the young. Meanwhile a hands-off approach to the privately rented sector has condemned a generation of young families to growing insecurity and unaffordability. The Government needs to shed outdated inhibitions about intervening to address these market failures.

So too when it comes to our country's approach to regional economic policy. Over decades a quiet new assumption has come to underpin public policy thinking: that people from weaker economic areas who wanted to get on in life would have to move out. The consequences of a generation getting on their bikes can be seen in the socially hollowed-out towns, cities and counties of 'left-behind Britain'. The impact is felt too in the increasingly

unaffordable London housing market. A less divided Britain will require a more redistributive approach to spreading education and employment prospects across our country.

Modern capitalist economies like our own are capable of creating better, fairer and more inclusive societies

Making Britain a socially mobile nation is a big task. Tinkering with change will not do the trick. Fundamental reforms are needed to our country's education system and local economies, just as they are needed in the labour and housing markets. The Commission I chair hopes that those reforms can be captured by government in a Ten Year Plan for Social Reform. It will take time and effort, as well as new thinking and new approaches, to create a level playing-field of opportunity in our country. But that should be the holy grail of public policy, the priority for government, and the cause which unites the nation to take action. ●

Establishment in transition

Philip Collins on the changing nature of ‘the Establishment’



PHILIP COLLINS *is a columnist and chief leader writer for The Times*

The term ‘the Establishment’ is sometimes attributed, probably apocryphally, to the radical historian AJP Taylor. In a review in 1953 of a biography of William Cobbett in *The New Statesman*, Taylor wrote that “the Establishment draws in recruits from outside as soon as they are ready to conform to its standards and become respectable. There is nothing more agreeable in life than to make peace with the Establishment — and nothing more corrupting”.

It’s a typically pithy thought, and it sounds like a maxim for our times. Britain has left the European Union, against the advice of every expert body that said anything; and the United States has elected Donald Trump over the next Clinton in line to be its next President. This seems like the age in which the people revolt against the established rulers. Sometimes those rulers are disparaged as ‘the Establishment’, and sometimes they are the ‘liberal elite’. But however they are defined and whoever is a member, this is a club that nobody now wants to join.

The hostility, though, is stupid. All representative democracies are governed by elites. They are bound to be so as there can only be one Cabinet. The institutions of the state and the organs of power in the media only have so many jobs available. Whoever occupies those positions are bound to be few in number and they are bound to be an

elite. That is not an interesting political point: It is just arithmetic. On the philosophical accusation that this elite is allegedly ‘liberal’, the first retort is to say that it often isn’t but, second, if it is then so much the better. The death of Fidel Castro is all the reminder we need of what happens when a country is run instead by an illiberal elite.

The more important question is not therefore whether Britain is governed by an elite, but whether that elite is subject to change. Here is the deep stupidity hidden in AJP Taylor’s mock radical formula. The idea of ‘the Establishment’ implies an unchanging body of people (or families, perhaps, to give it some dynamism over time), who run the country in defiance of the wishes of the population. Or perhaps, in the more generous version, with just enough deference to the people that they get away with it. As soon as you start to define the idea like this it yields up its nonsense.

This seems like the age in which the people revolt against the established rulers

‘The Establishment’ is subject to change in two ways. The first is democratic and this works well. One lot gets thrown out with ruthless efficiency. This happens even within parties, let alone between parties. The Blair people were kicked out when Brown took over. Theresa May has got rid of most of the ardent supporters of David Cameron. But of course the same thing happens at General Elections. The dismissal of a Labour Government and the election of a Tory Government

brought to power a new political generation. Of course the top people in the courts and the press stayed the same, but so they should. Democracies do not alter their judiciary and their journalism according to the government of the day.

The death of Fidel Castro is all the reminder we need of what happens when a country is run instead by an illiberal elite

The non-political ‘Establishment’ is, in any case, subject to the second force for change. An elite is a concern if it is closed. If entry is open and meritocratic then we need not worry about the inevitable fact that it does not comprise many people. This is something worth being concerned about. The passage into the professions is nothing like as open and meritocratic as it needs to be. The Social Mobility Commission’s latest State of the Nation report makes that point plain. This is the essential point about ‘the establishment’ - although it must be said that social mobility is not well measured by the numbers of working class people who make it into an elite clustered around a few London professions. This would be entirely the wrong obsession. The first priority for social mobility must be a relevant educational offer to the half of the population that does not go to university.

If we fixed that (and there is no indication that we are about to) then we can stop using the defunct category of ‘the Establishment’. AJP Taylor should

>> have known better. He didn't, after all, have to look far for an example. William Cobbett was a radical outsider all his life. He was vocal in the campaigns for Catholic emancipation, the 1832 Reform

Act and the abolition of the Corn Laws. He was a pamphleteer, a newspaper editor and a polemicist who cultivated a reputation for being a scourge of established authority. He spent time in

prison and was often prosecuted for libel. It is worth remembering that Cobbett began his career as a soldier and in 1832 became the MP for Oldham. He found a way in and it matters that he could. ●

Why grammars aren't the route to social mobility

David Laws argues for the need to focus on early years and non-selective education



THE RT HON DAVID LAWS
*is Executive Chairman
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Policy Institute*

Since Theresa May became Prime Minister, she has made a welcome commitment to prioritise action to improve social mobility. However, the recent report of the Social Mobility Commission demonstrates just how much progress needs to be made, in the face of the strong headwinds which are blowing directly in the opposite direction.

Any serious strategy to improve social mobility has to involve significant improvements in educational outcomes for those from more disadvantaged groups. Our recent Education Policy Institute (EPI) Annual Report on "Education in England" highlighted that when the new, more challenging, GCSEs had been introduced, only 20% of children from disadvantaged backgrounds were likely to achieve the new benchmark of exam success. Indeed, in 2015 there were 569 secondary schools in England - almost one in five - where 90% of disadvantaged pupils were failing to achieve the likely new benchmark of success. That is hardly a recipe for closing the disadvantaged gap, in spite of modest

recent progress in primary education.

In the face of this huge challenge, the Government has published a Green Paper - "Schools That Work for Everyone". This identifies a number of education providers which are considered to be highly successful, and which the Government sees as potential drivers of social mobility - namely private schools, grammar schools, faith schools and universities. The absence of emphasis on high performing multi-academy trusts looks striking in the light of the direction of schools policy prior to Theresa May taking over as Prime Minister.

Of course, the Government is right to indicate that grammar schools, faith schools, many universities and private schools are all strongly associated with high attainment. What is far less clear is whether these institutions have the characteristics necessary to significantly close the disadvantage gap. What these four types of institutions generally have in common is their ability to select students - this is certainly true for private schools, grammar schools and most universities. It is less overtly the case with some faith schools, though others tend to attract students whose backgrounds are notably less disadvantaged than their catchment areas.

So it may not be a sensible leap to suggest that these institutions

have the capacity or effectiveness to raise outcomes for large numbers of students from generally low prior attainment backgrounds.

Recently, the Education Policy Institute looked at the impact of grammar schools on social mobility, given the central role an expansion of grammar schools seems to play in the Government's emerging social mobility strategy. Our analysis, using data from the Government's own National Pupil Database, led to some conclusions which the Government will no doubt welcome. For example, we found that the Leader of the Opposition's claim that "grammar schools depress overall educational achievement" is not supported by the data. We also found that pupils attending grammar schools achieve, on average, an estimated one third of a grade higher in each of eight GCSE subjects, compared with similar pupils in non-selective schools in comprehensive areas.

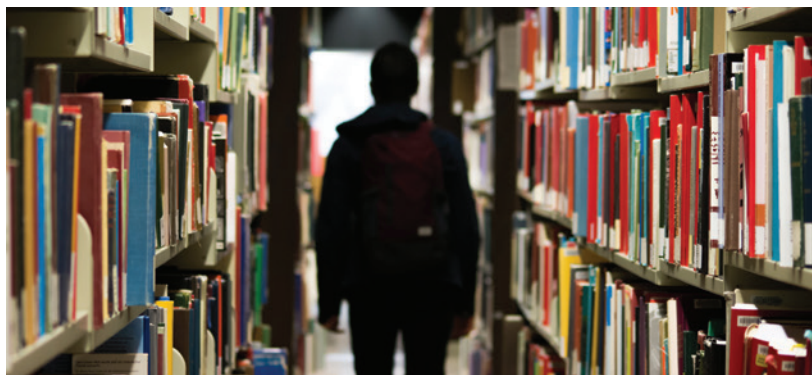
Since Theresa May became Prime Minister, she has made a welcome commitment to prioritise action to improve social mobility

However, the other aspects of our analysis cast doubt on whether grammar schools are likely to provide a serious and scalable social mobility solution.

>> Because almost 40% of the disadvantage gap emerges before entry to school, and around 60% emerges by the end of primary school (Education Policy Institute Annual Report 2016), any social mobility solution based on selection of highly able students at age 11 isn't likely to be very effective. Only 2.5% of grammar school pupils are entitled to free school meals - a key measure of poverty - compared with 13.2% in all state funded schools. Even the higher ability poor children are less likely to gain entry to grammar schools, and a mere 500 of 90,000 free school meal children in each age cohort gain access to selective schools each year.

The EPI analysis also found that the positive grammar school effect on attainment declines, as the proportion of pupils attending grammar schools rises. Importantly, our research also showed that in the most selective areas we begin to uncover a small negative effect of not attending a grammar school. For pupils who live in the most selective areas but do not attend a grammar school, negative effects are estimated to emerge at around the point where selective places are available for 70% of high attaining pupils - which is a concern given that the Government has indicated that it will prioritise grammar school expansion in the areas where these schools are most popular, which is largely where grammar schools are already prevalent.

What else might a Government intent on improving social mobility do? Well, at a school level, research commissioned by the Education Policy Institute from the London School of Economics shows that the first 200 sponsor academies have been successful at both raising overall attainment (on average by about one GCSE grade in each of five subjects) and serving large numbers of disadvantaged pupils. The first 200 sponsor academies now educate around 50,000 pupils entitled to free school meals, compared



with just 4,000 such pupils in total in the 163 grammar schools.

The positive grammar school effect on attainment declines as the proportion of pupils attending grammar schools rises

EPI researchers compared high prior-attaining pupils in grammar schools with similar pupils who attend high quality non selective schools. These are schools in the top 25 per cent based on value-added progress measures, and represent good quality schools operating at large scale. There are, according to our calculations, five times as many high quality non-selective schools as there are grammar schools, based on this measure. These schools also turn out to be much more socially representative than grammar schools, admitting close to the national rate of FSM pupils (12.6% versus 13.2% nationally). Compared with these high performing non selective schools, we estimate there is no benefit to attending a grammar school for high attaining pupils, measured by “best 8” GCSE grades.

There is therefore a strong case for the Government seeking to prioritise the creation of more high performing non selective schools, particularly in those parts of the country where the attainment of low income pupils is very poor.

The other striking conclusion from the analysis set out above is that Government

should be much more focused on early action to close the gap - including in the years before starting formal schooling. However, when we look at recent Government policy in the early years, we see that the current priority is an expanded childcare offer, in which the extra 15 hours of provision is not open to children who have either parent out of employment. This means that many of the poorest children will in fact have less spent on them in the “early years” than children from significantly more affluent backgrounds. Of course, the Coalition Government introduced an Early Years Pupil Premium to seek to support disadvantaged children in early years education - but this premium (of around £300 per child per year) is very small in relation both to the cost of the extra 15 hours of childcare and in relation to the primary school pupil premium of £1,320 for each eligible child.

Many of the poorest children will in fact have less spent on them in the “early years” than children from significantly more affluent backgrounds

As the Social Mobility Commission has therefore recently argued, there is a strong case for increasing the Early Years Pupil Premium and for taking steps to raise significantly the quality and availability of early years education for our most disadvantaged pupils. ●

Tomorrow belongs to Me?

James Kingston on the disaffection of millennial voters



JAMES KINGSTON is a member of *Bright Blue*, entrepreneur and activist

We are, or so we are told, being swept by anti-establishment fury. Voters in their wisdom have decided to kick the elites and reject the establishment they form. Everywhere the hollowed institutions of the West seem to totter before the storm; pundits solemnly prophesy the decline of the western-led global order; others of bleaker mien question the very notion of progress itself. But a curious fact remains: Unlike almost every other such ‘anti-establishment’ storm in history, this revolution – if revolution it be – is one overwhelmingly opposed by the young.

For better or worse, the young have stood in the vanguard of revolutionary change throughout modern history. From 1840s Germany through to the tumult of 20th century China and onto the Arab Spring, youth and youthful passion has challenged the established order. The anti-establishment politics of the contemporary Anglosphere thus represents a strange phenomenon. No more should it be presumed that it is the fresh-faced who line up to assault the established order. Quite the opposite: this is not a movement of youth.

Young British voters supported Remain by an overwhelming margin. Some 73% of 18-24 year old supported Remain, along with some 62% of 25-34 year olds. Of voters aged 20-29 in the US, 55% voted for Clinton and 37% for Trump; the remainder chose alternative candidates. In the immediate aftermath

of both the Brexit vote and Trump’s win, thousands of younger voters took to the streets in protest; anguished articles and shared screeds on social media discussed the threat to internationalist values that the young purport to cherish; in the UK, many wrote of a political divide falling as much along generational as class or geographic lines. The millennial voter, it seems, is the greatest proponent of established liberal values. Yet youthful disaffection clearly has a role to play. Transatlantic trends also ran in parallel with the rise of Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders. Similar in age and improbability, both achieved extraordinary late success as leaders of insurgent political campaigns, each fuelled in large part by the devotion of youthful supporters. Sanders won more primary and caucus votes among under-30s than Clinton and Trump combined, and it has become a truism of writing on Corbyn that his rallies are filled with the enthused young. Both politicians profited from attacks on a system seen as ‘broken’, a rejection of managerial politics, and a desire for far-reaching change among younger citizens.

But a curious fact remains: Unlike almost every other such ‘anti-establishment’ storm in history, this revolution – if revolution it be – is one overwhelmingly opposed by the young

This dichotomy between the status-quo liberalism of younger voters and their support for the anti-establishment radicalism of Corbyn and Sanders may be

in part explained by a consideration of the word ‘establishment’. An establishment exists in institutions, networks, and attitudes. In Britain, our favourite notion of the establishment is that stemming from our traditional class structures; the commingled networks of influence once tying together the public schools, Oxbridge, Guards Regiments, landowning gentry, Anglican Church and upper echelons of the Conservative Party.

The millennial voter, it seems, is the greatest proponent of established liberal values

The contemporary global establishment is different. Based on the presumption of meritocracy, today’s elite is at base educational – schooled in Oxbridge, the Ivy League, and institutions such as the Ecole Polytechnique. The financial establishment gains its further training in the elite institutions of global capitalism (Goldman Sachs, McKinsey), its meeting grounds in conferences like the Davos Forum, and its mouthpiece, the sublimely self-confident Economist magazine. Beside them stands the political establishment. In Britain, this is ever more the preserve of the educated. According to the Sutton Trust, of the members of the 2015 parliament, 33% attended a private school, and almost all possess a degree, and a quarter of MPs had an occupational background in politics prior to becoming an MP – the think tanks and lobbying firms that form the penumbra to political power.

Alongside this is the cultural establishment: academics, journalists, TV

>> commentators. It is this establishment that does the most to form the norms of public discourse, to structure public narrative, and to create the cultural symbols by which social and political consciousness is mobilised. Uniting all three is professionalisation, a process that encourages area expertise and specialisation; but some say the British public has had enough of experts.

Different elements of the populace rail against different strands of 'the Establishment'. Much of Brexit and Trump campaigning was couched in anti-professionalism and a rejection of the cultural elite, whose preoccupation with identity politics some argue played into these dynamics. Much populist

behaviour may be seen to be carried out in rejection of immigration, diversity, and identity politics. Millennials – 'snowflakes' and 'Stepford Students' to some right-wing journalists – are broadly identified as comfortable with all three.

In this sense, younger voters are not anti-establishment, for they have imbibed the social liberalism espoused by cultural elites since the 1960s. Younger voters tend to be more accepting of ethnic diversity and tolerant of alternative lifestyles. Above all, these voters tend to be more urban, and with the expansion of further education in Britain and the US, more educated too. Sharing an increasingly global and liberal culture, these younger voters

congregate together in the great cities.

It is the under-30s who will most contend with the emerging experience of economic precarity – caught between the imperatives of student loan repayments, rapid change in the jobs market, a stagnant income, and inflated house prices. The preconditions of Millennial radicalism are there – and while Millennials supported Remain and (largely) came out for Hillary – Sanders and Corbyn have demonstrated the deep reserves of millennial frustration. As automation and AI come further to transform the jobs market and with economic inequality rising across the west, politicians would do well to take note. ●

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The resurrection of radical populism?

Professor Vernon Bogdanor discusses how populist politics has fuelled a surge in nationalism



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Populism seems now the most dynamic political force in many liberal democracies, following Brexit, Donald Trump's election victory and the rise of Marine Le Pen's Front National. But what is populism? Some say that a populist is merely a politician who proves unexpectedly popular. But perhaps we can try a more precise definition.

A populist is someone who believes that the traditional governing parties of moderate Left and moderate Right, which claim to oppose each other, in reality form a consensus, since they agree upon basic issues. In Britain, France and the United States, for example, the main parties agreed on the benefits of immigration and the advantages of globalisation. In Britain, the three major parties favoured Britain's continued membership of the European Union. The people did not.

The real debate, so populists claim, is not between Left and Right, but between the people and the elite, the political class which has interests in common which separate them from the people.

Until recently, the political debate in the West was based broadly on the role of the state in economic affairs. The left sought an expanded state, the right a more restricted one; and whether a voter found herself on the left or the right depended primarily on his or her social class.

But, with the rise of populism, the debate has shifted from economics to

identity. The populists stress national identity as against the transnational allegiances of the elite. The elite, so they argue, is more familiar with Sardinia than with Sunderland, knows Biarritz better than it knows the banlieues of Paris, and prefers Palm Beach to Pittsburgh.

With the rise of populism, the debate has shifted from economics to identity

UKIP's main criticism of David Cameron was not that he was too right-wing or too left-wing, but that he was insufficiently British. The SNP's criticism of Labour is not that it is too right-wing or too left-wing but that it is insufficiently Scottish. That is why the election of Corbyn has done so little to help Labour north of the border. Donald Trump's criticism of Obama and Hillary Clinton was not that they were too left-wing or too right-wing but that they were insufficiently American. Marine Le Pen similarly assails the traditional parties in France with the cry that they are insufficiently French.

The populists divide voters on the basis not primarily of class but of education. The key indicator for a UKIP vote is an absence of educational qualifications. The same is true of support for Trump and Marine Le Pen. The elite belong to the exam-passing classes. Most supporters of populist parties do not.

Populists stress the identity of the indigenous majority who, so they say, have become strangers in their own land. Whereas the Left tends to identify with ethnic minorities whom they see as

alienated and subjects of discrimination, populists say that the victims are the white working class whose status has declined in an era of globalisation, meritocracy and minority rights. Yet, so the populists say, these are the very people who have built up the country and played by the rules. By contrast, the 'elite', the bankers and their political backers, did not play by the rules. Welfare beneficiaries did not play by the rules. Minorities, who have benefited from affirmative action, have not played by the rules. Women, benefiting from another form of affirmative action – tokenism in the populists' view – do not play by the rules either.

The elite belong to the exam-passing classes. Most supporters of populist parties do not

Modern populism has historical antecedents. In Britain, the speeches on immigration and Europe by Enoch Powell in the late 1960s presaged the swing of blue collar workers away from the Left. In the United States, the revolt of George Wallace in 1968 was a first sign that the New Deal coalition was coming to an end and that many of its under-privileged supporters were seeking a new allegiance. Responding to Wallace, Richard Nixon spoke of the 'silent majority', those whom the American commentator Ben Wattenberg called, "The unpoor, the unblack and the unyoung". This group is once again fearful and angry. In a PEW survey carried out in

>> March, 75% felt that “discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities”.

The appeal of the populists is primarily to those left behind by social and economic change, the decline of heavy industry and manufacturing. In Britain, fifty years ago, educational qualifications were not absolutely essential to secure employment. One could leave school at 16, move into a job with the confidence that one would never be out of work. But with the decline of, for example, coal mining and the steel industry, that is no longer the case. There is therefore a sharp cleavage between those who have the skills to benefit from globalisation and those who have not. That is a new cleavage and not only in Britain. The ‘left behind’ feel a strong sense of disenfranchisement and powerlessness believing as they do that the political class makes its decisions without consulting their interests, and looks down on them as unreconstructed bigots.

There is therefore a sharp cleavage between those who have the skills to benefit from globalisation and those who have not

Leaders of the moderate Left such as Ed Miliband hoped that the financial crash of 2008 would lead to a fundamental change in attitudes to the free market. They hoped that there would be a strong electoral constituency for greater regulation of markets and the banks and in favour of redistributive taxation. They hoped that 2008 would prove a social democratic moment. But it has turned out instead to be a nationalist moment. It has strengthened national feeling while weakening class feeling and social solidarity. The alienation and sense of disenfranchisement which has arisen has benefited the Right more than



the Left, as it did in 1930s Europe when Marxists wrongly predicted the collapse of capitalism. But although the financial crash has benefited the Right, it has given rise to a mood which is radical and anything but conservative, benefiting not so much the traditional conservative Right but a new radical populism.

In September, 2014, Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF, told a lunch at the Financial Times that she was “particularly concerned about what she sees as a structural disconnect between economic and political structures.” The world economic system was becoming increasingly integrated, but the world political system was fragmented and becoming more so because of a backlash against globalisation.

Lagarde’s interlocutor, Gillian Tett, responded that “this makes for a dangerous cocktail, since it creates a world that is interconnected in the sense that shocks can spread quickly but nobody is actually in charge.”

Radical populism which is fiercely

nationalistic is nothing new in western politics. Twentieth century Europe was dominated by the struggle between liberal democracy and the forces of radical nationalism, as represented by Fascism and National Socialism. At the beginning of the century, Franz Kafka was asked to explain how he reconciled the growth of nationalism with the facts of economic integration. Kafka replied - “Men always strive for what they do not have. The technical advances which are common to all nations strip them more and more of their national characteristics. Therefore they become nationalist. Modern nationalism is a defensive movement against the crude encroachments of civilisation.”

In 2014, Christine Lagarde declared herself “Worried. Very worried. I don’t want my children, my grandchildren, to grow up in a world which is disaggregated and fragmented.” Our task is to consider how we can prevent our world becoming one which is disaggregated and fragmented. ●

Sensationalism and the news

Does the media facilitate anti-establishment sentiment? **Dr Sharon Coen** thinks it does



DR SHARON COEN is a Senior Lecturer in Media Psychology at University of Salford

2016 will be remembered as the year in which two superpowers were hit by a political storm leading to the unexpected success of anti-establishment movements across the world. The increased distrust in political and cultural elites that we've seen comes from the belief that those elites have little or no regard for the interests of the 'man of the street'. It's important to note, however, that these populist values have a history which have long been documented within political science and political communication literature.

News outlets are therefore incentivised to deliver news in a way that attracts and maintains attention

In the introductory chapter to their book "Twenty-First Century Populism", Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell suggest several factors which may explain this phenomenon: First, political elites have failed 'in the eyes of the electorate' to adequately address the challenges posed by modern developments such as globalisation, integration and immigration. Second, the success of anti-establishment sentiments can be traced back to an increased level of 'political malaise', that is, a growing disaffection of the electorate towards the political system,

resulting in a lack of trust and lower participation rates in political activities.

Increased coverage of negative issues is connected to higher levels of pessimism in the audience

The progressive commercialisation of media landscapes across the West means that news outlets are finding themselves competing for audience share. News outlets are therefore incentivised to deliver news in a way that attracts and maintains attention and creates a loyal audience.

News stories are designed to grab attention and keep people entertained, but this rests on some basic assumptions which might have unwanted consequences.

The first assumption is that people tend to pay more attention to negative news than positive. Research has shown people are more likely to read negative stories, so it might not be surprising that negative news is over-represented. But what are the consequences in terms of attitudes towards politically relevant issues? An interesting study of the coverage of economic issues in the UK has shown that an increased coverage of negative issues is connected to higher levels of pessimism in the audience. In other words, the media may play a significant part in the spiral of cynicism by amplifying and exacerbating pessimism.

Second, people tend to pay more attention to news when it is presented in a sensationalistic, tabloid-like style. Whether in press, audio or

video formats, sensationalisation occurs when stories are presented in a dramatic, flamboyant way. Research on the effects of this sort of coverage has shown that, while it is indeed successful in grabbing the attention of the audience and arousing them, it also leads to them evaluating the source as less trustworthy or informative. Thus, the increased adoption of tabloid-like features in news coverage might be transforming news consumption into a type of entertainment, and adding mainstream media outlets to the 'not-to-be-trusted establishment'.

Third, politics is seen as more interesting when it concerns people than when it concerns issues. The increased personalisation of politics in media coverage is well-documented in academic research. News coverage of political issues is increasingly focused on individual politicians, their strategic moves and their private lives, rather than the actual political issues they represent. But what are the consequences of this personalisation?

News coverage of political issues is increasingly focused on individual politicians, their strategic moves and their private lives, rather than the actual political issues they represent

An interesting review of research in the area suggests this trend has had a significant impact on people's attitudes towards political leaders and voting behaviour. Overall, it suggests that the way in which people perceive the personality characteristics of an

>> individual politician plays an important role (over and above partisanship) on their voting decision. Combined with a tendency to present negative, sensationalistic news the increased personalisation of politics leads to an overrepresentation of political scandals and personality flaws, so contributing to the perception of political elites as corrupt and unworthy of trust.

The final assumption in news media which contributes to the rise of anti-establishment sentiment is a journalistic rule which characterises good journalism:

the rule of balance. This core journalistic value dictates that whenever there are conflicting views on an issue, all the conflicting positions need to be represented and given voice, even if the disagreement comes from a small minority of cases. While this is a good principle, in some instances – in particular when the issue is complex and requires specialist knowledge to understand the conflicting positions – this may result in the false impression that the ‘establishment’ is acting on some hidden interests

rather than on solid evidence.

Overall, the evidence suggests the media plays a significant role in promoting anti-establishment feelings in their audience, but this does not necessarily mean this process is unavoidable. The media depends on the ‘establishment’: evidence shows that the vast majority of sources in the news are politicians and public officials. If politicians change the way they talk about politics and about each other, the media will have no option but to change the way they cover politics. ●

Trump: from TV-star to President

How did Trump win the support of the disenfranchised? **Dr Clodagh Harrington** explores



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As the dust settles on the 2016 US presidential election result, America and the wider world continues to digest the stunning outcome. It is true the polls predicted a close race, but only the most ardent Trump supporters were convinced of an unhindered path to the White House for their renegade candidate.

The overall result was a sweeping Republican victory, from Congress to Governorships and state legislatures. The opposition has been consigned, temporarily at least, to the political wilderness as the pendulum has swung decisively in favour of the Grand Old Party. In 2008, when Barack Obama and the Democrats triumphed across the board, liberal pundits swiftly consigned the losing side to the dustbin of irrelevance. Such assumptions were

premature, and within three months the GOP was back in angry action, fuelled by the Tea Party movement and ready to gain significant electoral ground in 2010.

The only real difference between the real-estate tycoon and the men he was inspiring was the size of his bank balance

The Democrats would do well to draw lessons from the rapid and successful reincarnation of their opponents. Their most significant challenge now involves how to navigate a credible path forward. They must strike a balance between staying true to their ideological credentials and somehow managing to acknowledge the current surge of anti-establishment anger. Like its Labour counterpart in the UK, the US Democrat Party has conventionally been the political home of blue-collar voters, and yet in recent years has attracted increasing numbers of college-educated middle-class support. This

has in part contributed to the feeling of alienation expressed by many lower-income voters who feel they are no longer listened to by those in power.

Donald Trump connected with the disenfranchised in a hugely successful way. Non-college educated white males in particular flocked towards the maverick GOP candidate. One reason cited for his capacity to reach this demographic came from Donald Trump Jr, who described his father as a “blue-collar billionaire” making the point that the only real difference between the real-estate tycoon and the men he was inspiring was the size of his bank balance. Trump achieved a dramatic victory despite facing so little support from the Republican Party machine and running an often chaotic campaign.

Much has been written on the subject of populism’s recent rise in the US and elsewhere. The issue of how well the label fits Donald Trump remains contentious. A typical dictionary

>> definition of ‘populist’ is “a member or adherent of a political party seeking to represent the interests of ordinary people.” In that respect, it is true that Trump verbally expresses populist tendencies. But historically in the US context, the label ‘Populist’ relates more directly to the left-wing People’s Party which sprung up during the 1890s in the mid-west and south at a time of severe economic and social inequality. Perhaps mindful of the origins of the term, President Obama recently expressed his frustration at the idea of Donald Trump being viewed as populist, stating at a news conference:

“Somebody ... who has never shown any regard for workers, has never fought on behalf of social justice issues or making sure that poor kids are getting a decent shot at life or have health care, does not meet the definition.

“They don’t suddenly become a populist because they say something controversial in order to win votes. That’s not the measure of populism. That’s nativism, or xenophobia. Or worse. Or it’s just cynicism.”

Trump has been hailed as the leader of a ‘populist’ rebellion against the establishment status quo. It is testament to his charisma and capacity to woo voters that he has successfully presented himself as someone who is anti-establishment, despite being a part of the most privileged 1% of US society.

Trump has been hailed as the leader of a ‘populist’ rebellion against the establishment status quo

Hillary Clinton, in contrast, failed to achieve that visceral connection with the electorate. From early in the primary race, she had her own populist challenge to contend with from the left of her party. Bernie Sanders skilfully tapped into the millennial political mindset, which involves a



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blend of cynicism and hope. For those unimpressed with the ‘populist’ offering from the GOP, there was, for a while at least, another alternative option.

It seems incongruous that the cranky socialist from Vermont could be placed in the same bracket as the braggadocious reality-TV billionaire, but sometimes labels can offer a shorthand to voters struggling to make sense of the political choices they face. Early in 2016, Financial Times commentator Martin Wolf aptly summed up the unfolding US election scenario, observing that the unequal Latin American-style income distribution in the US would lead to Latin American-style politics: populism of the left and the right. And so, the street protests have subsided, and the victory balloons deflated. It is time for all Americans to at least acknowledge, if not embrace, the new political reality, which is that ‘Trumpism’ has won. The President-elect presents himself as a man not driven by ideology. He is a self-described negotiator and his public utterances on key issues since November 8 have, in part at least, demonstrated some change in tone from the rabble-rousing of the campaign trail.

However, it remains to be seen how the reality of a Trump presidency will play out.

It is time for all Americans to at least acknowledge, if not embrace, the new political reality, which is that ‘Trumpism’ has won

The liberal media is currently enjoying sharing reports of a transition team “in disarray.” Not all Republicans are rejoicing at the presidential victory, and to date it appears that Team Trump did not have a formal transition plan in place to roll out the day after an electoral victory. There will be a steep learning curve for the President-elect, perhaps involving some humbling compromises along the way. Meanwhile, President Obama has made it clear that he is willing to do what it takes to ensure a smooth transition of power. On meeting his successor for the first time, he stated that “we are going to want to do everything we can to help you succeed because if you succeed the country succeeds.” In this period of intense uncertainty, the new administration urgently needs to succeed. ●

The end of the two-party system?

Professor John Curtice discusses how Brexit is the biggest threat to the two-party system



JOHN CURTICE is Professor of Politics, Strathclyde University, and Senior Research Fellow, NatCen Social Research

Once upon a time, the virtues of Britain's two-party system were clear. Politics was dominated by two parties, one to the right of centre, one to the left. When the incumbent government had seemed to have run out of steam or to have lost touch with voters, there was a clear alternative to which the electorate could turn. However, given that elections were won and lost in the centre ground, both parties had a strong incentive not to stray into the extremes.

Once upon a time, the virtues of Britain's two-party system were clear

Those days seem to be long over. Having won well over 90% of the vote between them in the immediate post-war period, more recently the Conservatives and Labour have struggled to win as much as 70%. Neither party is now an effective force in Scotland. Meanwhile, following the inability of either the Conservatives or Labour to secure a majority in the 2010 election, the last parliament saw the first coalition in Britain's post-war history.

This challenge to Britain's two-party system shows no sign of abating. One reason, of course, has been the remarkable takeover of the Labour

Party by the left-leaning 'Corbynistas', after the introduction of a leadership electoral system that put the decision firmly in the hands of (a much enlarged) band of members and 'supporters'.

But the biggest challenge of all comes from Brexit. Ever since Britain first joined the EU in 1973, its membership has been a divisive issue. It played an important role in the split in Labour's ranks in the early 1980s that led to the formation of the SDP. More recently, UKIP's anti-EU stance has been rewarded with remarkable record-breaking performances in elections held between 2013 and 2015.

However, the potential disruptive power of the EU issue has never been more apparent than it has since last year's general election.

Although all but a small minority of Labour MPs backed remaining in the EU, the parliamentary Conservative Party was torn apart by the EU referendum. According to the BBC, while 185 Conservative MPs backed Remain, 138 backed Leave. Now that division is being replayed in an internal (but often public) debate in the party about whether the UK should seek a 'hard' or a 'soft' Brexit.

Meanwhile, no party – apart from UKIP – was able to take its voters with it in the referendum. According to the British Election Study, while 63% of those who voted Conservative in 2015 backed Leave, 37% voted to Remain. Labour voters were just as divided with 37% voting Leave, 63% Remain. Not even the SNP (34% Leave, 67% Remain), for whom

being part of the EU is an integral part of its vision for independence, or the Liberal Democrats (30% Leave, 70% Remain), long Britain's most pro-EU party, avoided a substantial split amongst their supporters.

Britain's two-party system could be facing its biggest challenge yet

In short, many a voter was out of sympathy with their party in June, and could continue to be so as the debate about Brexit intensifies. The key question now is whether some feel so strongly about the issue that they start to defect to a party they feel more adequately reflects their views.

Both UKIP, the self-proclaimed voice of the 'hard Brexiters', and the Liberal Democrats, who seem determined to become the standard bearer for 'Remoaners', have had their troubles of late. But on Brexit they both have a clear position with which they can hope to attract new supporters to their ranks.

Both the Conservatives and Labour seem destined to try and keep their divided ranks intact with what could come to seem like mixed or even conflicting messages

In contrast, both the Conservatives and Labour seem destined to try and keep their divided ranks intact with what could come to seem like mixed or even conflicting messages. If these efforts prove inadequate, then Britain's two-party system could be facing its biggest challenge yet. ●

Feelings over fact, sentiment over statement

Charlotte Henry on the impact of fake news in a post-truth era



CHARLOTTE HENRY is a member of *Bright Blue*

“There are three types of lies,” Benjamin Disraeli is alleged to have declared, “lies, damned lies, and statistics”.

One wonders what Disraeli or Mark Twain, who popularised the quotation, would have made of the current state of politics, which is filled to bursting with all three. So prevalent has ‘post-truth politics’ become, whereby people distort facts, dubiously source data, or simply make up things in order to fuel their own narrative, that the phrase was declared the Oxford Dictionary’s word of 2016.

It is my firm belief that post-truth politics helped push Britain out of the EU and Donald Trump into the White House. Politicians now seem comfortable promising things that they surely must know can never be delivered, from £350m a year for the NHS from the Leave campaign, to walls on the US border with Mexico from the then Republican candidate.

It appears that Michael Gove was right when he said that “people in this country have had enough of experts”. Voters now seem to care more about the sentiment than the statement itself. So dramatic has this change in discourse been, that it is hard to remember quite how we got here.

Writing in the *New York Times* back in August, William Davies, author and Associate Professor in political economy at Goldsmiths, University of London, said: “The problem is the oversupply of facts in the 21st century: There are too many sources, too many methods, with varying levels of credibility, depending on who funded a given study and how the eye-catching number was selected.”

Davies says that there is a for-hire facts industry that means anyone can pay for their own truth if they have enough money.

We are, without doubt, drowning in a sea of information, and this allows people to fish out the facts that suit them. However, I’m not convinced by Davies’ argument. It may not be fashionable to say so, but research, polling and yes, good old fashioned journalism, still have a vital role to play in helping us understand what is going on in the society, and what is deliverable by our elected leaders.

In this post-truth era liberals have found ourselves at a disadvantage

Social media is clearly a huge factor in information getting warped, and untruths being spread. We live in an age where trolls and troublemakers can, as the old saying goes, get a lie halfway around the world before the truth has put its boots on.

Fake news, powered by Facebook and Google algorithms not smart enough to edit fact from well-constructed fiction as humans can, is hurtling around the internet at lightning speed.

The US Presidential election demonstrated this perfectly. There was a genuine discussion in the media as to whether Hillary Clinton had suffered a stroke or was suffering some other major illness, because her opponents spread it on social media and on television that she had, despite all medical evidence pointing to the contrary.

The Trump campaign has regularly made statements that independent, non-partisan websites such as Politifact declared to be untrue, and yet he still swept to a comprehensive victory in the

electoral college. His supporters cared about the rhetoric, not the reasoning.

If you cannot get an appointment easily at your local GP, £350 million a week for the NHS sounds great.

If you think your job has been taken by a Mexican immigrant you may well want to build that wall, and you would probably believe a US President can make Mexico pay for it too. Most importantly, even if you do not believe those things can come to pass, you would be pleased somebody is prepared to tackle your issues.

Post-truth politics is then born both out of a frustration at the way things currently are, and a technological and media environment that allows people to ramp up and spread all kinds of misinformation.

After all, much of the public think that the current crop of political leaders have not done so well for us. They may well reason that even if a grandiose promise is only partially kept that is better than things are now.

From Brexit to Trump, Corbyn to Sanders, immigration to surveillance laws, liberalism has taken a bit of a pounding in 2016. In this post-truth era liberals have found ourselves at a disadvantage. In large part this is because so much of liberal thought is based on reason, logic and evidence, the very things people are rejecting.

Light will always be the best disinfectant though, and if we are going to counter fake news and post-truth politics we liberals need to do more than just piously fact-check. We need to sell the reality, the accurate, fact based, reality, far better than we are doing. Otherwise post-truth politics will be here to stay. ●



The *Centre Write* interview: The Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP

Laura Round discusses the rise of populism, the threat to liberalism, Trump and Brexit with the former Deputy Prime Minister.

One could say that 2016 has not been a good year for liberalism. Is there a way back and why is the liberal message not resonating with people?

Of course there's a way back. Nothing's fixed and immutable in politics. When a pendulum swings in one direction it has an uncanny habit of swinging in another direction as well. If the generational differences in this country are anything to go by and if the vote by young people in favour of staying in Europe can be used as any guide to how they might continue to think as they get older, there's going to be change with the passage of time in any event in favour of internationalism within British politics.

Of course, you have to always believe there's a way back, but clearly, liberalism - and by that I mean a classical British

liberalism - the belief in the individual, the belief in reason, the belief in internationalism, the belief in reform, and the enlightened belief in progress that tomorrow can always be made better than today and today can be better than yesterday - is clearly not speaking to the visceral fears and anxieties that people have about their own circumstances and about the world in which they inhabit. That's just obvious. I think liberalism always struggles at a time of fear. It's easier to espouse the sunny, rational altruism of liberalism when you're feeling good about your circumstances and you're feeling secure in your job and you're not feeling threatened by anything or anybody else. Where liberalism always fairs worse, and populism always, of course, fairs better at a time of fear.

I think the underlying question is "how do you address the

>> underlying insecurities and fears that are clearly giving expression to various forms of populism”? There’s no point in lambasting Trump - or Le Pen, Farage and Wilders - without understanding that lots of decent people are voting for him. Much as I abhor a lot of the leaders of the Brexit campaign, I certainly don’t abhor the many decent people who voted for Brexit. In the same way that I think it’s absurd for Brexiters to somehow air brush out of the record the aspirations and values of over 16 million of their fellow citizens. I think it’s equally absurd for some Remainers to somehow imply that somehow everybody that voted for Brexit did so out of malign intent. They clearly didn’t. Lots of really good, decent people voted for that. That’s the distinction you have to make and that’s one of the starting blocks that liberalism needs to put in place in order to get back in the ring.

Can you understand the backlash that ‘the establishment’ has experienced?

Yes, although I draw a distinction. Talking in apocryphal terms, when a very well-to-do gentlemen whose house is kept spotlessly clean by their Latin cleaner, whose elderly mum is being looked after and changed by their very nice Portuguese social worker and whose business has done very well out of a growing economy thanks to our place in the Single Market. However, they vote for Brexit because the *Daily Telegraph* has told him you’ve got to return to some sort of mirage of nineteenth century gunboat diplomacy. I’m afraid I have no sympathy for that at all. That is where I have a limit to my understanding and I think it’s just wrong. However, I have huge understanding for - again being apocryphal - a single mum on an estate in my constituency in southwest Sheffield who works long hours and has had a pay squeeze remorselessly for eight years, whose in-work benefits have been trimmed, and who worries that her daughter can’t get her feet on the property ladder, who says “Remain sounds as if all is fine as it is”. I have huge sympathy with them, so that is where I draw a distinction. In other words I not only sympathise but I find it very difficult to counter the sentiments of some Brexit voters. Others obviously I had and have no sympathy for at all.

Where I think we need to be careful is that some people say it’s all the establishment’s fault. The Brexit press in particular are now claiming that they were always right in every way. If you listen to them you’d think that everybody voted overwhelmingly for Brexit and only Ken Clarke and myself voted for Remain. It’s much more complex than that. History is being re-invented as if everybody voted for Brexit, that the establishment stinks, and all we need to do is just bury the past. It’s not nearly as simple as that.

If it were that simple it would be rather straightforward. Start a revolution and just kick everybody out.

The country was massively divided. Two huge votes pulling it in diametrically opposite directions and it’s just too easy to claim that everybody who’s in ‘the so-called establishment’ screwed up.

Self-evidently we’re dealing with much, much deeper and more profound forces than that: Islamist terrorism, mass migration from the Mediterranean, the financial system which could’ve started with a problem in subprime mortgages in midwest America that led to the biggest banking crisis this country’s ever seen. Saying all this is simply the establishment’s fault is a ludicrously simplistic allegation.

During the United States Presidential Primaries, Marco Rubio claimed the media had a lot to answer for, stating they had helped Donald Trump’s campaign by covering his controversial remarks instead of the other candidate’s policy announcements. What do you believe to be the role of the media in the recent developments?

There are significant vested interests in the British press. I’m hardly uncovering a conspiracy, they say it themselves. Paul Dacre, the Barclay Brothers, and *The Sun* are the dominant voices in our press. They are all competitors, but they are joined at the hip ideologically. They want to see Britain turned into a low-tax, low-regulation, offshore economy. They say the solution to Brexit is slash corporation tax, slash labour regulations, slash red tape, make it a wild west economy for investors from around the world. Of course they’re all aligned in their hatred of the European Union because turning the United Kingdom into an offshore, low-regulation Singapore is incompatible with being part of this supranational arrangement. I’m not whinging about it, that’s just a fact. The boot is now on that sort of Brexit foot.

The thing that I find so curious is that these people, for so long, yelled at what they consider to be the out of touch elite, they don’t quite know what to do with the responsibility that comes with victory. These people are in charge. I remember I was sharing a platform a few months ago with Douglas Carswell. All his usual clichés came tumbling out. And I said: “You are now the elite. You are in charge. You are now the establishment. We now look to you for answers.” He looked utterly dumbfounded. That’s what’s so curious.

Both in America and here, the populists have done very well. There’s absolutely no point denying it. But it’s almost as if they never really had the true confidence they were going to win, or even deserved to win. That’s the curious thing and we are now in a bizarre situation where they

>> have won and they still won't tell us what the answer is.

[What impacts are the elections in Germany, France and the Netherlands going to have on the Brexit negotiations?](#)

Massive. If the rest of Europe turns in on itself, then self-evidently the priority attached to the Brexit negotiations sinks. We do live sometimes in this illusion that everyone in western Europe is thinking about Brexit. They're not. They've got their own problems, their own priorities. If there is political instability in Europe, that will only become more the case.

[What was your reaction when you heard Trump had won the Presidential Election?](#)

Funny enough I was not that surprised. I thought long and hard about Brexit and it just seemed obvious to me that in a contest between a bunch of politicians who are saying they want to tweak the status quo and another bunch of politicians that say they're going to smash the status quo, the smashers are winning at the moment. This is a time smashers do well, tweekers don't.

[What three words would you use to describe Trump?](#)

Vain. Unpredictable. And bombastic.

[You've written about the heart being a stronger organ than the brain and that populists know how to appeal to emotions, which is a skill liberals don't seem to grasp as much. How can liberals solve this?](#)

That's the \$10 million question to which I don't have a perfect answer. There's a self-denying ordinance in liberalism. Liberalism is nothing if it is not a creed which believes in evidence, debate, compromise and data. If you relinquish that, you're no longer a liberal. Therefore the idiom through which liberalism speaks is less visceral than populism.

Having said that, I do think liberals have every reason now to be angry because their values are being traduced, and mocked and disregarded by the new Brexit populist elite. I think Blair's absolutely right. There's no reason why liberals cannot now say that they're the insurgents. With insurgency comes the freedom to attack a new establishment, a new elite, who may not know what to do with victory but whether they like it or not, they're now in charge.

I believe British liberalism is a profoundly patriotic creed. I think there's something profoundly patriotic about the long tradition stretching right back to the nineteenth century if not further back, of British liberalism. Right back to J.S. Mill,

the apogee of Gladstonian liberalism. Yet for some reason, every time liberals do battle with populism like Brexit, you're cast as a bit unpatriotic. What on earth has it come to if wishing to assert Britain's leadership as a leading member of Europe is basically branded as an unpatriotic thing to do?

For some reason, the populists appear to have a stronger claim in many people's views on patriotism. That is really dangerous. For that reason I always say the liberal left are going to overcome their squeamishness about patriotism. Patriotism can be a dark thing but it can be a very uplifting thing as well. One of the things I would like for liberals across parties to do is to be more unapologetically patriotic and never allow the localists and chauvinists to claim that they're more patriotic than liberals are.

I hope that across the whole liberal spectrum from liberal Conservatives to liberal Labour members to Liberal Democrats, people will be nonpartisan in listening to each other.

[How can we make Parliament and other top positions more representative?](#)

I would say that if you persist with a system that is so woefully out of whack with the choices that people actually express in the ballot box, you shouldn't be surprised when people feel they aren't being represented. Four million people voted for a party and they were rewarded with Douglas Carswell. What more do I need to say?

You can fiddle around as much as you like on the Titanic of Westminster. A tweak here, a tweak there, finding a different way of selecting candidates, but if at the end of the day the way millions of people vote is not being reflected in Parliament then you're always starting on the backfoot.

The sad thing is, most MPs that I know of all parties work much, much harder than most politicians in most other democracies in keeping in touch with their constituents. I think we have to marry reform which opens up the system whilst maintaining a very fine British tradition of MP's actually being much closer to their constituents than most political elites are in other democracies.

[This year in particular, has shown that politics can be a very nasty game. Are you worried it might turn off people entering into politics?](#)

Completely. Which normal person is going to willingly put themselves forward for the hysterical vituperation which is now directed at any politician that gets anywhere? As a dad, I wouldn't want my children to go into politics. Because as a parent, you want to protect your children. Perhaps in my case

>> it was slightly extreme, and I'm sure it was as much my fault as much as anyone else's. Trying to unite vituperative vested interest from both right and left, I've had to endure incoming fire everyday for half a decade from both Right and Left. The mud sticks and the bruises show.

It does worry me actually. Such appalling and vile things are said about people. My worry is that it's not just politics. If you were to read the *Daily Mail* for a week, you would think anyone who's in public service - whether it's accountants,

lawyers, social workers, doctors, judges, police, chief executives of local authorities - is either immoral or on the take. It denigrates the idea of public service. There are of course plenty of rotten apples in public service and you've got bloodhounds at the *Daily Mail* who sniff out corruption. However, there is a difference in holding people to account and denigrating all motives about public service. Of course that will discourage people thinking going to public service in the future. ●

LATEST REPORT

Better homes: Incentivising home energy improvements

Ben Caldecott & Sam Hall

This is the second report from our *Green conservatism* project.

Homes in the UK need to consume less and greener energy so that important targets for reducing carbon emissions are achieved. Government sought to incentivise home energy improvements by creating the Green Deal in 2013, but this was a failure and ended after two years. There is now a policy vacuum.

This report examines the current market in energy efficiency measures and decentralised renewable technologies, and the possible reasons for the Green Deal's failure. It proposes a new home energy improvement scheme in the able to pay sector.



A democracy that works for everyone

Chris Skidmore MP lays out the Government's plans to improve voter registration



CHRIS SKIDMORE
MP is Minister for
the Constitution

It is vital that as many eligible people as possible are heard in the democratic process to ensure we build a democracy that works for everyone. The EU referendum in June marked a historic high point in the level of democratic participation in this country, with a record 46.5 million people registered to vote. The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration has meant joining the electoral roll is faster and more accessible than ever before. It now takes just a few minutes to apply online, and more than 21 million have done so since 2014.

However, there is still more for us to do. We must continue to improve the registration process to successfully engage even greater numbers. People from black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, those who move house frequently, young people, and those with a longstanding mental health condition or disability are all still less likely to register to vote. British citizens living overseas are also particularly under-registered.

We will continue to reach out to all communities, including those who feel socially excluded, to encourage and empower them to have their say – ensuring that no community is left behind

That is why we will continue to reach out to all communities, including those who feel socially excluded, to encourage



and empower them to have their say – ensuring that no community is left behind. Recently, I began a tour of every part of the United Kingdom to hear how we can continue to build a stronger democracy. I have spoken with many individuals and organisations – including Citizens UK, UpRising and Patchwork Foundation – who share my belief that every voice matters. And we are working with groups such as Women's Aid, to ensure that victims of domestic violence aren't further discriminated against in the electoral process.

We have recently launched 18 pilot projects across England and Wales to bring down the cost of the annual canvass. These are in addition to pilots already taking place in Birmingham, South Lakeland and Ryedale. They will allow councils to compare the electoral register with the records they hold, for

example on Council Tax, to identify those whose details may have changed so they can then target the occupants directly to ensure that their information is up to date and, crucially, they are able to vote in the next election. They also give councils the flexibility to use letters, telephone, email or door knocking to contact residents. If these pilots are rolled out nationally, they could generate savings of up to £20 million every year and free up resources to help under-represented groups.

And once someone does register to vote, it is imperative we ensure that every vote carries equal weight - which is why reform of our boundaries is so important. As an example, in my area of the West Country, the constituency of Bristol West has the same democratic right as nearby Bath, who have 30,000 fewer voters. To put this right, we must press ahead with the redrawing

>> of constituency boundaries to end this historic unequal representation.

We must also address the injustice of British citizens losing their right to vote if they have lived in another country for 15 years. British citizens who move abroad remain a vital part of our democracy and it is important they have the ability to participate. People like Harry Shindler, who fought in the Second World War, have campaigned tirelessly for British citizens living abroad to be given the vote. That is why the Government's Overseas Electors Bill will ensure that British citizens who

have moved overseas have the right to register to vote in future elections.

British citizens who move abroad remain a vital part of our democracy and it is important they have the ability to participate

Underpinning these initiatives remains the Government's commitment to produce a clear and secure democracy where we continue to drive improvements to our electoral registration system to ensure it is fit for the twenty-first century, while putting in place measures

to make the system more secure. And it is only through all measures such as these that we can build on the good work already underway.

We all have a role to play in encouraging everyone in our communities to take an active part in our democracy. Over the next few months, I will be developing a Democratic Engagement Strategy to ensure that every member of every community feels their voice matters – and as the Prime Minister outlined on the steps of Downing Street, we will deliver a democracy that works for everyone. ●

What have experts ever done for us?

Professor Jonathan Grant argues there is still a need for experts



PROFESSOR JONATHAN GRANT *is the Director of the Policy Institute at King's College London*

"All right ... but apart from the sanitation, the medicine, education, wine, public order, irrigation, roads, a fresh water system, and public health, what have the Romans ever done for us."

So ended the infamous argument in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*. And the same could be said for experts. What have they ever done for us? From medical breakthroughs, space exploration and our understanding of climate change, to technological advances, improving schools and IVF – the list is almost endless.

But like the Romans, that contribution is being challenged and the role of the expert in the 21st Century is threatened.

As leading Brexit campaigner Michael Gove put it so memorably in the EU referendum campaign, "people in this country have had enough of experts". He went on to suggest that economists who were warning about the risks of leaving the EU could not be trusted as they were largely publicly funded, making a comparison with Nazi Germany. In an interview on LBC radio he said: "We have to be careful about historical comparisons, but Albert Einstein during the 1930s was denounced by the German authorities for being wrong and his theories were denounced, and one of the reasons of course he was denounced was because he was Jewish. They got 100 German scientists in the pay of the government to say that he was wrong and Einstein said: "Look, if I was wrong, one would have been enough." Gove acknowledged his mistake in making this comparison, later saying "I answered, as I

often do, with a historical analogy. It was clumsy and inappropriate" – but the cat was out of the bag. Many 'experts' were deeply worried and confused by these comments, worried that the emergence of a post-truth democracy is a threat to their livelihoods and ideology.

So let me confess - I am an expert and I am worried. My expertise is in the niche area of biomedical and health science policy, but in that area I am acknowledged globally for what I know and think. I have had the privilege of working with governments and medical research charities across the world – in the UK, North America, Australia and the Middle East. I like to think that my work, in a very small way, has helped to shape the way that research is supported and funded, and in doing so, has helped improve the health and wellbeing of communities across the world. But I am useless at many things. If a pipe leaks

>> in my house I call an expert to fix it; if my child is ill I take her to an expert to make her better; if my car breaks down, I take it to an expert to be repaired. The point is that we are all experts.

Many 'experts' were worried that the emergence of a post-truth democracy is a threat to their livelihoods and ideology

But have we really had enough of experts? I increasingly think not, for two reasons: First, Gove was being politically opportunistic in the EU referendum debate. When he was Secretary of State for Justice he set up a Data, Evidence and Science Advisory Board chaired by Sir Michael Barber. As his departmental plan put it: "We will put evidence at the heart of what we do. We will improve our data, analysis and research capability, so that we can give officials and frontline staff access to evidence about what works, helping to deliver the best outcomes for citizens". Second, the evidence points the other way. A recent poll by the Institute for Government concludes that "85% of people want politicians to consult professionals and experts when making difficult decisions, and 83% want government to make decisions based on objective evidence."

This does not mean I am complacent. There are two key issues that we need to reflect on: The first is the conflation of experts with 'elites'. Even here there is a further unintended ambiguity – are we really ranting against un-meritocratic elites? There is a big difference between someone who has a deep knowledge about a particular subject being asked for an opinion, against someone with a superficial knowledge with access to a broad group of people via social media or other outlets.

The second related issue is the impact of social media on public discourse. When I was being bought up I would often watch



the evening news with my parents. This was the dominant source of news and was taken as the 'truth' – we may have different interpretations of the rights or wrongs of what was being reported and its implications, but we trusted the 'facts'. But over the past 10 years or so the monopolistic supply of the facts has been fragmented into numerous sources – blogs, websites, Twitter etc.

There is no longer a single source of the truth. For example, a recent study in the US suggests that almost two-thirds of people get news on social media, and around one in five people do so often.

There is no longer a single source of the truth. The post truth democracy is actually a multiple-truth democracy

An international study of over 50,000 people in 26 countries found that half of people surveyed said they use social media as a source of news each week, and

around one in ten said it is their main source. More than a quarter of 18–24s said social media was their main source of news, which was more than television.

So the post-truth democracy is actually a multiple-truth democracy. Those 'truths' may or may not be anchored in evidence or expertise, but they are perceived by the recipients as the trusted facts. Facts that are reinforced through an 'echo chamber' of like-minded people in a self selected virtual network. So if, as experts, we are not to go the way of the Romans, we need to acknowledge and change our game accordingly. We need to improve the way that we engage in public discourse, using social media to our advantage, in a language that is accessible and understood. If we don't, not only are our livelihoods threatened but the health, wealth and wellbeing of the nation is at risk. Put another way, my pipe will continue to leak until I get the expert plumber to fix it. ●

In defence of elitism

Liam Booth-Smith tells us why we benefit from elites



LIAM BOOTH-SMITH *is the Chief Executive at Localis*

The elitism which I defend in this essay is not the sneering sort. I don't hold the belief that because someone is born into wealth or privilege they are 'better', nor do I think any race, gender or sexuality is superior to another. The elitism I believe in is meritocratic. In the words of Susan Sontag, I consider "the only difference between human beings is intelligence". Individual exceptionalism and achievement is not a corrosive agent acting on society. It might generate discord, even hostility, but it is not wrong.

The distinction between defending elitism and defending elites will be central to your understanding of my argument. Western liberal democracies have in recent years, in the most demotic vernacular, given traditional elites a right old kicking. The UK's vote to leave the European Union, Donald Trump's rise to the Presidency of the United States, the Five Star Movement in Italy, Syria in Greece, and even Jeremy Corbyn's hold over the British Labour party stand testament to the collective feeling that our ubiquitous 'system' is rigged against the many in favour of the few.

Yet elites, in and of themselves, are not inherently wicked. We benefit from them in all sorts of ways, from the enjoyment of watching a favoured sporting team to our education system which sees knowledge and outlook shared between the minority elite teachers and majority population pupils. Even the maligned

European landed leisure class of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries conducted diplomacy and created cultural and economic ties between nations from which we still benefit to this day. Throughout history elites performed functions of general benefit to the mass populace, whether via arts, culture, infrastructure or defence of the realm. They function well when their actions are connected to the betterment of society's lot as a whole. Conversely when they become detached from the concerns of ordinary people they appear decadent, aloof and arrogant.

Today elitism, even as a belief in exceptionalism, individual achievement and reward, has become a dirty word. Depressingly we seem to have forgotten that elitism, in its most noble form, is our insurance against mob tyranny and a guarantee that a minority voice will be heard. Burke saw this tension in the French revolution, Mill later shared a similar sentiment, via De Tocqueville, in his work *On Liberty*.

Damningly, many liberals have surrendered elitism in favour of socially inoffensive egalitarianism. William A. Henry's 1994 polemic, of the same title as this essay, put it succinctly when arguing such inoffensiveness robs us of the confidence to objectively rank cultures and ideas. There is a difference between a society where men and women are treated equally versus one which treats women like chattel with which to barter. I have no problem in calling the former, ostensibly our liberal democratic culture, objectively superior to the medieval Islamist fantasy being

imposed on much of the Middle East, for example. Nor do I feel compelled to 'respect' the views of those who advocate on behalf of despotic murderous creeds or regimes in the name of understanding or balance. I have no problem saying these things because I have not lost sight of the fact dialectic is a positive force. A tolerant society doesn't mean all views are equal, just that all views get an equal enough hearing to determine whether they're worth tolerating.

The rise of anti-establishment politics, noticeably often led by members of the establishment, is not anti-elitist. This may strike some as jarring but take a moment to reflect. Can anyone credibly claim that Donald Trump is not a member of an elite? Or even Jeremy Corbyn for that matter? It is precisely because they are members of an elite they have been successful. They both pass Bertrand Russell's evidence against interest by virtue of being nominally contrarian. Anti-establishment politics is as much anti-egalitarian, with its concern over a lack of prevalence, hierarchy and status in society, as it is any judgement on elitism. Intuitively people know they are not all equal: To be told otherwise is tedious, to be told truthfully is liberating.

The question of who tells such truths similarly induces a palsy of candour. Naturally our political elite should follow Kafka's advice and bare the intense obsessions of their soul. After all, many get elected on the pretence of possessing this agenbite of inwit, but given the opportunity to express it shows remarkable caprice. Preferring instead to designate increasing

>> numbers of problems as ‘local’ or for the ‘community’ and better dealt with ‘on that level’. This would be fine if it weren’t for the fact we’re the most centralised country in Europe.

As a result geography discriminates. Our divides can be cartographed as well classified. The notion of ‘local’, expressed as a pride of or connection to ‘where you’re from’, is a kick against the shins of all elites (political, financial and cultural). That ‘elite’ is often prefaced

with ‘London’ suggests as much. The capital enjoys natural advantages, we should encourage its success, but denying the rest of England the powers and freedoms it enjoys is anti-meritocratic. In this instance, given how far apart London is culturally and economically from the rest of England, our political elite has lashed its own back.

Thus I present the central tension; one cannot have a meritocracy without elitism, and one cannot have elitism

without elites. But when they function poorly it corrodes the very meritocracy necessary for a fair and rewarding society to exist. The answer, therefore, is not to bash elites, but make them work more effectively. A society which more visibly reflects the efforts and endeavours of its people is one few would argue with, that it is essentially an elitist vision would no doubt strike some as surprising. We liberals need to rediscover our confidence in such matters and say so. ●

We must trust the people

Andrea Jenkyns MP on the importance of honesty in politics



ANDREA JENKYNs MP is a Member of the Exiting the European Union Select Committee

For me, it is an honour to write about honesty in politics. From a young age I was taught by my father that honesty is an important asset to have, as it gains you the respect of those you are with. Now, as a politician representing my constituents, honesty is at the core of my work: I am always ready to say what I think and believe, even if that sometimes goes against popular opinion.

I am always ready to say what I think and believe, even if that sometimes goes against popular opinion

I am fascinated by the current trend in politics and I am excited to finally see that politicians are able to have frank conversations with their voters. I have often been referred to as a

candid Yorkshire woman, but actually it is simply in my nature that people should say what they think and believe, even if that sometimes goes against established ways of doing things.

We need to listen to public opinion, even if this means having difficult conversations

For me, when I reflect on a new direction in politics I do not see it as being neither populist nor being against popular opinion. We need to listen to public opinion, even if this means having difficult conversations. We are beginning to see this direction across the globe, whereby voters’ disappointment with politicians not wanting to have an honest conversation with them is resulting in unexpected election results. But whilst these results may be unexpected for the politicians they are a victory for the people. We have seen this occur at home, in the US, in France, Greece and Germany to name just a few. These unexpected

outcomes have often been a result of political views that, at times, made me cringe. However, the new political style of politicians telling things ‘as they are’ represents a refreshing change for many of our electorates. Whether this is deemed to be populism or simply the electorate’s desire to have more honest politicians is much open to debate.

We do not need to look far to find a good example: it was effectively showcased by our decision to leave the EU. Through the campaign, politicians were able to put forward what was initially perceived to be as the publically awkward position of leaving the EU. Many were pessimistic about that prospect, calling it a leap of faith or a walk into the dark - but I found it to be quite the opposite. I was thrilled to be able to have an honest conversation on how the previously unchallenged status quo was affecting us. Disagreeing with the European Union and its bureaucratic nature and believing that our great nation is better off outside of it has not always been a mainstream stance,

>> especially within political circles.

Throughout my lifetime, Conservative and Labour governments alike have held pro-European views. This, however, has not affected my life-long disagreement with the European project. Campaigning for a referendum on the European issue before I was an MP hardened my disagreement with the political union in Brussels. In those days, I would go door-to-door talking to people in what was to become my constituency, Morley and Outwood, asking them for their opinions on the European Union. Most of them shared my view that it was a protectionist anchor, holding us back from a truly global outreach, while depriving us of our sovereignty at home. The tide turned in our favour in the end, but as an MP I am proud to say that I was frank about this discussion from the outset, even when it was an unpopular opinion to have. I was passionate about being honest in my views and thoughts, and it was this that truly allowed me to represent my constituents.

Following the referendum result, I saw countless headlines describing it as a ‘victory for populism’. It seems every journalist and politician has their own idea of what populism represents. In the sense that it is a respect for democratic values, the power of people to make their own decisions and decide their own futures, then I agree that the Brexit result was a victory for populism. The referendum allowed the people to make one of the most important decisions of this generation. It trusted them to choose the direction their country would go in.

We must, as Randolph Churchill once said, “trust the people”

If we believe that populism is a representation of the people’s feelings towards policy and government, then Brexit sent a clear message that must be listened to. British people are frustrated with issues that the EU has kept out of our control. The right to make laws specific to our nation’s needs and values

has been denied to the British people.

Furthermore, the referendum sent a clear message that the majority of people believe freedom of movement does not work. Britain needs a new, unique and tailored immigration system that understands the needs of the economy, yet considers the strains on our public services. Labour’s reluctance to fill the Shadow Immigration Minister role is naïve. As happened across the Atlantic, people will support those they believe are taking their opinions seriously. Labour’s denial of people’s genuine fears on immigration is a threat to the legitimacy of our political system.

To conclude, there are many definitions of populism. In this article I have outlined how I see it: an understanding of the need to take public opinion seriously. We must, as Randolph Churchill once said, “trust the people”. Brexit sent a clear and optimistic message that we want to take control of our future and our destiny and this message must be respected. ●

The world is better than you think

Johan Norberg examines the unprecedented progress made over the past decades



JOHAN NORBERG is a Swedish historian and the author of *Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future*

I’ve got some good news for you, and some bad news. Let’s start with the good, because we need it right now.

At the moment, we are witnessing the greatest improvement in living standards ever to take place. Poverty,

malnutrition, illiteracy, child labour and infant mortality are falling faster than at any other time in human history. Life expectancy at birth has increased more than twice as much in the last century as it did in the previous 200,000 years.

The risk that an individual will be exposed to war, die in a natural disaster, or be subjected to dictatorship has become smaller than it was in any other epoch. A child born today is more likely to reach retirement age than his forebears were to live to their fifth birthday.

War, crime, disasters and poverty are painfully real, and during the last decade global news media has made us aware of them in a new way – live on screen, every day, around the clock – but they are not new, they have always been with us. The difference now is that they are rapidly declining. Today they are the exceptions – horrible, wide-ranging exceptions that affect, hurt and kill people, but still exceptions.

This progress happened because people got the freedom to explore knowledge,

>> experiment with new technologies and solutions and exchange the results, and so can come up with ever better ways of satisfying our needs and solve our problems. The individual human being is therefore, as economist Julian Simon pointed out, the ultimate resource, much more important than all the natural resources we fret about. It's also a resource that can be mass-produced by low-skilled labour.

Every minute that you spend reading this article, 100 people rise out of poverty

This development started in Western Europe and North American in the early nineteenth century, because markets were opened and governments were limited. But since the fall of communism and military regimes, and the start of globalisation, this is being repeated on a much larger scale in poor countries. Since 1990 world hunger has been reduced by 40 percent, illiteracy and child mortality by half and extreme poverty by more than two thirds. Every minute that you spend reading this article, 100 people rise out of poverty.

And it's not just the poor of the world who benefit. The more people who can make use of mankind's accumulated knowledge to contribute more science, technologies and business models, the better off we all are. It's difficult to invent the cell phone or a vaccine against measles, but once it's been done, it's easy to use it everywhere. Foreign trade has increased the purchasing power of Western consumers by almost 50 percent.

And since I grew up in the early 1980s, we have seen tremendous improvements in technology, in everything from treating cardiovascular disease to the internet, the leading pollutants have been reduced by 75 percent and homicide rates have been halved. And oh, we've had another ten years of life expectancy.

That's the good news. The bad news

is that almost no one gets this. And that has very dangerous implications.

When I recently tweeted a graph that summarized how poverty, hunger, child mortality and illiteracy had fallen dramatically in the last 25 years, a British woman retweeted it immediately with the addition "Startling graphics that confirm my general hell-in-a-handcart feeling." She had read the graph upside down! And she thought that it confirmed everything she thought she knew about the world.

She is not alone. Only six percent of the British think the world is on the whole becoming a better place. More people believe in ghosts and astrology than in progress. "Doom and gloom, everywhere", as a woman on the street responded when public radio asked her to describe the state of the world.

It's not a strange reaction. When I follow the breaking news I also get the impression that the world is falling apart, even though more people died of terrorism in the 1970s, the proportion of war fatalities has declined by almost three quarters, and the number of military coups has been reduced by around 90 percent.

The role of the media is to tell us about the most shocking and dramatic thing that happened in the world in the last few hours

That's because the role of the media is to tell us about the most shocking and dramatic thing that happened in the world in the last few hours. That is what we want to know, after all, as the problem-seeking species that we are. And this means we will always hear about awful things, and almost never think about the progress that has been made. The risk of famine in northern Nigeria is news, but the fact that 8 million Nigerians have been liberated from chronic undernourishment since 1990 is just statistics in an academic report somewhere.

And since we now live in a world with

global and social media there is always something new, disturbing or shocking to report on every minute. Disasters and human tragedies are not new, but cell phone cameras are. In combination with our natural sense of nostalgia, and some very real problems like the financial crisis and the migration crisis, this gives most of us the impression that the world is a more dangerous place than it used to be. The problem is that pessimism is politically potent. As H L Menchen pointed out, clever politicians keep the populace alarmed "and hence clamorous to be led to safety".

Only 6% of the British think the world is on the whole becoming a better place. More people believe in ghosts and astrology than in progress

Frightened people become more authoritarian and protectionist. They want safety at any cost, so they often turn to strong men and big governments that offer them this safety, in exchange for their liberties. To a Trump, a Putin or a Le Pen.

The problem is that this often results in intolerant policies and attacks on open societies and free trade – which happen to be the factors that contribute the most to human progress.

So this is a weird period in time, when we are making faster progress than ever before, but the lack of recognition of this progress results in a rise in nativism and populism that is threatening to undermine it. It's not the old debate about whether the glass is half-full or half-empty, it's about one group thinking that the glass is not sufficiently full, and in frustration deciding to break it.

To make the world safe for further progress, we have to recognize and tell the story about the amazing progress people make when they are allowed to be free.

We cannot take it for granted. ●

Is the power in the members or the money?

Professor Tim Bale on whether political party membership is important for winning elections



TIM BALE is a Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University of London

We live in a golden age of political participation. Hard to believe it, I know. But when it comes to people joining political parties, it's true – or at least half true.

On the one hand, huge numbers of people have joined UK political parties in the last year or two, bucking a European-wide decline that most experts had assumed was as inexorable as it was ubiquitous.

On the other hand, the surge we've seen recently only looks impressive because it's occurred after decades in which membership had – bar the occasional blip – been dropping, sometimes like a stone. We are still, the pessimists are right to remind us, nowhere near the levels we saw back in the early 1950s. And the Conservative Party, which could claim to be the biggest political party this country had ever seen when its membership officially (and not altogether convincingly) peaked at 2,805,032 in 1953, is arguably in rather less rude health in this respect than its main rival, Labour, which now boasts some 600,000 members to the Tories' guesstimated 150,000.

If elections come down to members vs money, money may well be the winner

But should this gap really worry us? Are we too ready to assume that having lots of members is always a good thing?

Is there any evidence to link growth in membership with, say, electoral success or more responsive policies? What is it that members do – or are supposed to do – for a political party? Is it inevitably positive or are there some downsides to people joining?

These are questions worth asking, especially in the light of what's happened to Labour in the last couple of years. Cast your mind back to the 2015 election: Ed Miliband, we were told, stood a stronger chance of making it into Downing Street than many people imagined because his party had a much better 'ground game' than did David Cameron's. While the Prime Minister and his colleagues were amassing a war chest that they could spend both during and, perhaps more crucially, before campaigning officially began, Ed's grassroots were supposedly out on 'the Labour doorstep' having 'five million conversations' with voters. Well, it's possible that they may have been – but little good it did them. The Conservatives, as we know, not only beat Labour easily but won a completely unexpected overall majority.

In other words, if elections come down to members vs money, money may well be the winner. But even more importantly, if a party's message isn't resonating with voters, then no amount of voter contact, whether it be canvassing by members or via Facebook through Party HQ, is going to make much difference.

And anyway, we need to remember that most members of political parties don't think or sound like the voters they're trying to mobilise. Whatever else

is shown by the wealth of survey data on party members that my colleagues, Paul Webb and Monica Poletti, and I have collected for our ESRC-funded party membership project, it shows that they are, almost irrespective of party, better-off and better educated, and of course much more ideological and interested in politics, than those whose doors they knock on or whose phone numbers they ring.

If we zoom out from SW1, we see that party members can and do still have a very positive role to play in British politics

Politicians and party staffers are well aware of this dirty little secret, which is why, traditionally anyway, they have paid far more attention, when formulating both policy and campaigns, to their own intuitions and expertise – and, of course, to opinion polls – than they have to the often very unrepresentative views of their own foot soldiers. That is not to say, however, that even in the Conservative Party (which has always preserved its leadership's autonomy by steadfastly refusing to adopt the internal democracy which is the norm in most other parties) members have no influence at all. After all, one only has to think of Brexit to realise that pressure from the party in the country, when combined with pressure applied simultaneously at Westminster, can help paint a Tory Prime Minister into a corner from which he can escape only by doing something he would earlier have regarded (and must surely regard now) as utterly stupid.

In his classic work on the distribution



>> of power within British political parties, Bob McKenzie, a Canadian academic who became one of the nation's favourite political pundits back in the days of black and white television, noted that, although Labour's constitution made it look more democratic and therefore more responsive to members than the Tories, the reality was rather different. But what happened to the party in the 1970s and 1980s, when the left temporarily seized control of the levers of power from the bottom up, suggested he'd rather overplayed its informal (but nonetheless institutionalised) elitism. Still, we all thought that normal service had been resumed after the devastating election defeat Labour suffered in 1983.

Indeed, the centralisation of power Labour experienced from the late eighties onwards, culminating in the manifestly top-down rule of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, suggested there would be no return to what some on the right of the party clearly regarded as the bad old days of badly-dressed blokes in branch meetings and on the conference floor telling their leaders what to do. The fact that party members provided – as was also the case for the

Conservatives, although not for parties like the Lib Dems and the Greens – a smaller and smaller proportion of the party's funding only served to reinforce the common wisdom that, unlike big donors, they could be ignored.

Now, it appears, everyone spoke too soon. Partly as a reaction to the apparent control freakery of New Labour, and partly as a reaction to the unexpected loss of the 2015 election and the uninspiring continuity candidates competing to succeed Ed Miliband, the party's membership (and not just those who joined after the election either) decided the answer to its problems lay on the left. By electing Jeremy Corbyn and giving him a mandate for a platform whose appeal to activists lies in inverse proportion to its appeal to floating voters, it has provided a perfect illustration of why mass membership isn't necessarily an unalloyed good – at least for a party which hopes to stand some chance of governing a small-c conservative country with a sometimes vicious print media and a first-past-the-post electoral system.

This, it must be said, is a very Westminster-centric view. If we zoom

out from SW1, we see that party members can and do still have a very positive role to play in British politics. Many of them are actively involved in community work and local governance, often standing as (or at least supporting) the councillors who do unsung work, day-in-day-out, for all of us.

In this, they also continue to provide the training grounds and constitute the recruitment pool from which many of those who aspire to the national stage emerge. Moreover, they form the so-called 'selectorates' whose approval those with loftier ambitions have to seek – a privilege which, by the way, our party members surveys suggest grassroots members are loathe to cede either to their leadership or to the wider public in the form of primaries.

Not all party members, of course, are so involved. Many of them, as our surveys show, do next to nothing for their parties apart from pay their subs – and as those responsible for collecting those subs will confirm, lots of them don't even do that! But active or passive, members remain an essential, if sometimes awkward, part of Britain's precious democratic life. ●

The demise of mainstream media

Ros Taylor warns us about the alternatives



ROS TAYLOR *is the Managing Director of LSE Brexit*

“Crooked media ... They [the New York Times] continue to cover me inaccurately and with a nasty tone.” – Donald Trump on Twitter.

Petulant, furious, bitchy: Donald Trump’s broadsides to the mainstream media (“#MSM”) – triumphantly vindicated during the long night of November 8 – were as regular a feature of his Twitter feed as the #CrookedHillary hashtag. Journalists raised their eyebrows at the impudence. Well, we’re not raising them now. Everyone is at it.

“Just listen to the way a lot of politicians and commentators talk about the public. They find your patriotism distasteful,” said Theresa May, who got her job largely thanks to several newspapers’ passion for Brexit, at the Conservative Party conference. Jeremy Corbyn, who owes little to the mainstream media, has not attempted to hide his contempt for “press harassment”.

Before we rejoice in the demise of the myth that the media can ever truly represent the people, consider the alternative

The disdain is nothing new: Alastair Campbell has long reserved a special place in hell for the *Daily Mail*. But Campbell was once a journalist himself. The tabloid press, it was understood,

would occasionally veer into populism, because that was how it sold papers. The trick was to manipulate it to your own ends. What has changed – on both sides of the Atlantic – is the emergence of a populist discourse that dismisses the press as staffed by a liberal elite (for the left, it can also be a neo-liberal elite, or a capitalist elite: the nomenclature varies, but the implication is the same.) A rising consensus argues that it (at least) needs urgent reform or (at worst) is unnecessary, and doomed to wither on the shrinking vine of dwindling advertising revenue.

In the UK, the anti-MSM discourse has occasionally found a home on the right, but it has largely played out on Twitter and Facebook among supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. Frustration is expressed in re-tweets of inadequate or misleading coverage and the hashtags #WeAreHisMedia, #DontBuyTheSun or #BiasedBroadcastingCorporation. More recently, The Canary news site has taken up the narrative: “The BBC’s bias has an obvious origin, and a groundbreaking academic just brought it to light”, the site reported in October, blaming Tony Blair’s influence on the Corporation’s appointments and its determination to reflect “what goes on in Parliament” rather than “a huge number of people who want left-wing policies in some areas”.

Again, the frustration with BBC reporting finds an ironic echo in Campbell’s fury at the Corporation’s handling of the David Kelly affair. Virtually every administration has expressed indignation at the state-funded

broadcaster’s temerity. But the modern anti-MSM narrative berates the press for excluding a mass of the population from its reporting. It is no longer (if it ever was) of the people; it stands apart from the people, and remote from their concerns. Trump’s attacks on the media likewise play on the frustration of the unheard and excluded: after his victory, the Kremlin-funded Sputnik News told readers “MSM ‘experts’” had failed “to hear the cries for change from the despised ‘little people’.”

Decrying the failings of the media is a healthy part of a healthy democracy; berating it as institutionally rotten speaks of a rising sense of social anomie

Decrying the failings of the media is a healthy part of a healthy democracy; berating it as institutionally rotten speaks of a rising sense of social anomie – a breakdown in the belief that the media are (even occasionally) capable of representing one’s concerns. Social media – which grants us the freedom of an endless search for others like ourselves, who understand us, who articulate our fears and anger better than we do ourselves – has precipitated that rupture in trust. In some instances, the fury is justified. And cutting out the middleman saves time amid a proliferation of available news and opinion. But before we rejoice in the demise of the myth that the media can ever truly represent the people, consider the alternative. ●

Why I'm a Bright Blue MP

We need to expand accessibility of opportunity, argues **Nusrat Ghani MP**



NUSRAT GHANI MP is a
*Member of the Home
Affairs Select Committee*

The Oxford English Dictionary has announced its international word of the year to be “post-truth”, defining it as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.”

Freedom is defined not merely as the absence of barriers, but the accessibility of opportunity

2016 has indeed been the year in which the populace has talked back to the establishment. It started with Brexit, when the British public went against the grain and decided to fight their own corner. In America, Donald Trump latched on to the growing belief that Washington misunderstood the electorate, channelling Narendra Modi’s ability for mass mobilisation in the Indian election two years ago by targeting audiences through pocketbook issues. In France, Marine Le Pen’s populism is expected to take her to the final two in next year’s presidential election.

The ‘American Dream’ runs like a thread through US society. Freedom is defined not merely as the absence of barriers, but the accessibility of opportunity. For many US voters, 2016 was the year in which they abandoned their hopes and belief in post-industrial society as a vehicle of upward social mobility through hard work.

In their minds, hard work has led to nothing, while skyscrapers in distant cities continue to grow higher and shine brighter. Modern work patterns, and the photoshopped and glittery lives played out by their metropolitan contemporaries on social media, have left them behind.

We need to free up every individual to live to their full potential without barriers or exploitation, something on which Bright Blue rightly places a high value

Here at home it is the same, and it is why I am a Conservative, and a Bright Blue conservative at that. Though some are privileged to reap the rewards of capitalism already, only a conscientious capitalism will truly work for everyone. We need to free up every individual to live to their full potential without barriers or exploitation, something on which Bright Blue rightly places a high value. In a multicultural Britain with a flow of people and talents, One Nation Conservatives have a crucial role to play, because creating one nation from many cultures requires good, pragmatic and conscientious government.

As the left moralise and preoccupy themselves with the idea that the best way to help the disadvantaged is through state ownership and redistribution, conscientious capitalism recognises that removing the gap between rich and poor is best achieved through economic freedom, competitive globalisation and individual empowerment.

That starts with ensuring that every child gets the best education, and

that the skills people have match the jobs that are available. But at an even more basic level, it is about making sure every individual is able to access every opportunity. And that is why it was a Conservative Home Secretary, Theresa May, who put the fight against modern slavery on the agenda; that is why it is a Conservative government that is carrying out an audit of racial disparities in public services, the first of its kind; and that is why it is the Conservatives who are asking independent schools to do more to share their advantages with others.

There remain taboos which must be addressed too. That is why I am pushing for an extension of extra-territorial jurisdiction for the prosecution of so-called “honour” crimes, and for substantial reforms to, if not abolition of, Sharia councils which are so damaging to women’s rights – because opportunity must be for everyone. Bright Blue, through its human rights project, recognises how tackling discrimination and unequal treatment is key to empowerment and access to opportunity.

Last year we were the builders; next year, we must be the enablers

Populism and anti-establishment politics are the antithesis of One Nation values. We want to enable the individual, not hold them back, and to avoid populism surging even further in Britain we need to make sure that we enable every individual. Last year we were the builders; next year, we must be the enablers. ●

Trust thy neighbour

James Dobson discusses the drivers of anti-immigration rhetoric



JAMES DOBSON is a researcher at Bright Blue

2016 has been seen by many as a watershed political year: The rise of populism, the decline of the elites, and the birth of so-called ‘post-truth’ politics. First came Brexit, then the rise of Donald Trump. Commentators should be wary of linking the two results too closely. Leaving the European Union was a position supported by many sensible members of both the Conservative Party and Labour Party, while, by election day in the United States, there were almost no MPs in Westminster willing to publicly endorse Trump. However, the two elections did share one common feature: a sharp focus on immigration control.

In the UK, voters told Ipsos-Mori that immigration was the most important issue during the referendum, even more important than the economy. For Leave voters, it was particularly crucial, with over half reporting it to be one of the most important issues, compared to 33% of all voters. The official Leave campaign was not shy of focussing on the issue: It claimed that a vote to Remain was a vote for “uncontrolled immigration”. In the US, 70% of voters cited immigration as “very important to their vote”, while 79% of Trump supporters said the same. The Trump campaign was even more bullish in its use of immigration. Trump rallies became noted for their chants of “build the wall” while the Republican nominee promised to ban all Muslims from entering the US

Some have argued that this anti-immigration rhetoric and its apparent

resonance with voters was driven by economic concerns. They contend that increases in immigration reduce the employment level of the native population and reduce wages. Yet, there is scant evidence for this. In a telling section of an account by Daniel Korski, a former advisor to David Cameron, he recounts the negotiations which took place with EU leaders prior to the referendum. Korski reveals that Number 10 attempted to convince them that the UK required immigration controls due to the economic costs of immigration. In response, the EU leaders contended that the UK economy was growing, the UK was almost at full employment and that European migrants paid more tax and used fewer public services than British citizens. Number 10 tried to find convincing evidence to counter this, but were unable to. It was true.

So, if this anti-immigration rhetoric is not being driven by economic concerns, then what is driving it? Some have attributed it simply to racism. It is certainly possible that this was the motivation of some Leave voters and some Trump voters. Yet, to attribute the campaigns’ victories to racism seems pessimistic. It requires us to believe that huge numbers of American and British voters are either racists or too ignorant to identify racism.

Others have attributed the growth in anti-immigration rhetoric to cultural concerns. One of the most pressing cultural concerns is the issue of integration in our communities. There is a significant body of evidence which suggests that immigration may have some negative effects on community integration. The American Professor Robert Putnam

has found that in communities with the most diverse population, neighbours trust each other around half as much as they do in communities with the most homogenous population. Neighbourhood trust is viewed by many social scientists as a reliable indicator of integration.

There is some evidence that lower levels of trust may have had an impact on the decision of the British people to leave the EU. The British Election Survey asked UK voters whether most people in their community can be trusted, or whether you can’t be too careful. It found a clear division between those who said that most people can be trusted, amongst whom 40% voted Leave, and those who said you can’t be too careful, 64% of whom voted Leave.

In the weeks following Trump’s election victory, evidence is yet to emerge of the relationship between neighbourhood trust and Trump’s victory. Yet evidence from Trump’s primary victory, when he claimed the Republican nomination for the Presidential election, shows that he was more likely to win in states with low levels of social connectedness.

Commentators should always be wary of attributing any complex electoral phenomenon to one factor. Yet it seems possible, even probable, that low levels of neighbourhood integration played a role in both Brexit and Trump. For any ideology to succeed, it must be prepared to admit its weaknesses. Over the last three decades, the West has enjoyed an unparalleled growth in wealth but it may have come at some costs. We must be conscious of the importance of our communities and do all we can to ensure they thrive. ●

Rebels with a cause: the fossil fuel divestment movement

Sam Hall on whether climate change protesters may be undermining their cause



SAM HALL is a researcher at Bright Blue

Young people were always the true anti-establishment rebels. Kicking against the authority of their parents. Questioning the norms of earlier generations. Challenging vested interests. But in the era of Brexit and Trump, this has changed. Anti-establishment sentiment is now associated with older, working class voters. Young people, instead, seem to be choosing the status quo options: Remain and Hillary Clinton. So what has happened to the anti-establishment activism of the young?

With climate change, young people still reveal their rebellious streak. And, arguably, with good reason. If, in a few decades' time, average global temperatures rise to more than two degrees above pre-industrial levels, the youth of today will be the ones affected by frequent extreme weather events. Climate change is the ultimate symbol of intergenerational unfairness, as older generations burn fossil fuels, warming the planet to the detriment of future generations. It is seen by some young activists as an example of corporate irresponsibility, with major fossil fuel producers, despite knowing the environmental impact of their product, continuing to pollute the planet. And, although most governments around the world have plans to cut emissions, for the idealistic young, the progress is too slow.

One of the forms taken by youth climate activism is divestment campaigns. The idea behind divestment is that activists force major institutions, such as universities, to sell all their shares in fossil fuel companies. This then starves the company of capital

for future investments by reducing their share prices. There is no available, or cost-effective, financing for new drilling. And, so the theory goes, carbon-intensive coal, oil, and gas are left in the ground. The phenomenon started in the US, but it has already crossed the Atlantic, with some major UK institutions, like Kings College London and Newcastle University, having divested in the past year.

These are not new tactics. Similar campaigns have been prosecuted against tobacco companies. Researchers from the Smith School at the University of Oxford have looked at how effective they are. Taken on their own terms, the answer seems to be 'not very'. Only a tiny proportion of the capital raised by fossil fuel producers comes from universities and pension funds. There is also plenty of demand from 'neutral' or 'unethical' investors for the divested shares. What's more, by removing the voices of responsible investors, some shareholder pressure for a more climate-aware business strategy is lost.

This is not to say that investors shouldn't be wary of climate risk in their portfolios. There is now strong evidence of the danger of 'carbon bubbles'. The Carbon Tracker project estimates that between 60-80% of the reserves of publicly listed companies must be left untouched, if dangerous levels of warming are to be avoided. Assuming government policy is introduced to achieve this, then fossil fuel investment starts to look very risky. This process is already happening. Both the UK and France have this year announced a date for phasing out coal from their electricity supplies.

Some defend divestment campaigns

on the grounds that they help create a 'fossil fuel stigma'. This may cost companies new contracts, deter prospective employees, or scare off potential customers. It may even lead to governments introducing new fossil fuel regulations. If institutions with the moral force of the Church of England (which divested in July 2015) refuse to invest in fossil fuels, it sends a powerful signal.

But this effect may not be so straightforward. Yes, the public is sympathetic. A clear majority is concerned about climate change – recent government polling suggests this could be over 70%. But the way the message is expressed, and the messenger, will not resonate widely. And in this case, the messengers are radical left-wing students engaged in protests on their university campuses.

So could divestment in fact be helping to stigmatise action on climate change? It seems like it could be, certainly amongst the most sceptical group that needs to be convinced: conservatives. Research by Climate Outreach has shown how radical, left-wing, anti-growth climate activism alienates conservatives. Climate activism, they argue, too often fails to speak to conservative values like responsibility, integrity, and family security. Seen in this light, divestment campaigns could actually be undermining efforts to tackle climate change.

The young rebels have a good cause. Responsible investment, which takes account of climate risk, could effectively limit carbon emissions. But they should reconsider their tactics if they are to emulate the success of their older counterparts. ●

Bright Blue research update

An update on Bright Blue's research programme by **Nigel Fletcher**



NIGEL FLETCHER is
the Head of Research
at Bright Blue

To say 2016 has been a year of major political drama is something of an understatement. Developments in the UK and elsewhere have seemed to heighten a pre-existing strand of anti-establishment, populist public feeling, with which politicians and policy-makers were already struggling, and which are explored elsewhere in this issue.

All these events will have an impact at home and abroad, across the policy spectrum, and at Bright Blue we are looking particularly closely at how the changed landscape will affect our key research themes: social reform, integrated Britain, green conservatism, and human rights.

The combination of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump has led many to question if and how the UK can retain its commitment to the environmental agenda and in particular the target to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. We continued our research on green conservatism and energy by focussing on a specific challenge, that of home energy improvements. In our report *Better homes: incentivising home energy improvements*, published in August, we argued that the end of the Government's Green Deal on 2015 has left a deficit of policy in this area, and suggested practical steps, such as 'Help to Improve' loans to encourage and support progress.

The election of Sadiq Khan as the new Mayor of London earlier this year heralded a new direction for the city, after eight years of Conservative administration. In September we launched an essay collection on *The future of London*, published with the think tank Localis.

To say 2016 has been a year of major political drama is something of an understatement

Contributors to this work included the former Mayor, and new Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, the Chair of the Government's Social Mobility Commission Alan Milburn, and Professor Tony Travers, amongst others. The collection covered issues ranging from economic growth and transport to social mobility, housing and culture, and will, we hope, contribute to the debate about how London can stay a step ahead of other world cities after the UK leaves the EU.

Meanwhile our *Conservatism and human rights* project continued its work, exploring how conservatives can think about human rights in a positive way. To this end, members of our Human Rights Commission held an oral evidence session in November. This heard from relevant academics, experts and organisations, whose contributions will feed into the next stage of the commission's work, which will focus on developing new policy options.

The world in 2017 will be much changed from how many would have predicted just 12 months ago, and

through our research work we will be seeking new and imaginative policy solutions to respond to the challenges the last tumultuous year has presented.

Human rights questions have been given added impetus, with many people questioning how leaving the EU will affect the UK's domestic and international systems of rights protection. In this context, we will be publishing an expert paper considering what the proposed new British Bill of Rights should contain. This will help inform the ongoing work of our Human Rights Commission, whose final report will be produced later in the year.

We will also be maintaining our focus on green conservatism, presenting the results of polling on the attitudes of conservatives to environmental issues. The new government's commitment in this area has also been the subject of great interest, given the changed circumstances in which the UK now finds itself, and this research will help provide some political context to inform the debate. Whilst that climate of opinion is important, it is more literal climate change that remains the central challenge facing governments across the world. This has been put into stark relief by the sceptical attitude of the incoming US administration, and it is against this backdrop that we will be publishing an expert policy paper looking at the role the UK should continue to play, examining in particular how environment concerns can be embedded in the Government's international development programme. ●



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- 4** A secure future for the Public Forest Estate
- 5** Increased tree planting, turning around the lowest planting rates in a generation
- 6** Green infrastructure at the heart of new built development

For further information, please visit our
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Towards a post-Brexit lose-lose situation

What are our European allies saying on Brexit? **Anne Mulder** tells us what he believes to be the upcoming challenges the UK faces in the negotiations



ANNE MULDER is *European Affairs Spokesman for the VVD, the centre-right Liberal Party in the Netherlands*

The Brexit referendum was a reality check. If the people feel that an institution no longer works for them, they are perfectly comfortable rejecting it. Even one as vast and consequential as the EU. That lesson demands that politicians focus more on the reality and concerns of ordinary people such as migration, creating growth and jobs, instead of the detached and abstract reality that tends to dominate these institutions.

Reports prior to the Brexit-referendum showed that The Netherlands would suffer more from a Brexit than most other EU countries

The British have been among our closest friends and allies for as long as anyone can remember. We were strong supporters of UK's EU-membership bid in 1973 and have partnered on many important issues ever since, such as strengthening the internal market and reforming the European budget. Reports prior to the Brexit-referendum showed that The Netherlands would suffer more from a Brexit than most other EU-countries. The Netherlands was therefore disappointed with the result of the referendum.

Directly following the vote there were the usual suspects who saw more Europe

as the only solution to the Brexit – as they do with every problem. On the other side, across Europe there were politicians who took this opportunity to plead for EU-exits of their own, including the Netherlands. Both groups of politicians are harmful to the broader support of the European Union, though only the latter does so intentionally. We, the centre-right Liberal Party, want a European Union that solves real cross-border problems that people are facing and struggling with every single day, such as security, migration, international trade, and climate change. Our approach to European politics is not determined by an institutional vision of the EU, but by the needs of real people.

Among certain British politicians there are high expectations of the UK's future outside the EU. The question of course is whether those expectations are reasonable. The voting on the Brexit referendum resembled the choice of getting on an aeroplane without knowing its destination. Or worse, without even knowing if it has wings. Not until negotiations have started will we get an idea of what the UK will be like outside the EU, or what the EU will be like without the UK. I am pessimistic about the results of the negotiations, because I am afraid they will end up in a lose-lose situation, for several reasons.

During its EU Membership, the UK has been very pragmatic, always making cost-benefit analyses and also often therefore opting-out. I'm not sure if the UK takes into account that other Member States have a different mentality towards the EU, one that transcends

the consideration of merely economic costs and benefits. A country like Germany, for example, is not only in the EU to sell as many BMWs as possible, but also because it wants to keep the EU-27 together for historical reasons.

Brexit referendum resembled the choice of getting on an aeroplane without knowing its destination. Or worse, without even knowing if it has wings

Not only in Germany, but also in other countries, political groups are on the rise that want their country to leave the EU. The current governments of these countries might be politically motivated not to give the UK a good deal, even if it is against their own economic interests. Giving the UK a good deal would be giving tailwind to these groups. This could explain why the EU is represented during the negotiations by politicians from Brussels who seem to take the result of the Brexit referendum almost personally.

The UK government seems to want to take back control over migration and to take back its legislative autonomy. That is only possible in a so-called 'hard Brexit'. The Brits, renowned as tough negotiators, are likely to be able to suffer the consequences even if negotiations lead to a hard and painful deal.

British departure from the European Union will leave a power vacuum in Europe, that other countries will fight to fill. The European negotiation after triggering Article 50 will perhaps be less about the Brexit

>> itself and more about establishing a new balance of powers in the EU.

I am pessimistic about the results of the negotiations, because I am afraid they will end up in a lose-lose situation

Furthermore, Article 50 was not intended to make life easy for Member States that want to leave. My political party agrees with the Council and the Commission that for the negotiations to start, it is up to the Brits to take the first step and to invoke the Article. Prime Minister May seems to be pressured by members of her own party into making rushed judgements. By setting the end

of March as the deadline for triggering Article 50, the UK has placed itself in a weaker bargaining position. The British PM not only needs to negotiate Brexit in Brussels but also in her own party.

To be honest, I have the impression that the UK, at this moment, does not have a negotiating strategy whatsoever

To be honest, I have the impression that the UK, at this moment, does not have a negotiating strategy whatsoever. By entering the negotiations unprepared and with no strategy, the UK will most likely lose momentum and crucial time that it needs in order to secure a

good exit deal. This unpreparedness, on top of the divergence in the PM's own party, does not promise a good outcome for the Brits or for the EU.

Of course nothing is certain yet, but all these variables could lead to a lose-lose situation. The challenge is to keep the damage as limited as possible. In any case I expect – regretfully – that the Brexit negotiations will take a lot of energy and manpower which now cannot be used in solving the big cross-border problems the EU and our people face.

For now, we are waiting for the UK to develop a realistic approach towards the upcoming negotiations. This will be in the interest of both the UK and the EU. ●

Maintaining good relations with our European allies

The Rt Hon Mark Field MP on strengthening European party relationships



THE RT HON MARK FIELD MP is the Vice-Chair of the Conservative Party

To coin a now well-worn phrase, whilst the UK may soon be leaving the European Union, we shall not be leaving Europe. Indeed our Government has made clear over the past few months that it sees an opportunity for the nation now to step up rather than step back from our international relationships. This makes it a fascinating time to be the Conservative Party's Vice Chairman for International Affairs, a role I have held since summer 2015. My responsibilities include managing our relationships with centre-right sister parties in Europe and across the globe.

It would be foolish of us to pretend

that our European friends and allies are delighted with the UK's decision to leave the EU. Indeed many of those who feel most let down are our closest allies, particularly in Sweden and Denmark, who have always welcomed the UK's role as the awkward large player in Europe, willing to ask the difficult questions. Nonetheless, the referendum has had two distinct, positive effects on our relationships with natural, centre-right allies on the continent.

It would be foolish of us to pretend that our European friends and allies are delighted with the UK's decision to leave the EU

First, it has allowed us to put to bed the EPP/ECR rivalry of recent years in the European Parliament and beyond, and

rebuild relationships with some of our key partners that had diminished since we Conservatives left the EPP in 2009. Secondly, albeit rather paradoxically, the firm decision of the British public has extracted much of the poison from our day-to-day interactions in Brussels. For many Europeans, the UK has been a reluctant partner and source of frustration rather than a willing and engaged member of the team. There is now a feeling that we can talk more openly and honestly – maybe even constructively – about the future without feeling that we are pulling uncomfortably in opposite directions.

The strengthening of party-to-party relationships opens a useful additional avenue of communication during the negotiations ahead, but also allows us to carry out the political groundwork for future alliances once the UK has formally

>> left the European Union. Whatever happens once we have extricated ourselves from the Union, the UK will naturally maintain a strong ongoing relationship with the continent – in trade and security, of course, but also through the innumerable personal ties that so many of us have to our neighbours.

This makes it all the more important that we Conservatives keep our finger on the party political pulse

For my part, I am half-German and have spent many years building strong links with counterparts in Germany, particularly within Angela Merkel's CDU party. Our friends take it as a given that our successful trading and diplomatic relationship will continue but also caution us about the tricky general election ahead for Mrs Merkel in 2017. With economic and migration

issues high up the agenda for German voters, the German Chancellor will be in no mood to expend much energy next year on negotiations for Brexit. Nor will she be inclined to offer the same level of access to the single market without some commitment on our part to freedom of movement. How to make this compatible with Theresa May's determination to restrict such movement will no doubt be a tough matter to overcome but I nonetheless believe there is scope for an accommodation that will give us ultimate control of our borders and strengthen the link between migration and work.

It may be aggravating to British business that our Prime Minister will provide no running commentary on Brexit, or seek to map out a clear plan for our negotiation. However what now must be understood is that our exit from the European Union will be – fundamentally – a political process.

This makes it all the more important that we Conservatives keep our finger on the party political pulse and develop a much more intricate understanding of the personalities and personal relationships at play in these most fascinatingly turbulent of political times. As we have seen from the recent US election, we live in an era when assumptions can very quickly be turned on their head.

With 2017 heralding critical Dutch, French and German elections, the changing European political landscape will have as much influence on our Brexit deal as anything we decide on here in London

Developing critical party political relationships provides us with one way in which we can be more nimble and flexible in the fast-changing world before us. ●

Soon we will be free

Jonathan Isaby puts forward the positive case of leaving the single market



JONATHAN ISABY is the Editor of *Brexit Central*

On 23rd June more people voted for the UK to leave the European Union than have ever voted for anyone or any proposition at any election or referendum in British electoral history. Theresa May's Government therefore not only has an unprecedented mandate to deliver the wishes of the British people – it has a responsibility and duty to do so.

There are some who campaigned

for a Remain vote who, disappointed at the result, have spent the months since the referendum demanding that the Government pursue what they have called a “soft Brexit” – generally deemed to mean some form of arrangement whereby the UK could somehow leave the European Union but remain a member of the single market and customs union.

That's not “soft Brexit” – it's “non-Brexit”, and any attempt to keep the UK inside the single market and/or customs union would be a betrayal of

the British people who voted in such unprecedented numbers to leave the EU in order to take back control of our laws, our money and our borders, freeing us to negotiate trade deals around the globe.

As far as the single market is concerned, it could not have been clearer during the referendum campaign that a vote to Leave would mean leaving the single market. And you needn't take my word for this. During the weeks of debate running up to the vote, prominent Remain campaigners like David Cameron, George Osborne and Angela Eagle

>> were all explicit in saying exactly that.

It is our membership of the single market that has forced us to accept the unfettered free movement of workers throughout the 28 member states, and retaining it would prevent us from controlling immigration. Note that I say “controlling” rather than preventing: we have a long, proud history of welcoming immigrants to this country who make massive contributions to the British economy and the fabric of the nation.

As a globally-facing, outward-looking, free-trading, independent nation, we will of course maintain friendly relations with our European neighbours and indeed cooperate with them where appropriate

But that element of control is important.

Some have consciously muddied the waters to confuse single market membership with single market access. There is no question that we will be able to retain access to the single market after we have rescinded our membership: virtually every other country in the world enjoys that - it is merely a question of the terms under which we will do so.

As for the customs union, our departure from it is another fundamental aspect of Brexit. Leave campaigners made it clear that one of the many benefits of Brexit would be the ability to do our own free trade deals with whomsoever we choose around the world. It was always clear that continued membership of the customs union would prevent us from doing that as we would still be tied to the EU’s Common External Tariff. So any arrangement that leaves us in the

customs union would be a non-starter.

In the not-too-distant future we will be freed from the strictures of the EU and its uncompromising straitjacket of one-size-fits-all legislation and heavy-handed regulation and there is every reason to be positive and optimistic about the UK’s future.

As a globally-facing, outward-looking, free-trading, independent nation, we will of course maintain friendly relations with our European neighbours and indeed cooperate with them where appropriate. But once sovereignty is restored to Westminster, power will once again lie with elected British politicians over the laws of the land, how British taxpayers’ money is spent and our trading arrangements with the rest of the world. We live in exciting times. ●

Friends without benefits

Joe Slater on what sort of future relationship Britain should have with the EU



JOE SLATER is a student at Durham University and the winner of The Tamworth Prize, our annual essay competition

It is hard to overstate the scale of change currently occurring in Britain, Europe, and the West. 2016 is the year of Trump and Sanders; Corbyn and Farage; Brexit and perhaps the demise of our liberal consensus. Just as in 1834, the year of the Tamworth Manifesto, these challenges require answers. For many in Britain the vote to leave was a national embarrassment, exposing nationalistic

tendencies previously hidden below the surface. For conservatives the referendum should mean something quite different.

Firstly it should be understood as a demand for change. Before we can think about our new relationship with Europe, we have to understand why the old one wasn’t working. This means acknowledging the diverse set of grievances held by Leavers and Remainers alike. Conservatism has been so resilient because it respects the desire for change and seeks a middle ground between the ideologues who would take us to the extremes and those happy to carry on with business as usual. This essay

seeks to begin a process, to examine the key themes of the campaign and sketch the outline of a new relationship to address them. It won’t fix every problem or solve every contradiction. It is a starting point, not a silver bullet.

Democracy

A discussion of democracy may seem an odd place to begin; after all it was frequently relegated behind issues like immigration and the economy. In truth, the poor health of our democracy was at the heart of the vote and fixing it should be at the centre of our negotiations. The slogan of “Take back control”, the anger at Brussels bureaucrats and

>> the suggestion that Britain has “had enough of experts”. The success of these campaign devices shows us the cleavages present in our political system; the lack of faith in our institutions, a basic distrust of politicians, economists, journalists and others.

2016 is the year of Trump and Sanders; Corbyn and Farage; brexit and perhaps the demise of our liberal consensus

The political scientist Francis Fukuyama has theorised how liberal democracies should seek to ‘get to Denmark’ - how they should renew and restore their ailing institutions. His belief that liberal democracy rests on a balance of political accountability, a strong, effective state, and the rule of law is hardly revelatory, but Britain is currently a long way from Denmark.

We need a relationship with Europe allowing us to take more decisions at home; so that British politicians can be accountable when things go wrong and changes need to be made. That means rebalancing our current relationship, not retreating into a bunker or rejecting any slight infringement of our sovereignty. Voters care about big issues like a sense of control over immigration, the economy, and the primacy of British courts. In seeking such reform we can take a first step towards restoring confidence in our democratic institutions.

The success of these campaign devices shows us the cleavages present in our political system; the lack of faith in our institutions, a basic distrust of politicians, economists, journalists and others

Immigration

The issue of immigration was the most controversial element of the referendum, and it will be key to our new relationship

with the EU. The evidence is clear that the majority of voters are unhappy with the lack of control inherent in European free movement. When trust on immigration is low it bleeds into other areas: support for populist right-wing parties, creeping xenophobia and prejudice, and anger at elites and governing institutions. Although trust is low, that doesn't mean Britain has become an anti-immigrant nation. Polling for British Future suggests a more nuanced picture: widespread support for high-skilled workers and international students but less for large numbers of low-skilled migrants. This kind of system would be likely to have the support of those on both sides of the campaign.

Although trust is low, that doesn't mean Britain has become an anti-immigrant nation

Our new relationship with the EU must be built on restoring faith in our immigration system - it is a litmus test for a functioning democracy. We require a system with a higher sense of government control and an ability to slow and, in certain circumstances, stop migration from Europe. Beyond that we should seek to maintain visa-free travel to the European Union and, more intriguingly, consider a new Commonwealth-based travel area. For decades British politicians have knowingly obfuscated about their limited power to manage movement, and there is now an opportunity to rebuild trust and support for an open migration system.

Economy

For many Remain voters the economy was the defining issue of the campaign. Many of them felt unhappy about immigration and lacked trust in the EU, but decided that the risks to the economy were simply too high. While the warnings of an immediate economic collapse have proved to be ill-founded, our renegotiation should seek to give

businesses certainty in the short term. After all, there is little chance of us renewing our democracy and building bridges across our divides in the midst of a recession, particularly when it is the most vulnerable who suffer in such circumstances.

It is highly unlikely that we will be able to negotiate a comprehensive and bespoke trading agreement with the European Union within the deadline set by Article 50. Instead we should seek to build short-term confidence by agreeing a basic economic relationship, possibly inside or adjacent to the European Economic Area (although establishing a clear reform to freedom of movement is a must). In the long term this allows us to reform our relationship from a position of economic strength and take advantage of the many opportunities to reinvigorate our liberal trading economy.

Our new relationship should seek to renew faith in democracy, create a coherent system for immigration, and protect our economic interests in the short term and internationalise them in the future

A path forward

This essay has not argued for ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ Brexit. Instead it has echoed the Tamworth Manifesto in seeking to understand a moment of great change and espouse the ideas and values our negotiators should prioritise. In any respect, building a new relationship with the European Union will be a process not an event, it will be managed by different leaders and multiple governments. This essay has argued that our new relationship should seek to renew faith in democracy, create a coherent system for immigration, and protect our economic interests in the short term and internationalise them in the future. With these values and interests in mind there is little to fear from Brexit, in fact there is much to gain. ●

Keeping close

Dr Charles Tannock MEP on maintaining close ties with Europe post-Brexit



DR CHARLES TANNOCK
MEP *is the Conservative
MEP for London*

Nearly five months after the UK electorate decided by referendum to leave the European Union we are still far from discovering what shape this will take. The most vocal proponents of Brexit leading up to and during the campaign have now fallen curiously silent or have simply continued to make ever bolder claims about what the future holds.

It is by no means perfect but it has brought peace and prosperity to Europe for the last half century and is a force for good in a modern world in which globalisation makes cross-border cooperation ever more necessary

I have been a long-time proponent of the underlying purpose of the European Union, and campaigned for a Remain vote. It is by no means perfect but it has brought peace and prosperity to Europe for the last half century and is a force for good in a modern world in which globalisation makes cross-border cooperation ever more necessary. Its reversal or disintegration does not augur well for good global governance.

The EU referendum was conducted in a manner and on terms which I believe gave in some areas a significant advantage to the Leave campaign. The exclusion of many Brits living in EU countries - due to the rule that revokes a UK citizen's right to vote after having resided outside of the country for more than 15 years - was one of the most egregious, and was contrary to the Conservatives' 2015 manifesto

pledge to abolish the rule. Following the Brexit vote the new administration has since honoured this commitment and will be proposing legislation.

The referendum, whilst not legally binding, was clearly conducted on an understanding that its result would be respected. There was, however, no accepted view of what leaving the EU would look like and the terms for leaving were poorly outlined. That the overall UK majority to leave was a narrow 1.9%; that Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to stay; that in London 59% voted to remain and that there was a majority to remain in all but five of 33 London boroughs, point to the need for a 'soft Brexit'.

I have represented London as a Conservative MEP for 17 years and I will continue as long as the UK remains an EU member. That there was a clear majority in London for the UK to remain emboldens me to oppose those seeking to interpret the referendum as a means to completely detach Britain from Europe.

I was delighted to see the signing of the Canada Free Trade Deal (CETA), which will boost UK trade with Canada by over 20% over the next two years

My main priorities over the coming months are to press for continued passporting rights for the City, important if London is to retain its position as the world's financial capital; continued access to intelligence-sharing and databases which will be key to counter-terrorism work and fighting cross-border crime; an ability to fill skill-shortages in the construction and health-care sectors that EU migrants have

contributed to; maintaining unfettered access to the single market that is unique in allowing British companies to trade across 27 EU countries; and continued cooperation on CFSP & CSDP foreign affairs and security matters, an area I can meaningfully contribute to after 15 years as Conservative Spokesman on the subject.

All of those requirements point clearly to a deal that would see the UK remain a member of the Single Market and the Customs Union on leaving the EU. I was delighted to see the signing of the Canada Free Trade Deal (CETA), which will boost UK trade with Canada by over 20% over the next two years and so we would do well to retain this and the other 60 EU trading agreements, post-Brexit. Whilst I believe such an arrangement would be inferior to the current situation, this solution delivers Brexit without the economic and diplomatic damage of a 'Hard-Brexit'.

If continued membership of the Customs Union is not achievable, I advocate using as a negotiation position Article 112 of the EEA Treaty to conclude a 'Norwegian Lite' model for the UK to have a cap on migration as currently enjoyed by Lichtenstein, but with full access to the Single Market. However, this would not resolve the negative effects on supply lines, as the Nissan case highlights, nor the dangers of a hard customs border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

If the Supreme Court upholds the Brexit judgement on the triggering of Article 50 I look forward to these issues being fully debated in Parliament. Whatever the future relationship between Britain and the EU, the Government has some very tough choices to make that will affect us for many generations. ●



Keeping the Best of Europe

Cathy Warwick on the need to keep EU midwives and protect employment protection post-Brexit.



Cathy Warwick,
Chief Executive at the
Royal College of Midwives
and a registered midwife

Tens of thousands of people working in the NHS today are from EU countries other than the UK. In England alone that includes over 10,000 doctors, almost 22,000 nurses, and well over 1,300 midwives.

The Government is yet to confirm to these people, who provide care to hundreds of thousands of us every day, that they can stay here post-Brexit.

That is wrong.

The Royal College of Midwives believes the Government should give them an explicit and unequivocal assurance. They deserve better than to be treated as poker chips in the exit negotiations ahead.

Letting existing EU staff remain is not enough however. In the long term, the Government must ensure that it remains



easy for the NHS to recruit doctors, nurses, midwives and other healthcare professions from across the EU.

Keeping our maternity units, hospital wards and clinics staffed should be more important than political immigration targets.

The Government has undertaken to bring all existing EU law into British law through its Great Repeal Bill. We are assured that the rules that come from the EU that underpin the protections we enjoy at work – the right to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments, for example, or paid maternity leave – will remain. But for how long?

There will be plenty of demands in the future for the Government to weaken and dilute protections. If we end up outside the Single Market or the customs union,

there will be a temptation to try to stay competitive by sacrificing protections to attract prospective investors to open new factories and start new businesses here.

If ministers give in to that kind of pressure, we will see British workers suffer to make up for the barriers to trade and additional cost of doing business that will be caused by Brexit. The RCM wants to see no dilution of employment protections, not just for midwives or NHS staff but for all workers.

Fifty two per cent of voters did not back Leave so that their working conditions would worsen.

Brexit will cause disruption for many. There is a moral duty on the Government to act decisively to reassure those whose lives have been thrown into doubt. It should also commit to continued protection for workers in any post-Brexit Britain.

BOOKS & ARTS

Kind of Blue: A Political Memoir

by Ken Clarke



ZAC SPIRO *is a member of Bright Blue and former Graduate Research Intern at Bright Blue*

By even his own admission, Ken Clarke has led a charmed life. Born during the Second World War, he made his way to Cambridge University where he was President of both the Cambridge Union and the university's Conservative Association. After leaving, he joined the Bar and made a living as a barrister until 1970, when at the age of 30 he won his seat in parliament, where he remains to this day.

On the way he has held a dazzling array of offices, including as Secretary of State for Education, Health Secretary, then Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Chancellor. He also found time to run for the leadership of his party no fewer than three times.

But that's enough of the biographical details. Clarke isn't in government now, and first held one of the great offices of state over 20 years ago. If you're reading this review - and therefore inclined to buy his book - you probably roughly know who he is already.

As he is at the end of his career, publishing a political memoir might make sense. After all, as one of the last Tory "Big Beasts" (no article or passing

reference to Clarke is complete without that obligatory description) his insights into the politics of the past forty-five years must surely merit some attention.

The problem is that Clarke's trademark insouciance - described in his own words as "a peculiarly laid-back and stress-free personality" - robs the book of much of the drama of the time. To some extent, conveying this is the purpose of the political autobiography: definitionally, politician's lives are only interesting when they are involved in interesting events, or when they are themselves interesting people. The diaries of Alan Clark - a particularly colourful minister during the latter half of the 1980s - were fascinating for their revealing political portraits. Alan Johnson's memoir, *This Boy*, is an extraordinary depiction of the poverty the young boy struggled through.

Yet Clarke rules out writing about his upbringing with the book's very first sentence, saying he "never thought very much of politicians who make a great deal of their poor-boy origins." A mere 20 pages later, he has travelled through 18 years of his life and found his way to Cambridge.

Nevertheless, if the book is to be about government and policy, then let it be about government and policy. However, Clarke's laid-back style infuses his description of his time in office with a light sepia tone and a hint of aimlessness.

Clarke seems to wander gently from conflict to conflict, department

to department, feeling occasionally bothered enough by something to put his foot down, but never genuinely seized by the awesome responsibilities he possesses. This sense of ease - a gliding and seamless success that effortlessly, and occasionally accidentally, propels everything Clarke touches to wherever he wants it to be - is most apparent when Clarke claims to have made a mistake.

For example, after three years of serving as the opposition spokesman for pensions and social security under Margaret Thatcher, Clarke goes to the leader, "concerned that [he] might soon be regarded as a one-issue man", to ask for a change of post. He describes the query as "reckless folly born of ambition" rather than any real affinity for a specific alternate job. Nevertheless, Thatcher acquiesces.

More frustratingly, Clarke devotes an entire half-page to the financial difficulties he would face were he invited to work as a parliamentary under-secretary upon the Conservatives' 1979 election victory. Not being privy to Clarke's concerns, Margaret Thatcher offers him an under-secretary role anyway. Clarke accepts and the consequences go unmentioned.

The inconsequential way that Clarke describes events also seeps into his policy decisions. Opponents of government positions, especially when they are unionised, are "absurd", "ludicrous" or in states of "near-

>> paranoia and victimhood”. When he does give his reasons without the leering spectre of unionisation, they can leave you wanting. For instance his explanation for cutting legal aid for divorce cases, is: “one spouse, usually the wife, would be devoid of assets and... able to obtain legal aid in order to mount numerous claims against a former husband who would be obliged to pay for any resistance.”

That being said, bees wandering into Clarke’s headgear don’t frequently leave. There is real passion in his words as he casts fire at David Cameron for holding the referendum on Europe.

Imploding Britain’s membership of the EU, the institution that dominated the relentlessly pro-Europe Clarke’s political career and thrice smothered his chances of being party leader, was “the worst political mistake made by any British Prime Minister in my lifetime.”

His self-deprecating and candid account of calling Theresa May a “bloody difficult woman”, as well as congratulations for his sniper fire at Michael Gove, is a delight to read. Clarke also has a talent for precisely capturing the character of his interactions - that is, when he supplies enough detail to distinguish them. An early phone-call with Margaret Thatcher

after an appointment to the Transport department resulted in protestations of his ignorance of the brief. The response from the Prime Minister was: “My dear boy, you’ll soon pick it up.”

If only there had been more of this. It’s difficult to know whether Clarke was simply unwilling to put the detail into writing, or whether external pressures forced a political career spanning nearly half a century into a single volume. In any case, it’s a worthy read, lit up by sadly too few flashes of illumination. ●

Kind of Blue: A Political Memoir, Ken Clarke, Macmillan; 515pp; £25

2016: The year in political books

Many great books have been published this year. **Diane Banks** provides an overview



DIANE BANKS is a literary agent and a non-executive director of Bright Blue

One thing which sets books apart from other forms of media is their notoriously long lead time – usually 18 months from deal to publication. This means that the publishing industry is not best placed to react quickly to current events, so 2016 represented a particular challenge.

Following June’s referendum, a number of books had to be “crashed into the schedule” as we call it in the business

Following June’s referendum, a number of books had to be “crashed into the schedule” as we call it in the business – often raising the question of whether the project is actually a book and not an extended newspaper or magazine feature.

Indeed, it has not been unknown for a book to be published on the basis of the income from serial or extract rights.

The key “inside stories” from Remain and Leave respectively were Craig Oliver’s *Unleashing Demons* (Hodder, October) and Arron Banks’s *The Bad Boys of Brexit* (Biteback, October). More impartial accounts came in the form of Owen Bennett’s *The Brexit Club* (Biteback, October); Gary Gibbon’s *Breaking Point* (Haus, September) and, most comprehensive and well reviewed of all, Times political editor Tim Shipman’s *All Out War* (William Collins, November). Like many people, I’ve only read the serialisations of these frontrunners. The one which I plan to read in full is Daniel Hannan’s *What Next: How to Get the Best from Brexit*, just out from Head of Zeus (November). Although still published quickly (I imagine that two drafts were in the pipeline depending on the referendum result), this is the

first book to look forwards and offer constructive advice and opinion and could come from no better authority.

The point is surely that Sir Malcolm, like many politicians, is a pragmatist, not a conviction politician, which makes for an interesting distinction in itself, and is never going to produce any lurid revelations

Of course, the biggest publishing event in the wake of the referendum was the sale of David Cameron’s memoirs, which, it transpired he had been working on for some time with Daniel Finkenstein, producing over 50 hours of audio tapes. After signing with celebrity agent Ed Victor – a starry choice – it was rumoured that the goal was to sell world rights for £4m, which would put the deal in the ballpark of Tony Blair’s. I’m not entirely sure where the rumour started, but a deal with William Collins was

>> announced in October with a figure of £800,000 on the publishing grapevine – unsubstantiated, but significantly less than the original figure doing the rounds.

The scene for the US election was set by two studies of Hillary Clinton: Karen Blumenthal's *Hillary: A Biography of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (Bloomsbury, January) and James D Boy's *Hillary Rising: The Politics, Persona and Policies of a New American Dynasty* (Biteback, January), followed by Mark Lander's *Alter Egos: Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and the Twilight Struggle Over American Power* (WH Allen, February) and David Greenberg's *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency* (WW Norton, March).

Ed is not the first politician or former politician to enter the show, but this promotional opportunity for the book is certainly unprecedented

Where books really come into their own, though, is analysis in retrospect. Recent history was examined in David Laws's *The Coalition: The Inside Story of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government* (Biteback, March); Tom Bower's *Broken Vows: Tony Blair The Tragedy of Power* (Faber, March) and Anthony Seldon and Peter Snowdon's *Cameron at 10: The Inside Story 2010-2015*.

Then there is the political biography or memoir. The year opened with the Telegraph's Rosa Prince's *Comrade Corbyn: A Very Unlikely Coup* (Biteback, January) which sold modestly. Another quiet but intriguing one was John Bew's *Citizen Clem: A Biography of Atlee* (Quercus, May) which I understand is well worth a look. Touted as the first and only biography of Nicola Sturgeon, David Torrance's *Nicola Sturgeon: A Political Life* (Birlinn, September) has sold a decent 2,500 copies at the time of writing - more than either of the author's previous accounts of Alex Salmond.

Two of the big beasts from the Thatcher era published their memoirs this year. I must

say that I enjoyed Sir Malcolm Rifkind's *Power and Pragmatism: The Memoirs of Malcolm Rifkind* (Biteback, July) despite the Times calling it "a plodding account of his life in which no detail is too dull to record" and similar verdicts from elsewhere. I was honoured to host an 'in conversation' with Sir Malcolm following publication which was a real highlight of the year. The point is surely that Sir Malcolm, like many politicians, is a pragmatist, not a conviction politician, which makes for an interesting distinction in itself, and is never going to produce any lurid revelations.

Ken Clarke's *Kind of Blue* (Macmillan, October), named for his love of jazz, was a long time coming. Publishers and agents had been chasing him for years so there was much excitement when he finally took the plunge, with rights reportedly selling for £430,000. At one point there were rumours that he would not finish the book, but that clearly didn't come to pass. At the time of writing it's sold a respectable 15,500 hardbacks and has enjoyed a prominent serialisation in the Times, which would have made a good dent in the rumoured £430k. Reviews elsewhere haven't been great, however - the Telegraph called it a "damp squib".

Sayeeda Warsi's *The Enemy Within: A Tale of Muslim Britain* (Allen Lane) was originally mooted for September but has now been moved to March 2017. Whatever the reason for this, publishing in spring will prevent it from getting lost amongst Brexit books and Christmas gift titles. This is going to be an interesting publishing event next year.

Finally, the political memoir took a new turn with Ed Balls's *Speaking Out: Lessons in Life and Politics* (Hutchinson, September) – published to coincide with his debut on *Strictly Come Dancing*. Of course, Ed is not the first politician or former politician to enter the show, but this promotional opportunity for the book is certainly unprecedented.

Looking back in time, 2016 saw three new Churchill books: Paul Bew's *Churchill and*

Ireland (OUP, March), Roger Hermiston's *All Behind You, Winston: The Secret Life of Churchill's War Ministry* (Aurum, April) and Candice Millard's *Hero of the Empire: The Making of Winston Churchill* (Allen Lane, September). The great man provides endless inspiration. David Cesarani's *Disraeli: The Novel Politician* (Yale, April) looks like an intriguing, if academic, read.

Two titles which particularly caught my attention were Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock (eds)'s *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary 1914-1916: The View from Downing Street* (OUP, March) and Kate Andersen Brower's *First Women: The Grace and Power of America's First Ladies* (Harper, May). First Ladies have really begun to take their place in history in the last couple of years, pioneered by Sonia Purnell's excellent biography of Clementine Churchill in 2015 and Anne de Courcy's study of Margot Asquith the previous year. I personally had the privilege of working on two biographies which put the interwar political scene in wider context, examining movers and shakers who exerted "soft power": Damian Collins MP's study of his predecessor, *Charmed Life: The Phenomenal World of Philip Sassoon* (William Collins, July) and social historian Sian Evans's *Queen Bees: Six Brilliant and Extraordinary Society Hostesses Between the Wars* (John Murray, September).

I'd like to give two special mentions. Michael McManus's *Edward Heath: Portrait of a Remarkable Man* (Elliott & Thompson, July) reveals the depth and talents of an often overlooked and misunderstood prime minister who has been the unfortunate subject of negative press recently. This book was published quietly, but is a must-read for aficionados of political biography. And finally there is Ben Wright's *Order, Order! The Rise and Fall of Political Drinking* (Duckworth, June) which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. This is the one to read if you really want to know what has gone on in parliament over the years – and it makes a good Christmas gift too. ●

Exhibition: Abstract Expressionism

The Royal Academy, London



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The Royal Academy's exhibition on 'Abstract Expressionism', open until 2 January, offers an impressive collection of works from the foremost exponents of the movement. Paintings by Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning unsurprisingly form the backbone of the collection, both in quantity and visceral impact. However, the addition of less well-known figures, such as Barnett Newman, Clyfford Still and Ad Reinhardt, demonstrates the breadth of visual interpretations that fall within the movement's capacious church.

The focus on depicting the inner world of the artists' emotions provides a powerful new form of representation, where the viewer is invited to feel and not merely to see

Emerging out of post-war New York, abstract expressionism can be defined by a combination of style and method. The erosion of figurative depictions, replaced with abstract colour grouping, is perhaps the most obvious visual feature of the movement – with Rothko's hauntingly beautiful 'façades' pre-eminent for their emphasis on this kind of tonal balance. While this may at times appear bewildering to viewers whose appreciation of twentieth-century art ends with Picasso's cubist experiments of the 1910s, abstract expressionism follows the same theoretical models of subjectivity to their logical conclusion. The focus on

depicting the inner world of the artists' emotions provides a powerful new form of representation, where the viewer is invited to feel and not merely to see.

Abstract expressionist painting should be seen not simply as a picture but the site of an artistic event

Process is thus as important as product and abstract expressionist painting should be seen not simply as a picture but the site of an artistic event. This is nowhere more evident than in Pollock's drip paintings where the apparently spontaneous layering of colour expresses, according to the artist, 'energy and motion made visible'. Although visually different, Barnett Newman's 'zip' paintings, in which a block of colour is interrupted by a contrasting vertical line, offer a similar moment of emotional frisson.

Elsewhere in the collection, Clyfford Still, a comparative outsider amongst the New York titans, is a surprising treasure. Working predominantly from the west coast of America, Still's style of painting can be categorised in the same colour field mode of Rothko and Newman. However, unlike his contemporaries, Still's large canvases arrange colour in torn layers rather than simple geometric patterns, evoking at times the majestic romanticism of jagged, mountainous landscapes and at other times the intimidating claustrophobia of glacial caves.

One thing that becomes apparent through the collection is the vast scale on which the abstract expressionists work. When viewed up close, the paintings almost pull the observer into the canvas itself. Rothko advised that his 'façades'

be viewed from six inches and in low lighting – conditions that the curators have admirably recreated in the room dedicated to his work. The result is that one's entire field of vision is dominated by the painting, allowing one to become immersed in the subtle gradients of colour.

The need to externalise some inner emotion – through colour and motion – unites the collection and delights the viewer

The curators have done an impressive job of creating an exhibition that will delight both admirers of abstract expressionism as well as those who have never experienced it before. The early galleries provide an introduction to the movement, including works by Arshile Gorky that served as a bridge between European and American traditions in the twentieth century. The collection then moves energetically through time, with each of the movement's main exponents given a gallery dedicated to their work.

While the variety of paintings on display might give one the impression that the term 'abstract expressionism' is more of a marketing ploy than an actual artistic philosophy, the exhibition does well to persuade the visitor that there is something deeper that connects these artists. The need to externalise some inner emotion – through colour and motion – unites the collection and delights the viewer. There are well-known masterpieces and lesser-known surprises around every corner. ●

Abstract Expressionism runs until 2 January 2017 at the Royal Academy, London.

Drinking culture in Commons

By Ben Wright



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Ben Wright entertains us with this well-researched account of the tragedy and comedy stemming from political drinking. In doing so he makes an interesting case for social drinking to lubricate the wheels of government, though the usual destructive effects are also present, but at a sometimes scary level.

British Prime Ministers tend to gradually drink more as their years in office wear on, Wright says of Tony Blair and Harold Wilson. Margaret Thatcher enjoyed winding down with her favourite whisky. And HH Asquith's enjoyment of good food and wine has even given us the term "squiffy".

"I have taken more out of alcohol than alcohol has taken out of me," said Winston Churchill, who received a case of his favourite 1928 vintage Pol Roger Champagne each year from none other than Odette Pol Roger.

Churchill gently sipped whisky and soda throughout the day and seemed none the worse for it. Wright observes Churchill's strong constitution, where such consumption may have finished off most other people, but asks the question how would we view this behaviour through today's media lens.

The Strangers' Bar in the Houses of Parliament, once nicknamed 'the Kremlin' as a favourite Labour drinking domain, is a "sweaty, spit

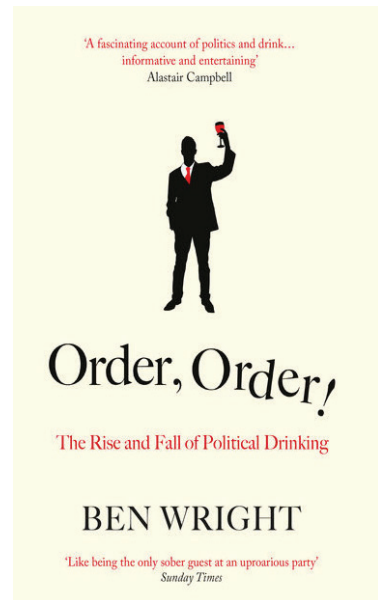
and sawdust place, sticky with stale beer" (p. 80). It apparently had a "Way Out" sign on the wall two inches off the floor, "to guide MPs crawling out on their hands and knees."

This is all good fun, but there are serious consequences.

Eric Joyce, MP for Falkirk, ended his parliamentary career with a bar fight in *Stranger's*. This set in motion a series of events, where allegations of local union interference with the new Falkirk candidate selection led then Labour leader Ed Miliband to radically change the process. Each member now had one vote, at the expense of MPs, and the new £3 membership swelled membership and paved the way for Jeremy Corbyn's takeover of the Labour Party. But the Americans can do one better - and then some.

On the other side of the pond, social drinking amongst US politicians has been a good way for opponents to mix on friendly terms and thereby find consensus, because they know and like each other. Unfortunately, the more socially awkward Richard Nixon often drank alone and, following an incident in 1969, issued a late night order for a nuclear strike on North Korea. This was quickly countermanded by Henry Kissinger, but seems a good argument for a teetotal Commander-in-Chief.

Perhaps Jimmy Carter's completely dry White House was a safer choice, if a bit boring. Pity poor Ted Kennedy, who enjoyed his tipples, enduring long meetings or a dinner with the Carters. A better example of successful political drinking is Speaker of the



House Tip O'Neill's visits to Ronald Reagan, where they could thrash out a deal over a drink or two.

Then there is the Soviet version of political drinking: Wright recounts Joseph Stalin had no rivals as a sadist. His Defence Minister Nikolai Bulganin once said to Nikita Khrushchev, after one of Stalin's infamous hard core drinking sessions, "One never knows if one's going home or to prison." Something to keep in mind as we look back at the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Ben Wright's stories of political drinking and its ramifications are often funny and, at times, outright terrifying. If you are a fan of political biographies, *Order, Order* adds a distinctly human dimension to many of history's most important characters. ●

Order, Order! The Rise and Fall of Political Drinking, Ben Wright; Duckworth Overlook; 327pp; £16.99

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