

SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS  
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**Michele Bachmann: the Tea Party crusader electrifying the US right**

**Congresswoman will come under scrutiny about hardline politics. But will she be able to reach beyond her Tea Party base?**

Paul Harris in Stillwater, Minnesota  
The Guardian, Saturday 18 June 2011

Michele Bachmann, who announced her White House run last week, and then shone in the first major Republican debate, is eclipsing Sarah Palin as the new darling of the Tea Party. She is an evangelical whose husband runs a controversial Christian counselling service. She is a Minnesota congresswoman who has vowed to repeal healthcare reform and lambasts Barack Obama as a socialist. Like Palin, she makes political capital of her role as a mother to a large family: five children of her own and more than 20 foster kids. She is also a glamorous woman in a party that is frequently dominated by older white men.

By the time Bachmann and her husband, Marcus, arrived in Stillwater with their burgeoning family they were staunch members of the religious right. She home-schooled her own children, but by law had to enrol her foster children into local public schools. It was that experience – she saw the state curriculum as too liberal and politically correct – that led to her becoming involved in educational activism, and ultimately politics.

Many on the American left see Bachmann's presidential ambitions as little more than a joke: the punchline to a gag about how far right the Republican party has drifted. She is mocked and lampooned by those who expect her to fail. But not all of her opponents in Stillwater are joining in that ridicule.

Joan Ceconi is certainly not. She recalls going to an education meeting in 1999. Bachmann was supposed to be playing second fiddle to a speech by education campaigner Michael Chapman. But instead she had become the main attraction: "She was amazing. She held the room in her hand."

A year later Bachmann would run for – and win – a state senate seat. Shortly after that she would run for the US Congress in the sprawling district of which Stillwater is a part. She would emerge victorious from that, too. Now she is running for the White House. Ceconi has a warning for those mocking her: "She has got as far as she has by people underestimating her. I am not going to underestimate her."

Even Bachmann's admirers, however, sometimes confess that her passionate style of ultra-rightwing politics has its drawbacks. "It is very attractive to some folks, and she certainly does not hesitate to say what she thinks. But that can upset others," said Edwin Cain, a Stillwater-based lobbyist who has worked frequently with Bachmann.

Indeed, it is not hard to find Bachmann critics, even among Republican supporters in the town. Though she makes her home here this is not automatically Bachmann territory. The town thrives on a tourist economy; Main Street is packed with bistros and represents a slice of urban city life with a hint of liberal values. Preston Norris, who works in a bar, voted for Bachmann for Congress but will not do so for the presidency. "She has some views that are just too much for that office."

It is not hard to see what those views are. Bachmann's criticism of homosexuality is open and brutal. She has led the charge against gay marriage, even at the cost of a once-close relationship with a lesbian stepsister. In 2004 Bachmann said of gay people: "It's a very sad life. It's part of Satan, I think, to say that this is gay. It's anything but gay."

She is on record as viewing homosexuality as a "disorder" or a "sexual dysfunction" and is a staunchly anti-abortion Christian conservative. She believes Obama is "the final leap to socialism" in America, and has accused him of wanting to set up youth indoctrination camps for teenagers.

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She has called for investigations into fellow congressional politicians to see if they are "anti-American". She wants to repeal healthcare reform. She is a firm sceptic on the dangers of global warming. She once introduced a resolution seeking to prevent the dollar being replaced by a foreign currency, despite the fact that such a move is already illegal. She has called the Environmental Protection Agency a "job-killing" organisation.

Such extremism can lead to some very odd ideological bedfellows. Away from Stillwater, in the rural hinterland of Bachmann's vast congressional district, she is more popular. Here, in a landscape of deeply religious small towns and rolling farms, Bachmann's support is solid. In Buffalo, a small community beside a lake, one Bachmann supporter was delighted she was running. "I think it's great! She can win and I have found the president very disappointing," said one elderly woman who declined to give her name. Asked what was most disappointing about Obama, the woman said: "He has not been honest about being a Muslim."

Such beliefs are unusual, but not exactly unknown in these parts. Not far from Buffalo lies the town of Annandale, which acts as the base for a rightwing Christian ministry called You Can Run But You Cannot Hide. Led by the drummer of nu-metal band Junkyard Prophet, Bradlee Dean, the ministry has made its name by denying Obama's Christianity and promoting slurs against gay people, accusing them of child abuse and even suggesting they be executed.

Yet Bachmann herself has headlined a fundraising gala for Dean and his ministry. That sort of thing has so far passed under the radar of most American media, but seasoned Bachmann-watchers, such as Stillwater writer Karl Bremer believe that will not last for long now: "She has to soften her image. But her image is already on the table. She is in the big leagues now. It is not just a little congressional race."

Bremer believes Bachmann's politics and career are about to get the sort of scrutiny they have long deserved. Indeed, he has already chronicled much of it on his blog. "She has got plenty of skeletons in her closet," he said.

Reconciling the liberal and conservative visions of Bachmann is impossible. Her detractors and supporters inhabit different worlds. But it has led to speculation that Bachmann might privately not believe all she says in public: that her ambition is simply to bask in the spotlight.

Perhaps, like Palin, she may have more of an eye on realising her value on the lucrative TV talk show circuit than on winning a political race. Bremer is unsure of the theory and not keen to test it. "Does she believe what she says? Or is it just a road to success?" he said. "I don't know the answer to that -- but I do think she should be stopped."

## Are the Republicans any match for new Action Man Obama?

Osama bin Laden killing has transformed US president from procrastinating intellectual to decisive commander-in-chief

Ewen MacAskill in Washington

The Guardian, Friday 6 May 2011



Barack Obama looms at the head of the table in this photograph from the White House situation room during the mission against Osama bin Laden. Photograph: Reuters/White House

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Barack Obama is flying to Fort Campbell on the Kentucky-Tennessee border to thank the special forces who stormed Osama bin Laden's hideout. He has good reason to thank them personally: the raid transformed the way Americans view their president, changing him overnight from dithering nerd-in-chief to decisive action man.

Since Obama began campaigning for the presidency in 2007 he has faced criticism, some of it racially charged, that he was not up to the job. First from the Hillary Clinton campaign: that he was too inexperienced, that he could not handle the crisis call at three o'clock in the morning. More followed from John McCain and Sarah Palin. Then came the rightwing commentators Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck and the Tea Party movement. He was too detached, too academic. His patriotism was questioned and his religion too.

Stephen Hess, one of America's most respected commentators on the White House, acknowledged the change since the death of Bin Laden. "His image, fair or unfair, is that he is an intellectual, which he is and which is unusual in a president. Obama thinks about things and takes his time in making decisions, which I think is a good thing." Hess, a political scientist at the Brookings Institution, saw the Abbottabad decision as "very gutsy, tough, made quickly" and responsible for changing the dynamics of American politics. "It is going to be very hard for Republicans to use any more that label of weak and indecisive in foreign policy," Hess said.

Helping to reshape the image are those pictures of Obama in the situation room looking grave and anxious as the raid is taking place. He was risking not only the special forces he had sent in but his own presidency, with the danger of a Jimmy Carter-style Iranian hostage rescue debacle that could have finished any hopes of a second White House term.

There is a hard core that will never be convinced Obama is truly patriotic and will continue to insist he was not born in the US, that he is a secret Muslim. But their numbers have dwindled fast because of the combination of his release of his long-form birth certificate a fortnight ago (and his ridiculing of Donald Trump at the White House correspondents' dinner on Saturday

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night) and the Abbottabad raid. Beck, Limbaugh and former members of the Bush administration, including Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, joined in the praise for Obama.

David Frum, who as assistant to Bush wrote the "axis of evil" speech, deplored the vilification of Obama as some dark-skinned alien. "So we had this situation where he was not an American, a Muslim, not a patriot. I do not think it [the Bin Laden killing] ends the paranoia but it shoves it back from the centre to the margins. He has shown he understands that the nation has enemies and that force is sometimes the only remedy," Frum said.

The White House and Pentagon almost threw away its advantage with its poor handling of the aftermath, offering exaggerated accounts of what happened and then having to recant. Obama's emotional visit with the 9/11 relatives on Thursday and his trip to see the troops at Fort Campbell have helped undo some of that damage.

Within minutes of Obama announcing last Sunday that Bin Laden was dead, US commentators were tweeting that the president had the 2012 election in the bag. That is grossly premature. Obama has not enjoyed the kind of spectacular jump in approval ratings he might have expected from Bin Laden's death. He has not soared into the 80s, instead seeing relatively modest rises that take him from the mid-40s to the mid-50s. That is mainly because of the sluggish economy.

Obama came to power with some of the highest approval ratings in US political history. Millions turned out for his victory night party and inauguration. He has managed to get some of his programme through, delivering on his promise to introduce near-universal healthcare, due to begin in 2014. He has had other gains too, on gay rights, a US-Russian arms reduction deal and preventing the shutdown of government. But there is a lot left to do, including closing Guantánamo, reforming immigration laws and ending tax breaks for the wealthy. These failures have brought criticism from the left. Clarence Jones, who helped draft King's "I have a dream" speech, believes there was an undercurrent of racism behind many of the jibes about the president not being up to the job. "Yes, his academic professorial background was used by his critics to portray Obama as some ivory tower intellectual incapable of taking decisive action. Regrettably there was a racial undercurrent in the suggestions he was not up to the job." Jones does not believe that the elimination of Bin Laden has exorcised that. Politics will return to normal in Washington next week. The Republicans will resume their confrontation with the White House over the size of the national debt. But catching Bin Laden has given Obama an edge in those negotiations. And an edge in the longer term. National security is usually a point of weakness for Democrats. But next year, when any Republican rival questions his credentials, the president will have an easy one-word answer: "Osama."

## Michele Bachmann grabs Tea Party baton for Republican nomination

Mitt Romney, the presidential frontrunner, topped in debate by the congresswoman who also poses threat to Sarah Palin

Chris McGreal in Washington, The Guardian Tuesday 14 June 2011



Congresswoman Michele Bachmann at the first 2012 Republican presidential candidates' debate in Manchester, New Hampshire. Photograph: Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty

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No sooner had Michele Bachmann hijacked the Republican presidential contenders' debate to declare she is indeed a candidate for the White House than her newly minted campaign website said she is on her way to "reclaim America".

Americans may know far less about the first Republican congresswoman from Minnesota than they do of that other darling of the Tea Party movement, Sarah Palin. But they are about to learn fast.

Her performance in Monday night's Republican candidates' debate marked her out as a serious threat, not only to Palin's ambitions but by having the potential to force issues onto the agenda – even if she faces an uphill struggle to build enough support to win the nomination.

Politico rated her as runner-up in the debate to the favourite in the early stages of the long race for the nomination, Mitt Romney, in part because "she did not say anything embarrassing or scary". Others thought she did better than Romney, using her ascribed twin weapons of bluntness and charm to make the men in the debate look hesitant.

Bachmann, 55, believes her country needs to be reclaimed from a socialist president, a gay mafia, and treasonous liberals, responsible for, among other things, robbing Americans of the freedom to choose their light bulbs.

It's a far cry from Bachmann's first dabble in politics as a student in Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign for president. She said at the time she was attracted by Carter's deep religious convictions, a constant in her life, but was ultimately disillusioned by his support for abortion rights and his economic policies. Four years later, Bachmann campaigned for Ronald Reagan.

From then on, she was on her way to becoming a Tea Partier avant la lettre, rising through the Minnesota state legislature and into the US Congress in 2007 with an increasingly strident conservatism built around the belief that big government flies in the face of the America imagined by its founding fathers.

She did not shy from making clear she was driven by her Lutheran beliefs including her decision to bear five children and foster 23 more. Neither did she hide her belief that those

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who disagreed with her were somehow disloyal to the country, once calling the then presidential candidate Barack Obama anti-American. Questioned on the issue, she went on to suggest that some of her fellow members of Congress might be similarly flawed: "Are they pro-America or anti-America?"

No issue appears to rile Bachmann more than gay marriage, and homosexual rights in general, which she sees as a vast and spreading conspiracy to change the sexuality of the nation's children. She has accused the courts of rulings intended to indoctrinate the young. "What a bizarre time we're in, when a judge will say to little children that you can't say the pledge of allegiance, but you must learn that homosexuality is normal and you should try it," she said on one occasion. (The words "under God" were added to the US oath of loyalty in 1954, and in 2005 a California judge said he would if asked stop teachers making children in their charge repeat the oath.)

On another occasion, Bachmann said that teaching children the achievements of gay men was a means of promoting homosexuality. "Very effective way to do this with a bunch of second graders is take The Lion King for instance, and a teacher might say, 'Do you know the music for this movie was written by a gay man?' The message is: 'I'm better at what I do, because I'm gay'," she said.

Bachmann is also famed for getting her history wrong, truncating the fight to abolish slavery by a century. "We also know that the very founders that wrote those documents [the constitution] worked tirelessly until slavery was no more in the US," she said. Her legislative initiatives include the Light Bulb Freedom of Choice Act in an attempt to overturn the phasing-out of incandescent bulbs, She has also dismissed global warming as a hoax.

She has even gone so far as to suggest that recent swine flu scare may have been the fault of the Obama administration by noting that a similar outbreak occurred "under another Democrat president Jimmy Carter". "I'm not blaming this on President Obama, I just think it's an interesting coincidence," she said.

It is those kind of statements that have left Bachmann with a long way to go to win over the independents and mainstream Republicans who are crucial to taking the White House.

But Monday's performance did her no harm. "Bachmann all but stole the show at the Republican presidential debate," said Howard Kurtz of the Daily Beast. "She offered a passionate and inclusive defence of the Tea Party, saying that unlike the distorted picture painted by the media, the movement includes 'disaffected Democrats', 'independents', 'libertarians' and 'people who've never been political a day in their lives'. Not bad for a rookie who kept smiling as she reeled off her best lines." The most crucial endorsement came from the senator regarded as godfather of the movement, Jim DeMint, who said: "Bachmann does impress. She should not be underestimated."

Not what Palin wants to hear.

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**It's not the Republican line-up but the economy that Barack Obama must fear**

The conservative candidates may look weak. But what will count for US voters is food on the table and clothes for the kids

Gary Younge, The Guardian, Sunday 19 June 2011

On 27 April Barack Obama produced his long-form birth certificate and denounced the "sideshowes and carnival barkers" who insisted he was not born in the US. Within a week he had announced Osama bin Laden's execution to the world, burnishing his credentials as commander-in-chief and leaving the carnival barkers to howl at the moon.

Watching the declared Republican presidential hopefuls debate in New Hampshire last week it was difficult to perceive any threat to the apparently unassailable position he had established almost two months ago. The most viable Republican contenders – Mike Huckabee, Mitch Daniels and Chris Christie – have all decided not to run. Meanwhile, the calibre of those who have taken up the challenge suggests the sideshow has been promoted to the main event.

There was Newt Gingrich, who had effectively just been fired by his own handpicked staff; Mitt Romney, railing against the very healthcare proposals he implemented when governor of Massachusetts; and Herman Cain, conservative radio host and former pizza executive, who insists any Muslim would have to take a loyalty oath before they could work in his administration. Among this field even Michele Bachmann – a Tea Party favourite who once claimed that The Lion King could be used as gay propaganda – emerged looking reasonable.

Republicans themselves are underwhelmed. A recent NBC poll showed that only 45% of Republican voters who said they plan to participate in the GOP primaries were satisfied with their choices. At the same point in the election cycle four years ago the figure was 73%. That's why, at this relatively late stage, the party is still desperately seeking a halfway decent candidate and why so many prominent potential candidates (halfway decent or not) have yet to declare their hand. A poll last week showed the most popular Republicans are Romney, Sarah Palin and Rudy Giuliani. The last two are not yet running and are unlikely to.

Many liberals witness this spectacle with a wry smile, assuming that if this is the best the Republicans can come up with, Obama's lease on the White House is good for another four years. But the last laugh could be on them. And a very sick joke it could be too.

In 2004 Bush showed us that being wrong, stupid and incompetent is no bar to being elected to the highest office in American politics (or any politics for that matter). Put even more bluntly: just because they're ridiculous doesn't mean they can't win. And the only thing more startling than the lack of Republican talent at this stage of the race is the fact that whoever gets the nomination has a fighting chance. Because, however weak the Republican field appears, Obama is looking weaker by the day.

A Gallup poll from last week has Obama losing against a generic Republican candidate by 39%-44%; in March, when he launched his re-election campaign, a Pew survey had him leading by 10 points. One poll shows that today he would be in a dead heat in a national

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contest against Romney, the Republican frontrunner; in January polls showed he would have beaten Romney in all six swing states surveyed.

Obama's high from Osama bin Laden's execution wore off within a month. Now his approval ratings are back where they've been for most of the last 18 months, below 50%.

The basic reasons for this are identical to those that rendered Bush Sr a one-term president: the economy. The raft of recent data suggesting stubborn unemployment, a collapsed housing market and elusive growth has coincided with rising gas prices and a stock market in virtual freefall. Of the nine states that Obama took from Republicans in 2008, unemployment is up in all of them by, on average, a third. Obama supporters like to counter these facts by reciting a list of his achievements, thereby utterly missing the point. A list never clothed or housed anyone or fed their kids.

The good news for Obama is that it is early days yet and things can change. At this point in 1983 Reagan trailed Walter Mondale, and in 1995 Bill Clinton was losing to Bob Dole. Both won landslides.

The bad news is things could change for the worse. There is little to suggest that the economy will improve much between now and November of next year, and much to indicate it could further deteriorate. With the Republicans in control of the House the days of even inadequate fiscal stimulus are over. Meanwhile, cuts at a local and state level, where budgets have to be balanced, are biting even deeper.

Those who believe Obama's defeat unthinkable should remember that his victory was nowhere near as emphatic as it appeared. Despite his strengths as a candidate, superior funding, a well-run campaign, the economic crisis and the failures of his Republican predecessor, he only got 53% of the vote.

Those who assume that, given the field, the nomination of a viable Republican candidate is unthinkable should bear in mind the increasingly polarised nature of the electorate, and the fact that the Republicans could well choose someone who only appeals to their base and remain in contention. With relatively few waverers to win over, the task for the last three elections has not been to win over moderates but to mobilise the faithful.

The midterms show there is a limit to this strategy. The Republicans lost some seats by selecting extreme candidates. And the more conservative a candidate they select the more Democrats are galvanised, not in support of Obama but against the alternative. But the bottom line is that Republicans nonetheless won big in November with many more extremists, primarily because Democrats stayed at home. Notwithstanding the paucity of decent Republican candidates, a significant enthusiasm gap remains.

As the 1980 election campaign drew to a close, Reagan famously ended a debate with the questions: "Are you better off than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than four years ago? Is there more or less unemployment in the country than there was four years ago?" Obama's opponent would merely have to repeat the questions verbatim to recast him as Jimmy Carter 2.0.

If you want to know how Obama will fare next year, don't watch the Republicans, watch the economy.

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## Calm down, dear? Do me a favour David Cameron – language matters

Women's position in society is already being weakened by this government. Cameron's words should not undermine it further

Libby Brooks, The Guardian, Thursday 28 April 2011



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George Osborne – although not Nick Clegg – finds David Cameron's 'Calm down, dear' highly amusing.  
Photograph: PA

When Michael Winner delivers his catchphrase "Calm down, dear" on the Esure insurance ads he does, on occasion, have the good grace to do so dressed as a fairy. For David Cameron at prime minister's questions this week there was no such self-ironising. He directed the borrowed injunction at the shadow Treasury secretary Angela Eagle while in costume as leader of the coalition. He did not even carry a string of sausages, which would at least have made explicit the official return to Punch and Judy politics that he was initially so keen to rid the house of.

For some, the incident was a simple case of mask slippage: Cameron's modern facade cracking under pressure to reveal the Eton-entitled, habitually sexist Bullingdon bully beneath. But, as it became clear that offence had been taken by a constituency bigger than Ed Balls – making easy feminist hay on behalf of the opposition – the debate revealed a response that was, if not polarised, then certainly non-equatorial.

Male sketchwriters and assorted Westminster aficionados either affected bemused indulgence on behalf of their slighted sisters or scented the whiff of political-correctness-gone-mad. The storm was argued back into its teacup. This was just a joke and a gender-blind one at that. The House of Commons is a bearpit and those participating have tacitly accepted that the usual rules of polite discourse need not apply. Edwina Currie was among former female ministers wheeled out to pooh-pooh the notion of "bleating about being a woman". Ergo, telling a female colleague to "Calm down, dear" is Not That Big A Deal.

To these assorted exculpations I reply: "Do me a favour, love!" (For those whose mental data cloud does not include a section marked Public Wallyfication, this refers to Sky Sports presenters Andy Gray and Richard Keys discussing the West Ham vice-chair, Karren Brady, off-air.) Because language really, really matters. It is fundamental to how we construct and convey meaning. And when that meaning is: "I am expressing paternalistic concern at your inability [*as a woman*] to rein in your emotion" then yes, that is sexist and yes, it is a big deal.

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To undermine her anger as hysteria, to reference her femaleness, is a particularly male way of putting a woman down.

In her seminal treatise *Man Made Language*, the feminist theorist Dale Spender makes the argument that language is a system that embodies sexual inequality. She offers evidence of the loss of prestige experienced when men are referred to in female terms ("don't be such a girl"), and the way that words to describe women are consistently sexualised or imply over-emotion and weakness. (Nick Clegg, since the earliest coalition negotiations, has been described by critics as a "harlot", a "flirt" and "arm candy".) Spender noted that, while males have more control over meaning and more control over talk (one study found men were responsible for 98% of interruptions in mixed conversation), women are in a double bind: damned if they do and damned if they don't talk like a lady.

Language is about inclusion and exclusion. Whether certain men revert to sexist banter when they think they can get away with it, as was the case with Gray and Keys, is beside the point. What matters is that nowadays, in the majority of public spaces and, crucially, workplaces, such behaviour is policed by other men as well as women. What matters is that when women don't hear this kind of language on a regular basis they get the message that they belong and become more confident about speaking up. That this subtle but fundamental inclusion is not manifest in our own parliament is of profound concern.

To those who would at this point query the existence of my funny bone, I would respectfully suggest that humour is about context as well as content. "Cheer up, darling, it might never happen"? It already has, and here is the context in the spring of 2011. There are just four women cabinet ministers and one of those comes unelected from the Lords. All the decisions about cuts to benefits and services that are affecting women, and especially single mothers, disproportionately are being made with little female input.

Indeed, across the coalition benches as a whole, women are woefully underrepresented, with a recent Fabian analysis forecasting the complete demise of Liberal Democrat women in the house after the next election. And it's hard not to see this as evidenced directly in the slew of anti-woman proposals that have emanated from the government since last May: be that the bungled child benefit changes, alterations to abortion provision and anonymity in rape trials, or the current assault on equality legislation under the guise of Cameron's "Red Tape Challenge".

Meanwhile, David Willetts sees fit to blame feminism for working-class worklessness, the Telegraph posts a "whose boobs are these?" blog alongside a photo of a headless Labour MP, and the most visible woman anywhere near the government remains Samantha Cameron, who could this week be found baking cupcakes for a royal wedding street party. As women's position in society is weakened by recession, the government's response to that recession, and their representation within that government, it is frightening to see just how quickly the wider culture takes its cue to move backward. I see no reason to be calm about it.

## David Cameron's bills may glide through, but reality will bite

If governing were PR, Cameron would be in power for ever. But, from NHS to welfare, so much recklessness is bound to crash

Polly Toynbee, The Guardian, Friday 17 June 2011



David Cameron listens as Ed Miliband rounds on him over cancer patients during PMQs this week. Photograph: Pa

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A small group of disabled demonstrators, some in wheelchairs, were protesting outside Atos HQ this week. The company that conducts work capability tests was recruiting new examiners, who remove 70% from incapacity benefits, judging only 30% too frail to work.

Here is a common catch-22: with faraway test centres, if you can get to a centre you're fit enough to work, but those who can't are struck off for failing to attend. One demonstrator said his cramped flat is too small to fit his wheelchair, so he hangs on to the furniture to get around – but because he doesn't use a wheelchair at home, he was judged fit to work. A social worker emails me about her stick-thin, sick client living on pureed food yet rejected for disability living allowance, but she died last week waiting for her appeal. That's what it takes to cut £18bn from the welfare budget. Expect an avalanche of such stories, and not just in the Guardian.

Ed Miliband caught David Cameron out in Prime Minister's Questions this week over the 7,000 cancer patients losing their right to employment and support allowance if they are not back at work within a year. They contributed to sickness benefit in national insurance for all their working lives. As the welfare reform bill passed through parliament this week, Labour were amazed that Cameron hadn't inspected it with a fine-tooth comb: neither Blair nor Brown would have dared go ignorant into the chamber on so tricky a bill. But Cameron will soon discover the bill's contents when thousands of mothers abandon work as their childcare credit is cut, or when care home residents are trapped indoors with no mobility allowance.

What of the half of disabled children losing all disability benefits? The bill was passed with nothing to stop housing and council-tax benefit cuts causing a wave of evictions in the south-east. Just wait until single and divorced mothers find they have to pay £100, plus 12% of any maintenance, for the state to pursue errant fathers. Does Cameron know all this, or is he carried away by his eloquent claim that the still undetermined universal credit will smooth all rough edges and solve all the age-old welfare conundrums? Has he learned nothing from the health service catastrophe?

True, Cameron's NHS U-turn this week was done as elegantly as a London taxi driver spinning on a sixpence. He is good at the talk, sounding so eminently reasonable when he said what more politicians should say. "I think people respect a government that feels it is strong

enough to say, hold on, we haven't got every element right, we're not taking enough people with us, let's stop, let's get this right. People will throw a few bricks at you, but so what?" Labour should dare say that about some past errors. If governing were just public relations, Cameron would be in power for ever. But it isn't. Bills may glide through parliament on a sea of silken words but reality bites back.

His "reformed" NHS is now a monster: don't even try to draw the organogram. Semi-dismantled primary care trusts are randomly assembled in temporary clusters, all with their own boards and CEOs, but will be reorganised again to fit council boundaries, leaving some PCTs where GPs refuse to do commissioning. Hospital doctors and nurses will sit on these GP clinical commissioning groups influencing the contracts, probably in their favour. Clinical senates will sit above them, as will health and wellbeing boards. Local authorities can appeal against commissioning decisions, while a new citizens panel oversees competition and choice and HealthWatch guards patients' interests.

Don't give up, keep following: Monitor, designed to ensure competition, now combines that with a contradictory duty to create "integration". It still oversees foundation trusts (all hospitals soon), until they float as free businesses run by their often eccentric governing boards, elected by a few producer interests or local obsessives, free to do any amount of private practice. On high sits the all-powerful NHS Commissioning Board, which now needs eight regional branches – just like the semi-abolished strategic health authorities.

This great farrago adds tiers more bureaucracy and builds in lethal rigidity. How can anyone merge an A&E or shift money from hospitals into the community, let alone close a bad hospital, when blocked by every local interest? Yet private companies may still appeal to Monitor to demand the right to cherry-pick profitable services. This turmoil is to be run with 40% fewer managers, many of the best already departed in dismay. Out of this chaos 4% a year more productivity must be squeezed (never achieved anywhere) while suffering the greatest NHS cut in after-inflation income. Waiting lists are rising: this week's figures show a third of hospitals already missing the 18-week treatment target that Cameron rashly pledged to keep. Clegg beamed at his political "victory" – but reality will bite back within the year.

Few of Cameron's reckless bills will do what they promise – and some will crash. Not surprisingly, the public services white paper is quietly shunted into July's parliamentary dog days. Who knows if Cameron and his ministers are deluded, dangerously ignorant or snake-oil charlatans who hope no one will notice the real effect of remedies sold with enough flamboyant promise. Will Labour gain from all this? Almost certainly. Miliband is canny enough to side-step the elephant traps, neither defending the work-shy nor encouraging strikes that harm public service users. His "squeezed middle" expresses a genuine truth: the middle and bottom left behind for years on frozen incomes, are now "paying taxes to fund the bankers". His refreshing attack on boardroom greed was well timed in the week that figures showed bankers gave themselves unthinkable increases last year: Goldman Sachs's Lloyd Blankfein took 15 times more than the year before. These are foundations for Labour regeneration.

## Why we should cherish prime minister's questions

Rowdy and undignified, it's the bear pit of British politics. But in the age of 24/7 TV news, instant blogging and Twitter, a strong performance at PMQs has never been more vital

Michael White, *The Guardian*, Saturday 18 June 2011



### SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS ANGLAIS ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS PROGRAMME

Ups and downs ... Ed Miliband has been a winner and a loser at PMQs in the last fortnight. Photograph: PA

Apart from entertaining the sketchwriters, does the weekly session of political mud-wrestling matter? As with John Major, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown before him, Cameron has deplored its rowdy, Punch-and-Judy qualities. They all look back nostalgically to a golden age of scholarly exchanges between gents and promise to do better, at least in the early stages of their rule. Cameron is only the latest prime minister to acknowledge defeat.

Does it matter? Of course it matters. "Of course, it's serious, but performance is key, it's theatrical. Gordon never got that," says Daily Mirror political pundit Kevin Maguire. "Blair was brilliant, with the barrister's gift for picking on his opponent's weak point. People complain but you can make a fool of yourself – or a success – in three words," says Telegraph sketchwriter Andrew Gimson.

Such as? Everyone remembers Cameron's opening salvo against Blair in December 2005: "You were the future once." An "analogue PM in a digital age" was his jibe against Brown. In 1999 Blair punctured William Hague as "Billy Bandwagon", a man with "good jokes, bad judgment". Such soundbite verdicts often stick. They always did.

It is not that politics (to misquote Liverpool FC's Bill Shankly) is "more important than life and death" to most voters – not most of the time, though it currently is in Greece. But busy people do make judgments out of the corner of one eye about the personal qualities and suitability of their leaders. The main way they do that is via TV news and clips of PMQs, perhaps on YouTube, which is why Ed Miliband's progress – or lack of it – is worth monitoring.

The stakes were not always so high as they have become in the age of 24/7 rolling TV news, of instant blogging and Twitter. Until the 1880s, prime ministers were routinely asked questions by MPs without prior notice on working Commons days, no differently from other ministers. Then, as now, public business – that is, statements, debates or legislation – could not start before backbenchers got their answers. This is central to British constitutional theory and practice. There is no US-style separation of the powers. However mighty, ministers running the executive branch of government are ultimately responsible to and subordinate to the legislature where they must command a majority. Is that mere hot air in an age of whipped party majorities? No, as Cameron and Nick Clegg may yet discover. After all, Margaret

Thatcher fell because those baying PMQs backbenchers decided she'd become a liability by 1990. Tony Blair had a narrow escape in 2007.

Such calculations were even truer in the early days of party machine politics when backbench independence was stronger. PMQs were moved to the end of the list of daily questions in 1881, only as a courtesy to William Gladstone, then 72, so he could turn up later. The practice persisted so that by 1902 cerebral Arthur Balfour could complain that answering questions on "trifling subjects" wasted "the best hour of the day". Worse, it was undignified, stirred up friction and personal abuse – complaints still heard in 2011.

Typical of an intellectual, Balfour missed the point which Thatcher would forcefully articulate in her memoirs. PMQs were "the real test of your authority in the House, your standing with your party, your grip of policy and of the facts to justify it," she wrote. Few heads of government are so accountable, as she liked to point out at EU summits. Few fellow-summiters "know where their parliaments are," she once snapped.

In her day the ordeal was twice-weekly, at the fixed time of 3.15 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 15 minutes, a reform sanctioned by Harold Macmillan in 1961 as the volume of questions mounted. Before that the PM's questions were sometimes never reached. It was Tony Blair in 1997 who unilaterally telescoped the two sessions into one 30-minute slot at noon on Wednesdays. Blair knew the scary session was "irrational but important". Having watched it drain John Major and his diary ("two PMQs equal two days, that's a lot of time") he acted – proof to many MPs of his disdain for the Commons, though in his final speech there Blair admitted he had "always feared" it.

Like all modern PMs, Blair and Thatcher took immense pains to brief themselves. This was a point of maximum leverage over Whitehall departments. They had to tell No 10 what they were up to in case some uppity MPs put the PM on the spot. "It was a good test of the alertness and efficiency of a cabinet minister" to see if the information was accurate or punctual, Thatcher's memoirs explained. But it was terrifying too, a bear pit where not every question, let alone every witty heckle ("are they laughing at me?") can be heard. Macmillan, a sensitive man who turned himself into the most urbane of postwar PMs did so by mastering pre-PMQ nerves which, he admitted in retirement, sometimes made him physically sick.

Thatcher always took a drink (Scotch) while Blair's memoirs spend three pages explaining how important ("fear tumbles into panic") it was to be in the right physical and mental shape. He took a melatonin pill to guarantee six hours sleep and had a banana for breakfast.

As a young thruster in the Conservative Research Department, David Cameron first made his mark advising Major on PMQs, and quickly learned a prime minister's authority depends on it. As he later wrote as a backbench blogger for the Guardian no PM or opposition leader who was "slow-witted, corrupt or simply not up to the job" would survive.

That is the raucous spirit of PMQs. Long may it continue.

## The coalition still hasn't worked out the principles that bind it together

Retreat on the NHS, on sentencing – Conservatives and Lib Dems talk of pragmatism, but cannot define a common purpose

Julian Glover, The Guardian, Sunday 19 June 2011



Nick Clegg, David Cameron and the health secretary, Andrew Lansley, meet nurses and doctors at Guys hospital in London. Photograph: Paul Rogers/The Times/PA

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After the whirlwind, what next? The uncontrolled energy of the coalition's first year has subsided suddenly and inelegantly. The landscape left by this building boom is messy: there are roads going nowhere, half-ruined projects and anxiety about plans for reconstruction. So what now?

"Nothing," says one of the architects. Essentially, it's been done. The Fabian state that has served Britain since Attlee has been rigged with explosives and detonated. The priority is not finding new things to blow up but different ways of putting them back together. In this view, chaos over the NHS, which has bruised confidence deeply, has also been unexpectedly useful. It marks the shift from fearless zeal to a reasoned and political approach: one year of wild revolution to be followed by four sensible years of making it work.

Yet this brings a problem. If the coalition is not to be powered by the excitement of its own daring, then something else must hold it together instead. "The programme is steaming forward," says one Tory minister. "We haven't lost our nerve," says a cabinet Liberal Democrat. But they would say this. That they do is as much about reassurance as reality. Retreat on the NHS; retreat on sentencing; retreat, perhaps, on pensions; retreat and delay on the public service reform paper – all shout fear. You don't have to obsess about U-turns (as if unbending dogmatism were better) to sense something has changed.

Changed up to a point, anyway. The justice white paper to be published in the next few days will still be tabloid allergenic – but not as allergenic as it might have been. It is true that huge chunks of policy – such as education and welfare – are as yet unaltered. A government following the biggest deficit-reduction programme attempted in a large western economy may be accused of many things, but not cowardice. On everything from carbon emissions to high-speed rail, departments are lively. The problem is making this add up to a sustainable whole now that the first-year firework show is over.

"You better not look down, if you want to keep on flying," sang BB King, and the truth of that is becoming clear. Last year's coalition agreement was brilliant at forcing a quick start, but useless as a guide to the government's founding values now the pace is slowing. It provided a

to-do list of reform but avoided deep questions that must now be confronted: what is the coalition's attitude to democratic accountability, the role of markets and competition in public service? What does it mean by localism? To what extent should empowerment be accompanied by a harsher willingness to allow people to fail if they do not act? Above all, is the reconstruction and fragmentation of the state ideological rather than a consequence of deficit reduction?

And it is on that final point, the logic of the Cameron Tory position – in favour of breaking up the state long before the financial crisis brought up the deficit – that some in the coalition would answer yes, while others, including most Lib Dems, would say no. The exaggerated portrayal of divisions between the chancellor, George Osborne, and the prime minister's thinker, Steve Hilton, is a result of trying to answer this question.

Curiously, it has proved easier for the coalition to agree specific policies than to define the reasoning behind them. Conflict over the impending public service reform white paper exposes the problem. The document's delay has "ludicrously magnified" its importance, according to one of the authors, but the cause of the delay matters: the coalition's inability to define a common purpose. The result has been "enormously long discussions about what we are actually doing. Once you find the desire to set principles for what is happening, everyone gets terribly interested."

On the one side are those pushing for a pragmatic case-by-case summary of what is already being done, with few new plans. On the other are dreamers who think the paper should set out a dashing philosophical case for the coalition — "phantasmagorical bollocks", in the words of one Tory minister.

Lib Dems, stung by attacks on Nick Clegg in the anti-AV campaign, are in no mood for daring. "We've got to guard against the inclination to sneak in sweeping stuff," says one. Last Friday's uninspiring awayday in Yorkshire for Lib Dem MPs confirmed that there is no appetite (as there was until recently) for thinking beyond the dull transactional grind of the coalition agreement (which itself is beginning to run out).

The cross-party coalition 2.0 group is supposed to meet again this week, but the spark has gone. It is notable that while no Lib Dem MP questioned deficit reduction at the meeting last week, most clung to basely pragmatic reasons for coalition – the size of the deficit and the party's role as an internal opposition, taming Tory zeal. There's no appetite for defining the positive.

This is hazardous. At best, it will lead to a barren coalition, sticking to a programme whose coherence its members are unable to establish, let alone explain. It is sensible to slow the pace; right not to unleash a new set of dramatic changes on a public sector digesting its existing orders. But coalition can only work if it is bound together by fundamental principles. It is troubling that its members are finding these so hard to define.



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**The eternal appeal of conspiracy theory**

Barely had Obama 'birtherism' been laid to rest than the Osama 'deather' narrative was born. Is it part of the American psyche?

Jeff Winkler, The Guardian, Friday 13 May 2011

The US – with the help of a few Navy Seals – found the elusive Osama bin Laden, shot him in the face and then deep-sixed the diabolical diabetic somewhere in the Arabian Sea. While the rest of the country cheered "How wonderful!", many others had only one thought: "How convenient."

Before the al-Qaida figurehead had hit the ocean floor, conspiracy theories surrounding Osama's death had already begun to bubble up. Within hours, the conspiracists had a name – "Deathers" – and, shortly thereafter, feature pieces in mainstream news outlets. One publication called the supposed death of OBL our "generation's 'Grassy Knoll'".

Let's hope so.

Whether it's JFK, aliens, the Bilderberg Group, the massacre at Virginia Tech, George Soros or the Koch Brothers, the culture and prevalence of conspiracy theories comes out of this country's own unique history as an unregulated brave new world for the slightly afraid. To trust no one is not a preciously paranoid mantra solely for The X-Files fans. It's just caution.

The desire to assess and confront threats has universal appeal. As one New York Times conspiracy theory article noted, "In a way, it is human nature to want to construct a narrative to resolve anxieties, to be drawn to mystery or the perception of it." For the American psyche, surviving this chaos means constructing an order, any order, and this need manifests itself in as varied ways as there are people.

Unfortunately, in the partisan hype over President Obama's birth certificate, journalists latched onto the just one idea. Several publications even ran nearly identical headlines ("Why the stories about Obama's birth certificate will never die"). Despite numerous, varied and sometimes overlapping conspiracy theories, when it came down to the Birther conspiracy, the conclusion in the media was clean and simple: Birthers equalled horrible, conservative racists on par with good ol' boys from the Old South. Conversely, when the left-leaning Sarah Palin "Trig-truthers" breached the public consciousness yet again this past month, one columnist on this site expertly concluded that the conspiracy theorists were, at their core, hateful misogynists and nothing more.

But the fears about Obama and Palin come from the same essential conspiracy. Two previously little-known figures with relatively untested backgrounds have become powerful agents of change in a now unfamiliar world. A few people recognised the elemental fear, but quickly shied away from fully acknowledging it, favouring reactions to them and explanations of them that were nearly as ridiculous the conspiracy theories themselves. Perhaps the most bizarre reaction was that of Lawrence O'Donnell who – knowing full well what the most famous Birther would say – actively sought out Orly Taitz to appear on his show before rudely and publicly kicking her off after she did exactly what she was put on the programme

to do. A casual observer might wonder what the point of that was. A conspiracy theorist, however, knows full well that anyone desperate to prove something probably has twice as much to hide.

But, as any "sane" person knows, berating – rather than listening to – a fearful individual is not constructive: fear isn't rational, and can't be yelled out of existence. Second, to understand and sympathise with these elemental fears – to recognise one's own doubts about the unfamiliar world – is to know they spring from some kernel of truth.

The CIA's mind control project? Yeah, that was ultra real. The Kennedys were quite familiar with the Mob. Those evil-doers supposedly "behind" the attacks on 9/11, like Saddam Hussein and the Sadis? Plenty of American backing in their day. The world's political leaders and wealth-holders actually *do* meet once a year, a tradition begun at the Hotel de Bilderberg in the Netherlands.

At worst, conspiracy theorists are harmless kooks. At best, they're simply more aware and over-prepared for the infinite possibilities of impending doom. The conspiracy theorists are the American psyche's most blunt defence mechanism against an increasingly strange and uncontrollable world. And as that strange American frontier rapidly expands become a global frontier, they're not only becoming bipartisan, but international, as well.

As the Los Angeles Times gleefully pointed out, Deathers come from *both* sides of the political sphere. Those who believed the official story were "stupid", according to antiwar cheerleader Cindy Sheehan – and left-leaning 9/11 truthers didn't believe it, either. The Tea Party Nation's Judson Phillips said Obama "killed" Osama solely to win the next election. That, and Osama was killed years ago.

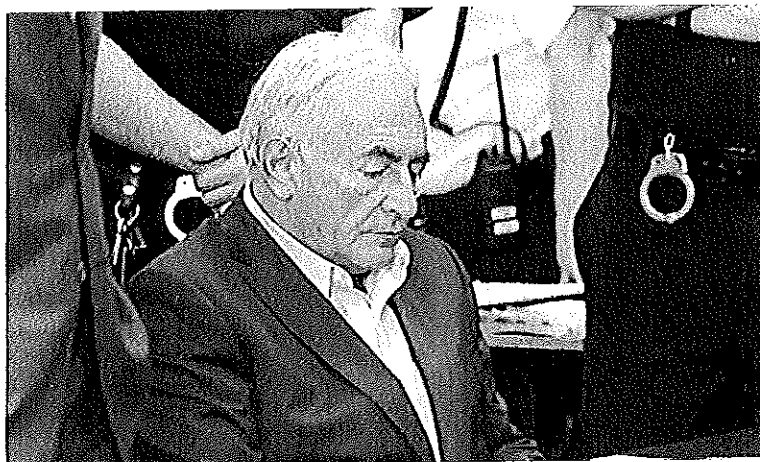
Moreover, there are reports that Muslims and other foreigners think something devious may be afoot, too, thanks to the Obama administration's refusal to release the photos showing Bin Laden's body. Convinced this government has lied so much about so many other things – and it has – that this too-good-to-be-true thing much not be. Conspiracy theorists may be getting the wrong answers, but at least they're asking the right questions. The administration's original story was, by its own admission, not entirely the truth and now some high-ranking politicians who have seen the photos say, "Trust us" – which is like putting 23-year-old John Gotti in charge of the Warren Commission.

So, while the media fails to question authority – or positively panders to it (lookin' at you, Richard Wolffe!) – the conspiracy theorists and their never-ending ragging serve as the vanguard of the strange, post American century. The country, founded with no rules and no history, remains forever a vast, threatening mystery where the enemy is out there and within. Now that the paranoia is going global, it's the conspiracy theorists who will keep an eye out for Them, and Us.

## Conspiracy theorists, stop asking 'who benefits'

From Barack Obama 'birthers' to Osama bin Laden 'deathers', we have become high priests of one question – *cui bono*

Carl Miller and Matthew Moran, The Guardian, Tuesday 31 May 2011



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Many in France believe Dominique Strauss-Kahn was the victim of an international conspiracy. Photograph: Sipa Press/Rex Features

If every epoch has to have a defining question, something that characterises the feeling of the time, then ours is: *Cui bono*? Who benefits? Arising somehow from the ashes of trust in Westminster and a disquiet with a globalisation no one can control, we, culturally, seem happier and happier to explain the causes of events by looking to who benefits from them.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn's arrest in New York is a case in point. The story whipped up a media frenzy as political analysts, philosophers, psychologists and even psychoanalysts were rolled out to debate the various aspects of the case. What was most interesting was the speed at which discussions about who would benefit most from DSK's downfall took centre stage. It was as if this was the magical key to unlocking the truth.

Evidence was in short supply, yet commentators pointed the finger of blame at the Sarkozy camp, the Americans and even the Russians. Everywhere, in fact, except at the man himself. Regional councillor Michèle Sabban went all-out and denounced it as an "international conspiracy" to bring down the former head of the IMF. And the media fallout was reflected in the public sphere: polls in France revealed that almost 60% of the population agreed that DSK was the victim of a conspiracy.

The DSK case is only the tip of the iceberg, the latest in a long parade of conspiracy theories that have queued up for their share of airtime and column inches. The recent "birther" theory, for example, supported by over 20% of Americans, holds that Barack Obama was not born in the US and forged his birth certificate. Then there are those who don't believe in the recent killing of Osama bin Laden. These – let's call them the "deathers" – hold that perhaps he has been dead and kept on ice for the last 10 years, hidden "behind the frozen peas and oven chips" until it was politically opportune to defrost him (this one got airtime on Russia Today).

To the "deathers" we can, of course, add the "truthers" – those who believe that the US government caused or allowed the attacks on 9/11 (to replace the bogeyman of the USSR as a

way to control the public and pave the way to Iraq). A 2008 poll put the number of people who thought al-Qaida was behind the 9/11 attacks at 16% in Egypt, 11% in Jordan and 32% in China. Only a bare majority – 57% – thought so in the UK. These powerful ideas bounce around to all the corners of the internet before the government can "strongly reject..."

But there is a serious point here. Conspiracy theorists are not typically driven by a dispassionate search for truth. Conspiracy theories have become an attractive, addictive habit, offering a comforting explanation for an increasingly complex, mysterious world. For those who are distant from the great decisions and the powerful people that shape our lives, there is a mystique that allows little room for coincidence or accident. They can offer social status, too. Conspiracy theorists often set themselves up as heroic defenders of life, liberty and truth. The well-known YouTube conspiricists compete to break the next scandal to stay ahead. Conspiracy websites sell T-shirts emblazoned with "You Are the Resistance", "Legalise Freedom" and "Tyranny Response Team" (for only \$20, you too can join the crusade to smash corporate interests).

There is some truth to the claim that conspiracy theories exist because conspiracies exist. No doubt some do: during Operation Northwoods in 1963 the US joint chiefs of staff discussed (but never implemented) manufacturing a false Cuban terror campaign in the US as a reason for war. In 1973, the CIA was involved in a coup against the democratically elected Chilean leader Salvador Allende. And the CIA's Project MKULTRA, involving universities, hospitals and pharma companies, did indeed attempt to manipulate mental states through the secret administration of drugs, hypnosis and isolation to unknowing patients.

Conspiracy theories view certain events as the work of a hidden, powerful elite that secretly influence world affairs while concealing their interests, irrespective of the available evidence. In exposing these conspiracies, one question above all others directs their efforts: who benefits? When world events seem the marionettes of the "powers that be" (read: a cabal of Bilderburg, Zionist, Masonic, CIA, Mossad, government, Bond villain superplotters – delete as appropriate), when everything is connected, nothing is as it seems and interest reigns supreme, this is a logic that seems the most sensible, the most relevant.

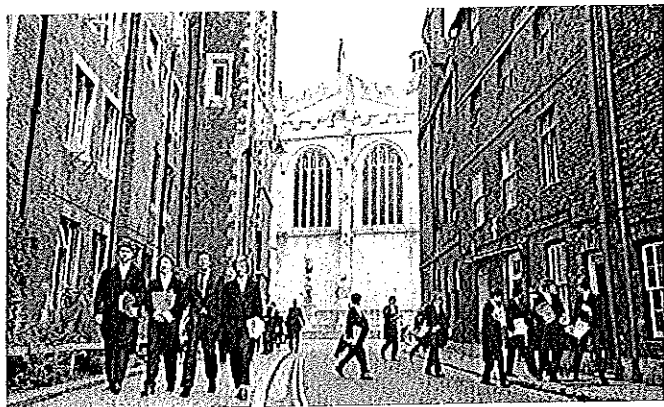
If, despite all evidence, we start explaining all events by *cui bono*, the world suddenly becomes perhaps a little darker, a little more treacherous and frankly a lot simpler and straightforward than it ought to be. We often find that the facts are crowbarred into a world view that has little time for things that aren't conspiracies.

We should be agnostics to the question, rather than its high priests and priestesses. The problem is when people's distrust becomes a kneejerk reaction of any official line, regardless of the evidence. Presuming there is a plot in every case is as myopic and frankly silly as presuming there isn't. When the next big story breaks, let's not lose our scepticism about the powers that be, but let's not become dyed-in-the-wool cynics either.

## Etonians flood into Who's Who - the guide to Britain's establishment

More Old Etonians have entered Who's Who this year than in any year since 1997, according to research

James Ball, The Guardian Friday 20 May 2011



Eton school boys make their way to class. Photograph: Peter Dench/Corbis

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The return of the Conservative party to government has been accompanied by a resurgence in the number of Old Etonian entrants to Who's Who, long regarded as the definitive guide to the British establishment.

More Old Etonians have entered Who's Who this year than in any year since 1997, according to research by the Guardian. Thirty-one of the 1,008 new entrants attended the school. In total, 1,225 Old Etonians grace the book's pages – only 20 fewer than 18 years before. The findings also show the resurgence of the UK's elite universities and members' clubs, revealing a glacially slow pace of change.

Who's Who – biographical listings of Britain's senior politicians, judges, civil servants and notable figures from the arts, academia and other areas – is widely seen as the standard reference book for the UK's governing classes.

Eton has long dominated its pages, with roughly four times as many alumni listed as its public-school rival Harrow. But in recent years, the number of Old Etonians entering the listings had been falling, with only 16 in each of the 2009 and 2010 lists.

The coalition government is dominated by former public school pupils. Within days of the appointment of the cabinet in May 2010, it was revealed that 16 senior ministers attended public schools.

David Cameron and the Commons leader, Sir George Young, went to Eton, as did Cabinet Office minister Oliver Letwin, while 222 alumni of Nick Clegg's alma mater, Westminster school, have made their way into Who's Who pages.

In total, more than 2,300 people in Who's Who attended the top five public schools – Eton, Charterhouse, Harrow, Rugby and Marlborough.

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Oxford and Cambridge graduates also continue to dominate the establishment. A study in the Sunday Times in 1993 found the proportion of new Who's Who entrants from Britain's two oldest universities had fallen to 27%. Though fewer than 2% of students attend Oxford or Cambridge, 32% of entrants to Who's Who in 2011 went to one of the two universities. About one in three people – 11,700 out of 34,210 – listed in Who's Who attended Oxford or Cambridge. Cambridge, with 5,985 alumni listed, was ahead of Oxford on 5,776. In contrast, Edinburgh, in third place, had just 913 listings.

The findings echo comments made last month by the Conservative MP David Davis after the publication of the government's social mobility strategy. "Britain is probably now the most stratified society in the western world," he wrote on Politics Home. "Equality of opportunity has been declining for at least four decades, and the postwar 'golden era' of social mobility is a rapidly dimming memory."

Cameron and Clegg clashed after the initiative's launch over the issue of MPs and other public figures giving unpaid internships to the children of friends and relatives. Clegg had attacked internships, saying: "We want a fair job market based on merit, not networks. It should be about what you know, not who you know."

One field in which Who's Who is gradually changing is the addition of women. While fewer than one in eight people listed are female, the proportion of women entrants has been gradually increasing over the last 15 years, from 11% in 1996 to 23% in 2011 – the largest figure so far.

The extracurricular interests of those listed have also changed little in 30 years. The gentleman's club the Athenaeum was the most-represented institution, with 916 members. The MCC at Lord's was close behind with 832, followed by the Garrick (626), Royal Automobile (498) and Reform (439) clubs.

Aaron Porter, president of the National Union of Students, said the continued dominance of the professions by Oxbridge and private schools highlighted the importance of widening university access. "These findings demonstrate Oxbridge still opens doors in an unparalleled way," he said. "This makes their failure to really make progress in attracting students from the poorest and non-traditional backgrounds more important than ever.

"It is still remarkable that private schools make up 7% of the school population but 50% of Oxbridge. It's a problem for society as a whole."

## 10 reasons the AV referendum was lost

From a dodgy format to hated head boy Nick Clegg, here's why last year's support for the AV system went down the pan

Tom Clark, The Guardian, Friday 6 May 2011



The yes to AV campaign: Eddie Izzard was not the key to success. Photograph: Teri Pengilly for the Guardian

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No one ever claimed that Guardian readers were representative of the wider population, but compare the referendum result with the views you expressed in our own survey a couple of years ago, and you could be forgiven for thinking that planet Guardian exists in an entirely different universe. At the height of the expenses crisis, 5,000 of you gave your views on a new politics, and by a country mile you said that the top priority had to be fixing the voting system. Well, the nation has now had its say on electoral reform of a type, and has decisively flipped its thumbs down.

But this is not, in fact, a case of a chasm between those branded the chattering classes by their detractors, and the wider population. A year ago, opinion polls were suggesting strong support for the general idea of reform, and even recording double-digit leads for the particular option of the alternative vote, which has now been so squarely rejected. Here is a quick top 10 of the reasons why.

**10. The referendum format.** A yes/no plebiscite reliably puts reformers on the defensive. Instead of attacking the status quo in general terms, which is always easy to do, they must suddenly pin their colours to the particular change on offer on the ballot paper, in this case the alternative vote, and then stick by it. Australia's referendum on the republic in 1999 provides a case study of how an impulse for change can dissipate over the detail.

**9.** In this context, the **Alternative Vote system itself** posed particular problems. Infamously dismissed by Nick Clegg as "a miserable little compromise", it is loved by no one, with most of the yes camp hankering for reform that links a party's tally of votes to its tally of seats, something AV fails to deliver. Few Labourites, and no Lib Dems, regard AV as an end itself. It scarcely mattered that from the reformist point of view it is unambiguously better than the system we start out with. What did matter was that the reformists could not muster the energy to market something that they did not truly believe in.

**8. Leaflets from the electoral commission**, which were designed to explain what the reform would mean to every household with meticulous neutrality, ended up making AV look horrendously complex. The blurb summed up first-past-the-post in just three sentences, while describing AV with an excessively complex example election, which required three diagrams and text that spilled over four pages.

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7. A bigger blow was dealt by the **shockingly deep conservatism of much of the Labour party**. Although Gordon Brown had stuck an AV referendum in the last manifesto, candidates never had to declare how they would vote, and when the moment arrived to show their hands half the parliamentary party turned out to be against. Labour has always been split on electoral reform, and for the moment the ranks of the naysayers are swelled by intense animosity to coalition government as currently practised, and towards the Lib Dems in particular. Despite the pro-AV leader, Ed Miliband, having stuck his neck out a few times for the yeses, belligerent turns by grumpy old stagers such as David Blunkett have created the impression that the people's party has no interest in giving the people more of a say.

6. And then there is the rather less shocking **conservatism of the Tories**. David Cameron had signalled he would be quite relaxed about the whole thing, and there were a few rumours that some modernising Conservative ministers would support AV. But obedience is the Conservative creed and before long the polls were showing decisively that Conservative voters were falling back into line.

5. A **no campaign that got down, dirty and deceitful** in the best traditions of the party of which it had become a wholly owned subsidiary. Made-up costs were attached to made-up voting machines, and posters proclaimed that these would be paid by soldiers making the ultimate sacrifice.

4. A **wet yes campaign**, on the other hand, entirely failed to meet fire with fire. The wrong celebrities (Eddie Izzard) were marshalled by worthy functionaries who looked like they would be most at home arguing in favour of a Financial Times editorial about joining the euro (something else Izzard once campaigned for). In a political culture that rewards those who pitch themselves against the system, for all the semi-comprehensible suggestions that AV would make politicians work harder, the campaign looked like the work of a metropolitan elite.

3. **Mistrust of coalitions**. They represented a new politics last year, but are now seen by many, whether fairly or not, as the byword for dodgy deals and broken promises on health, universities and cuts.

2. The abject luck of a winning argument, and a **failure to target the top**. Abstractions about fewer safe seats and the need for representatives to reach out to a majority of their electors were never likely to cut the mustard, and particularly not when the yes team could never seem to settle on one of them as its central argument. There's no easier enthusiasm to whip up than the enthusiasm of hatred, and the campaign to have fought would have ruthlessly targeted on David Cameron. Here was an Etonian prime minister, asking for a licence for business as usual from those whom he deigns to rule over. The yes camp should have made no bones about a call to the nation to shake things up, by bringing him down a peg or two.

1. If the lack of a hate figure was the gaping hole for the yes side, **Nick Clegg** provided an unbeatable one for the noes. The man himself recognised that voters wanted to poke him in the eye, and he dutifully kept a fairly low profile in the campaign that was by far the most visible single concession that he obtained from the Conservatives. Having once dismissed Gordon Brown's pre-election promise of an AV referendum as doomed by association with him, there is a bitter irony here. It is not association with Brown but association with Clegg that has now sunk the electoral reform he was so desperate to achieve.



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*The Guardian*, Saturday 21 May 2011

**Big society isn't new, but the Tories are purging the past**

David Cameron thinks he has nothing to learn from Labour. The hard-won experience of creating community is being lost

On Monday, David Cameron will again try mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on his "big society". It took another near-death blow from this week's report by the Commission on Big Society, which found 78% of voters say they have no idea what it means. What began as a clever replacement of Margaret Thatcher's notorious "no such thing as society" has eluded both popular imagination and real-life substance. Lord Wei, its standard bearer, has retreated somewhat. His inability to define it flummoxed officials, as he issued nothing but stirring anecdotes of good citizens – of whom, thankfully, there have always been many. The Third Sector Research Centre says a steady 25% of people volunteer at least once a month, with twice as many in prosperous areas.

But 5 May 2010 was Year Zero to Cameron's government. Nothing good ever happened before, with nothing to learn from the last decade. Soviet-style, the past is eradicated. The very names of policies that worked well have been airbrushed from the record. For there is nothing new about the big society. Labour embraced communitarian ideas, influenced by Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* call for social capital in an atomised society, and with Richard Sennett's call for mutual respect in poor communities. Neighbourhood renewal schemes were a hallmark of Labour policy, but you would think Labour's "V" initiative for young volunteering or Volunteering England never existed.

Instead, here come the National Citizens Service and a new bank holiday for volunteering – though the commission's report found 80% unlikely to use their day for community activity. Around 2,500 community organisers are to be trained – but the contract was carefully not given to Citizens UK because it is too good at this, and in danger of organising against the cuts. Meanwhile, Timebank, mobiliser of 300,000 volunteers, has been axed by civil society minister Nick Hurd – a great surprise. I chaired its 10th anniversary debate where Hurd praised it to the skies and tweeted a congratulation for "countering the cynicism of the big society". But even it fell in the purge.

Next week I'm summoned to give evidence to the public administration select committee's hearings on the big society. Of course, I'll start by saying it's A Good Thing: whose heart isn't warmed by volunteers improving their own and others' lives? But Cameron's big society words are hollow when he strips the voluntary sector bare. Peter Kyle, acting head of Acevo, the charity CEOs association, says £1.4bn government funding has been cut from charities this year, rising to £3.1bn by 2013 – replaced with a paltry £100m "transition fund". Thousands of applications rushed in and each charity had to prove it had suffered at least a 30% government cut.

In search of big society ideas, I will urge the committee to look at the New Deal for Communities, the boldest initiative ever tried. This week I visited Aston Pride, the NDC that topped the 39 schemes Labour created in the nation's worst areas. Each was given about £50m to spend as local people chose over 10 years. That committed funding drew together communities weary of half-hearted previous attempts, always abandoned when money ran out. The 17,000 inhabitants of this multi-ethnic, high-unemployment patch of Birmingham had 17 often fractious mosques and six diverse churches, but slowly and with difficulty they came together and transformed the place.

A shabby, underused park was renewed, now with beautiful sports grounds; a local museum refreshed; a new health centre reaching people the NHS had neglected; schools springing

to life through bringing headteachers together, funding equipment and giving a hot breakfast to every child. The main emphasis was on training and job-finding, with money skilfully levering in funds from other partners. The results were spectacular, with lower crime than the city average, school results and youth employment that rose faster, while antisocial behaviour fell. Small businesses were supported and hundreds of volunteers took qualifications.

Perfect? No. But the change is remarkable. [...] Simon Topman, a local manufacturer who took over the chair of Aston Pride [...]

is indignant that the government does not want to learn how it was done. This really is the big society, creating new local champions, bringing people together in the hardest places, levering in outside help. Cameron would not like to know the truth: it only happened with money so local people could employ their own chosen professional support – and those things are not free. In Witney, people have time and money – but in places like Aston, with no resources, nothing happens. This is not a little light volunteering in the library – this is heavy-duty hard grind, often quarrelsome, and the people who made it work really are local heroes, whose own lives were changed. But that's all erased from the record. All that hard-won experience in creating community is lost.

Polly Toynebee

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*The Guardian*, Tuesday 15 March 2011

**Tuition fees plague the government**

If universities all charge much higher fees, the government will have to find another way to reduce demand for places, suggests Bahram Bekhradnia, and potential students will lose out



Students gather to protest against the planned rise in university fees in London. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Last week, the Office for Fair Access (Offa) produced guidance about what it would require in the access agreements that universities must negotiate. In doing so, it was responding to the government's repeated demands that Offa should use these access agreements to control the fees that universities charge. The reality will be that universities will do whatever they need to do to satisfy Offa, and this is unlikely to provide an effective way of controlling fees.

The government is in a bind, and universities are potentially in trouble as well. The maximum fee has been set at £9,000. But in calculating the cost of the subsidies it would have to provide for student loans, the government assumed that the average fee would be just £7,500. The Browne committee, on which the government's proposals have been based, anticipated the creation of a market in fees as the mechanism for controlling price – something that was always extremely dubious, but looks less likely by the day.

Unless student demand can be constrained in some way that is not yet apparent, demand will outstrip supply substantially, and unless it can find other mechanisms for controlling fees, they are likely to be well above the government's expectation. At present, the access agreements that universities are required to enter into with Offa are the only mechanism available. The reality is that Offa's powers are extremely limited, and the guidance it published last week largely sets out expectations about the amount universities should spend on widening participation, requiring greater investment from those that have been least successful in the past.

There is something ironic and somewhat disturbing about Offa's approach. Because universities will no longer receive grants directly from the government for teaching-related activity, all of this expenditure will in effect be borne by students through fees. How will students react when they understand that not only are the fees they pay to be trebled, but that up to one third of those fees will not be used on their education, but on widening participation activity?

It is ironic that when in opposition David Willetts, who is generally a wise and humane man, said repeatedly that he would only countenance an increase in fee levels if universities could show that additional fees would be used to benefit those who paid them. Here we have a

requirement that a substantial part of the increased fee should explicitly not be used for their benefit.

Offa's approach attempts to provide a disincentive to universities to charge higher fees by increasing the cost if they do so. But the irony of this is that the more universities are told they will have to spend on widening participation, the higher the fee they are likely to feel they need to charge in order to provide the income they need for teaching and learning. This approach is unlikely to have the effect of dampening fees.

But let us be in no doubt, the government has a budget, and it will do whatever it feels is needed in order to stay within that budget, however unpalatable or damaging in the long-term. What else can it do? Well, it can either reduce its expenditure in other parts of the HE budget – and that means either the residual amount left for investment in teaching, or research funding; or it can raise the cost to students even more – and there is a separate issue here, because its calculations about the cost of loan subsidies are almost certainly an underestimate, so rises in the interest rate or in the length of time payments have been made are very likely anyway.

But even worse, the most likely outcome is that it will renew its attempts to create a rigged market by reducing demand – or if not reducing demand, then choking it off in one way or another – deeming to be ineligible students who might previously have gone to university, or controlling the extent to which universities might enrol such students.

Such an outcome would directly damage participation. These are not happy times either for universities or the government, but the real losers will be future generations of young people.

Bahram Bekhradnia

- Bahram Bekhradnia is director of the Higher Education Policy Institute. He will be among the speakers on Wednesday at the third Guardian higher education summit: [guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network](http://guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network) For live tweeting from the event follow #HE2011

## It's not just 'the economy, stupid'

The notion that Obama's re-election is jeopardised by a slow recovery is too simple. It'll depend on his message about fixing it

Alex Slater, The Guardian, Monday 13 June 2011



James Carville, Bill Clinton's senior election strategist, in 1999. Carville popularised the phrase, 'It's the economy, stupid', to keep Clinton's 1992 campaign focused. Photograph: Nati Harnik/AP Photo

### SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS ANGLAIS ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS PROGRAMME

Republicans broke the economy. Democrats own it. And they'll deal with it. That's the sentiment pervading Washington's senior Democratic circles right now, with the all-too-pressing issue of the economy bearing down upon them ever more heavily.

In every change of administration, the new White House is given a certain leeway to "blame the last plumber" – to claim, quite correctly, that a bad economy is the last administration's fault. But, of course, as respected researcher David Cantor points out, that "honeymoon" period generally ends about eight months after an administration handover.

So, the issue of economic responsibility has long become moot – and Democrats are now, to be certain, in a tight corner. After all, any talk of a new stimulus bill has long evaporated, the Federal Reserve has done all it can with interest rates to stimulate the stumbling economy, and presently few other tools are at President Obama's disposal (though talk of lowering payroll taxes was briefly floated by administration sources last week). With an increasing unemployment rate and a lacklustre 54,000 jobs created in May, Obama has been forced to address fears that America's economy is regressing. To be fair, the president has constantly warned of a difficult road to recovery, as he recently told the workers of a car plant: "We've got to rebuild this whole economy for a new age so that the middle class doesn't just survive, but it thrives." But voters are not necessarily convinced. The polling bump the president enjoyed following the killing of Osama bin Laden has evaporated. The whole situation is truly a lesson in James Carville's now too often quoted phrase "it's the economy, stupid." Indeed, in pre-election year, political elites are becoming hypersensitised to every economic prognostication made by the White House and official indicators. Washington web publication Politico went so far to declare as breaking news the hardly newsworthy fact that the president had "acknowledging frustration over the slow pace of economic growth." But Obama's political strategy on the economy, and more importantly, his political focus have been far from stupid.

First, the economic stimulus itself, conducted within a month of his inauguration, was a massive political undertaking – an expenditure of political capital on what was essentially an abstraction: \$787bn spent to revive the American economy. Even for those of us in

Washington, the evidence of this vehicle to recovery is apparent in the form of constant roadworks on some of the city's main arteries: works that tend to annoy Washington's elite rather than remind them of the thousands of projects and the hundreds of thousands of jobs the stimulus has saved and created. At the time, Republicans were outraged at the massive stimulus. Now, commentators like Charlie Cooke report it simply wasn't enough.

Second, Obama quite deliberately pivoted his political clout to address healthcare. This wasn't some political blunder, turning away from the economy to address an unnecessary luxury; in fact, this was the action of a brave president. In an interview with ABC News's Diane Sawyer in January 2010, two days before his state of the union address, Obama said, "I'd rather be a really good one-term president than a mediocre two-term president." He added, "I will not slow down in terms of going after the big problems that this country faces." Again, that clout that was ably deployed onfixing something that feels like an abstraction, as the majority of new healthcare benefits won't become fully evident for years; some even for a decade.

Despite a lame-duck session of Congress, Obama made progress, even on the economy. As I've previously written, he appealed to everyone with sweeping tax cuts, to Middle America with the ratification of the Start treaty and to base Democrats with the historic repeal of the military's policy of "don't ask, don't tell".

Yet ... the economy remains the most vexing issue and, very likely, the major battleground for the 2012 elections. As things now stand, the chances of unemployment decreasing to below 8% by election day are, we are told by economists, relatively small. This prognostication has Republicans crowing that no president – at least, a modern president – has ever been reelected with an unemployment rate above 7.2%. This is technically true. But as Cooke notes, Ronald Reagan was the president who was re-elected when unemployment was at 7.2%, and he won in a 49-state landslide. Part of this is a question of empathy: do voters believe that a president genuinely shares their pain (the answer for Bush Sr, for example, was a resounding no). For Obama, the great communicator, it is quite clear he shares the pain of the American people.

But more importantly, the management of the economy is not likely to be judged on static conditions on election day, but rather the direction the economy is seen to be heading in the runup (by November 2012, that should be firmly in the right direction). If economic indicators are trending in the right direction, the public is highly likely to give President Obama the benefit of the doubt. Although James Carville famously coined the phrase "It's the economy, stupid", it was his then boss Bill Clinton who liked to say, "elections aren't about the present, they're about the future; they're about hope."

And economic hope is what America is looking for.

## NHS problems will continue to haunt coalition government

An array of problems, most with nothing or very little to do with the NHS reform bill, will soon be turning the NHS into another running bad news story for the government

Denis Campbell, The Guardian, Tuesday 14 June 2011



### SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS ANGLAIS ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS PROGRAMME

David Cameron may be feeling relieved but the NHS reform crisis is far from over. Photograph: Carl Court/AFP

David Cameron must be feeling mighty relieved. After letting the NHS become a serious political problem, which the coalition neither needed nor expected, its months-long crisis seems over. Steve Field, chair of the forum examining the future of the NHS, has with skill and political savvy neutered the key criticisms raised by opponents of the original health and social care bill, both in the NHS and parliament, while retaining (and improving) enough of its radical essence to ensure the government's – though not the health secretary's – honour is preserved.

Does this mean the prime minister can now stop speechifying almost weekly on how much he loves the NHS and apply himself elsewhere? No.

The sheer number and seriousness of the challenges facing the NHS will allow the coalition government very little breathing space, even after the choreographed events of the last 48 hours. An array of problems, most with nothing or very little to do with the bill, will soon be demanding Cameron's time and, potentially, turning the NHS into another running bad news story for a government that thought health would prove its strong point during an otherwise gloomy, austerity-dominated period in power.

The big one, of course, is money. The NHS in England is trying in vain to contend with the need to find £20bn in efficiency savings by 2015, and the fact that the growing burden of caring for older people costs another £1bn every year. NHS leaders and health policy experts privately warn that it simply can't be done. No organisation has ever made 4% annual productivity gains for four years in a row and the NHS is certainly not going to manage that now. Many trusts struggled to meet their cost improvement programme targets last year. And next year's targets are tougher still. If the NHS's failure to strip out £20bn of costs was available as a bet, I would put my house on it.

When will the NHS's inability to cope with an at best 0.1% budget increase – at a time when both demand for its services and its costs are rising – become evident? Later in the year, when winter pressures really stretch the system, looks a likely answer.

Conservative pledges to protect the NHS frontline and increase its funding have understandably prompted confusion about increasing job layoffs and rationing of care.

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Cameron's "five personal pledges" on the NHS earned him positive coverage last week. But the promise to keep waiting lists low could prove to be a rod for his own back. The evidence on waiting times – at least on some measures – is heading in the wrong direction, both for patients and ministers. "He's given hostages to fortune," says one seasoned observer of health politics. "He may regret that." Andrew Lansley might point to the median wait being stable, but the number of patients waiting past the 18-week limit for treatment is rising. How long before the media decides that that is a big story and starts highlighting the ensuing pain and discomfort?

Then there is the pressure, added to by Field's report, to reconfigure hospital services across England, including maternity and accident and emergency services. That is vital to ensure that efficiencies are made and care is integrated. The coalition's populist opposition to such changes in last year's election campaign is not a sustainable basis for government policy. Firm action is required in this most politically painful area, but unlikely.

Plus, the forthcoming report of the public inquiry into Stafford hospital will expose major failings in the NHS's clinical governance, including at the Care Quality Commission. That could prompt yet another shakeup to make that key area of policy fit for purpose.

Make no mistake, the NHS has just begun to test the coalition.



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**The AV debate**

**How a Yes vote to AV could lead Britain to proportional representation**

Apr 14th 2011, by Bagehot, The Economist

THIS week's print column looks at the shockingly low quality of the national campaigns around the May 5th referendum on whether to change the voting system for British general elections. As this blog noted on Tuesday, I came away from a whistle-stop tour of the country pretty impressed by the diligence of local activists, as they try to explain the intricacies of the alternative vote (AV) to members of the public. The national Yes and No campaigns are a different matter, I argue: they have blown a chance to have a proper debate about the nature of British democracy.

Normally, the gripe with referendums is that voters simply use them to pass judgement on the government of the day. I don't think that is happening this time: partly because the coalition government is split, with the Tories in favour of keeping the current system of first-past-the-post and the Liberal Democrats in favour of a change; partly because the Labour opposition is split between Yes and No supporters; and partly because the Conservatives who would normally attack the very idea of coalition politics (and attack the Lib Dems for supporting coalitions) cannot this time because they have to argue that their coalition with the Lib Dems is actually jolly effective.

Judging by my anecdotal crop of evidence from the ground in Dorset, Cambridgeshire and the suburbs of Manchester, the country is in a pretty sober, rather political mood. Voters did not brush off canvassers or treat the whole question of the referendum with flippancy. Yet instead of engaging with the public, national political leaders have chosen to bombard them with cheap slogans.

My straw polling reinforced one last point. Quite a few people in favour of AV described their excitement at being able to give a first preference to the party that they really favour. In all three seats that I visited, tactical voting is pretty much a given: Lyme Regis is part of West Dorset, in which the Conservatives and Lib Dems picked up more than 88% of the vote between them. One of the speakers at the Lyme Regis campaign event I attended on Monday night, a Lib Dem local councillor, freely admitted that many Lib Dem voters in West Dorset are really Green or Labour supporters, but voted tactically to try to defeat the sitting Tory MP, Oliver Letwin.

That was echoed by Rikey Austin, a local woman and AV supporter who is running as an independent for the Lyme Regis council. "I've been guilty of voting Lib Dem tactically in the past, I love the idea of being able to vote transparently, and I would vote Green," she told me. Her friend Stuart Carver agreed, saying: "I voted Lib Dem, and I'm absolutely disgusted with them now."

In Kimbolton, part of the safe Tory seat of Huntingdon, a semi-retired college lecturer, John Chadwick, told me that though he did not think AV would make a lot of difference to British elections, he was hoping it might make more people turn out and vote, "because an awful lot of people are disillusioned with the big three parties, and if there are more alternatives, they might use them."

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Several people said this sort of thing. In truth, though, I think they are not right to say that AV would spare people from the need for tactical voting. What I think they really mean is that under AV they would get to cast a first preference with their hearts, secure in the knowledge that if their small party is eliminated their second preference will count, allowing them a chance to vote tactically.

I have a hunch this points to something rather important about AV: it may not be very stable, politically. If the country does choose that method of electing the House of Commons on May 5th, I wonder if we will not all find ourselves discussing a move to proportional representation before long.

I know that AV has lasted for decades in Australia, but Australian politics has been pretty dominated by two big blocks on the left and the right for much of that time. In the British case, I think it is a fair assumption that a good number of voters would take the chance to use their first preference votes to show support for outfits like the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Greens or the British National Party. It would not astonish me if a third of all votes were cast for those three parties, or parties like them, if the next general election were held under AV. And yet the chances are, given the way that AV works, that the Greens, UKIP and BNP would still struggle to pick up many or any seats at Westminster. I wonder how sustainable that sort of election outcome would be. After one or two general elections that showed how much support there is out there for the smallest parties, without reward for those parties, I think we would face very strong pressure to move to PR.

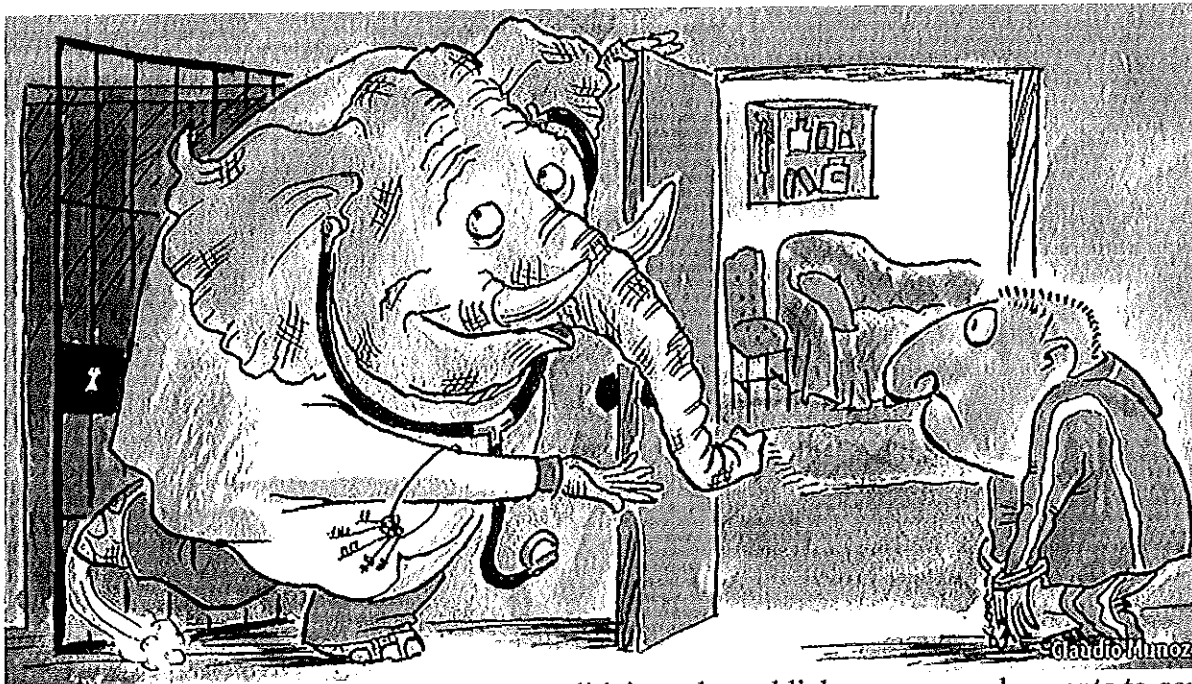
To lay my cards on the table, I think that PR would be a disaster. Yes, it is the most proportional system (funnily enough). And yes, there is a big issue with the current voting system in Britain, and how it shuts out parties with minority support in a given area. But my experience of watching European politics for five years is this: voters do not really choose their governments under PR. Instead, they get to send delegates into a smoke-filled room from which a coalition government will at some point emerge. At most, voters get to try to adjust the dose of their favoured ideology or special interest lobby in the final mix. But it is perilously hard to hold individual parties to account for any given policy, and in some countries with strong regional interest parties, pretty hard even to sanction incumbent parties for gross incompetence because certain parties more or less have to be included in every coalition.

Conservatives and criminal justice

Right and proper

May 26th 2011 | *The Economist*

With a record of being tough on crime, the political right can afford to start being clever about it



THE word commonly used to describe a politician who publicly announces he wants to send fewer criminals to prison is “loser”. But back in February there was David Williams, president of Kentucky’s Senate, speaking in favour of a bill that would do just that. The bill in question would steer non-violent offenders towards drug treatment rather than jail. It is projected to save \$422m over the next decade, and will invest about half those savings in improving the state’s treatment, parole and probation programmes. Mr Williams, who believes Kentucky “incarcerates too many people at too great a cost,” praised the bill for recognising “the possibility for forgiveness and redemption and change in someone’s life”. It passed the Republican-controlled Senate 38-0, and on May 17th Mr Williams went on to win the Republican nomination for governor.

Mr Williams and his Republican colleagues join the swelling ranks of conservatives who have taken up the cause of sentencing and prison reform. In February Nathan Deal, Georgia’s Republican governor, announced a bill to create a council to recommend changes in how his state sentences criminals. On May 11th Oklahoma’s Republican governor, Mary Fallin, signed a law expanding alternatives to jail for non-violent offenders. This follows similar measures in South Carolina and Texas, both of them conservative states with Republican governors.

Driving these reforms is a simple factor: cost. Over the past two decades, crime rates have fallen but prison populations have risen. More people have been jailed for more crimes—particularly non-violent drug-related crimes—and kept there longer. Pat Nolan, a former Republican legislator from California who served time in prison for racketeering and now works for Prison Fellowship, a prison ministry, laments that “we build jails for people we’re afraid of, and fill them with people we’re mad at.”

And fill them America has. Over the past two decades, spending on prisons has grown faster than any segment of states' budgets except Medicaid. Between 1989 and 2009 prison spending in Kentucky grew by 340%. Georgia spends \$1 billion a year on corrections, despite spending less than the national average on each inmate.

Texas began tackling these problems in the last decade. In 2003 it started mandating probation rather than prison for first-time offenders caught with less than a gram of hard drugs. Two years later it gave the probation board more money to improve supervision and treatment programmes. In 2007, faced with predictions that it would need over 17,000 new prison beds by 2012, requiring \$1.13 billion to build and \$1.5 billion to operate, Texas allocated \$241m to fund treatment programmes. Since 2003 crime of many kinds has declined in Texas. Between 2007 and 2008, Texas's incarceration rate fell by 4.5%, while nationally the rate rose slightly. Both juvenile crime and the number of juveniles in state institutions have declined.

These reforms saved money. In slowing recidivism, they turned prisoners from tax burdens into taxpaying citizens. And they acknowledged something that tough-on-crime rhetoric has too long ignored: almost everyone in prison will eventually return to society. Better they return as good neighbours and productive citizens.

The fact that the reforms that produced these encouraging figures came from hang-em-high Texas, and not, say, hippie Vermont, has given them political as well as policy credibility. Grover Norquist, head of Americans for Tax Reform and a prominent supporter of an initiative called Right on Crime, which advocates criminal-justice reform from conservative ground, argues that "nobody's going to listen to Barney Frank" (a particularly liberal congressman) on these issues. Just as Richard Nixon could open relations with China without being thought soft on communism, so conservatives can push for sentencing reform without being considered soft on crime.

Britain's coalition government

Keep calm and carry on

May 12th 2011 | *The Economist*

**The coalition has proved stronger and more radical than seemed likely a year ago. It should not lose its nerve**



TO JUDGE by recent commentary, Britain's coalition government is fractious, dysfunctional and doomed to collapse—and that is just according to some of its members, after elections on May 5th in which the coalition's junior partners, the Liberal Democrats, were mauled. But take a step back, and the striking thing about the administration that was formed 12 months ago is not its fragility but its robustness. And its success: by and large, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat team has governed well and surprisingly radically (see [article](#)). Both David Cameron, the Tory prime minister, and Nick Clegg, his beleaguered Lib Dem deputy, deserve credit—in Mr Clegg's case, much more than he is getting. Amid the ructions, both must stick to their mission to remake the state.

Before last year, Britain hadn't been governed by a coalition in peacetime since the 1930s. Many thought this one wouldn't survive the year, or that, if it did, it would be hamstrung by compromise. It hasn't turned out that way. The coalition addressed its toughest task—repairing the public finances—with an alacrity and decisiveness that impressed governments elsewhere. Fragile economic growth means that George Osborne, the chancellor of the exchequer, might yet have to tweak his fiscal plan; but the outlines of the consolidation, and its mix of public-spending cuts and tax rises, remains broadly right.

At the same time, the coalition has begun to devolve power over the public services and make them more responsive: letting new providers run schools and giving many more of them freestanding “academy” status; handing over power to local councils and voters; fixing the perverse incentives in the welfare system. In most of this, coalition has proved a strength rather than a weakness. That is not just because the only real alternative after the general election was a weak, minority Tory government. It is also because the Lib Dems have tempered some of the wilder Tory impulses, for example on confronting the European Union and restricting immigration. [...]

**Don't panic and freak out**

It is worth remembering the mistaken pessimism that greeted the coalition's birth, and how much it has achieved and might yet, because the prime minister and his deputy now face pressure to become less co-operative (in Mr Clegg's case) and less radical (in Mr Cameron's). They should stand firm.

As well as being battered in the local elections on May 5th, Mr Clegg's party saw its cherished aim of reforming the Westminster voting system thumpingly rejected in a referendum. Mindful of the fate of British liberals in the three coalitions they entered before the second world war—all of which resulted in the party splitting—many Lib Dems want Mr Clegg to prove that they are more than mere Tory stooges, by distancing himself from Mr Cameron's reform agenda.

That would be a mistake. Before the general election, Mr Clegg foolishly pledged to oppose any increase in university-tuition fees; his subsequent (and sensible) reversal of that position explains much of the opprobrium he has received. But his big decision—to enter the coalition—was in the interests both of the country, which sorely needed stable government, and of his party. [...]

### **Cruel to be kind**

For his part, in the intangible but crucial matter of demeanour, Mr Cameron has fit the office of prime minister in a way that Gordon Brown, his immediate predecessor, never did. Besides his occasional fumbles on policy (and a strange fondness for intellectual gimmicks, such as the "Big Society", an unhelpful slogan for his ideas), Mr Cameron's main weakness is a yearning to be liked. The risk now is that he tries too hard to ingratiate himself with the Lib Dems, soft-peddalling his reforms as a sop to Mr Clegg's fracturing base.

There is certainly room for refinement in the government's plans for the NHS. For example, it could phase in the transfer of spending powers to family doctors and make that new responsibility voluntary at first. But Mr Cameron mustn't compromise on the basic principle of injecting more competition into the provision of hospital care, an approach first introduced in Britain by the previous Labour government, considered utterly unremarkable in most European countries, yet suddenly regarded as unpalatable by many British politicians (including, it seems, some Tories who are overly queasy about seeming right-wing). The same goes for opening up other public services to private and voluntary providers: a white paper on the subject has been ominously delayed.

There is scope to go much further. The welfare system is still more of a comfort blanket (for rich pensioners, for example) than the safety net it ought to be. Allowing education outfits to make a profit from running new "free" schools would encourage more applicants: Mr Cameron should reconsider his reluctance to let them to do so. Such reforms are decades overdue. If they stall, the coalition could yet fizzle out in failure. But if Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg hold their nerve—and cut out the unforced errors—their novel, improbable government could prove one of Britain's boldest.

Britain and America

**Essential, but fraying**

**Defence cuts could jeopardise Britain's security relationship with America**

May 26th 2011 | *The Economist*



AP Struggling to be a team player

**SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS  
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THE moment that Barack Obama knew for sure that Osama bin Laden was dead, he made two telephone calls. The first was to his predecessor, George Bush. The second was to David Cameron, Britain's prime minister. Despite some recent strains and the prevailing (mainly British) cynicism about the specialness of the "special relationship", it remains in pretty good shape. This week, in a newspaper article the two leaders wrote jointly to coincide with the president's state visit to Britain, they rebranded it the "essential relationship".

America has many other vitally important bilateral relationships. Some newer ones, such as the one with India, can appear to have a higher priority with the present administration. But there is no more intense and deeply embedded global-security relationship than the one with Britain. This week the two governments announced the establishment of a joint national-security strategy board, to be chaired by their respective national-security advisers, Tom Donilon and Sir Peter Ricketts. This was public recognition of both the sheer amount of stuff America and Britain uniquely do together in the fields of defence and intelligence, and the extent of what the two leaders referred to as their "common interests and shared values". The new board is to meet quarterly; its usefulness will be reviewed after a year.

Part of its purpose will be to iron out the kind of differences that have niggled over the past few months. Initial disagreements over Libya—silence from the president, something pretty

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close to scorn from the Pentagon—when Mr Cameron was trying to gather support to stop Muammar Qaddafi's brutal suppression of the uprising caused some consternation in London. Just in time, Mr Obama made his choice; and although Britain might have preferred a more "forward-leaning" approach from America to the military campaign, there is now broad agreement on who should do what. Although Mr Obama insists that this is primarily Europe's war to fight and win, America has quietly increased its contribution to the mission, mainly in the form of additional aerial refuelling and ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) assets. About a quarter of all NATO's Libyan sorties are now being flown by the Americans.

Recent tensions between Britain and America over Afghanistan also appear to have eased a little. Since bin Laden's death Mr Obama has moved closer to the British view that the recent military gains need to be backed up by a "political surge", which means trying harder to get talks going with the Taliban. In return, the Americans would like to see Mr Cameron talking less about 2015 as a hard date for pulling all Britain's forces out of Afghanistan, and more about a conditions-based timetable for drawing down the troops.

What concerns the Americans most, however, is the scale of the defence cuts Britain is embarking on. It is now apparent that because of unbudgeted commitments worth £38 billion (\$62 billion) that the previous Labour government allowed to pile up, the real reduction in military spending will be two or three times the 8% called for in last year's defence review.

One main reason why America sees Britain as such a crucial ally is that when it needs to build a coalition to deal with something nasty or dangerous, it can usually rely on Britain to be the first name on the teamsheet. But such is the likely degradation of Britain's military capabilities that its willingness to fight alongside America may no longer be matched by the means to do so. The "essential relationship" will not stay essential for long unless Mr Cameron is willing to spend a bit more on the things that underpin it.



## Oxford University's tuition fees

# Why it is wrong to splurge on student support

Mar 15th 2011, *The Economist*

THE University of Oxford today became the fourth English institution to announce the level of tuition fees it will charge from autumn 2012, and the first to detail how students from poor families will pay less.

In an open letter, Andrew Hamilton, vice-chancellor, said that while students from families with an annual income of more than £25,000 (\$40,000) will be charged the maximum sum permitted by government, namely £9,000 per year, those whose parents brought home less than £16,000 and were thus in the bottom quintile in the earnings distribution will pay just £3,500 to cover their first year and £6,000 per year thereafter.

The University of Cambridge, Imperial College London and the University of Exeter have all said they will charge full whack for tuition, with yet-to-be-announced subsidies for students from low-income families. None of the monies, at Oxford or elsewhere, must be repaid until after the students have left university and are earning an annual salary of more than £21,000.

Tuition fees were introduced because, as more and more young people entered higher education, the need to reduce the state's share of the bill became more and more pressing. Just weeks after becoming prime minister in 1997, Tony Blair was handed a blueprint for asking students to contribute towards their university education, which had been commissioned by the previous Conservative government. Amid great outcry that poor families are more debt averse than rich ones (and there were some studies that supported the claim), the new Labour government introduced tuition fees in 1999.

What happened next shows that such fears were misplaced. The introduction of tuition fees was followed by a small blip in the popularity of university, as youngsters attempted to secure a free place, leaving fewer to apply the following year. Since then, however, demand has increased almost unrelentingly, with the exception of a second small blip, due to the same reasons as the first, when tuition fees were almost trebled to £3,000 in 2006. Now the fees will be tripled once again in many institutions. (Vice-chancellors of England's 130 universities and colleges have until April 19th to fix their fees for 2012, as I wrote in the current edition of the paper.)

For all the continuing chatter about debt aversion, I suspect that Oxford has failed to strike the right balance with the package it has outlined today. Right at the end of Mr Hamilton's letter is a box detailing the university's proposed spending on various forms of student support. It has three categories: financial support for existing students; outreach to raise the aspiration and attainment of potential students; and support to prevent existing students from dropping out of university. It shows that the university currently spends 55% of its investment in student support on financial measures, which it proposes to increase to 63%. Meanwhile spending on outreach will fall from 22% to 18% of the total, as will spending on retention.

Now I know that the coalition government recently pulled the plug on the AimHigher programme, which was supposed to encourage state-school children to aspire to a university education. (As an aside, recent studies have found that an astonishingly high proportion of new mothers want their offspring to go to university, though grim reality hits by the time the little cherubs have reached school-leaving age.) It was incredibly cheeky for the government to then insist that universities both provide and pay for this work.

Yet it is precisely this sort of measure that appears to make a difference. The reason why Oxford University takes just 55% of its undergraduates from state schools is firstly because it demands the highest entry qualifications, and students from outside the state system are more likely to achieve these. However that is not the whole story: if it were, then the university would hit its benchmark of taking 70% of students from state schools. The discrepancy is mostly down to the fact that fewer state-school pupils apply to elite institutions than do their privately educated counterparts.

Many potential state-school students have already ruled themselves out of Oxbridge by making poor subject choices before applying for higher education. Others have been dissuaded from applying by hidebound teachers and careers advisers, who deter them from aspiring to such things. Those that do apply tend not to seek financial advice until the final stages of their application or later. Throwing money at successful candidates utterly fails to address the underlying problems.

SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

**Higher education**

Reassuringly expensive

**Getting poor students to university costs more than money**

Mar 10th 2011 | *The Economist*

WHEN Parliament voted almost to treble to £9,000 the maximum annual tuition fee that can be charged students at English universities from September 2012, coalition ministers had three aims. The first was to help fill the alarming hole in the nation's finances by slashing the sums spent on higher education; it was embraced most strongly by the Conservatives. The second was to create a market in university education, again popular with the right. The third, championed by the Liberal Democrats, was to get more students from poor families into university, despite the initially daunting higher fees. It is the final aim that now looks most likely to be realised.

As the government also plans to cut the money it provides universities to teach students, some 130 English institutions of higher education intend to increase their tuition fees; their governing bodies have until April 19th to say by how much. Three universities—Cambridge, Imperial College London and Exeter—have already announced that they will charge top whack, and Oxford hints that it will have to do the same if it is to fund bursaries for students from poor families. When the maximum fee was last raised, in 2006, almost all universities soon charged the top rate. Raising the cap again, and by so much, was supposed to let them set differential fees that reflected the quality of the education they provided, as well as encouraging potential students to assess whether they offered value for money. Instead it appears that prices will cluster at the upper extreme.

Part of the problem is perception: price is seen as a proxy for quality. Universities do not want to seem cheap because students might suspect that a low tuition fee signals a second-rate product. But higher education is also genuinely expensive. The average cost of teaching an undergraduate is £7,500. Some universities want to offer their students a better education than they do now, and must charge more to cover the cost of delivering it. Others anticipate the loss of specific income streams—from, for example, government plans to shift teacher training into schools.

And more costs attached to raising the attainment and aspiration of schoolchildren will now fall to universities. On March 8th the Office for Fair Access, a quango established to cajole universities into accepting students from poor families, said that any of them charging more than £6,000 a year would have to spend some of the surplus on improving access. That will push fees higher too.

This eliminates price as a market force in high education and also adds to the state's bill, for government pays the fees until a student graduates and earns an annual salary above £21,000. To limit the damage, David Willetts, the universities minister, has threatened vice-chancellors with further funding cuts should the average tuition fee turn out higher than £7,500. This is the sum the government assumed in devising a system of financial support for students it thought it could afford.

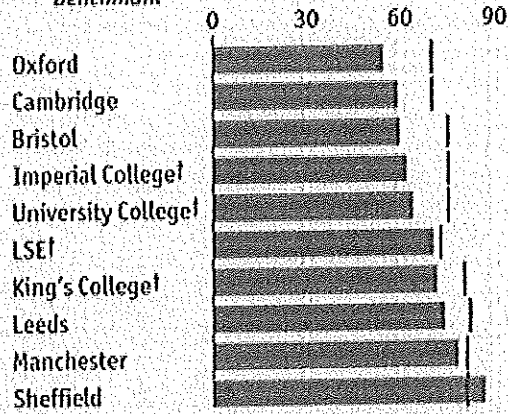
But Mr Willetts lacks the means to implement his threat in a way that would target the institutions he thinks are raising their fees too much. From September 2012 the state will give teaching grants only for science, technology, engineering and medicine: all subjects that the government wants to encourage. Mr Willetts could reduce university research grants, but that too would fail to curb mediocre institutions' tuition-fee ambitions, for research is concentrated in the elite ones. And it will be years before new providers of higher education, which he plans to encourage, exert discipline on the old-timers.

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## Classes apart

Young full-time degree students from state schools at top universities, 2008-09, %

--- Benchmark\*



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

\*% of all state-school students holding required grades for entry †London

The Lib Dems, meanwhile, can pull levers to ensure the outcome they are keenest on because the Office for Fair Access can fine institutions that fail to attract students from poor families. The latest global ranking of universities published on March 10th by *Times Higher Education*, a magazine, puts 11 English universities in the top 100 (Edinburgh University also features). All but one of those—Sheffield—have a smaller proportion of state-school full-time undergraduates than might be expected, given the number of state-school students across the country who meet their exam-grade entry criteria (see chart).

One big reason is that even clever state-school students (not all of whom, of course, are poor) often do not apply to top universities, as a study by the Sutton Trust, a charity, has found. So the Office of Fair Access wants universities to seek them out more diligently. Those that charge more than £6,000 a year will have to set—and meet—formal targets for enrolling more poor students, on pain of losing the right to charge those fees. Interestingly, the quango thinks universities would do better to spend less on bursaries for poor students and more on outreach to raise their ambition and achievement.

*The Economist* Apr 20th 2011 | from the print edition

**Bagehot**

### **No more royal weddings**

**Our columnist's wedding present for Prince William and Catherine Middleton: a republic**

IN A few days Prince William, the 28-year-old heir-but-one to the British throne, will marry Catherine Middleton, a 29-year-old university chum whose parents run a successful business selling party goods. In central London the machinery of state flummery is in motion. Along the Mall, Union flags are being hung from crown-topped poles, palace railings gleam with fresh paint and plume-helmeted horse guards rehearse in the parks. A grandstand for television anchors has been erected opposite Buckingham Palace: hours of special programming loom.

The mood of the British public is harder to gauge. The press is full of dresses and hats, but also of opinion polls saying that barely a half of the British are interested in the wedding, and only a third are certain to watch it on television. Councils report a north-south divide in applications to hold street parties—and far fewer overall than when Prince William's parents wed in 1981.

What is going on? Most simply, experience has taught the British that to cheer a royal wedding today is to risk feeling a chump tomorrow. After decades of royal divorces and marital wars conducted by tabloid leak or tell-all book, sighing over a new princely union requires a Zsa Zsa Gabor-like leap of faith.

Perhaps, optimists might also hope, the British feel a twinge of collective remorse over the short, pitilessly scrutinised life of Prince William's mother, Diana, Princess of Wales. Perhaps the public simply want to give two young people some space.

Optimists make a plausible case that Prince William will thrive if he embodies his mother's impatience with protocol and empathy with suffering, and learns from the middle-class warmth of Miss Middleton's childhood, or the rise of her mother's family from poverty only two generations ago. A big dose of normality, it is agreed, will do the monarchy wonders.

Bagehot, a pessimist, disagrees. On paper, the monarchy looks pretty safe: support for a republic remains constant at about 20%. But the question—Do you want to keep the monarchy?—is too crude. The queen and her offspring are different things at once: they are “a family on the throne”, to quote the original Bagehot, embodying national (and Commonwealth) unity and continuity. Though the job description has evolved to include displays of human emotion, being a monarch still removes the queen far from normal experience. After nearly 60 years, she might as well be a unicorn or other mythical beast. At the same time, the royal family does touch the real world, albeit the part of it inhabited by what remains of the landed upper classes: a life of moors and deer-stalking, of summers under Scottish rain, dogs and horses, the church, the armed forces, the same few boarding schools

and the right sort of nightclubs. That is more perilous territory: the British, in the main, dislike such people.

To put it plainly: if the royal family are like unicorns—existing outside society—their place is reasonably secure. If they sit atop high society, they are unsafe. Though her father was an earl, Diana's loathing for horses, summers in Balmoral and the rest was a key plank of her case that she was a modern princess and a better parent than her husband, the Prince of Wales. She took her sons to theme parks in anoraks while their father took them, dressed in tweed, to kill animals. She spent her summers in the sun, or with film stars. She was dazzlingly famous more than she was posh, and she was adored.

Prince William, it can be countered, may share his father's tastes for country life and field sports, but he spends much of his time in royal unicorn mode, or something like it. He is an officer in the army, the navy and the air force, popping away from his helicopter rescue squadron to represent Britain's bid for the football World Cup. This is not a life open to any other 28-year-old. Short of putting Prince William in a super-hero's cape, the royal household could scarcely do better. Surely, it is argued, a middle-class wife can only extend his appeal. Maybe: marrying a duke's daughter might have been riskier. But what if all and any contact with the class system is lethal to today's royal family?

### **Daylight and magic**

Miss Middleton's journey from home-counties affluence to palace, via the right sort of boarding school, may inspire some as a story of social mobility. It inspires others to vitriol: a writer in the *Times* recently described hers as a tale of "shiny new money systematically raising a girl so perfectly to a prince's eye level that she is virtually indistinguishable from the real thing." [...]

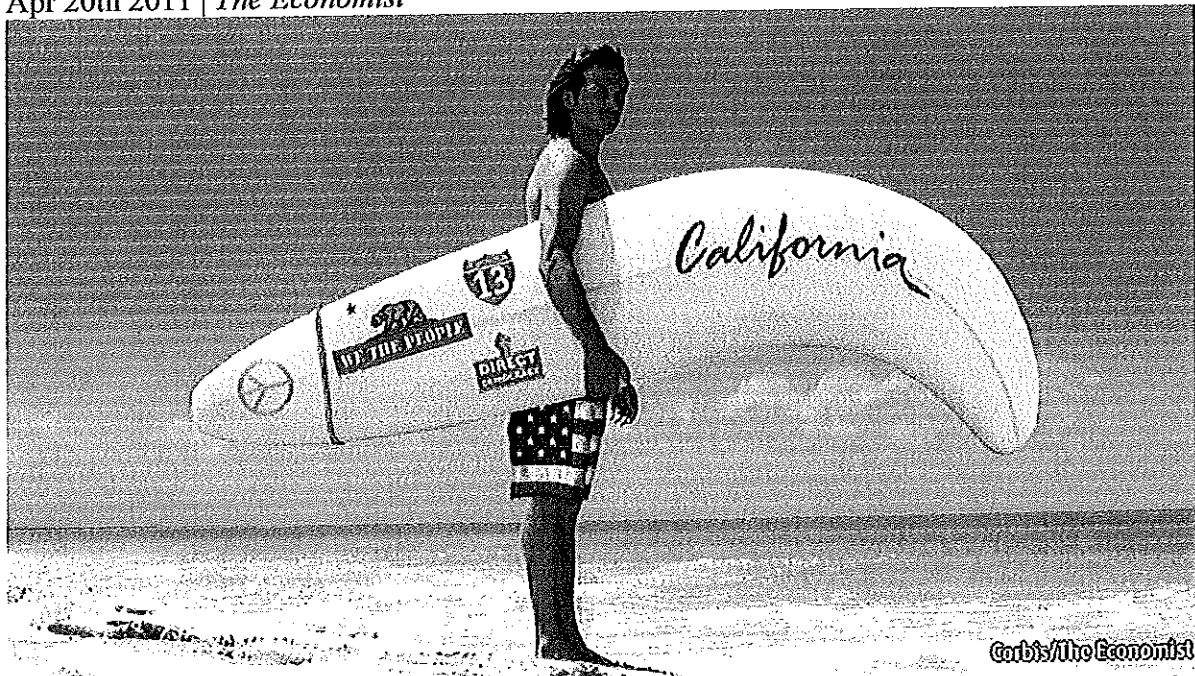
Miss Middleton may well be a fine person, but if her life's journey pinpoints Prince William's place in society too closely, she could end up harming him. Class shows up Britain at its worst. For the sake of the country, but also as an act of kindness, pension the royals off. Time for compassionate republicanism: it might be the best wedding present the young couple could have.

Lessons from California

**The perils of extreme democracy**

**California offers a warning to voters all over the world**

Apr 20th 2011 | *The Economist*



CALIFORNIA is once again nearing the end of its fiscal year with a huge budget hole and no hope of a deal to plug it, as its constitution requires. Other American states also have problems, thanks to the struggling economy. But California cannot pass timely budgets even in good years, which is one reason why its credit rating has, in one generation, fallen from one of the best to the absolute worst among the 50 states. How can a place which has so much going for it—from its diversity and natural beauty to its unsurpassed talent clusters in Silicon Valley and Hollywood—be so poorly governed?

It is tempting to accuse those doing the governing. The legislators, hyperpartisan and usually deadlocked, are a pretty rum bunch. The governor, Jerry Brown, who also led the state between 1975 and 1983, has (like his predecessors) struggled to make the executive branch work. But as our special report this week argues, the main culprit has been direct democracy: recalls, in which Californians fire elected officials in mid-term; referendums, in which they can reject acts of their legislature; and especially initiatives, in which the voters write their own rules. Since 1978, when Proposition 13 lowered property-tax rates, hundreds of initiatives have been approved on subjects from education to the regulation of chicken coops. This citizen legislature has caused chaos. Many initiatives have either limited taxes or mandated spending, making it even harder to balance the budget. Some are so ill-thought-out that they achieve the opposite of their intent: for all its small-government pretensions, Proposition 13 ended up centralising California's finances, shifting them from local to state government. Rather than being the curb on elites that they were supposed to be, ballot initiatives have become a tool of special interests, with lobbyists and extremists bankrolling laws that are often bewildering in their complexity and obscure in their ramifications. And they have impoverished the state's representative government. Who would want to sit in a legislature where 70-90% of the budget has already been allocated?

**They paved paradise and put up a voting booth**

This has been a tragedy for California, but it matters far beyond the state's borders. Around half of America's states and an increasing number of countries have direct democracy in some form. Next month Britain will have its first referendum for years (on whether to change its voting system), and there is talk of voter recalls for aberrant MPs. The European Union has just introduced the first supranational initiative process. With technology making it ever easier to hold referendums and Western voters ever more angry with their politicians, direct democracy could be on the march.

And why not? There is, after all, a successful model: in Switzerland direct democracy goes back to the Middle Ages at the local level and to the 19th century at the federal. This mixture of direct and representative democracy seems to work well. [...] But there is a strong case for proceeding with caution, especially when it comes to allowing people to circumvent a legislature with citizen-made legislation.

The debate about the merits of representative and direct democracy goes back to ancient times. To simplify a little, the Athenians favoured pure democracy ("people rule", though in fact oligarchs often had the last word); the Romans chose a republic, as a "public thing", where representatives could make trade-offs for the common good and were accountable for the sum of their achievements. America's Founding Fathers, especially James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, backed the Romans. Indeed, in their guise of "Publius" in the "Federalist Papers", Madison and Hamilton warn against the dangerous "passions" of the mob and the threat of "minority factions" (ie, special interests) seizing the democratic process.

Proper democracy is far more than a perpetual ballot process. It must include deliberation, mature institutions and checks and balances such as those in the American constitution. Ironically, California imported direct democracy almost a century ago as a "safety valve" in case government should become corrupt. The process began to malfunction only relatively recently. With Proposition 13, it stopped being a valve and instead became almost the entire engine.

#### **You don't know what you've got till it's gone**

[...] Direct democracy must revert to being a safety valve, not the engine. Initiatives should be far harder to introduce. They should be shorter and simpler, so that voters can actually understand them. They should state what they cost, and where that money is to come from. And, if successful, initiatives must be subject to amendment by the legislature. Those would be good principles to apply to referendums, too.

The worry is that the Western world is slowly drifting in the opposite direction. Concern over globalisation means government is unpopular and populism is on the rise. Europeans may snigger at the bizarre mess those crazy Californians have voted themselves into. But how many voters in Europe would resist the lure of a ballot initiative against immigration? Or against mosque-building? Or lower taxes? What has gone wrong in California could all too easily go wrong elsewhere.



**Shades of Diana's Legacy at the Royal Wedding**  
April 28, 2011, *Time*.



**SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

The carriage used by Charles and Diana on their wedding day in 1981 will also carry Prince William and Kate Middleton after their ceremony

Princess Diana took to the world stage in a blaze of white taffeta, as a 19-year-old bride trailed by two tiny attendants. The trumpets that blared on the morning of her wedding on July 29, 1981, did more than mark her arrival at St. Paul's Cathedral: they signaled her uneasy entry into a limelight she would never escape — and, some say, that ultimately killed her. In the days following her 1997 car crash in Paris, as her funeral cortege crawled toward Westminster Abbey, she still commanded the world's attention. But the fanfare had been replaced by the eerie silence of a million mourners. The figures that followed were her two grieving sons.

Fourteen years on, Diana continues to captivate the public and never so strongly as in the run-up to Prince William's wedding on April 29. From the very moment he and Kate Middleton announced their engagement last November, the world began to examine their relationship through a Diana-tinted lens. Is William's relationship with Kate built on firmer foundations than Prince Charles' marriage to Di? Will the young couple pull out all the bells and whistles and throw the wedding of a new century? For supporters of the late Princess, William's story represents another chapter of hers. "Diana would be very proud of her son Prince William and his marriage to Catherine," says royals superfan John Loughrey, 56, who has been camped outside of Westminster Abbey since April 25. "She will be with them in spirit on their special day, and always."

That's not just emotional banter from a royalist. William has said as much himself. When explaining why he proposed to Kate with Diana's sapphire engagement ring, he suggested that he wanted to include his mother in the biggest day of his life. "It's very special to me," he said of the ring after his engagement-day photo call. "It's my way of making sure my mother didn't miss out on today and the excitement and the fact we are going to spend the rest of our lives together." That symbolism of literally holding on to Diana's legacy has cropped up again and again as wedding preparations have unfolded. Lady Sarah McCorquodale, Diana's oldest sister, will attend the event wearing the same earrings that Diana wore to her nuptials in 1981. Featuring a pear-shaped diamond surrounded by 50 smaller diamonds, the earrings were flown back especially from a museum in Kansas City, Mo., where they were on loan with other items from Diana's life. And when Kate and Wills leave Westminster Abbey as man and

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wife, they'll do so in the 1902 State Landau — the open-top carriage that carried Charles and Diana to Buckingham Palace after their wedding.

But as commentators contemplate these supposed shades of Diana, they lose sight of the fact that the royals do live in a world that occasionally reflects our own, particularly in the realms of human loss and celebration. "Just like the rest of us get out our best silver and crockery for a wedding, they get out their best carriage and Rolls-Royce. It's inevitable," says Sarah Haywood, Britain's most sought-after wedding planner and an authority on multimillion-dollar weddings. "William doesn't think of Diana as a princess. He just sees his lovely mother."

It's important to mention because any princess can amass a collection of jewels and ride in a fancy carriage. Diana was unique because her all-mighty influence stemmed from personal insecurity and vulnerability. Plagued by feelings of worthlessness and blamed by many royals for the breakdown of her marriage, Diana understood life on the margins. She identified with society's outcasts, the men and women living with AIDS and leprosy, and the victims of land mines. They sensed her vulnerability too. Remembering that, her real presence at the wedding won't be felt through the lavish objects, but through the guests who brought her joy and comfort during her life. They include the Rev. Richard Chartres, the man who presided over William's christening and Diana's funeral, who will deliver the wedding address, and Elton John, her close friend who sang "Candle in the Wind" at her funeral. William has also included representatives from groups that Diana championed, like Centrepoint, a homelessness charity, and the Royal Marsden Hospital.

William, who has now lived half his life without his mother, may have moved on in many ways, but surely on momentous days like this one, he can't help but think back to that long walk behind her cortege. "She was straight with him," Patrick Jephson, Diana's private secretary, has said. "She told him he had been born to fulfill a particular duty, that it would be a heavy burden, but that it would also be an opportunity to use his enormous influence for the good of those less fortunate than himself." In that way, through the charities he supports in the name of his mother, he honors her every day — not only when the world is watching.

**At the Polls, Britons Have Bad News for the Coalition**  
May 7, 2011, *Time*



British Prime Minister David Cameron, left, and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg on May 5, 2011, the day of the Alternative Vote (AV) referendum

**SERIE LETTRES ET ARTS  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

One year ago, British voters made history by forcing rival politicians into the first U.K. coalition government since the end of World War II. They celebrated the first anniversary of that event on Friday, May 6, by delivering verdicts in a series of elections that could yet tear that same coalition government apart.

A day earlier, on a "super Thursday" of polls, there were elections for all 279 local administrations outside London and for the devolved assemblies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. On top of that was the first nationwide referendum in 36 years, offering voters the chance to replace the first-past-the-post, winner-take-all system of national parliamentary elections with the Alternative Vote (AV) system, in which they could rank candidates in order of preference. (Meanwhile, voters in Scotland handed the Scotland Nationalist Party the first overall majority in the Edinburgh parliament's 12-year history, ensuring that there will be a referendum within five years on Scottish independence.)

The AV referendum was the single biggest concession Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron handed Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg a year ago to woo the junior partner into the Conservative-led coalition government. The deal was done with the full knowledge that Clegg and his party would lead the campaign for a yes vote in the referendum while Cameron and his party would back the no campaign.

As the results of all the various polls cascaded in Thursday night and Friday, the verdict was clear, unequivocal and, for the Liberal Democrats and their leader, devastating. Not only was the party virtually wiped out in local councils and assemblies as voters punished them for sacrificing election promises — notably over the introduction of university tuition fees — as part of the coalition deal, but it also lost the referendum by almost 2 to 1 as voters decided they did not want AV, a system that could have led to more coalition governments in the future.

Clegg's humiliation was sharpened by his belief that Cameron had promised not to lead a heavily partisan no campaign against AV but reneged after his own party warned him not to allow the yes campaign to win by default. That breakdown in trust, in what had until now been a surprisingly close relationship, threatens to undermine the coalition government.

Senior Liberal Democrats are furious at Cameron's "breach of faith" over the referendum campaign, as former Lib Dem leader Lord Paddy Ashdown branded it in a newspaper article before the vote, and are promising that Clegg will now be more robust and demanding in

government, fighting for major concessions from Cameron over big issues like the hugely controversial reforms to the state-run National Health Service.

And if Clegg is to shore up his massively weakened position as Deputy Prime Minister, he needs to appease those grass-roots members of his party who in large numbers opposed the coalition with the Conservatives in the first place and now have very good reason to say, Told you so.

Meanwhile, Cameron, who on Friday defied all predictions and won seats in the local polls — thanks in large part to Clegg's taking much of the incoming fire — will be pressed by his party to ditch his junior partner and call an early general election in a bid to win an outright majority in Parliament.

But echoing the general sentiment in Britain, Tim Montgomerie, founder of the influential Conservative Home website, believes the coalition will continue, as Cameron has insisted it will. "The coalition is going to go into a more mature and honest phase," he says. "The idea that they agreed on everything was always unsustainable anyway, but any concessions [going forward] will not be about keeping the Lib Dems in the coalition but about keeping Clegg as leader. Cameron doesn't want the Lib Dems landing him with another leader now."

Ivor Gaber, a professor of politics and journalism at London's City University, agrees there will be no early general election but thinks the coalition government could yet be destroyed by dissident Liberal Democrats in Parliament. "Cameron now has an angry, humiliated and embarrassed coalition partner and will have to offer concessions to stop the Lib Dems' splitting," says Gaber. "It's not inconceivable that a significant section of the Liberal Democrats in Parliament breaks away and refuses to continue to support the coalition."

What is certain is that the yearlong honeymoon enjoyed by Clegg and Cameron after they sealed their union in the rose garden of 10 Downing Street last May is well and truly over. The question now is whether they can avoid divorce.

**Obama's SOTU Success: Making Democrats the Party of Optimism**  
 January 27, 2011, *Time*

We never really came up with a catchy name for the past decade — the Awful Oughts? The Total Zeros? Whatever it was, the *decadus horribilis* is officially over. Barack Obama's 2011 State of the Union was the first such address this century that wasn't overwhelmed by war or financial collapse. It was the beginning of a new era, a return to business as usual. Indeed, it was a return to many of the issues that plagued the country in the 1990s: budget deficits, international competitiveness, the need to reinvent government, health care, education. In terms of content, it was a speech that could have been delivered by Bill Clinton. It wasn't exactly a barn burner, and its muted, non-confrontational message was reinforced by the integration of Democrats and Republicans in the House chamber, a seating arrangement that served to restrain the usual animal spirits.

And yet, there was something new here: two years into his presidency, Obama has discovered the power of storytelling. I was always struck by how few anecdotes he told when he was running for President; his rhetoric was more about *we* than *he* or *she*, even though telling stories about actual people is one way politicians can demonstrate that they are actual people too, sort of. Ronald Reagan, who invented the tear-jerking hero sitting in the First Lady's box, was the master of this. But Obama's brilliant Tucson speech hinged on the character and dreams of a 9-year-old girl, on the human qualities of all the victims, and his State of the Union speech was a nonstop round of inspirational storytelling. The heroes of those stories were almost all entrepreneurs, an interesting choice for a Democrat; even the non-entrepreneurs — the principal who turned around a Denver school, the 55-year-old factory worker who was getting a degree in biotechnology — were entrepreneurial, taking charge of their lives and institutions.

It was, in fact, amazing how conservative a speech it was. The three big goals — innovation, education and infrastructure — have been around since Henry Clay. Obama talked about them in a manner that George H.W. Bush might have employed. When he dealt with education, he eschewed the standard Democratic talking points about early-childhood programs like Head Start, which have become code words for spending more money on poor kids. Instead, he talked about accountability, which is code for breaking the stranglehold of teachers'-union work rules. When he talked about innovation, it was the small-business loan that a Michigan solar-power company received — or the creative, private-sector by-product of a perceived national security threat, the "Sputnik moment." When he talked about infrastructure, he insisted that "we'll make sure this is fully paid for, attract private investment and pick projects based on what's best for the economy, not politicians." Even his effective defense of health care reform was anchored in promises to lift onerous regulations on small businesses and work for malpractice reform.

Not much socialism there, and nothing for Republicans to grab on to and screech about. There was little substance or controversy of any sort. When the President says he's going to freeze domestic spending for five years, saving \$400 billion, and uses a good chunk of the evening to talk about all the breaks he's going to give the business community, it becomes prohibitively difficult for Congressman Paul Ryan, offering the official Republican response, to argue that the country is wantonly heading down the tubes. And I found myself utterly amazed when Obama celebrated our gay members of the military.

And that was the most remarkable thing about the speech: Obama completely reversed the American political calculus of the 1980s and '90s. He made the Democrats the party of optimism and the Republicans the party of root canal. Someone really should have told Ryan that there isn't much mileage in comparing the U.S. to Greece or Ireland; it's a false analogy, in any case. Indeed, the notion of the Republicans having, as their official spokesman, a guy

who has proposed making serious cuts to Social Security and Medicare while privatizing both — positions that are opposed by 80% of the American people — is strong evidence that the GOP, in its post-election exuberance, has already lost touch with the public.

By contrast, Obama's biggest applause line was about American exceptionalism: "As contentious and frustrating and messy as our democracy can sometimes be, I know there isn't a person here who would trade places with any other nation on earth." This came near the end of the speech — which is where great applause lines should come — and it was greeted by a visceral roar, and then followed by the story of yet another entrepreneur, the Pennsylvania drilling machinist who saved the Chilean miners. This was deft on so many grounds. It subtly addressed the Republican extremists who question Obama's patriotism, and it put him squarely — with Reagan — on the side of sunshine and enterprise. That is the winning side in American politics: you tell inspiring stories and sell soap bubbles.

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May 29 2011  
*Newsweek*

**The Upside of GOP Despair**

**Things look bleak for 2012, but Republicans have talent in the pipeline.**



Photo: iStockphoto.com / Getty Images (50 Frames) / DigitalZone / Getty Images; Erik Snyder / Getty

Mitt Romney is damaged goods. Tim Pawlenty is a snooze. Newt Gingrich is a mess. And Rick Santorum, Herman Cain, and Ron Paul are unelectable. It's no surprise that Republicans are responding to their 2012 choices with "a range of emotions running from disappointment to panic," as *National Review* editor Rich Lowry quipped in a recent column.

But the GOP's short-term dismay should be tempered with something like long-term relief. Why? Because the very conundrum that's currently vexing conservatives—an unsatisfying crop of 2012 contenders—is setting them up to reap a far more important reward four years from now: a standard-bearer they can actually be proud of, running in a race that he or she stands a better chance of winning.

Consider the party's 2016 farm team. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio is young, conservative, and a minority. Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal boasts some of the same qualities, with the added bonus of actual policy chops. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is already a conservative folk hero; by 2015 he might have some real accomplishments under his belt. Former Utah governor Jon Huntsman, meanwhile, is flirting with a 2012 run, but as a moderate, his plan may have less to do with winning over this year's hyperpartisan base than with laying the groundwork for 2016. And then there's Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan, Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, and South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, along with other lesser-known names.

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Not only are these rising Republican politicians some of the most intriguing in recent memory, they're also shaping up to be very well suited to the likely demands of the 2016 presidential campaign. After eight years of young, cosmopolitan Obama, the GOP will probably want to field a candidate who strikes voters as fresh and new—especially because people tend to get elected president (or vice president) only within 14 years of first winning major elective office, as journalist Jonathan Rauch has noted. By 2016 only Ryan will have passed his sell-by date, and he's unlikely to seem stale, given his relative youth. The rest of the class of 2016 either has a short résumé or minority roots. Rubio, Jindal, and Haley have both. Freshness won't be an issue.

But the strongest selling point for Rubio & Co. is that most of them have developed their political personae during the age of Obama. The perils of being a pre-Obama Republican in a post-Obama world are on full display right now, as Romney, Gingrich, and Pawlenty struggle to explain their support for policies (individual mandates, cap-and-trade) that were considered conservative before Obama came along, but now constitute apostasy simply because he has endorsed them. In contrast, Republicans such as Rubio, Jindal, Haley, McDonnell, and Christie, who were elected between 2008 and 2010, have had the luxury of defining themselves in clear opposition to Obama. Even Huntsman, whose governorship preceded Obama's presidency, has an opening here: after serving as the administration's ambassador to China, he can argue with some authority that his boss was wrong on trade, and deficits, and so forth. With so much talent in the pipeline, Republicans may be tempted to call for a class-of-2016er to take the plunge in 2012. But the GOP would be wise to recognize the risks of jumping the gun. The class of 2016 is impressive, but no one has a better shot than, say, Pawlenty of defeating Obama next November: some are too green to contend against a sitting president; others are too moderate for today's GOP base. By running now, they would risk revealing their inexperience or tying themselves in too many Tea Party knots for future audiences.

But 2016 is a better bet. By running a solid, staid T. Paw type against 2012's formidable incumbent, Republicans are keeping their most explosive powder dry for the more winnable battle ahead. In 2016 Democrats won't have Obama at the top of the ticket—or even his vice president, Joe Biden. Instead, they'll have someone who's subsisted on rare slivers of spotlight to shine through the president's vast shadow: a Mark Warner, perhaps, or one of the few Democratic pols elected in the previous six years. The Republican candidate, on the other hand, will be someone whose star has been rising, in opposition, since 2011. The important thing is that he or she doesn't go kamikaze this time around. The GOP has other, blander candidates to handle that job.



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2012's Cowards

May 29 2011 *Newsweek*

It is, more politicians are saying, an exercise in craziness that appeals only to the unbalanced. As Mitch Daniels, the latest to recoil at the prospect of running for president, put it: "What sane person would like to?"

Increasingly, we are told, White House aspirants are horrified by the grueling pace, the relentless attacks, the withering scrutiny, the notion of dragging their families into a slimy swamp that will taint them forever. My response: stop the whining.

First, the presidency is a pretty cool job. You get a nice mansion with backyard, a bowling alley, a chef, your own helicopter, and an impressive pile of nuclear weapons. No one forced these folks to stir up presidential speculation. The agonizing is getting old.

Second, as nutty and nightmarish as the process may be, it's not an irrational way to pick a president. The pressures of running, defining a message, mastering the issues, and fending off attacks is a rough proxy for managing the burdens of the Oval Office. If a candidate can't galvanize supporters during a campaign, how can he or she rally the country during a Wall Street meltdown or a war? "In a classic mythological sense," says former Joe Biden aide Ron Klain, "it tests the candidate in every respect—physically, mentally, emotionally. It weeds people out."

Donald Trump loudly proclaimed he was serious this time, right until the day he had to re-up with *Celebrity Apprentice*—for a payday worth up to \$60 million. "It was very hard because I was doing so well in terms of the polls," Trump tells me. "Do you give up a top show on television with a tremendous amount of money for the privilege of running for a year and a half?" Well, some people might.

Trump insists he wasn't deterred by the negative coverage: "I expected a lot of scrutiny. My whole life I've been getting scrutiny." Besides, says Trump, he always has the "option" of running "at a later date"—an obvious reference to mounting an independent bid next year.

Still, the publicity payoff is enormous for these toe-in-the-water types. The press eagerly plays along, hyping the Hamlet act for sheer entertainment, while the pretenders boost their book sales or their profile without the inconvenience of actually running—let alone actually governing. Now that Sarah Palin is launching an East Coast bus tour, the speculation machine is revving up again.

What about public service as a lofty calling? Mike Huckabee chose his \$500,000 Fox News salary over a second White House bid, more than doubling his ratings for the announcement, only to see the numbers plummet the next week, after pulling the plug. Choosing a weekend cable show reaching fewer than a million viewers over the chance to be commander in chief? Huckabee says he sought divine guidance.

I understand the family concerns. Daniels didn't want his wife, Cheri, hounded about why she divorced him and left their children in the 1990s, marrying another man before she remarried

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the Indiana governor. Haley Barbour passed up the race in part at his wife's urging. But really, what's gotten into these spouses? They married practicing politicians, reaped the status rewards and then, when the White House beckoned, the prospect wilted their delicate sensibilities? Or are the husbands using them as convenient camouflage to duck races they can't stomach or can't win?

Each prospective candidate must ponder: are the chances I'll make a fool of myself and expose my messy marital history outweighed by whatever shot I have at the nomination? But the less-than-dirty little secret is that the campaign is a gas. Reporters follow you around, columnists seek your opinion on weighty matters, and you share the limelight in endless televised debates. For an Al Sharpton or Ron Paul, it is a platform that mere money can't buy.

One man's reason for skipping 2012 is refreshing. Chris Christie, the combative New Jersey governor, says flatly: "I've got to believe I'm ready to be president, and I don't." Rather than preen about whether he could win, Christie considered whether he should win. Best of all, he isn't whining about it.

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**Anthony Weiner scandal: Is anything in Congress private anymore?**

**Rep. Anthony Weiner finally acceded to demands that he resign because of his 'sexting' scandal. The incident further opens private lives in Congress to public scrutiny**

*Christian Science Monitor*

By Gail Russell Chaddock, Staff writer / June 16, 2011, Washington

Had he not lied, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D) of New York might have survived the "sexting" scandal that ended Thursday with his resignation at a senior center in Brooklyn. That's the view of many of his former colleagues, speaking Thursday just off the House floor. "Had he come out straight forward in the very beginning, he would have seen less of, 'You've got to go,' " says Rep. Bill Pascrell (D) of New Jersey. "We're all human here."

Still, the speed and intensity of Congressman Weiner's fall raises new questions on the line between public and private behavior that some members and ethics watchdogs find troubling. "There's now very little distinction between public and private life, and I think politicians should know that," says Melanie Sloan, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. The Weiner case "sets a dangerous precedent," she adds. "There are still members of Congress engaged in sexual improprieties. The second you're involved in one, are you out?" she adds.

The message from the Weiner debacle appears to be that you resign if you create too many problems for your colleagues. "If something becomes a scandal, and leaders believe it's a distraction from their message, that's what's going to get a call for a resignation."

After nearly three weeks of media frenzy, House Democratic leaders lost patience as the scandal drowned out their assault on the new GOP majority over jobs, the economy, and proposed cuts to Medicare.

Asked to distinguish between lies and sex scandals involving Weiner and former President Clinton, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D) of Florida, the new chair of the Democratic National Committee, said that Weiner should resign because his conduct "has distracted [from] his ability to do his job and distracted from almost all of our ability to do our jobs and make sure that we can effectively serve our constituents."

Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who called for Weiner's resignation last week, had scheduled a caucus meeting on Thursday to strip the seven-term lawmaker of his committee assignments. "Congressman Weiner exercised poor judgment in his actions and poor judgment in his reaction to the revelations. Today, he made the right judgment in resigning," she said in a statement after the resignation.

In earlier eras, sex scandals on Capitol Hill were widely known in the Washington press corps, but rarely reported. Even if reported, they often had little consequence. In part, the heightened scrutiny of the private lives of public figures reflects a change in public standards. It also reflects more diversity among members of Congress and the press corps that covers them.

"The press corps was predominantly male until the 1980s, and men looked the other way," says Gene Grabowski, senior vice president and manager of the Crisis and Litigation Practice

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Group for Levick Strategic Communications in Washington. "There was as much going on then, but now it's found out."

"The sensibilities have changed. More women are in positions of power and more women are in positions of influence in the press," he adds.

There were 17 women House members when Ways and Means chairman Wilbur Mills and stripper Fanny Foxe made sensational headlines in 1974, but he was not pressed by his colleagues to resign. Today, there are 75 women in the House, 51 in the Democratic caucus, many in leadership positions, Congresswomen Pelosi and Wasserman Schultz among them. Women in the Democratic caucus were among Weiner's most outspoken, early critics. Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D) of Pennsylvania was the first to call for his resignation, citing his "offensive behavior online." On Thursday, Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D) of New York echoed the sentiment that Weiner made things worse for himself. "If Anthony hadn't lied in the beginning, it would have been OK," she says. "The culture has changed because of a 24-hour news cycle. It makes everything here a little more sensitive and paints a bad picture of all of us."

Beyond the TV news cycle, sex scandals over the Internet have an immediacy that creates new problems for politicians trying to escape them, says Mr. Grabowski, whose firm has represented members of Congress involved in sex scandals.

"The Internet has been a marvelous tool for messaging, but it's a tool your adversaries can use against you," he adds. "It can trip you up if what you think is private isn't. Weiner used the Internet to great advantage for his political career, and it proved to be his undoing. You're going to see more of that."

"The whole thing is very sad. It's a tragedy," says Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D) of New York, speaking outside the House chamber as Weiner was resigning. As for lessons from the scandal for members of Congress, he said: "I hope they're tweeting a little more carefully."

## Homophobia has infected the Church of England

*The church must find the courage to deal with the poisonous culture of anti-gay prejudice in its appointment of bishops*

Colin Coward / The Guardian / 3 June 2011

5 Last week, a leaked memorandum revealed that the deliberations of the group appointed to select a new bishop of Southwark were marked by acrimony and manipulation. The same day the House of Bishops' meeting in York failed to agree new guidelines to evaluate whether a gay priest was fit to be appointed bishop, guidelines seemingly designed to prevent Jeffrey John from being appointed.

10 There are in the House of Bishops five who are gay. Other bishops are their friends and are actively supportive of gay and lesbian priests and lay people in the church. When the new guidelines were being discussed, it appears that not one of the gay bishops had the courage to say to his brothers: hang on, I'm gay? Nor did any of the gay-friendly bishops present have the courage to say: hang on, some of you may not know who among us is gay, but I have several good friends in this room who are.

15 The Church of England has 13 bishops who are gay. None are publicly open about their sexuality and, as far as I know, none have been open about their sexuality in the process of being appointed bishop. Until last year, potential bishops were never interviewed so there was no opportunity to ask the question or volunteer the information.

20 The church has created an impossible dilemma for itself. No candidate who is gay or has been involved in a same-sex relationship in the past is going to willingly volunteer this information. It is rightly a personal matter and in secular society, irrelevant to someone's capacity to perform their work. Secular employment best practice sets an example that the Church of England would do well to adopt. The process of appointing bishops should be transparent and open.

25 The church rightly requires and expects fidelity and lifelong commitment from her clergy. The church allows that prior to marriage, people may have had other sexual partners. It doesn't enquire into the premarital intimacies of heterosexual candidates for ministry. Why, in the proposed guidelines, does it think it can not only ask the question of those it suspects of being gay, but requires them to repent?

30 The church has allowed itself to become infected by the prejudice and homophobia, which drives conservative pressure groups. They are dripping a poison, which is infecting the church at every level. At the extreme conservative end of the spectrum, both evangelical and Catholic, are people who don't believe in the existence of homosexual identity. In their world view there are no gay people, only corrupted heterosexuals. They believe homosexuality is a sickness that can be cured by therapy.

35 At the other end of the spectrum are those, including bishops, who encourage lay people and priests to live in fidelity with their same-sex partner and contract a civil partnership, knowing this is healthier for the couple and, by extension, healthier for the church. The church expects an immaculate sexual history and a willingness to reveal all from gay candidates for the episcopacy.

40 The church urgently needs to find the courage to deal with the poisonous culture of prejudice against women and gays. It needs to open itself to the transformation of prejudice, which has occurred in secular society – a mark in itself of the spirit of God at work in creation.

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**Conservatives and Lib Dems plan policy drive as Letwin hails 'deep bonds'**

*Policy chief hails overlap between Tories and Lib Dems as Ed Miliband denounces 'sham' government*  
Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt / The Guardian / Thursday 23 December 2010

5 Oliver Letwin, the government's policy chief, today launches a passionate defence of the coalition, hailing "the deep bonds of trust formed" between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and asserting that the two parties together have achieved more in the first months than would have been possible under a Tory government with a small majority. Letwin also says that despite the collapse in the Lib Dems' poll ratings both parties will benefit equally at the next election. Although he insists he would have preferred a majority Conservative government, he says he has discovered "a huge amount of policy overlap with the Liberal Democrats".

10 He also discloses he has begun discussions within government on a second tranche of policies to be launched in the mid-term of the parliament after the current larger tranche has been implemented. "It will be concerned with elaborating, refining and improving the first wave," he says. [...] "We are beginning to talk about that collectively in government".

Ed Miliband, the Labour leader, said that revelations of Lib Dem doubts on some government policies had shown the coalition to be "a sham" in which the Lib Dems were "passengers, not even in the back seat of the car, [but] passengers who have got themselves locked in the boot".

15 But Letwin, the Cabinet Office minister seen by some as one of the most powerful figures in government, says in his first post-election interview: "There are very strong bonds now. We have to come trust one another". He says the coalition government has made ministers and the government machinery more rigorous in the formulation of policy; strengthened the hand of politicians over the civil service through the negotiation of the joint policy programme and the proper use of cabinet committees; and allowed the government to deliver a radical public service reform programme more quickly than Tony Blair in his first term of government. Although Letwin admits the government suffers from strains, he says: "It is as much blue on blue and yellow on yellow, as it is blue on yellow."

25 On Tuesday, Vince Cable, the business secretary, was forced to relinquish responsibility for ruling on News Corp's planned takeover of BSkyB after he was recorded claiming that his party was at war with Rupert Murdoch. Faced by claims in recent months, including from Cable, that the government is moving too fast on too many fronts, Letwin says: "If you want to make the kind of changes that we are talking about and begin to see the results within the five year allotted period, you need to begin at the beginning. These things take time." [...]

30 Letwin denies the Conservatives are likely to benefit more from the alliance than the Lib Dems. "If people feel four and a half years from now that this was a government that cured the deficit, kept the public services intact and indeed improved them, gave people more power over their lives, they will re-elect us. Will the Conservatives or will the Liberal Democrats benefit? The answer is both. We're both going to be judged by the same standards at the end."

35 In the short term he says the aim will be to introduce a white paper on public services reform setting out how a range of non-state providers can take over the delivery of services, using a payment by results model. He urges banks to play a role in funding these moves.

40 Letwin's enthusiastic endorsement of coalition government came as a Liberal Democrat backbencher, Adrian Sanders, accused his party's leadership of almost revelling in the pain which government policy was causing to Lib Dem supporters. "We have a leadership that seems keener on impressing the Conservatives as to how much we can be relied upon to take 'tough' decisions, than on asserting how much the Conservatives need us in order to remain in government," Sanders wrote.

**Student numbers could be cut to cover spiralling cost of loans**

*Ministers underestimated how many universities would charge £9,000 fees – and now face huge bill to fund student loans*

Polly Curtis and Jeevan Vasagar / The Guardian / Tuesday 7 June 2011

Tough quotas on student numbers may have to be introduced to avoid the creation of a spending black hole under plans to raise tuition fees at English universities to a maximum of £9,000, a powerful committee of MPs has warned.

5 Ministers underestimated how many universities would charge the maximum fee and now face an annual bill to fund the interest-free student loans that is "several hundred million pounds" higher than anticipated, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) reports. The current balance of outstanding loans – £24bn – is expected to rise to £70bn by 2015-16, the report says. Margaret Hodge, the chair of the committee, said: "At present, more universities intend to charge higher fees than the department had expected. If the universities' plans to widen participation are approved by the Office for Fair Access,

10 this will leave a substantial funding gap which will either require further cuts in higher education or further resources from the Treasury." Whitehall sources told the Guardian they would not know the true cost of the policy until students had turned up at freshers' week in 2012.

Reducing student numbers below the current cap would prove deeply unpopular after several years of increasing demand and an annual row over the competition for university places.

15 While some students will forgo loans and universities will subsidise some of the fees with bursaries, ministers will still have to consider other options "which might range from finding more money through to reducing places available", the PAC report says.

Figures compiled by the Guardian reveal that as of Monday, 105 universities had declared the fee they will charge, with an average of £8,765. The government modelled its plans on an average fee of £7,500. The Office for Fair Access is vetting universities' fee plans. They will announce on 11 July which have been agreed.

A Whitehall source said uncertainty over the costs was inevitable given the number of variables but insisted that they were confident that the figures they had used were the best projection.

25 Whitehall sources indicated on Monday that students at the New College of the Humanities – a new private university being set up by high-profile academics including AC Grayling – would not be entitled to government-backed student loans because its £18,000-a-year fees break the £9,000 cap. The university's backers have said they expected students to be eligible for loans of up to £6,000 from next year in line with other private universities. They are also seeking commercial loans.

30 The forthcoming white paper on higher education is expected to set boundaries of a "level playing field" between traditional institutions and new private providers. Only students at universities charging under the £9,000 cap are expected to be eligible for state-backed finance.

Ministers are expected to pave the way for students educated privately to borrow up to £9,000. However, private universities charging fees above £6,000 are also expected to become subject to government requirements on widening access to students from poorer backgrounds.

35 A growing number of universities are warning of uncertainty over the policy. [...] But the uncertainty is compounded by predictions that applications could collapse when students are faced with higher fees, putting some less popular institutions in financial jeopardy. The PAC calls for clarification about what the government will do when universities are in danger.

40 Meanwhile Oxford University is poised to take an unprecedented vote of no confidence in the higher education minister, David Willetts, on Tuesday in the most aggressive act of the university against a government since its dons vetoed an honorary degree for Margaret Thatcher. Oxford dons will vote on a resolution that says: "Congregation instructs council to communicate to government that the University of Oxford has no confidence in the policies of the minister for higher education." Cambridge, Goldsmiths and Warwick are to embark on similar exercises. [...] Sally Hunt, general secretary of the University and College Union, called on every university to hold a vote of no confidence claiming that the plans were in "disarray".

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## Student protests planned on a national scale on 24 November

Jeevan Vasagar, education editor, and Matthew Taylor / The Guardian / Thursday 11 November 2010



Emboldened by the numbers who took to the streets of London to campaign against the proposal to charge up to £9,000 a year in fees, students are planning a wave of direct-action protests across the country. Protesters occupied a building at the University of Manchester today, demanding access to accounts to see how government spending cuts may affect students and staff.

5 Grassroots groups were drawing up plans for a national day of action in two weeks' time. Michael Chessum, the co-founder of the *National Campaign Against the Cuts*, predicted there would be widespread disruption as students staged sit-ins, occupations or walkouts at universities and colleges on 24 November. "We went off script: the script that said a few thousand people would turn up, complain a bit, and go home; and the cuts would go through pretty much as planned," said Chessum, 21, a sabbatical officer at University College London. "That has changed. Now students really feel they can stop this."

10 A statement published by student leaders praised the storming of the building housing Conservative party headquarters by a fringe group of protesters on Wednesday. "We reject any attempt to characterise the Millbank protest as small, 'extremist' or unrepresentative of our movement. We celebrate the fact that thousands of students were willing to send a message to the Tories that we will fight to win." [...]

15 The Millbank protesters were also praised by the president of the lecturers' union at Goldsmiths, London: "Yesterday was a really good natured but equally angry demonstration against the damage that the coalition is doing to higher education. The real violence in this situation relates not to a smashed window but to the destructive impact of the cuts and privatisation that will follow if tuition fees are increased and if massive reductions in HE funding are implemented."

20 The NUS plans to campaign locally against Lib Dem MPs, reminding them of their pre-election pledge to vote against a rise in tuition fees. NUS president Aaron Porter said: "It's an issue of principle. Clegg talked about no more broken promises – they made a promise, and we will hold them to it." The union plans to raise petitions in constituencies with high numbers of student voters, warning MPs that they face losing their seat if they break their word on fees.

25 A number of Lib Dem MPs plan to vote against the proposal, due to be presented to parliament before Christmas. The 20 Lib Dem ministers, including Nick Clegg, the deputy prime minister, and the business secretary, Vince Cable, are expected to vote in favour. The resolution must be passed by both houses but cannot be amended. Clegg today admitted he should not have signed the NUS pledge on fees, blaming the state of public finances for the party's U-turn. "I should have been more careful perhaps in signing that pledge," he said. "At the time I really thought we could do it. I just didn't know, of course, before we came into government, quite what the state of the finances were."

30 Writing in the *Guardian* today, Lib Dem MP Tim Farron describes fees as "the poll tax of our generation". He writes: "It is not for me to tell colleagues how to vote, but I believe that we need to move away from burdening young people with debt, towards a fairer system. Education should be available to all – not just those who can stomach the debt." Lib Dem MP Lorely Burt said the party was "stuck between a rock and a hard place". She added: "This is not our policy. We are not comfortable with it."

35 Lib Dem opponents of a rise have not coalesced around an alternative policy. Martin Horwood, who plans either to abstain or vote against, said: "The long-term alternative is really to pay for student finance through income tax and probably an inevitable reduction in student numbers, neither popular options with our Conservative partners. So short term, I fear the alternative would be cuts in other areas like science or FE, which is why I'm hesitating to vote against."



**Liberal Democrats: a year of living dangerously**

*Social liberalism and welfare justice must be integral to any Liberal Democrat party worthy of support*

Editorial, The Guardian, Thursday 30 December 2010

There is not much doubt about the biggest domestic political event of 2010. The formation of Britain's first fully fledged coalition government of the modern era would have made this a year for the record books, whatever the coalition's partisan composition. The fact that this unprecedented coalition government has been formed on the centre-right makes the event even  
5 more discombobulating, since most of the speculation and work about realignment during the previous 20 years had focused on such possibilities for the centre-left.

Yet the remaking of British politics brought on by the election of 2010 does not end there, by any means. The unexpectedly energetic radicalism of the incoming coalition, some of which seems to be devised on the hoof, has given the reshaping of British party politics yet a further violent twist.

10 The coalition's apparent readiness to put an end to an era of welfarist social democracy that began in 1945 and that survived, albeit in significantly changed form, until the fall of Labour in May poses fundamental identity problems for all the parties.

The Liberal Democrats have been pivotal players in all this. So Nick Clegg was at least entitled to sound a little out of breath in his new year message to his party this week. This has indeed, as he  
15 says, been an extraordinary year for the Lib Dems, as the party moved from their long accustomed place as an oppositional third party to the new and unmapped status as a minority party in a coalition government. These remain breathtaking times. The pieces of the kaleidoscope, to coin a phrase, have not yet settled anew. But it is no longer sufficient to say, as it was straight after the election, that the undoubted difficulty imposed by the hung parliament that Britain elected in May  
20 is enough to justify the way that Mr Clegg and his party are playing an indisputably tricky political hand.

Mr Clegg's current strategy puts the future of the coalition above the future of his party. On one level, this makes sense. Voters have been indoctrinated by the big parties to fear coalitions. The Lib Dems need to show that coalition works. But this is not merely a question of proving they are  
25 competent administrators. Coalition parties require pride in their continuing differences as well as pride in their ability to compromise. They also need to show that they are achieving policy ends that their supporters want. Here the record is not as wholly negligible as Labour, often amnesiac about their own failings, make out. But it is still modest. The problem is made more acute by the intensity of the coalition's drive to slash the public services, cut swaths out of large budgets and ambitiously reorganise schools, the health service and local government in ways that will be – and  
30 have been designed to be – hard to reverse.

The Liberal Democrats have always had an identity dilemma. They are not alone in that. But the Lib Dems of 2011 are conspicuously a party whose old identity is giving way to a new one. The old party was a more localist and individualist progressive party than Labour. The new one is now  
35 a more avowedly individualist and small state party, with more scruples about social injustice than many Tories. Some of the rethinking is positive; critics should listen to the Lib Dems as well as lecturing them. In the process, however, the social liberal traditions of Lloyd George and Beveridge and the social democratic inheritance of Jenkins and Williams are increasingly hard to discern. These traditions are too important to be cast aside.

40 No party can remain the same. But, in 2011, the Lib Dems must do more to clarify and resolve where they stand. Social liberalism and welfare justice must be integral to any Liberal Democrat party worthy of future support. Today, these principles are at risk of becoming mere afterthoughts in the overhasty and indiscriminate assault on the flawed public realm the coalition has inherited from Labour.

**Unpeople? We used to call them working-class**

*MPs and the media hardly notice working-class communities. It's time the labour movement gave them back their voice.*

Owen Jones / The Guardian / 20 March 2011

I met Mrs Parry a few months ago in the centre of Ashington, a 27,000-strong community about 17 miles north of Newcastle. Once the world's biggest mining village, thousands were thrown out of work when the local pit closed in 1986. The community never recovered. "We died!" Mrs Parry insists. "Once all the mines closed, all the community had gone. It's just been a big depression ever since, just struggling to survive, that's all." Many middle-aged miners never worked again, but the next generation suffered too. I asked her what jobs there were for young people. "Nothing. There's nothing. My son's 24 now and he joined the army because there was nothing."

As far as Mrs Parry is concerned, the political elite no longer care that people in her community even exist. "We've just been totally abandoned. Maggie Thatcher put the knife in and they just left us to bleed to death." There was fleeting hope in 1997, when Labour turfed out Ashington's Tory tormentors. "Young people and teenagers at the time, when Tony Blair got in, they were dancing and cheering in the street – and that broke my heart. Because they were so disillusioned! ... No, no. He didn't do nothing for nobody."

Ashington is just one of the many working-class communities across the country that suffered the brunt of Thatcherism's vandalism of British industry. They were hammered by two waves of mass unemployment, first in the early 1980s and then in the early 1990s. They're about to hit a third time. But will anyone notice?

The campaigning journalist John Pilger coined a chilling term: "unpeople". It refers to millions of people in poor countries who are marginalised or entirely absent from media coverage. Because these people are a faceless mass, it's easy for western governments to wage war against them. After all, if electorates can't imagine that there are real people suffering the consequences of war, they are less likely to protest.

In modern Britain, the inhabitants of places like Ashington are treated as unpeople. Their very existence is barely acknowledged in the media. It isn't necessarily vindictive: it's partly the legacy of the demise of local newspapers; the result of cuts to national newspapers that have left journalists increasingly chained to their desks; and the fact that many of our top hacks – over half of whom went to private schools – may as well have grown up on a different planet.

It's the same in the political world. Two-thirds of our MPs had professional jobs before arriving in parliament. Less than one in 20 have manual labour backgrounds, a figure that has more than halved since the late 1980s. The people of places like Ashington are simply not represented in the Westminster bubble. One former senior adviser to Tony Blair explained to me New Labour's attitude to what was described as the "non-aspirational working-class": "Maybe partly taken for granted, maybe partly those people are in constituencies that Labour are going to win anyway. You don't focus your energies on people who are in constituencies where they don't make a huge difference. And partly those people are less likely, or least likely, to turn out."

And these people are about to face a double whammy. Many will lose their jobs, only to have their benefits slashed by legislation currently going through parliament. But there will be few voices in the media or in Westminster to fight their corner.

This all suits the government's agenda, of course. As it propagates perverse caricatures of communities brimming with the feckless and the idle, the actual situation facing people around the UK is airbrushed out of the picture.

I'm not suggesting that the people of Ashington need pity. Many of those thrown out of work in the Depression didn't wait for the goodwill of the wealthy: they organised. The labour movement once gave people in working-class communities a collective voice that forced those with power to listen to their demands, and it must do so again. Only then will they cease to be treated as unpeople.

## Andreas Whittam Smith: A more 'democratic' Lords can only damage the Commons

*The Independent, 19 May 2011*

5 What Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats are finding out the hard way right now is that what they had assumed was widespread discontent with our constitutional arrangements does not exist. Reform is well down our "to-do" lists. This absence of zeal applies as much to the House of Lords as it did in the case of our first-past-the-post voting system. There is no deeply felt need. That the Conservative Party would support legislation in these circumstances would run counter to its history and its character.

10 Moreover, increasing the so-called democratic authority of the House of Lords would have as a consequence a diminution in the power of the House of Commons. It's as simple as a see-saw. When one side rises, the other falls. Imagine that you had been elected to the House of Lords following Mr Clegg's reforms. You would feel a responsibility to those who had voted for you. If your view of their interests in a particular case was not, as you saw it, being properly taken into account by the House of Commons, then my guess is that you would do all you could to oppose the House of Commons in this matter. As Graham Stringer, the Labour MP, asked Mr Clegg on Tuesday "When the other place has 100 per cent elected Senators or Lords and they take a different view from him, how will he assert this House's authority over another elected House?"

15 However, the White Paper goes to much trouble to show that the relationship between the two houses wouldn't alter to the detriment of the House of Commons. Two arguments are made. In the first place it reminds us that two acts of Parliament already provide that, in certain circumstances, legislation may be passed without the agreement of the House of Lords. Yes, but the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949 are, as the White Paper itself admits, longstops to which recourse is rarely made. Second, it states that the conventions governing the relationship will not be changed. One of these, however, is that the House of Lords should think very carefully about rejecting a Bill that the Commons has approved. That should obviously be the case where the House of Lords is unelected – but if it were elected and had a different view wouldn't its duty be to reject the House of Commons Bill and then see whether a compromise could be found that would satisfy both houses?

20 This process would look perfectly rational, but the consequence would be that the authority of the House of Commons would have been diminished. Democratic authority isn't an elastic concept. You cannot increase democratic authority over here without diminishing it over there. To believe otherwise is wishful thinking.

25 But what sort of people would be elected to the House of Lords? Some of them would be politicians not good enough to get elected to the House of Commons. The House of Lords would become a refuge for House of Commons rejects. Others would be attracted by the 15-year term that the White Paper promises elected members of the reformed House. Among these members there would probably figure disproportionately older MPs who, without losing salary, would be able to swop the uncertainties of the House of Commons for the safety of the House of Lords.

30 What we might expect has been well put by Anthony King, Professor of Government at Essex University. He recently wrote that a "democratically legitimate" House of Lords would "inevitably consist almost entirely of a miscellaneous assemblage of party hacks, political careerists, clapped-out retired or defeated MPs, has-beens, never-were's and never-could-possibly be's". And we want to give that lot democratic authority? Ugh.

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**Leading article: Britain's chance for a fairer voting system**

First-past-the-post has created a malign empire of safe seats that are unlikely to change hands  
*The Independent, 18 February 2011*

5 The democratic blockage in the House of Lords has been cleared. Royal assent for the legislation authorising a referendum on electoral reform on 5 May was finally granted late on Wednesday night. The unholy alliance of Labour and Conservative peers – many of them former ministers – put up a ferocious fight to block the electoral reform bill. They deployed all manner of justifications for their filibustering, ranging from the supposedly unconstitutional reduction in the number of constituencies, to concerns about the referendum turnout. But few doubt that one of the main motivations behind these attempts to thwart this bill was opposition to the very principle of electoral reform.

10 If the bill had not been passed this week, the referendum on moving to the Alternative Vote would not have taken place. The House of Lords often performs a valuable role in checking the partisan follies of the House of Commons. But on this occasion, the peers were the ones playing politics. This was not the upper chamber's finest hour.

15 Thankfully, attention can now turn to the issue at hand: reforming our electoral system. This newspaper has long argued that there is something fundamentally wrong with the first-past-the-post voting system. This voting system, biased as it is towards the largest parties, could be justified in the post-war decades when more than 90 per cent of British voters tended to put their cross in the box of either the Conservatives or Labour. But in the 2010 general election, only 65 per cent of voters endorsed these two parties at the ballot box.

20 Yet, last year, first-past-the-post still delivered Labour and the Tories 87 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons. This is undermining the popular mandate of those sent to Parliament. In the 1950s, most MPs received more than half of the votes cast in their constituencies. In 2010, just a third did. The existing system has also helped to create an empire of "safe" seats, which are most unlikely to change hands between parties at elections. At the last election, 69 per cent of the electorate lived in such constituencies and were largely ignored by party campaigns as a result.

25 AV is no panacea for these ills. Yet it would have important advantages over the present arrangements. It would put more power in the hands of voters. The public would be able to list their votes in order of preference. The old "wasted vote" argument would wither. AV would also help to make safe seats more competitive. All candidates would have to work harder to gain the support of the local population. The focus of national campaigns would widen in a healthy way too.

30 It is true that AV is not a proportional system. Under AV, smaller parties would find it just as difficult to win representation in the Commons as they do now. And there are circumstances in which AV might deliver a distribution of seats in the Commons that is even less representative of the manner in which most people cast their first preference votes than now. Landslides could be enhanced.

35 Yet there is a solution to that deficiency. The 1998 report by the late Roy Jenkins came up with an elegant blueprint for voting reform that would retain the best feature of our existing electoral system, namely the link between individual MPs and their constituents, while also making Parliament better reflect the proportional support of each party. The majority of MPs would be elected by AV, but there would also be a number of MPs chosen from open regional party lists.

40 This referendum to secure AV can be a step towards a fundamentally fairer and more efficient voting system of the sort envisaged by the Jenkins Report. It is a step that the country should have no hesitation in taking.

## Cameron: My war on multiculturalism

*Oliver Wright and Jerome Taylor / The Independent / 5 February 2011*



David Cameron launched a devastating attack today on 30 years of multiculturalism in Britain, warning it is fostering extremist ideology and directly contributing to home-grown Islamic terrorism. Signalling a radical departure from the strategies of previous governments, Mr Cameron said that Britain must adopt a policy of "muscular liberalism" to enforce the values of equality, law and freedom of speech across all parts of society.

He warned Muslim groups that if they fail to endorse women's rights or promote integration, they will lose all government funding. All immigrants to Britain must speak English and schools will be expected to teach the country's common culture.

The new policy was outlined today in a speech to an international security conference in Munich and will form the basis of the Government's new anti-terrorism strategy to be published later this year.

But his remarks have already infuriated Muslim groups, as they come on the day of what is expected to be the largest demonstration so far of anti-Muslim sentiment being planned by the English Defence League. They accused Mr Cameron of placing an unfair onus on minority communities to integrate, while failing to emphasise how the wider community can help immigrants feel more welcome in Britain. They suggested his speech was part of a concerted attack on multiculturalism from centre-right European governments and pointed out he was making it in Germany – where Chancellor Angela Merkel recently made a similar attack.

In his speech, Mr Cameron rejected suggestions that a change in Western foreign policy could stop the Islamic terrorist threat and says Britain needs to tackle the home-grown causes of extremist ideology.

"We have failed to provide a vision of society [to young Muslims] to which they feel they want to belong," he said. "We have even tolerated segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values. All this leaves some young Muslims feeling rootless. And the search for something to belong to and believe in can lead them to extremist ideology."

Mr Cameron blamed a doctrine of "state multiculturalism" which encourages different cultures to live separate lives. This, he says, has led to the "failure of some to confront the horrors of forced marriage". But he added it is also the root cause of radicalisation which can lead to terrorism. [...]

"And if we are to defeat this threat, I believe it's time to turn the page on the failed policies of the past. Instead of ignoring this extremist ideology, we – as governments and societies – have got to confront it. Instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of shared national identity, open to everyone." [...]

But Muslim groups said Mr Cameron's approach was simplistic and would not succeed in tackling extremism. "Communities are not static entities and there are those who see being British as their identity and there are those who do not feel that it is an overriding part of their identity," said Fiyaz Mughal, founder of interfaith group Faith Matters. "Finger-pointing at communities and then cutting social investment into projects is a sure-fire way of causing greater resentment. It blames some communities while his Government slashes social investment."

Mohammed Shafiq, chief executive of Muslim youth group The Ramadhan Foundation, said: "The speech by British Prime Minister David Cameron MP fails to tackle the stooge of the fascists EDL and the BNP. Singling out Muslims as he has done feeds the hysteria and paranoia about Islam and Muslims. British Muslims abhor terrorism and extremism and we have worked hard to eradicate this evil from our country but to suggest that we do not sign up to the values of tolerance, respect and freedom is deeply offensive and incorrect. This sort of rhetoric to score cheap political points will damage community relations in the long term and affect our efforts to deal with terrorism and extremism. Again, it seems very much that the Muslim community is in the spotlight and being treated as part of the problem rather than part of the solution."

## Public services reform stalled as No 10 gets the jitters

The Times, Jill Sherman, Whitehall Editor, June 16 2011

David Cameron's plan to open public services to competition is set to be delayed until early autumn after internal wrangles over the speed of reform.

No 10 hoped to deliver proposals next month to get the private and voluntary sectors to take over public services to help to improve efficiency. But after the embarrassment over NHS reform, fears of a second backlash from health professionals and the spectre of public sector strikes this summer, the Prime Minister's commitment to "transform" public services is being postponed.

Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office Minister, who has been working on the plan, told *The Times* yesterday that it would be out "within months", an acknowledgement that even if the White Paper is published in September, the reform cannot possibly come into effect until next year.

The commitment to reform hospitals, schools and local councils became directly connected to Mr Cameron earlier when he made a personal pledge to bring in the private sector to run services. "Instead of having to justify why it makes sense to introduce competition in some public services ... the State will now have to justify why it should ever operate as a monopoly," he said.

But some policy experts outside government believe that the proposals — among the key planks of the coalition's plans to reduce the budget deficit — may be dropped entirely.

So far, the White Paper has been delayed three times amid signs that it was being watered down to reduce the role of the private sector. Further delay will infuriate business leaders who warned yesterday that "competition to drive efficiency and improve services is now taking a back seat".

Indecision about the timing of the paper centres on a dispute between Steve Hilton, the Prime Minister's chief strategist, and George Osborne on the pace of reform.

Mr Hilton wants to speed up the pace to show that the Government is driving the policy agenda, and has been keen to publish the White Paper as soon as possible. The policy also fits Mr Cameron's Big Society vision to get social enterprises, charities and communities more involved in providing services. But the Chancellor, battling with trade unions over public sector pensions, is desperate to avoid another row like the NHS U-turn and believes that the policy could be too politically risky. [...]

"We have a number of big issues hitting the public sector, such as pensions. Some people want reform now and others say it is too fast. In times of austerity and cuts it might be too much."

Mr Hilton has been urging the Treasury to wrap up negotiations with the unions so that the White Paper can be published.

Public sector pensions are one of the key issues likely to be addressed in the document. Many private companies and charities have been put off taking over state services because they say that the generous public sector pensions are unaffordable. The White Paper was expected to let companies and charities set their own pension terms after a separate move to scrap rules protecting retirement benefits. But this proposal is now at the heart of TUC negotiations with ministers over pension reforms.

This week's union strike ballot results — and a warning from Unison of concerted industrial action in the autumn — have left no doubt that pensions are to be the key battleground between the coalition and public sector workers. Nick Clegg, who was instrumental in the coalition's decision to have a two-month pause on NHS reforms, also supports a delay in publishing the wider public service reforms.

Whitehall insiders say that the White Paper would be seen as an open door to privatisation and cause a similar row with the health professions. "Nick has the same reservations as he did about the NHS reforms — about how much private firms get involved and how much is contracted out," another Whitehall official said. [...]

Treasury insiders made clear that the White Paper was not high on the Chancellor's agenda, while No 10 said: "We will publish it in due course. It is important we get it right."

## Cuts set to hit women the hardest

The Times, David Budworth, October 23 2010

*Women have emerged as some of the biggest losers from the most savage package of benefit and spending cuts for generations.*

George Osborne used this week's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to cut back key benefits that support mothers with children. The Chancellor also warned that some women will have to work nearly three years longer, as the state retirement age will be raised more rapidly than originally planned.

5 Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, described the measures announced in the CSR as a "huge assault" on working families, particularly mothers. To make matters worse, about 70 per cent of those working in the public sector — where nearly half a million jobs are expected to be cut — are women. [...]

### Pensions

10 The Chancellor announced that the state pension age will rise to 66 in 2020. Although it will affect both sexes, the jump will be particularly acute for women in their mid-fifties. [...]

### Benefits

15 Families in which at least one earner is a higher-rate taxpayer earning more than £43,875 will lose child benefit from 2013, the Chancellor confirmed. The move is expected to hit stay-at-home mothers particularly badly. The TUC says that 830,000 of the at least 1.5 million households that will be affected are single-income families. [...]

Child benefit is worth £20.30 a week for the eldest child and £13.40 a week for each other child and isn't taxed. It is paid directly to the parent responsible for care of the child, usually the mother.

20 The measures mean that a one-child family in which one parent earns £45,000, just above the threshold for higher-rate tax, will lose £1,055.60 a year from 2013, based on current rates. A family in the same situation with two children will be £1,752.40 a year worse off.

25 The Chancellor has refused to modify the proposal, first advanced at the Conservative Party conference, despite protests that it is unfair. A single-earner household on £44,000 will suffer a benefit cut, while families in which both parents earn £43,500 — just below the higher-rate threshold — will continue to receive child benefit, even though they collectively take home £87,000.

30 Mr Osborne also confirmed that an overall cap on benefits will be introduced from 2013. This is expected to be about £500 a week, or £26,000 a year, for couples and single parents. Single people without a family will be limited to £350 a week, or £18,200 a year.

### Tax credits

35 Working parents will suffer reductions in help with childcare costs and a freeze in working tax credits from next April. About 60 per cent of those who receive the childcare tax credit are single parents, most of them women. Help with childcare costs for parents receiving tax credits will be cut from the current maximum of 80 per cent to 70 per cent of costs.

Fiona Weir, chief executive of the single-parent charity Gingerbread, says: "The changes mean a single parent in London who is working 21 hours a week with a three-year-old child in nursery will have to find an additional £505 a year out of their earnings to spend on the childcare costs."

40 [...] Tougher qualifying rules will also mean working tax credit will go to fewer people from 2012. Couples with children will not qualify for working tax credit if they work fewer than 24 hours a week between them, compared with 16 hours at present.

### Job cuts

The coming cull of public-sector jobs is expected to affect women disproportionately. About 40 per cent of female employees work in the public sector, compared with 15 per cent of men.

45 Although the CSR was light on details of where the public spending job cuts will come, the Chancellor said that about 490,000 positions will go. The TUC estimates that about 300,000 of the people who lose their jobs will be women. [...]

*Time*

**Does Mitt Romney Have a Prayer with Evangelicals?**

By Amy Sullivan

Friday, June 3, 2011

When Mitt Romney makes his appearance at Ralph Reed's Faith & Freedom Conference Friday evening in Washington, he won't exactly be headed into the lion's den—but it might seem that way to him. A Pew Research study released on Thursday showed that Romney has the most potential appeal of any candidate in the GOP field for 2012. But the key word there is "potential." Twenty-five percent of all voters say they would be less likely to support a candidate who is Mormon, like Romney. And a full third of white evangelicals express an aversion to Mormon candidates.

Those numbers are essentially unchanged from four years ago, when Romney first ran for the GOP nomination. That's bad news for the former Massachusetts governor, whose supporters have often argued that suspicion about the Mormon faith would fade as voters became familiar with a Mormon candidate. White evangelicals don't have vague anti-Mormon prejudices—they have very specific theological disputes that can't be overcome by personality or even shared positions on social issues. Many believe, and are told in their churches, that Mormons are cult members and not Christians.[...]

The Romney campaign did its best to head off that anti-Mormon bias in 2008 by gathering endorsements from evangelical leaders like Chuck Colson and working with evangelical PR professional Mark DeMoss to communicate with the community. Romney even gave a speech in December 2007 in which he promised that he would not take orders from church leadership in Salt Lake if elected president. It was essentially an updated version of the same promise JFK felt obligated to make to Baptist leaders in 1960, distancing himself from Catholic leadership in Rome. [...]

Perhaps the most damaging attacks were not anonymous, but from religious leaders who simply told their flocks that Romney was not a Christian and that they could not vote for a Mormon. The pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas declared in a sermon that "Even though [Romney] talks about Jesus as his Lord and savior, he is not a Christian. Mormonism is not Christianity. Mormonism is a cult." Florida evangelist Bill Keller wrote a widely-circulated commentary titled "A Vote for Romney is a Vote for Satan."

The attacks worked, and Romney's past qualified position on abortion as governor of Massachusetts only deepened the distrust. By the time he dropped out of the race in early February 2008, Romney had gathered just over 20% of the white evangelical vote.

But now he's back, fully aware of the attacks he'll face, particularly if he appears to be the frontrunner going into next year's primary season. ConservativeHQ.com, the site run by conservative godfather Richard Viguerie, has already claimed that a majority of Tea Partiers would vote for a third-party candidate in 2012 if Romney is the GOP nominee. Looking to wound Romney's candidacy before he can take command of the field, evangelical Christian author Warren Smith released an essay last week calling Mormonism a "false and dangerous religion" and arguing that a Mormon president would threaten Christianity.

And then there's popular culture, which just can't seem to give Romney a break. The HBO series "Big Love" about polygamous Mormons passing as a regular suburban family premiered right around the same time Romney launched his first presidential bid. The Broadway smash hit of this spring is "The Book of Mormon," a religious satire by the creators of "South Park" that does not exactly depict Mormonism as part of mainstream America.

The best thing Romney has going for him is that evangelical voters may have no other options. No candidate currently in the race has the appeal of Mike Huckabee, the Baptist minister who inspired enthusiasm among evangelical voters in the 2008 primaries. And most of Romney's declared and presumed opponents leave voters either yawning or slightly queasy. The same Pew poll found that nearly 40% of GOP voters said there was "no chance" they would ever vote for Newt Gingrich or Sarah Palin. By comparison, only 18% of Republicans said they would never consider backing Romney. Some of those voters who don't want to support a Mormon realize that they may have to.

Read more: <http://swampland.time.com/2011/06/03/does-mitt-romney-have-a-prayer-with-evangelicals/#ixzz1OE5gthOM>



Time – NewsFeed

World

Julian Assange's Lawyer: It Was Missionary Position, Not Assault

February 11, 2011

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange did not attempt to pin down a Swedish woman in bed, as suggested by Swedish prosecutors, but was simply having sex in the missionary position, Assange's attorney claimed today.

In the final day of extradition hearings at Belmarsh Magistrates' Court in London, Assange's lawyer, Geoffrey Robertson, attempted to portray allegations of sex crimes by two Swedish women as misunderstandings rather than crimes. One woman, which court documents identify as Miss A, alleges that Assange used his body weight to hold her down during intercourse.

"It is quite clear that [Miss A's account] described what is usually termed the missionary position," Robertson told the court.

Later, Robertson apparently suggested that the two sexual encounters in question — which began as consensual but which both women say became non consensual — were not criminal. "Sexual encounters have their ebbs and flows. What may be unwanted one minute can with further empathy become desired," he said.

At the center of the extradition hearings is whether Assange should be tried in Sweden for rape if the crime he is accused of would not be considered rape in the U.K., but would rather be classified as a less serious criminal offense. Prosecutor Clare Montgomery countered this argument today by telling the court "If Sweden says it's rape, it's rape," to which Robertson replied, "If Sweden says that sucking toes without washing them first is rape, then that would make it an extradition offense?"

According to the Swedish branch of Interpol, an arrest warrant for Assange stated that the rape accusation stems from a sexual encounter in which the woman "was asleep and in a helpless state." There is also a sexual-molestation allegation based on claims from another incident. And prosecutors also want to question Assange in relation to the suspicion that he sexually coerced one of the women by "lying on top of [her], using his weight to prevent her from moving, and forcefully spreading her legs," and that he sexually molested both women by "having sex without the use of a condom, without the woman's knowledge."

There were more tart exchanges between the two lawyers over these accusations. Robertson argued that Assange would not receive a fair trial in Sweden because Swedish officials had created a "toxic atmosphere" by commenting publicly on the case. To which prosecutor Montgomery referred to Robertson's grandstanding in front of the press by replying that, "Those who seek to fan the flames of media firestorm can't complain when they get burnt."

Robertson had told the court and various journalists that his client faced the prospect of rendition to Guantanamo Bay from Sweden, but such claims were absent in Robertson's closing argument. This led Montgomery to say that "I take it from the absence of any sound bites about Guantanamo Bay and torture ... that there is no prospect in reality in law of extradition to the United States and we may well put that point to bed."

Assange will now remain on bail in the U.K. until Feb. 24, when Judge Howard Riddle is expected to rule whether the Wikileaks boss should be extradited. The decision may be appealed. (via [The Guardian](#))

Read more: <http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/02/11/julian-assanges-lawyer-it-was-missionary-position-not-assault/#ixzz1PpCFmZij>

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

**Royal wedding: diehard republicans battle on despite Britain's love affair with the monarchy**

*As the marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton approaches, some republicans believe the death of Elizabeth may bring the reign of the Windsors to an end - but is that what the public really wants?*

David Sharrock, The Observer, Sunday 6 March 2011

*Prince William and Kate Middleton at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, last month*



Hugh Ashton's face was a portrait of thwarted ambition as he watched from a discreet distance the anti-monarchist protest in front of Buckingham Palace. He had come from Chichester to take part in the illegal gathering, but couldn't bring himself to join the chanting republicans gathered at the gates of the enemy. "It's a bit disappointing. I was expecting more people than this. It's made me wonder, if this is the strongest number they can get out... I was sort of hoping the police might move them on, but there's no edge to this at all is there?" Indeed, there was not. Two police officers watched impassively. [...]

Graham Smith doesn't share the pessimism. The campaign manager of the organisation *Republic* believes that royal weddings are good for business. [...]: "It's a good omen for those of us who want a serious debate about the monarchy and our constitution," he tells a German TV crew. "The monarchy is not a luxury; it's an imposition and an obstacle to serious political reform." British public opinion about the royal family is fickle, he says. "We are launching *Republic 2025*. We need to put a date on it because things that people don't expect can happen very quickly."

But Britain a republic by 2025? The calculation is based on the longevity of the Queen, who Smith grudgingly concedes is unassailable "because she's been there so long, we've all grown up with her". When Elizabeth II departs it is game over for the Windsors, according to *Republic*. [...]

In an essay for the Institute of Public Policy Research, historian Tristram Hunt says millions view the monarchy with affection because at its best it represents "continuity, tradition and dignity", though for many on the left it is "the antithesis of everything we believe in". He concludes that "for better or worse we do have a monarchy which has numerous advantages in modern, multicultural Britain. Yet if it is to sustain itself, 'the firm' needs to continue to evolve."

Whether or not you agree, it is a good illustration of why Smith describes the status quo as "the politicians' monarchy – it serves their interests and not ours. The monarchy corrupts the culture of politics because the politicians end up seeing themselves as part of a state apparatus rather than the people's servants. [...] The media hasn't caught up with the fact that most people are indifferent to the royals."

But it's a giant leap from indifference to activism on an issue which fails to register in the national discourse. [...] *Republic* can rely on the support of only 14 Labour MPs, the Green MP and two Liberal Democrat MPs. [...]

Smith believes that 20 years ago he would have faced far greater hostility from the public for advocating a republic. "That's gone and it's down to the royal family's own scandals, which have stripped away the veneer of magic. Society has become a lot less deferential. The royals have become a part of the celebrity culture, and that's what sustains them."

That may be true, but neither is there the noisy antipathy towards the royals which surrounded the 1977 silver jubilee. "Fuck the Jubilee" was the rallying cry of the punk movement and God Save the Queen by the Sex Pistols its anthem. But [...] according to Mori founder Sir Robert Worcester, support for a republic has remained constant at about 19% since 1969 – except in the two weeks after Diana died, when it rose to 25% and then fell to 12% after the Queen broke her Balmoral silence on the tragedy. The Germans, the Spanish, the French and the Japanese have nailed the true point of interest in the royal wedding: it is a romantic fairytale made flesh and blood for a global audience.

## What is the special relationship behind the barbecue bonhomie?

Andrew Rawnsley, The Observer, 29 May 2011

The American president has certainly made an impression on Britain. The state visit has left us a country divided: split between the gushers and the gnashers. For the gushers, the Atlantic alliance has been forged anew in the glowing crucible of royal ceremonial and barbecued sausages. [...] To the gnashers, all the platitudes, the pomp and the ping pong were cheap confections of public relations which demeaned the host country. [...] If we cut through the cynicism of the gnashers and the sycophancy of the gushers, what did we learn about Britain and America?

The barbecue bonhomie could not entirely mask the underlying tensions, especially over the conduct of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Libya. We could also see, at their occasionally awkward joint news conference, that president and prime minister are not soul brothers. How could they be? One is a Tory from leafy Oxfordshire; the other is a Democrat from Chicago by way of Hawaii. Obama ignited the most spontaneous applause when he hailed both countries as places where citizenship was not based on ethnicity, but on a set of democratic ideals: "It is possible for the sons and daughters of former colonies to sit here as members of this great parliament and for the grandson of a Kenyan who served as a cook in the British army to stand before you as president of the United States." By contrast, David Cameron is the grandson of an English baronet who was descended from William IV.

Yet despite personal differences between the two men, they have quite a lot of points in common. The first priority for both is to sort out their domestic economies. [...] Both came to power as avowed sceptics about military intervention. [...] Both are pretty desperate for an exit from the war in Afghanistan. Both have staked a lot on the Arab Spring.

The phrase "special relationship" has become a cliché. Yet like most clichés, it contains a truth. The bonds between America and Britain are deserving of the adjective special. This goes beyond a common language, overlapping cultures, shared myths and an entwined history. After the obligatory jokes about the foolish war of 1812, during which we burnt down the White House, Obama observed that this is "one of the oldest and strongest alliances the world has ever known". He's not wrong. For Washington, Britain remains the most dependable of partners: the friend that instinctively reacts in a similar way to international crises and the first to call when the US is seeking to assemble a multi-national coalition. Of all the current tensions in the relationship, the biggest springs from American anxiety about the scale of the cuts to the British defence budget. For London, America remains the friend to turn to when serious things need doing. It was with Nicolas Sarkozy that David Cameron pioneered the idea of imposing a no-fly zone to prevent a massacre in Benghazi. But they had to have America with them to make it happen.

The history of this relationship has often been told in terms of the dynamics between the people at the top: Churchill & FDR, Jack & Mac, Ronnie & Maggie, Bill & Tony and, less happily, Tony & George. But this alliance has not endured for so long and through so many ups and downs because individual prime ministers and presidents have happened to hit it off or shared ideological agendas. It is because Britain and America have had and continue to have a coincidence of interests.

More than that, Obama spoke another truth when he rooted it in a shared commitment, imperfectly practised but sustained for many years, to liberty and democracy. At the news conference, he put it quite baldly: "The United States and the United Kingdom have a unique relationship and that is going to be consistent regardless of who the president and the prime minister is." He was telling David Cameron, standing by his side as this was said, that the British prime minister could fall out of a helicopter and it wouldn't make any substantial difference. Perhaps that wasn't terribly diplomatic. But it was right.

*USA Today*

June 5, 2011

Column: Candidate or not, ignore Palin if you dare

By Chuck Raasch

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

WASHINGTON — As Sarah Palin toured East Coast battlefields, historical monuments and Trumpworld, members of what Palin mocks as "lamestream media" were being asked two questions:

1. Why are you paying any attention to her?
2. Why aren't you taking her more seriously?

Those questions, coming from anti- and pro-Palin spheres, illustrate why the former Alaska governor, commentator and reality TV star is the most unconventional public figure since Ross Perot tinkered under the nation's hood in the mid-1990s.

The answer to the first question is easy. Palin is news. She draws media attention because she is as unpredictable as it gets in a world of show-voters and risk-avoiders.

Palin does not hand out the script beforehand — and might even be writing it as she goes along. It's unclear whether her bus is heading toward the White House or the bank. But while potential rivals — mostly middle-aged men in blue suits — follow well-marked trails through PACs to exploratory committees to formal presidential announcement, as Mitt Romney did Thursday, Palin hops on a bus and talks about fire in her belly.

Palin was, after all, the 2008 vice presidential nominee of her party. In any normal political year in the hierarchical, wait-your-turn Republican Party, she'd be an automatic top-tier candidate. Her critics — including McCain campaign insiders, some of whom came out of that election believing she was a narcissistic lightweight — contend she wilted in the '08 spotlight and would again. But they seem to forget Palin's effective introductory speech at the GOP convention, and how her addition to the ticket momentarily shot John McCain into the lead in polls in 2008 before the Wall Street meltdown, and before Palin was subjected to left-wing ridicule — some of it sexist and obscene — and to GOP establishment doubts.

She added to the doubts with missteps of her own, publicly questioning the McCain campaign's strategy of not contesting Michigan, and looking unprepared about basic questions, such as those about her reading habits, in an interview with then-CBS anchor Katie Couric. By the end of the campaign, she had become a liability to many independent voters who feared she was not ready to be president should something happen to McCain.

Some GOP advisers and pollsters who have worked with Republican insurgents in the past say they believe that, even as an undeclared possible candidate, Palin has done the best of anyone in the presidential field in describing how Republicans need to frame the 2012 election to have a chance of beating President Obama. The only way to win, they believe, is to go at Obama "frontally and unapologetically," in the words of one. Palin's mantra is fingernails on blackboards to the left, but it is music to Tea Party ears. She says the country needs smaller government, a president who will defend American exceptionalism, and leaders who believe we need to restore America, not transform it as Obama wants to do.

Palin has already had an impact on the 2012 race. Her bus tour upstaged Romney's formal candidacy announcement in New Hampshire. And Palin is in the spotlight as another potential Tea Party female candidate, Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann, is getting ready to announce whether she will run.

Question two is a little harder to answer because of Palin's hybrid politician-commentator-celebrity status. She adds to the confusion by doing things like reality shows. Yet anyone who knows anything about Republican primary politics — about how a few thousand energized voters in a multiple-candidate race can be the difference between first and also-ran — will take Palin seriously. Even as her overall job approval numbers tumbled over the winter, she still drew huge crowds in places such as Wisconsin, where the Tea Party squared off with the union left in state budget battles.

By virtue of Tea Party appeal and her ability to dominate a spotlight, Palin has assets that any of the announced candidates in the GOP field would love to have right now. [...]

*New York Times*. May 17, 2011  
Op-ed contributor  
Droit du Dirty Old Men  
By STEPHEN CLARKE

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

Paris

SINCE Sunday, when Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the head of the International Monetary Fund, was arrested on sexual assault charges in New York, French politicians have been loudly expressing their horror at his “violent” treatment at the hands of America’s criminal justice system. It must be a shock to them: the sight of a top French establishment figure being treated like an ordinary criminal is about as rare as a photo of the Queen of England in a bikini.

But they are not merely voicing their concern for an esteemed colleague; many of them are also thinking, “There but for the grace of God (or rather the grace of living in France and not the United States) go I.”

France may think it had a revolution, but in fact it just got a new, and even more powerful, elite. They believe themselves so indispensable to the running of the country that trying to topple one of them is a bit like threatening to shoot a prize racehorse for nibbling your lawn. You’re meant to shut up and let them nibble.

This is why the French establishment sees Mr. Strauss-Kahn — rather than the traumatized chambermaid the police say he attacked — as the victim. The same case would never have come out in the open in Paris. The woman would have been quietly asked whether she thought it was worth risking her job and her residence permit. She would have been reminded that it was her word against his, and frankly, whom would people believe? The witty, famous man with the influential friends, or the nobody?

French politicians are known to be serial seducers, and as a rule no one bothers them about it. It is widely accepted that a male politician can combine efficiency in his job with a tendency to leap into bed with as many people as possible. And maybe it’s true — the French eat a balanced diet and have lots of energy.

The danger is, however, that their reputation as “chauds lapins” (hot rabbits), to use the French term, can give them a sense of impunity. Surely it’s a thin line between thinking that because you’re powerful and famous, everyone will succumb to your charms, and assuming that anyone who resists is being unreasonable. By this logic, forcing yourself on an unwilling partner is only making her bow to the inevitable. It’s all very Louis XIV.

And it’s also a thin line between sexual impunity and legal impunity.

In 2004, Alain Juppé, a former prime minister, was convicted of corruption. He was given an 18-month suspended prison sentence and barred from public office for 10 years because, in the words of the judge, he had “betrayed the confidence of the people.” But he appealed and today is foreign minister, representing France on the world stage.

Jacques Chirac was implicated in the same scandal, but benefited from presidential immunity until 2007. Since then, all attempts to bring him to justice have stalled, and the whole affair is now treated as something of a running joke.

The most telling parallel with the Strauss-Kahn case is that of Roman Polanski. Whatever his talents as a filmmaker, he fled the United States to France in 1978 to avoid being sentenced for unlawful sex with a 13-year-old girl. When he was arrested in Switzerland in 2009, at the request of the American authorities, the whole of the French cultural establishment rose up to defend him. At this year’s Césars ceremony (the French equivalent of the Oscars), Mr. Polanski received an award for “The Ghost Writer,” which, to quote France’s most respected newspaper, *Le Monde*, “marked his return to the family after his legal troubles.” They made it sound like a speeding ticket. All of which leads me to my belief that even if Dominique Strauss-Kahn is convicted and has to serve time, he will someday return to France, publish his autobiography (which will, of course, be adapted for the big screen by Mr. Polanski) and eventually be made a government minister. Minister of gender equality, perhaps?

*Stephen Clarke is the author of “1,000 Years of Annoying the French.”*

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

*New York Times*  
Editorial  
May 17, 2011  
President Obama and the Arab Spring

It should be no surprise that the ferment in the Arab world has touched the Palestinians, whose promised two-state solution is no closer than ever. On Sunday, the anniversary of Israel's creation, thousands marching from Syria, Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank breached Israel's borders and confronted Israeli troops. More than a dozen people were killed; scores were injured.

According to The Times's Ethan Bronner, the protests were coordinated via social media, but they also appeared to have support from Lebanon and President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, who is eager to divert attention from his crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators.

Israel must defend its territory. But the protests and the casualties might have been avoided if credible peace negotiations were under way. Since President Obama took office, Israeli and Palestinian leaders have had just three weeks of direct talks. Last week, George Mitchell, Mr. Obama's Middle East envoy, quit.

There is blame all around: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who is scheduled to meet with Mr. Obama at the White House on Friday, has shown little interest in negotiations and has used the regional turmoil as one more excuse to hunker down. Arab leaders haven't given him much incentive to compromise. President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority wants a deal but seemed to give up after Mr. Obama couldn't deliver a promised settlement freeze.

President Obama has done far too little to break the stalemate. As he prepares to give a speech on Thursday on the Arab Spring, the White House signaled that he is unlikely to offer any new initiative to revive peace talks.

Frankly, we do not see how Mr. Obama can talk persuasively about transformation in the Arab world without showing Palestinians a peaceful way forward. It is time for Mr. Obama, alone or with crucial allies, to put a map and a deal on the table. The two sides will not break the impasse by themselves.

This is a singular moment of great opportunity and challenge in the Arab world. The United States and other democracies cannot dictate the outcome but must invest maximum effort and creativity to help shape it. There is no one-size-fits-all doctrine for dealing with disparate countries. The United States and its allies are right to balance values and strategic interests.

Still, Mr. Obama can use the speech to articulate principles that Arab countries should follow as a condition of Western economic and political support: democratic elections, free markets, peaceful relations with neighboring states — including Israel — rights for women and minorities, the rule of law.

He should press American allies to lay out similar principles when the Group of 8 industrialized nations meets this month in France and back them up with clear offers of support. The United States and its allies must help Tunisia and Egypt — their struggles have inspired the region — weather severe economic problems, providing debt relief, trade and access to international financial institutions. Civil society groups need support.

President Obama raised great hopes in 2009 when he spoke in Cairo about "a new beginning" with the Muslim world. The glow has faded. He has another chance this week to bolster this country's image and to help support democratic change in the region. Reviving the peace process must be part of that effort. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict wasn't central to protests in Egypt, Libya or Syria. But as Mr. Assad proved, it is still a far too potent weapon for autocrats and extremists.

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

*New York Times* (Politics)  
May 31, 2011  
**A Political Revival for Ralph Reed**  
By **ERIK ECKHOLM**

LADY LAKE, Fla. — Ralph Reed turns 50 this month, but as he roused a crowd of retirees here with talk of restoring Christian values and bringing down President Obama, he still looked like the boy wonder who appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1995, named “The Right Hand of God” for building the Christian Coalition into an electoral juggernaut.

The standing ovation the other day at a meeting of the Tri-County Tea Party in central Florida was just one sign that Mr. Reed, who has formed a new group with national aspirations called the Faith and Freedom Coalition, is escaping the political purgatory that even many Republicans had predicted and may be gaining some traction as he seeks to emerge as a player in the 2012 campaign. IN 2006, in his first bid for elective office, Mr. Reed suffered a humiliating loss in the Republican primary for lieutenant governor of Georgia, dogged by embarrassing revelations about his close business ties to Jack Abramoff, the lobbyist who went to prison for influence peddling and defrauding Indian tribes.

But the ensuing five years have been a political eternity, with the election of Mr. Obama, the rise of the Tea Party and last year’s conservative victories that have whetted Republican appetites for more. In that time the public-relations savvy Mr. Reed, who once said a factor in his decision to locate his consulting firm in Atlanta was that the city was the headquarters of CNN, has kept an unusually low profile.

Hardly bashful these days, Mr. Reed suggests that his party needs him. He said that “a couple good friends, fairly senior in the party” told him, “You need to do something.” They said, “Since you left the Christian Coalition, we haven’t had a lean, mean operation focused on the grass roots.”

Mr. Reed is pursuing these grand, some say grandiose, plans with a nonprofit group that he has described as “a 21st-century version of the Christian Coalition on steroids.” As the name implies, the Faith and Freedom Coalition hopes to rope in a broader constituency. His “sweet spot,” he says, is the millions of people who were fired up by the fiscal concerns of the Tea Party and share the cultural values of evangelicals.

“That’s our market,” he added.

The coalition’s red, white and blue logo is reminiscent of the Christian Coalition’s. The new group is holding its second annual conference in Washington on Friday and Saturday, conjuring memories of the “Road to Victory” events that the Christian Coalition held in the capital every year.

As with the Christian Coalition, this group’s conference roster includes nearly all the likely contenders for the presidential nomination, including former Gov. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, former Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, Herman Cain, a retired businessman, and Representative Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, as well as a famous almost-candidate, Donald Trump. There will also be evangelical leaders like Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, and establishment Republicans like Speaker John A. Boehner and Reince Priebus, the Republican National Committee chairman.

“Ralph is rebuilding his image,” said Matt Towery, a columnist and pollster in Atlanta who formerly managed Newt Gingrich’s Congressional campaigns. “How powerful will he be? We have no way of knowing, but he’s very clever and has the talent and connections to reinvent himself.”

Many of the retirees gathered here could not even recall who Ralph Reed was, let alone ponder his past. But they loved his message. Weaving together themes of the Tea Party and evangelical Christians, he called the debt crisis a sign that the country has lost sight of its founding moral principles. He said that by working together, fiscal and cultural conservatives can “begin the process of turning the country around.”

“Our goal for 2012 is to build a file of 29 million conservative voters,” he said, describing to cheers the political “ground game” he is best known for, now souped-up with Internet technologies. “We’ll e-mail them, we’ll call them, we’ll knock on their doors and, if necessary, we’ll drive them to the polls.”

[...]

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
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PROGRAMME

*New York Times.*  
Op-Ed Contributor  
May 21, 2011  
Not Going to the Chapel,  
By RICH BENJAMIN

I PICKED up my jangling cellphone one recent Saturday to hear the elated voice of Zachary, my longtime buddy and college classmate. "I just proposed to Caroline," Zach announced, inviting me to the wedding and angling to plot logistics. "So when are you flying in?"

"Oh, I'm not coming to your wedding," I said.

It's true. I'm boycotting all heterosexual weddings.

How utterly absurd to celebrate an institution that I am banned from in most of the country. It puzzles me, truth be told, that wedding invitations deluge me. Does a vegan frequent summer pig roasts? Do devout evangelicals crash couple-swapping parties? Do undocumented immigrants march in Minuteman rallies?

Heterosexual ladies and gentlemen, please. Don't mail me that wedding invitation. It's going straight to the bin.

I'm not a gay-rights activist. Given the choice between a round of golf and a "discrimination teach-in," I'll take the golf. Back in college, when I was asked to take part in a protest, I declined because it conflicted with Uncle Duke Day, an annual keg and marijuana bash.

But now I'm a conscientious objector to all heterosexual weddings. It's less activism than common sense. Why should I financially subsidize and emotionally invest in a ritual that excludes me in all but five states (and the District of Columbia)?

A poll last month showed Americans are split on same-sex marriage. A narrow majority, 51 percent, supports it, while 47 percent do not. Though Zach falls into that slim majority, he scolds me for being "peevish." He says he resents me for blowing off his special day, for putting political beliefs ahead of our friendship and for punishing him for others' deeds. But screaming zealots aren't the only obstacles to equal marriage rights; the passivity of good people like Zach who tacitly fortify the inequality of this institution are also to blame.

They're proof of a double standard: Even well-meaning heterosexuals often describe their own nuptials in deeply personal terms, above and beyond politics, but tend to dismiss same-sex marriage as a political cause, and gay people's desire to marry as political maneuvering.

What many straight people consistently forget is that same-sex couples aren't demanding marriage to make a political statement or to accrue "special rights." When I ask my gay friends why they wish to marry, they don't mention tax benefits. They seek marriage for the same personal reasons that straight people do: to share life's triumphs and trials with their beloved, to start a family, to have the ability to protect that family, and to celebrate their loving commitment with a wedding.

I call on all gay people to join my boycott of straight weddings this summer, regardless of where their straight loved ones stand. Yes, our boycott may bruise some feelings. But then again, our inability to participate in this institution is hurtful and bruising, too.

In recent years, many straight people have admirably pledged not to get married until gay people have the right to do so nationwide. I can't ask friends like Zach to cancel their weddings, but I expect them to at least understand why I won't attend. Straight friends and family need to accept their wedding invitations as collateral damage to exclusionary marriage laws. They should feel the consequences of this discrimination as sharply as we do.

*Rich Benjamin is the author of "Searching for Whitopia: An Improbable Journey to the Heart of White America."*



*New York Times*

U.S.

February 9, 2011

Counting by Race Can Throw Off Some Numbers

By SUSAN SAULNY

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

The federal Department of Education would categorize Michelle López-Mullins — a university student who is of Peruvian, Chinese, Irish, Shawnee and Cherokee descent — as “Hispanic.” But the National Center for Health Statistics, the government agency that tracks data on births and deaths, would pronounce her “Asian” and “Hispanic.” And what does Ms. López-Mullins’s birth certificate from the State of Maryland say? It doesn’t mention her race.

Ms. López-Mullins, 20, usually marks “other” on surveys these days, but when she filled out a census form last year, she chose Asian, Hispanic, Native American and white.

The chameleon-like quality of Ms. López-Mullins’s racial and ethnic identification might seem trivial except that statistics on ethnicity and race are used for many important purposes. These include assessing disparities in health, education, employment and housing, enforcing civil rights protections, and deciding who might qualify for special consideration as members of underrepresented minority groups.

But when it comes to keeping racial statistics, the nation is in transition, moving, often without uniformity, from the old “mark one box” limit to allowing citizens to check as many boxes as their backgrounds demand. Changes in how Americans are counted by race and ethnicity are meant to improve the precision with which the nation’s growing diversity is gauged: the number of mixed-race Americans, for example, is rising rapidly, largely because of increases in immigration and intermarriage in the past two decades. (One in seven new marriages is now interracial or interethnic.)

In the process, however, a measurement problem has emerged. Despite the federal government’s setting standards more than a decade ago, data on race and ethnicity are being collected and aggregated in an assortment of ways. The lack of uniformity is making comparison and analysis extremely difficult across fields and across time.

Under Department of Education requirements that take effect this year, for instance, any student like Ms. López-Mullins who acknowledges even partial Hispanic ethnicity will, regardless of race, be reported to federal officials only as Hispanic. And students of non-Hispanic mixed parentage who choose more than one race will be placed in a “two or more races” category, a catchall that detractors describe as inadequately detailed. A child of black and American Indian parents, for example, would be in the same category as, say, a child of white and Asian parents.

The new standards for kindergarten through 12th grades and higher education will probably increase the nationwide student population of Hispanics, and could erase some “black” students who will now be counted as Hispanic or as multiracial (in the “two or more races category”). And reclassifying large numbers of white Hispanic students as simply Hispanic has the potential to mask the difference between minority and white students’ test scores, grades and graduation rates — the so-called achievement gap, a target of federal reform efforts that has plagued schools for decades.

“They’re all lumped together — blacks, Asians and Latinos — and they all look the same from the data perspective,” said Daniel J. Losen, a policy expert for the Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, referring to the Department of Education aggregation. “But the reality is much different. There are different kinds of discrimination experienced by these subgroups.”

“It’s a big problem for researchers,” Mr. Losen continued, “because it throws a monkey wrench in our efforts at accountability, student tracking and the study of trends.”

Education officials say the changes will more accurately reflect how Americans see themselves.

The standards were also devised to save schools time and money. If schools were to report on every possible racial and ethnic combination to the federal authorities, there would be dozens of possibilities. It is simply easier to call students “two or more races.”

[...]

*New York Times*  
The Opinion Pages  
June 3, 2011  
When Teachers Talk Out of School  
By JONATHAN ZIMMERMAN

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

IN 1927, a schoolteacher in Secaucus, N.J., named Helen Clark lost her teaching license. The reason? Somebody had seen her smoking cigarettes after school hours. In communities across the United States, that was a ground for dismissal. So was card-playing, dancing and failure to attend church. Even after Prohibition ended, teachers could be dismissed for drinking or frequenting a place where liquor was served.

Today, teachers can be suspended, and even fired, for what they write on Facebook.

Just ask Christine Rubino, the New York City math teacher who may soon be dismissed for posting angry messages about her students. Last June, just before summer vacation began, a Harlem schoolgirl drowned during a field trip to a beach. Ms. Rubino had nothing to do with that incident, but the following afternoon, she typed a quick note on Facebook about a particularly rowdy group of Brooklyn fifth graders in her charge.

“After today, I’m thinking the beach is a good trip for my class,” she wrote. “I hate their guts.” One of Ms. Rubino’s Facebook friends then asked, “Wouldn’t you throw a life jacket to little Kwami?”

“No, I wouldn’t for a million dollars,” Ms. Rubino replied. She was pulled from the classroom in February and faced termination hearings; the case is now with an arbitrator.

Ms. Rubino’s online outburst was only the latest example of its kind. In April, a first-grade teacher in Paterson, N.J., was suspended for writing on her Facebook page that she felt like a “warden” overseeing “future criminals.” In February, a high school English teacher in suburban Philadelphia was suspended for a blog entry calling her students “rude, disengaged, lazy whiners”; in another post, she imagined writing “frightfully dim” or “dresses like a streetwalker” on their report cards. Such teachers have become minor Internet celebrities, lauded by their fans for exposing students’ insolent manners and desultory work habits. Their backers also say that teachers’ freedom of speech is imperiled when we penalize their out-of-school remarks.

But these defenders have it backward. The truly scary restrictions on teacher speech lie inside the schoolhouse walls, not beyond them. And by supporting teachers’ right to rant against students online, we devalue their status as professionals and actually make it harder to protect real academic freedom in the classroom.

Last October, a federal appeals court upheld the dismissal of an Ohio high-school teacher who had asked students to report about books that had been banned from schools and libraries. The exercise wasn’t in the official curriculum, and parents had complained about their children reading some of the banned books. [...]

Meanwhile, in Wisconsin and elsewhere, state legislatures are moving to restrict or eliminate teachers’ collective bargaining rights. That means unions will have a more difficult time defending teachers’ freedom of speech.

So the rest of us need to make a fresh case for why teachers should have this freedom. And the answer starts, paradoxically, with the limits they should impose on themselves.

All professionals restrict their own speech, after all, reflecting the special purposes and responsibilities of their occupations. A psychologist should not discuss his patients’ darkest secrets on a crowded train, which would violate the trust and confidence they have placed in him. A lawyer should not disparage her clients publicly, because her job is to represent them to the best of her ability.

And a teacher should not lob gratuitous barbs at her students, which contradicts her own professional duty: to teach the skills and habits of democracy. Yes, teachers have a responsibility to transmit the topics and principles of the prescribed curriculum. But they also need to teach democratic capacities — including reason, debate and tolerance — so our children learn to think on their own. [...]

Jonathan Zimmerman, a professor of education and history at New York University, is the author of *Small Wonder: The Little Red Schoolhouse in History and Memory*.

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
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*New York Times* - June 2, 2011 (Technology Section)  
**E-Mail Fraud Hides Behind Friendly Face**  
By **MATT RICHTEL** and **VERNE G. KOPYTOFF**

SAN FRANCISCO — Most people know to ignore the e-mail overture from a Nigerian prince offering riches in exchange for a bank account number. That is a scam, plain to the eye.

But what if the e-mail appears to come from a colleague down the hall? And all he asks is that you add some personal information to a company database?

This is spear phishing, a rapidly proliferating form of fraud that comes with a familiar face: messages that seem to be from co-workers, friends or family members, customized to trick you into letting your guard down online. And it has turned into a major problem, according to technology companies and computer security experts.

On Wednesday, Google disclosed that it had discovered and disrupted an effort to use such pinpoint tactics to steal hundreds of Gmail passwords and monitor the accounts of prominent people, including senior government officials. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Thursday that the F.B.I. would investigate Google's assertion that the campaign originated in China.

Such tactics were also used in an attack on a company called RSA Security, which security experts say may have given hackers the tools to carry out a serious intrusion last month at Lockheed Martin, the world's largest military contractor.

The security specialists say these efforts are a far cry from more standard phishing attempts, which involve spraying the Internet with millions of e-mails that appear to be from, say, Citibank in the hope of snaring a few unfortunate Citibank customers. Spear phishing entails sending highly targeted pitches that can look authentic because they appear to come from a trusted source and contain plausible messages.

As such, the specialists say, the overtures are becoming very difficult for recipients to detect.

"It's a really nasty tactic because it's so personalized," said Bruce Schneier, the chief security technology officer of the British company BT Group. "It's an e-mail from your mother saying she needs your Social Security number for the will she's doing."

Mr. Schneier said the attacks are more like a traditional con game than a technically sophisticated intrusion. "This is hacking the person," he said. "It's not hacking the computer."

Symantec, the computer security firm, said it intercepted around 85 targeted attacks a day in March, including efforts to steal personal information through phishing or with links to nefarious software that could ultimately expose corporate files. The only month with more attacks was March 2009, when there was a surge that coincided with a G20 summit meeting.

Symantec said the most common targets were government agencies and senior managers and executives; the phishing of such big game is commonly referred to as "whaling." Manufacturing firms were the targets of 15.9 percent of the attacks, compared with 8 percent for the financial sector and 6.1 percent for technology companies, Symantec said. Hackers taking aim at corporations are often seeking new product designs and may focus on engineers at a defense contractor, for example, to get data they can sell on the black market.

Enrique Salem, Symantec's chief executive, gave the example of an e-mail sent to the head of a company that appears to be from the Internal Revenue Service. The message raises questions about the tax implications of an acquisition, and the chief executive passes the message to others inside the company. Someone opens the attachment, giving the attacker access to the company's internal network. [...]

*New York Times* - Magazine  
June 3, 2011  
A Theory of Conspiracy Theories  
By BILL KELLER

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

*Dear Mr. Keller: Last night on the "PBS NewsHour," they had a story about some Los Angeles Times reporters who uncovered corruption in a nearby, small city in California. The newspaper eventually received a Pulitzer Prize. That is what you can have if you will talk with me. Within one hour, I will convince you and your staff that Lee Oswald did not assassinate President Kennedy. Then, I will give you the evidence for the real killers, and how the cover up could be perpetrated. It is a great story, fully documented and supported with facts, many from the Warren Commission itself!!*

That e-mail landed a few weeks ago. Even if you are a card-carrying member of the reality-based community, even if you regard the liberal use of exclamation points as a symptom of emotional instability, there is a little voice, a very, very little voice, that whispers, in the few seconds before you push "delete": "What if he's right? There's always been something fishy about that assassination. What if the e-mail I am reflexively sending to the trash file is the story of a lifetime?"

Humans live along a continuum from doubt to faith. Wander far enough in the direction of faith and you reach the land of Nostradamus and of the Rapture (recently postponed). Wander too far in the other direction, past cynicism, through misanthropy, and you get to more or less the same zone of credulity: Osama bin Laden isn't dead, President Obama isn't American, global warming is a hoax. Recently we have pivoted from one conspiracy theory (the plot to hide our president's foreign birth) to another (the plot to frame Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the French banker and Socialist candidate-in-waiting known by his monogram and for his predatory eye for women). More than half of the French people surveyed in the immediate aftermath of D.S.K.'s arrest told pollsters that he was set up. This belief was held by men and women, by the most educated and the least. Among Socialists — whose ideology might suggest a little empathy for a working-class African immigrant charging assault by a rich, powerful capitalist — an astounding 70 percent believed their party darling was the real victim. People who would happily accept the label "intellectual" were quick to surmise that the scandal was somehow cooked up by President Nicolas Sarkozy (with the help of French-hating Americans) to bring down a rival on the left.

The birther controversy might be written off as a fever of racial bigotry and right-wing paranoia. But the D.S.K. case was a useful reminder that evidently rational people, educated and skeptical, liberal or conservative, can fall for beliefs that seem far-fetched at best. Think of Gore Vidal nursing the idea that 9/11 was part of a Bush administration plot to justify oil-field conquest. Or consider that Vidal's nemesis on the right, the late William F. Buckley Jr., was once enticed by a theory that F.D.R. was complicit in Pearl Harbor. Oliver Stone, Michael Moore and Norman Mailer have all dabbled in dark intrigues, too.

And then there is Naomi Wolf, the author and feminist, who detected ominous "geopolitics by blackmail" in the coincidence that three antagonists of the establishment — Eliot Spitzer, Julian Assange and Strauss-Kahn — were sidelined by sex charges. [...] Hmm.

Richard Hofstadter, whose writings long dominated the field of conspiracy studies, hypothesized that conspiratorial thinking — what he called "the paranoid style" — festered on the political margins and often contained an anti-intellectual streak. More recent scholarship by academics like Mark Fenster, Peter Knight and Robert Goldberg suggests that conspiracy theories do not come from a particular personality type, I.Q. stratum or dispossessed fringe; they erupt wherever unfathomable news collides with unshakable beliefs.

That is what happened in France, argues Bernard-Henri Lévy, the philosopher-pundit who has been a fierce defender of Strauss-Kahn. Lévy says he does not believe his friend is the victim of a plot — just an American rush to judgment — but he thinks he understands why so many of his countrymen smell a conspiracy. "People begin to believe in a plot, to model conspiracy theories, when they are staggered, literally staggered, clobbered by astonishment," he told me. [...]

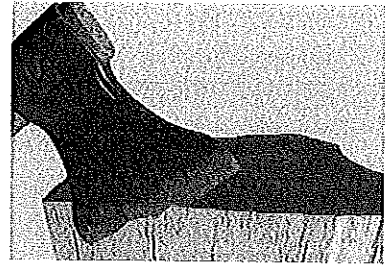
Bill Keller is executive editor of *The New York Times*.

## Columns

### Economic Outlook: Is Osborne cutting too hard, or not enough?

David Smith, *The Sunday Times*, 29 May 2011

The debate over the government's economic policy is intensifying, and taking a surprising turn. On one side there are those on the left, who say George Osborne is scuppering the recovery with his spending cuts. That is the predictable attack.

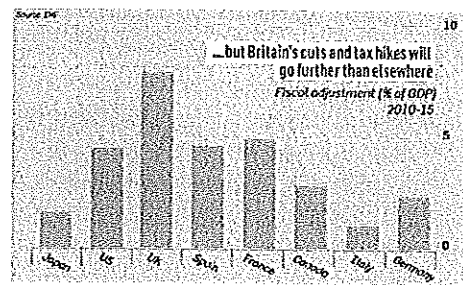


On the other side is a very different kind of charge. This is that the chancellor is guilty of misrepresenting his machismo. Far from wielding the axe with abandon, his right-wing critics say he is barely inflicting a scratch on an overblown state. Worse, they say, Britain is not cutting any more than mainstream governments elsewhere, including those on the Continent.

So which is it? Is Osborne cutting too fast or not fast enough? The Office for National Statistics' second estimate of GDP in the first quarter, as expected, left the rise in GDP unchanged at 0.5%, following the 0.5% fall in the fourth quarter of last year. [...] There is a case that January's Vat hike contributed to the exceptional first-quarter weakness in consumer spending [...]. There is no case yet for the argument that spending cuts are killing the economy.

What about an apparent change of heart by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD)? Its twice-yearly Economic Outlook endorsed the government's plans, saying "the current fiscal consolidation strikes the right balance and should continue in line with the medium-term plan to eliminate the deficit", but its chief economist, Pier Carlo Padoan, appeared to suggest the government should go slow on cuts if growth is weak. Weak growth means weaker tax revenues and higher spending on unemployment benefits. If, in spite of these, the chancellor tried to stick to firm deficit targets, he could make things worse. [...]

Yet, the OECD appeared to offer some support for the view that Britain's cuts are not that exceptional. It compared reductions in the projected budget balance (the deficit) in member states between 2009 and 2012. Easily the biggest were the crisis-hit economies of Greece, Ireland and Portugal, plus Spain [...]. Britain's projected deficit cut is significant, about 3% of GDP. That, however, is not much more than Italy and France, neither of them natural big cutters. [...]



This highlights criticism of the cuts by some commentators, that they have been sold as much tougher than they are. Certainly, the coalition has been unsubtle in its warnings about the tough times ahead.

There are two problems with these comparisons, however. One is that the ratio of public spending to GDP is not a good measure of the fiscal pain being inflicted. [...]

The other problem is that Britain's cuts go well beyond 2012, and only really begin this year, 2011-12. The International Monetary Fund compared planned fiscal tightenings in eight economies over 2010 to 2015 — Britain, America, Germany, Japan, France, Italy, Canada and Spain — and found Britain's tax rises and spending cuts, nearly 8% of GDP, easily exceeded those of America, France and Spain (4% to 5%), Canada (3%), Germany (2.5%), and Japan and Italy (less than 2%).

The spending cuts, far from being a scratch, are significant. Revised calculations from the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that over the four years from 2010-11 to 2014-15, real departmental spending will fall 11.7%. Take out the protected areas of health and overseas aid and departmental cuts are even larger. Overall government spending will fall 4% in real terms over that four-year period. This does not sound much, but includes a sharply rising debt interest bill. It is also unusual. In only eight years since 1948 has spending on this measure fallen, and never more than two years in a row. This four-year squeeze will break historical precedent.

Will it kill the recovery? I say not, but this is an uncomfortable time for the government. Barely more than a month into his four-year programme of cuts, Osborne cannot change course. [...] The chancellor is known for occasionally having spent time on yachts. Any sailor knows that if you drift too much you get into trouble.

Huffpost Politics

Amy Siskind, President and Co-Founder of The New Agenda

Top 10 Reasons Palin Should Run for President

Posted: 06/ 3/11 08:11 AM ET

- 1) Our country has yet to elect a woman president -- a national embarrassment! Almost every country in Europe and Latin America; along with India, Israel, New Zealand, Canada, China, Pakistan, Rwanda and many other countries have been led by a woman. The UN cites: "The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women..."; then goes on to rank the U.S. 75th for women's representation in government (great news, we're tied with Turkmenistan). It is time we move forward as a country and elect a woman president!
- 2) Left to their own devices, neither party will run a woman -- in 2008, Hillary was not only betrayed by the 'Senate Boys Club', but the DNC allowed overt sexism to hurt her chances (acknowledged by Howard Dean after she dropped out). The GOP Establishment continually discourages Palin (and Bachmann) from running. For a women of either party to become president, she'll need to take a non-traditional, circuitous route. Since women are brought up to be 'good girls' the moxie and bravery to buck the system is rare. Palin has it.
- 3) A generation of girls will see politics as a possibility -- over the past decade, an alarming trend has developed on campus: college women are less likely to seek out positions of power. Not only avoiding politics, but also corporate America. One Ivy League woman told me her take-away freshman year on career paths for women was: "social work or medicine - you know, women need to help people."
- 4) Women's representation in leadership is moving backwards -- from congress to Fortune 500 management, the percentage of women in leadership roles is decreasing. We're moving backwards! The best way to move forward again is to get women who support other women into positions of power.
- 5) Palin 'walks the walk' on supporting and mentoring women -- no one has done more to dismantle the GOP's white-male construct than Palin. Her 2010 efforts helped deliver the country's first Latina governor (Martinez-NM), first Indian-American woman governor (Haley-SC) and many new and returning women candidates.
- 6) Standing up to sexism -- Palin has faced a steady barrage of sexism since 2008, including yesterday when a sign was posted on her bus referring to her as a media "whore." In fact, women in power are frequently referred to as "sluts, bitches and whores." Unambiguously, sexism hurts female candidates. Which is why it is so important for Palin to continue to stand up against and smack down the low-lives who perpetrate sexism and misogyny, by running despite them!
- 7) Women's voices (and faces) are evaporating -- increasingly, the decisions which determine the future of our country are made predominantly or exclusively by men. Although women make the bulk of consuming decisions, there is not a single woman in the federal budget negotiations or leading a major economic agency in the Obama Administration. Geez, NASA couldn't put one female astronaut on Shuttle Endeavor's final mission?
- 8) Teaching girls to take risks (and pick themselves up and try again) -- our culture pressures teach girls not to take risks. That they must be perfect and not make mistakes. As a result, as women we are under-represented in high-paying jobs and top-level management positions. Palin running for office again would send a powerful message to take risks, keep trying and never give up. Truly empowering.
- 9) Like so many of us, Palin is a working mom -- she understands the quandary facing today's women, and how we are put in a no win situation. She's been a victim of gender stereotyping from the moment she stepped into the national spotlight: how dare she be a working mother?! (here, here and here). She'll bring that understanding to office.
- 10) Palin made her own way -- she was not the beneficiary of her father and his cronies, her fraternity, or the boys' network. She worked hard and did well based on her own abilities, and never forgot where she came from. This gives her an implicit understanding of the battles that the marginalized and underrepresented (including women and girls) must wage to advance.

Follow Amy Siskind on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/AmyTheNewAgenda](http://www.twitter.com/AmyTheNewAgenda)

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**A triumph for diplomacy, and for the monarchy**

*Telegraph View: The Queen dazzled in Ireland precisely because she is non-political.*

The Daily Telegraph, 20 May 2011

More than a quarter of a century has passed since the Anglo-Irish Agreement – which gave the Republic a say in the governance of Northern Ireland for the first time – was signed at Hillsborough Castle, to the fury of Ulster’s Loyalist community. They saw it as a betrayal, the beginning of a process that would see the Province sold down the river. Every Unionist MP  
5 resigned, triggering a mini-general election; an estimated 250,000 people gathered in protest outside Belfast City Hall; and Ian Paisley denounced the British government’s perfidy. But Irish republicans drew a different lesson from Hillsborough. For Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president then as now, it represented “the formal recognition of the partition of Ireland”.

Which of those two interpretations has been proved right at the end of a momentous week that  
10 saw the Queen, still the head of state of part of Ireland, given standing ovations by audiences in Dublin, where her host, the President of the Republic, was a former hard-line nationalist from Belfast’s Ardoyne?

It is fitting that Garret FitzGerald, one of the architects of the agreement, who died on Thursday, should have lived long enough to see this extraordinary denouement. His fellow  
15 signatory, Margaret Thatcher, was so taken aback by Unionist hostility that she later wondered if she had done the right thing. But she can now claim a role, often denied her, in a diplomatic and political enterprise that reached its apogee this week. Even if the sectarian divisions remain as deep as ever in the North, removing the enmity between the two nations will help heal those wounds over time, and further isolate those who would use violence in  
20 pursuit of a unity few today want nor need. Even Mr Adams, now a member of the Irish parliament, had to concede on the BBC yesterday that the Queen’s visit had had a profound impact in the Republic. “I particularly was taken by [her] sincere expression of sympathy to all those who had suffered in the course of the conflict,” he said.

As the Irish broadcaster Sarah Carey observed on these pages yesterday, gestures and symbols  
25 matter in Ireland; so it was the Queen’s bow at the shrine to those killed in the Easter Rising of 1916 that particularly moved and impressed her Irish hosts. On top of that, her speech at Dublin Castle, the headquarters of British rule in Ireland when George V was the last monarch to visit in 1911, was as delicately nuanced a piece of diplomatic craftsmanship as she has ever delivered. It spoke to the residual sense of Irish victimhood which, while much  
30 diminished in recent years, persists, without directly apologising for past British mistakes. “We can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all,” said the Queen. We trust that Ireland grasps the simple truth in those words: the ghosts of the past should be allowed to fade as a modern, mature relationship between our two countries is built. The success of the visit was due most of all to the sheer indefatigability of the Queen herself.  
35 From the moment she arrived at Casement Aerodrome at noon on Tuesday, resplendent in emerald green, to her departure from Cork yesterday, she brought to bear all the experience of her 59 years on the throne. More than that, her stamina – and that of the Duke of Edinburgh, now approaching his 90th birthday – was remarkable. Given that the monarchy was, only 20 years ago, an institution in the middle of an “annus horribilis”, riven with matrimonial strife and with its hereditary principle under scrutiny as a new millennium approached, we can only  
40 marvel at its renaissance. The recent marriage of the future king to a girl from a middle-class family has been instrumental in this reconstruction, which will culminate next year with the Diamond Jubilee.

Politics

### Battered Nick Clegg poised for summer of 'noise'

*David Cameron is to consider a string of demands on health, education and tax policy from Nick Clegg in the wake of the Liberal Democrats' local election drubbing.*



By Melissa Kite, Deputy Political Editor / The Daily Telegraph / 07 May 2011

5 In a clear change of strategy for the Liberal Democrats, the Deputy Prime Minister has put "lofty" issues such as House of Lords reform on the back burner in favour of "bread and butter issues" which he believes are his only chance of reconnecting with voters. Panic-stricken Lib Dems are licking their wounds after the party suffered its worst set of results in council elections since the party was formed in 1988, while the referendum on moving to the Alternative Vote (AV) system, supported by Lib Dems, was lost by a huge margin. [...]

While Tory MPs insist they do not want to make fresh concessions to the Lib Dems, it is understood Mr Cameron is in listening mode and has said he will consider some or all of the proposals Mr Clegg has put to him in a bid to shore up the Coalition Government. These include:

10 \* Health reforms to be watered down and NHS reorganisation made into an "evolution not a revolution". Only GPs who want to run services will do so, with concessions announced before the summer parliamentary recess [...].

15 \* Education reforms to give more money to the pupil premium, a Liberal Democrat idea for poorer pupils to receive additional educational funding. Schools this year will get £430 for each poorer pupil they take – a much smaller sum than was first envisaged.

\* Income tax threshold to be raised to £10,000, a key Lib Dem manifesto commitment which also featured in the Coalition Agreement. Although this cannot be done until the next Budget at least, George Osborne could signal it in a statement in the coming months [...].

20 One senior Lib Dem official close to Mr Clegg said: "We have got to start making some noises. Loud noises. We have got to be seen delivering on issues that matter to people. We have not said enough on delivering on our promise to raise the tax threshold, putting money in people's pockets. It's health and schools we need to make a difference on. We need to show we are improving policy and stopping bad policy in these areas. We need some early wins from this process to be wheeled out before the summer recess. We have got to have wins the punters know about so we are going to do this with some fanfare."

25 The aim was to enable Mr Clegg to paint himself as "the saviour of public services" in the run-up to the next election, the insider said. Confirming that the party would push for policy changes, Norman Lamb, Lib Dem MP and chief parliamentary aide to Mr Clegg, said: "It's time for cool heads but we have obviously got to reflect on what's happened and learn the lessons. We have got to listen to the party. We have to communicate effectively what we are doing in Government. We should be reflective but resolute in making sure that the Government is effective."

30 However, Tory MPs said Mr Cameron should not offer concessions to the Liberal Democrats. John Redwood, the former Welsh Secretary, said: "I don't see any need to reopen the coalition agreement. There were lots of concessions in it for the Lib Dems. It's not the right spirit to see this as one party granting concessions to another. It should be about a group of ministers working together in the national interest. [...]" David Davis, the former Conservative minister, said the Lib Dems were "amongst the grubbiest and most dishonest political operators to be found anywhere in our democracy. [...]. We must not try to buy off Liberal discontent with a few more constitutional baubles. What we should do, rather, is remember that the electorate will reward or punish both Lib Dems and Conservatives solely on the basis of how well we perform as a government – no more, no less." [...]



## Why Ed Miliband should be the next Labour leader

*The New Statesman*, Leader, August 30, 2010

The Labour leadership contest has now officially begun with the clashes between the Milibands - as Ed attempts to define himself against David and the New Labour establishment [...].

Many of our readers despair of Labour and will never forgive the authoritarian tendencies of Tony Blair, or how he allowed the party to be drawn into a fatal and militaristic alliance with the neoconservatives of the Bush administration. Nor will they forgive the neoliberal market dogmatism that resulted in the British economy becoming so unbalanced and so over-reliant on reckless financiers. [...]

It takes time to recover from the trauma of defeat after 13 years in office. It takes time to understand how the party that preached "prudence with purpose" left government with the largest Budget deficit in our peacetime history. [...] But New Labour's obituary has been happily written during this campaign as all five candidates- the Milibands in particular - elaborate on their vision of a transformed party. Now, slowly, we are witnessing the first signs of renewal. There has been a preparedness to admit mistakes and ask painful questions about why so many of its natural supporters ended up feeling so betrayed by or isolated from Labour.

So far, of all the candidates, it is Ed Miliband who has been most prepared to challenge New Labour orthodoxies, to use a different kind of language. He advocates a Labour agenda that is confident, forceful and empowering, committed to greater freedom, social justice and above all else reducing inequality.

The primary task of the next Labour leader has to be to develop a political economy that addresses the fundamental inequalities and inequities that have blighted British society for so long - and which will only worsen as the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition's doctrinaire spending cuts begin to bite. To talk of tackling social mobility, as coalition ministers do, without addressing the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, is disingenuous. The fight for a more equal society has to become a priority again and Ed Miliband understands this. Witness his living wage campaign, his proposal for a high pay commission and his insistence on keeping the new top rate of tax for high earners. [...]

With the exception of Diane Abbott, he has been most robust in denouncing the Iraq war as a great wrong, a moral failure. He has placed civil liberties and the restoration of freedoms lost during Labour's 13 years in office at the centre of his campaign. On constitutional reform, he supports the Alternative Vote, if not full proportional representation, and is an instinctive pluralist. However, he needs to think harder about the relationship between the individual and the state and accept that we are grappling with not only market, but state, failure, too. [...]

Our endorsement of Ed Miliband is not a rejection of his brother [...]. David Miliband deserves his title of "front-runner". Despite his mistaken support for the catastrophic invasion of Iraq, the elder Miliband has the intellect, eloquence and experience to be Labour leader and prime minister. [...] He has been caricatured as a Blairite, but his call to abolish the charitable status of private schools in order to pay for free school meals for the poorest children in our society, and his support for a mansion tax, reflect his strong social-democratic credentials. [...] The elder Miliband remains the bookies' favourite, the best funded candidate, with the support of the New Labour establishment and much of the right-of-centre commentariat. For all of this, the race is open.

Voting begins in September and we urge all undecided MPs and MEPs, and Labour Party and trade union members, to vote for Ed Miliband. He is the "change candidate" who has the greatest potential to connect with a wider electorate and especially with those politically engaged young people, internationalist in outlook, who have lost faith in conventional Westminster politics but yearn for a more democratic, fairer and freer Britain. Labour needs a bold, charismatic, compassionate and visionary leader to renew the party and begin the journey back to government. Ed Miliband has shown us he could be that leader.

Scottish politics, THE ECONOMIST | May 12th 2011 | EDINBURGH

## Independence by stealth

*Alex Salmond has defied predictions. Can he do it again?*

CONFOUNDING all punditry, Alex Salmond, Scotland's first minister, led his Scottish National Party (SNP) to a stunning victory in the devolved Parliament's elections on May 5th. The SNP gained 23 seats to hold 69 out of 129—the first overall majority since the Parliament was created in 1999, and a feat once thought to be impossible under its proportional voting system. Mr Salmond, however, is in no rush to leverage his popularity into a bid to break away from Britain. And the kind of independence he might eventually seek could be much less of a break-up than many now imagine.

The result is certainly catastrophic for his unionist opponents. All three leaders of the other main Scottish parties—the Conservatives' Annabel Goldie, Labour's Iain Gray and the Liberal Democrats' Tavish Scott—swiftly announced that they would quit. The Lib Dems, tainted by their Westminster coalition with the Tories, were reduced from 17 seats to just five. While Labour fared least badly in terms of overall votes, it lost constituencies once considered to be safe and ended up with 37 seats, down from 44. The Tories slipped from 20 to 15.

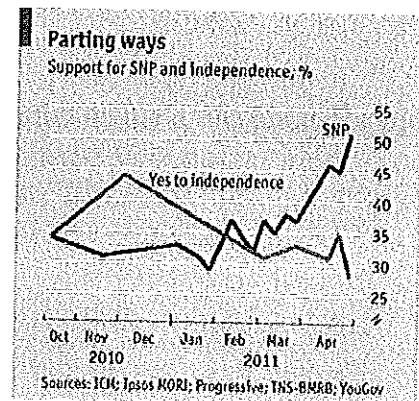
Was this a vote for leaving the union? Hardly. Neither independence nor the enhancements to devolution proposed in legislation currently wending its way through Westminster featured much in the campaign, which was dominated by public spending and the economy. Opinion surveys consistently suggested that support for independence was much lower than backing for the SNP (see chart).

Mr Salmond duly announced that he might delay the independence referendum his manifesto promised until as late as 2015. His immediate priority, he said, was to win further powers for the devolved institutions, particularly over corporation tax. He put his demands—also including early implementation of mooted borrowing powers, and devolving the collection of income from offshore renewable-energy schemes—to David Cameron. The prime minister is in a tricky position. Refusing the demands risks strengthening Mr Salmond's hand; concessions might suggest to Scottish electors that voting SNP pays dividends.

A devout unionist, Mr Cameron would be well-advised to regard this conundrum as the first skirmish in a long war with Mr Salmond over independence. He should also view current opinion polls as unreliable indicators of how Scots might eventually vote.

That is because the SNP has yet to define what it thinks independence would mean. Some matters, such as control over North Sea oil and gas revenues, are obvious; but other, equally important ones, such as whether an independent Scotland would merely share in the costs and command structures of the British armed forces, or have its own, are not. Mr Salmond is by instinct a gradualist, believing that Scottish sovereignty is most likely to be obtained bit by bit rather than in one go. He would probably prefer to pay for a share of some British functions, for example diplomacy and revenue collection, than instantly to set up separate ones.

James Mitchell of Strathclyde University has just completed a marathon set of interviews with SNP members. He says he was surprised by how relaxed both the leaders and members were about seeking "an ever-looser union" with Britain, rather than an abrupt severance. Mr Salmond's eventual vision of independence might look more like a big but comfortable extension of existing Scottish freedoms than the lonely, impoverished isolation his opponents depict. And as the election showed, he is not to be underestimated.



SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

Bagehot | Britain's feral press  
May 26th 2011 | The Economist

EVERY gang of rogues knows that, when it comes to agreeing an alibi, quality matters more than quantity. To a comical degree, that lesson is being ignored by the British press, as newspapers seek to justify reporting sex scandals involving the rich and famous, which became public knowledge after court injunctions were wrecked by campaigners on the internet and in Parliament.

5 The spring air has filled with excuses, as the press explains just why the public needs to know about alleged extramarital flings by Sir Fred Goodwin, an unpopular ex-bank chief, or Ryan Giggs, a popular footballer. Many of the alibis are weak. Taken as a whole, they are hopelessly contradictory. Sir Fred's sex life is funny, suggests the *Sun*, with the front-page banner headline: "Fred the Bed". It is a grave matter, intones the *Daily Mail*: perhaps his libido distracted him as he led the Royal Bank of  
10 Scotland to disaster, costing the taxpayer billions. If his injunction had held, nobody would have known to ask this "disturbing question". What hogwash: follow that logic and nobody should fly without full details of their pilot's marriage.

In a single issue on May 24th, the *Daily Mail* simultaneously suggested that Mr Giggs deserved exposure because his lucrative "brand" was underpinned by a "clean-cut, family-man image", because  
15 he was a notorious "Lothario" dogged by rumours of serial infidelity, and because his name had been leaked on Twitter, unfairly disadvantaging "traditional newspapers" subject to gagging orders that cannot be enforced on foreign internet sites.

Married celebrities who cheat on their wives are selling the public a lie, newspapers declare: that is why we must expose them. Come off it. If tabloids really believe the exposure of sexual hypocrisy is  
20 their moral mission, how come they also report on the sex lives of unabashed bed-hoppers?

Newspapers denounce privacy injunctions as an elitist tool open only to the wealthy. It's a fair point—and would be neatly addressed by granting ordinary citizens legal aid to sue newspapers. Legal aid for privacy and libel suits is provided in France (home to some of the world's toughest press laws): is that really what British editors want?

25 Some grander dailies have attacked privacy injunctions as a judicial assault on parliamentary sovereignty. When Parliament approved the Human Rights Act in 1998, says the *Daily Telegraph*, MPs intended that freedom of expression should trump privacy rights "especially—but not only—in matters of public interest." [...] Some are already snarling with triumph: "Anyone thinking of taking out a gagging order now knows what to expect," as the *Sun* put it this week. But beneath the bully's  
30 swagger, there is also fear.

In a candid 2008 speech on press freedom, Paul Dacre, editor of the *Daily Mail*, admitted what was really at stake: commercial survival. If mass-market papers are not allowed to write about scandal as well as dry public policy, he said: "I doubt whether they will retain their mass circulations, with the obvious worrying implications for the democratic process." Newspapers have other reasons for fear.

35 Fresh arrests were recently made by police investigating the alleged interception of voicemail messages on the mobile phones of the famous or newsworthy by gumshoes working for *News of the World* reporters. More arrests seem likely, and the widening of the phone-hacking scandal to other papers.

In a last-ditch defence, British hacks point to French counterparts who concealed what *le tout Paris* knew about Dominique Strauss-Kahn [...] and his creepy ways with women. That's the effect of French-style privacy laws, British journalists say, and they are half-right: French law chills investigative journalism and gives politicians the whip hand. But the worst French censorship is self-imposed, as journalists preserve access to the gilded, incestuous circles of the Paris elite.

45 In any case, the British government is not about to propose a privacy law, ministers say. With the current system of injunctions crumbling, a committee is being set up to review press regulation. "The government is in a blue funk, I don't think it has any idea what to do," says someone involved in the review.

**The King's Speech, a preposterous film but oddly shrewd about Britain**

The Economist / Jan 14th 2011 / Bagehot

DEEP in Britain's collective unconscious, it is said, a special place is reserved for dreams about the queen dropping round for tea—[...]. Small wonder, perhaps, that "The King's Speech", a film about King George VI, has sparked swooning adulation since opening at British cinemas this month. [...] Acclaim for "The King's Speech" cannot be attributed to narrative interest alone.

5 Once popularity reaches a certain pitch, it cannot be fully explained by examining its object: extreme public enthusiasm is often a form of narcissism. If British cinema-goers have taken this tale of a reluctant king to their hearts, it is because it faithfully reflects their sense of themselves. At the heart of the film lie two linked themes. One involves Britain's ideas of hierarchy, the other its wartime heroism and rejection of fascism. First, hierarchy. At a casual glance, the film could

10 pass for subversive. Its least attractive characters believe in grandeur based on birth or rank. They range from snooty members of an English amateur theatrical society (who snigger at Logue, an Australian, auditioning for Shakespeare) to the priggish Archbishop of Canterbury, appalled by Logue's lack of qualifications. Above all, Edward VIII is shown as unworthy: a bullying playboy, unmanned by dependence on ghastly Wallis Simpson.

15 In contrast, George VI, his wife and two young daughters are shown fulfilling what the original Bagehot called the English ideal of "a family on the throne". This leads to some moving scenes [...]. At other moments, the film wallows in sentimental anachronism. One preposterous scene has the king shuffling across a nursery floor in white tie and tails, impersonating a penguin for his daughters (in view of a nanny). In another, he celebrates a stammer-free speech by snogging his

20 wife and whirling his children about. Not that much is known of George VI's private life. But given that he died in 1952 and his daughter the queen seems pretty formal, it seems implausible that he cast protocol to the winds like a proto-Diana in trousers. Equally, for most of the film, Logue is shown using impertinence as a clinical tool, calling his royal patient "Bertie" or lounging on a throne to provoke the king's stutter away. In fact Logue's

25 real-life diaries show a more formal relationship. What is going on? A clue can be found near the climax. The buttoned-up king calls Logue "my friend". In return, Logue at last calls him "Your Majesty". The message is thumpingly clear: only once the king has shown he is Logue's equal in humanity has he earned the Australian's reverence. [...] This is a moment of conservative closure: a celebration of a very British doctrine

30 of meritocratic snobbery—the notion that deference is quite proper, as long as it is deserved. That grudging doctrine has its uses. Historically, Britain's insistence on earned respect arguably helped insulate the country from fascism. In much of Europe would-be tyrants spent the 1930s strutting about in black shirts and shiny boots on stages lit by searchlights. In Britain, Oswald Mosley recruited thousands to the fascist cause but—vitality—he was also seen as ludicrous. As

35 one Conservative MP noted acidly: "he is wearing riding breeches and riding boots though I cannot see any horse." In the film, Edward VIII is a flashy, selfish chap. When he praises Hitler (shown preening and ranting on a newsreel), it is no surprise. These themes come together in the climactic royal speech of the film's title, broadcast on the day war broke out. Audiences watch George VI—a man who did not seek the throne, wanting only to

40 raise his family in peace—reminding his subjects that Britain [...] had also sought to live in peace, until forced into war. This is the stuff of national myth-making: the undemonstrative king and his undemonstrative country provoked to painful duty by foreign tyranny. [...]

"The King's Speech" is at times uplifting and at other times absurd. But if you are British, or even just an admirer of Britain, it is a deeply flattering film. No wonder that it is proving so roaringly

45 popular.

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

**Washington Post  
National**

**Osama bin Laden killed in U.S. raid, buried at sea**

**By Scott Wilson, Craig Whitlock and William Branigin, Published: May 2**

Osama bin Laden was buried at sea Monday after U.S. forces raided his well-appointed hideout in Pakistan, shot him in a firefight in which at least one of his wives was used as a human shield, then spirited his body out of the country aboard a helicopter, U.S. officials said.

In a White House briefing Monday afternoon, John O. Brennan, President Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser, said it was "inconceivable that bin Laden did not have a support system" in Pakistan that allowed him to live comfortably with his family in a town north of the capital. He said U.S. officials are pursuing this with the Pakistanis, who were pointedly not informed about the raid before it took place.

Obama made one of the "gutsiest calls" of any president in deciding to go ahead with the raid based on his confidence — but only circumstantial evidence — that bin Laden was indeed living in the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, Brennan said. He said there were "absolutely" disagreements among Obama's advisers about that course of action.

Brennan described tense moments in the White House Situation Room on Sunday as Obama and his top aides monitored the raid "in real time" and "the minutes passed like days." When it became clear later that bin Laden was dead, he said, the president's reaction was, "We got him."

The death of the long-hunted al-Qaeda leader, who had eluded intensive U.S. efforts to capture or kill him after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks he ordered, triggered warnings Monday that his radical Islamist network or sympathizers could try to retaliate against Americans or U.S. interests.

It also served, U.S. officials said, to send a message to the extremist Taliban movement fighting to make a comeback in Afghanistan, where it had harbored bin Laden and al-Qaeda before being driven from power by U.S.-backed Afghan forces in November 2001. The message: Give up hope of defeating U.S. and NATO forces, renounce al-Qaeda and join the political process.

Bin Laden was killed early Monday in Pakistan (Sunday afternoon in Washington) in what officials described as a surgical raid by U.S. Special Operations Forces on his compound in Abbottabad, a garrison town 72 miles by road north of the capital, Islamabad. The raiding team reportedly was led by U.S. Navy SEALs.

Also killed in the raid were bin Laden's son Khaled, two brothers who were harboring him and one of his wives, officials said.

In a rare Sunday night address from the East Room of the White House, President Obama said a small team of U.S. personnel attacked the compound, where bin Laden had been hiding since at least last summer. During a firefight, the U.S. team killed bin Laden, 54, and took custody of his body in what Obama called "the most significant achievement to date in our nation's effort to defeat al-Qaeda."

At the White House early Monday afternoon, Obama said: "I think we can all agree this is a good day for America. Our country has kept its commitment to see that justice is done. The world is safer. It is a better place because of the death of Osama bin Laden."

Speaking at a ceremony to award Medals of Honor posthumously to two Korean War veterans, Obama added: "Today, we are reminded that, as a nation, there's nothing we can't do when we put our shoulders to the wheel, when we work together, when we remember the sense of unity that defines us as Americans." [...]

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV1 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME**

*The Washington Post*

**U.S. releases videos seized in bin Laden raid**

**By Greg Miller, Sunday, May 8, 2:38 AM**

The Obama administration on Saturday released five videos of Osama bin Laden that were seized at the compound where he was killed, part of a vast collection of data that U.S. intelligence officials said shows that bin Laden remained highly active in directing the terrorist group.

The trove of data from Pakistan reveals that “this compound in Abbottabad was an active command and control center for al-Qaeda’s top leader,” a senior U.S. intelligence official said in a briefing at the Pentagon. “Though separated from many al-Qaeda members, [bin Laden] was far from a figure-head.”

The videos provide glimpses of bin Laden in settings that are familiar and surreal. In one, a noticeably gray-bearded bin Laden huddles under a wool blanket and uses a remote control to flip through news footage of himself on a small television propped up on a broken desk. Another was described by the senior U.S. intelligence official as a previously unreleased “message to the American people,” in which bin Laden stands before a blue backdrop, wearing a gold robe and delivering a speech in which he “repeats the usual themes by condemning U.S. policy and denigrating capitalism.”

The administration did not release any audio from the segments or a transcript of what bin Laden said. The official said the government was reluctant to broadcast the messages on the videos or give al-Qaeda a propaganda platform after its leader’s death.

The decision to release the footage — and the choice of which segments to share from a broader collection in the possession of the CIA — appeared designed to provide new evidence that bin Laden was killed in the U.S. operation, and perhaps to present him in settings that might embarrass his followers or at least minimize his mystique.

The videos are part of a broader library of recordings that “would only have been in his possession,” said the U.S. intelligence official, who described other segments as fumbling “outtakes” from a terrorist leader who was “very interested in his own image. [...]

The CIA has created a task force involving at least nine other agencies, including the FBI and the Defense Department, that are likely to spend months combing through a collection that includes printed material, computer equipment, recording devices and handwritten documents, the official said. [...]

Already this week, the Department of Homeland Security issued a bulletin based on intelligence gathered from the bin Laden materials suggesting that al-Qaeda was plotting an attack on railways in the United States, perhaps to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Bin Laden was killed in a pre-dawn raid Monday in Pakistan by a team of U.S. Navy SEALs. His corpse was carried away by the assault force and later buried in the Arabian Sea.

The U.S. official said that DNA comparisons with samples taken from known relatives prove with near-perfect certainty that the man killed at the Pakistani compound was the al-Qaeda leader. The chance of a false positive from the DNA testing is “approximately one in 11.8 quadrillion,” the intelligence official said.

Perhaps the most intriguing of the videos released shows bin Laden, apparently squatting on the floor in a cold room, watching television news clips of himself. He is wearing a black stocking cap instead of his standard white headgear, and gripping a remote. On the screen is a menu of channels including al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya.

The camera zooms in on his face — his beard gray instead of dyed black — then pans back to show the al-Qaeda leader watching scenes of himself in familiar news footage: brandishing an automatic rifle, navigating a rocky trail.

The intelligence official said it was unclear when the video was recorded and that bin Laden’s beard was similarly gray when he was killed. [...]

*The Washington Post*

Politics

Republicans hope to spark political revival among evangelicals for 2012 race

By Karen Tumulty and Nia-Malika Henderson, Friday, June 3, 3:37 AM

Is it possible to revive the evangelical political movement into the potent voting bloc it once was? The answer to that question may help determine who wins the GOP presidential nomination next year, as well as whether it will be possible to defeat Barack Obama come November 2012.

The proposition will get one of its first tests this weekend. Nearly every one of the declared and all-but-declared Republican candidates will take the stage at a "conference and strategy session" in Washington for a new group that bills itself as a 21st-century version of the Christian Coalition.

But mobilizing and winning evangelical voters is a vastly different challenge from what it was when they emerged as a political force more than three decades ago. Today's is a far different political landscape even from 2004, when the bloc that would become known as "values voters" turned out in record numbers for George W. Bush, supporting him for reelection 4 to 1.

Long gone from the front lines are galvanizing leaders such as the Moral Majority's Jerry Falwell, who died in 2007, and the Christian Coalition's Pat Robertson. Today's pastors are more likely to focus on propagating the Gospel than turning out the vote.

But the potential for a renewal of the movement is there, Republican leaders say, thanks in part to the enthusiasm that conservative Christians have shown for the tea party movement. In a Pew Research Center poll last year, 42 percent of tea party supporters said they agree with the religious right.

Though there may be some tension with the libertarian elements of the tea party, many evangelicals see its emphasis on limited government and fiscal discipline as one that addresses their own yearning for a return to traditional values.

"What's likely to happen is what a lot of us have wanted to see happen for a long time — a social conservative movement that speaks to a broader set of issues but which never strays from the foundational issues of life and family and marriage," said longtime political operative Ralph Reed, who as a baby-faced 33-year-old leading the Christian Coalition in 1995 was dubbed "The Right Hand of God" on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Reed suffered a fall from grace and a defeat in his 2006 bid for Georgia lieutenant governor, hurt by his association with the scandals surrounding former lobbyist Jack Abramoff.

But he is back again as head of a new organization called the Faith and Freedom Coalition. Its gathering this weekend is scheduled to include a greater number of presidential contenders than showed up for the first debate last month in South Carolina.

### **Evangelical engagement**

White evangelicals have voted overwhelmingly Republican since the 1980s, and exit polls suggested they turned out overwhelmingly in favor of the GOP in last year's midterm contests. But their level of engagement has varied from election cycle to election cycle.

Many pastors and some of the leading evangelical organizations have in recent years soured on partisan politics.

In the nearly three decades that James Dobson led the Colorado Springs-based evangelical organization Focus on the Family, for instance, it had a large presence in the Republican Party.

But Jim Daly, who took the reins of the organization in 2005, has turned it in a new, less partisan direction. He has described "the idol of political power" as "one of the errors that we've made, to be forthright and honest."

"Christian leadership has become about the victory, and that's led to us becoming the predator and the world our prey. That's not very much a Christian doctrine," he said at a recent conference sponsored by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a think tank that focuses on religious issues. "I'm very concerned about the politicization of the faith. . . . I think being owned by a party is dangerous."

This new aversion to politics is particularly pronounced among younger evangelicals.

"Among the older generation, there was a comfortable conflation between faith and partisanship. To be a Christian meant to be a Republican," said Jonathan Merritt, a young evangelical leader whose father, Atlanta megachurch pastor James Merritt, is a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"What you're finding is not a new evangelical left, but you're finding a rise of political orphans." [...]

NOM:

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LANGUES VIVANTES  
LV2

PRÉNOM:

# The Grim Threat to British Universities

by Simon Head • Jan. 13, 2011

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jan/13/grim-threat-british-universities/>


SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

memorial service for Harold Macmillan, Oxford University, 1987

The British universities, Oxford and Cambridge included, are under siege from a system of state control that is undermining the one thing upon which their worldwide reputation depends: the caliber of their scholarship. The theories and practices that are driving this assault are mostly American in origin, conceived in American business schools and management consulting firms. They are frequently embedded in intensive management systems that make use of information technology (IT) marketed by corporations such as IBM, Oracle, and SAP. They are then sold to clients such as the UK government and its bureaucracies, including the universities. This alliance between the public and private sector has become a threat to academic freedom in the UK, and a warning to the American academy about how its own freedoms can be threatened.

In the UK this system has been gathering strength for over twenty years, which helps explain why Oxford and Cambridge dons, and the British academy in general, have never taken a clear stand against it. Like much that is dysfunctional in contemporary Britain, the imposition of bureaucratic control on the academy goes back to the Thatcher era and its heroine. A memorable event in this melancholy history took place in Oxford on January 29, 1985, when the university's Congregation, its governing parliament, denied Mrs. Thatcher an honorary Oxford degree by a vote of 738–319. It did so on the grounds that "Mrs. Thatcher's Government has done deep and systematic damage to the whole public education system in Britain, from the provision for the youngest child up to the most advanced research programmes."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Thatcher, however, disliked Oxford and the academy as much as they disliked her. She saw "state-funded intellectuals" as an interest group whose practices required scrutiny. She attacked the "cloister and common room" for denigrating the creators of wealth in Britain.<sup>2</sup> But whereas the academy could pass motions against Mrs. Thatcher and deny her an honorary degree, she could deploy the power of the state against the academy, and she did. One of her first moves in that direction was to beef up an obscure government bureaucracy, the Audit Commission, to exercise tighter financial control over the universities.

From this bureaucratic acorn a proliferating structure of state control has sprung, extending its reach from the purely financial to include teaching and research, and shaping a generation of British academics who have known no other system. From the late 1980s onward the system has been fostered by both Conservative and Labour governments, reflecting a consensus among the political parties that, to provide value for the taxpayer, the academy must deliver its research "output" with a speed and reliability resembling that of the corporate world and also deliver research that will somehow be useful to the British public and private sectors, strengthening the latter's performance in the global marketplace. Governments in

1/2



Britain can act this way because all British universities but one—the University of Buckingham—depend heavily on the state for their funds for research, and so are in a poor position to insist on their right to determine their own research priorities. (...)

Since the only major segment of the British economy that is both world-class and an intensive user of university research is the pharmaceutical industry, any UK government invitation to business “end-users” to take a more prominent part in the evaluation of academic research amounts to an invitation to the pharmaceutical industry to tighten its hold over scientific research in the UK. (...)

The central government, usually the UK Treasury, decides the broad outlines of policy—the amount of money to be distributed to universities for research and the definition of “research excellence” that determines this allocation. The government has also set up a special state bureaucracy, situated between itself and the universities, that handles the detailed administration of the system. This bureaucracy, which continues under the new coalition, goes by the unappealing acronym HEFCE, or the Higher Education Funding Council for England.<sup>2</sup>

The intervention of the state in the management of academic research has created a bureaucracy of command and control that links the UK Treasury, at the top, all the way down to the scholars at the base—researchers working away in libraries, archives, and laboratories. (...)

The system has therefore markedly shifted the balance of power in British universities from academics to managers. “Managers” is a category that now includes not only professional managers in central university administrations, but also those senior academics in university departments and divisions who have responsibility for submitting work to the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) panels. They have become hybrid academics/managers and they have to worry about pleasing the agents of HEFCE, whether they like it or not.

What is it like to be at the receiving end of the HEFCE/RAE system, especially for a young academic starting out on his or her career? Here is the testimony of a young and very promising historian teaching at one of the newer universities in the London area:

The bureaucratization of scholarship in the humanities is simply spirit-crushing. I may prepare an article on extremism, my research area, for publication in a learned journal, and my RAE line manager focuses immediately on the influence of the journal, the number of citations of my text, the amount of pages written, or the journal’s publisher. Interference by these academic managers is pervasive and creeping. Whether my article is any good, or advances scholarship in the field, are quickly becoming secondary issues. All this may add to academic “productivity,” but is it worth selling our collective soul for?

# Death or glory

*Modern warfare has made the role of war reporter more difficult and more dangerous than it has ever been. But, argues Max Hastings, the ultimate dilemma remains that between truth-hunting and thrill-seeking*

Mightn't it be rather dangerous?" William Boot demanded of the Daily Beast's foreign editor on being invited to report on an African civil war in *Scoop*, Evelyn Waugh's immortal 1938 comic novel of journalism. The passage continues: "Mr Salter smiled; to him, it was as though an Arctic explorer had expressed a fear that the weather might turn cold. Nothing to what you are used to in the country," he said. "You'll be surprised to find how far the war correspondents keep from the fighting."

Not all. The deaths in Libya a week ago of British filmmaker Tim Hetherington and American photographer Chris Hondros highlighted the peril inseparable from recording conflict. In recent years, the world's wars have claimed the lives of hundreds of journalists and photographers of many nationalities, whose luck ran out.

Especially in places such as Libya, where western diplomats and intelligence services struggle to secure reliable information, the contribution of the media is substantial. So, too, is its influence. Intervention in Bosnia, almost two decades ago, was forced upon reluctant western governments by the reports and images of carnage which correspondents filled television news bulletins and front pages. Their insistent demand, which strikes fear into every democratic president and prime minister, is: "Something must be done."

Likewise today, Nato policy towards Libya is powerfully affected by harrowing word portraits delivered daily by journalists in Misurata. Contrast these with Syria, where President Assad has slaughtered hundreds of civilians, not quite with impunity but with diminished impact on western public opinion because there are few pictures of his murders.

Again and again, since William Howard Russell created the modern culture of war correspondence with his 1854 Times reports from the Crimea, the actions of governments have been profoundly influenced, for

good or ill, by press narratives. A myth is still cherished by a few elderly American generals that the media lost them the Vietnam war. In truth, that was the soldiers' own achievement. But it is hard to overstate the impact on global opinion of, for instance, the image of a screaming Vietnamese child running naked down a road, hideously disfigured by napalm.

Likewise, footage of a Saigon police chief summarily executing a Viet Cong suspect during the 1968 Tet offensive converted millions overnight to a conviction that the US was supporting an unworthy ally. This prompts a bleakly ironic reflection: America's commitment to press freedom made possible the revelation of such atrocities. By contrast, communist North Vietnam's culture of secrecy ensured that its own crimes and massacres, of which there were many, received no matching attention.

The world glamorises war correspondents, perceived as the least discreditable element of an essentially racy trade. They fulfil a vital, and occasionally noble, function. But, as a former war reporter myself, I recoil from the mawkish sentimentality with which we enshrine our casualties. The deaths of Hetherington and Hondros prompted an orgy of emotional prose about sacrifices in the cause of truth, courage under fire and the compulsion to risk.

In my own youth on battlefields, I never doubted the worth of what we were trying to do. But nor did I suppose that I, or more than a tiny fraction of my colleagues, put ourselves in the line of fire in the cause of suffering humanity. We did it because we loved adventure and every ambitious journalist knows that conflicts offer the fastest and most glamorous path to a reputation.

In June 1982, aged 36, I remember gazing across the 400 yards separating the British and Argentine lines in the last hours before the Falklands war ended, contemplating the possibility of becoming "the first man into Port Stanley". With shameless egoism, I thought: "If I can walk up that road without being shot, I can bore everybody to

death for the next 30 years talking about it." So I did, and I have. I would never have been offered the editorship of the Daily Telegraph less than four years later, without the celebrity purchased by those 10 minutes of self-inflicted terror.

As for the casualties, one day during the 1973 Yom Kippur war, I returned briefly to Tel Aviv from the Golan Heights - in those

I knew that if I was wounded, saw my own flesh mangled and bleeding, I could never have faced a battlefield again

prehistoric, pre-satellite days, regular retreats to landlines were indispensable to file copy. In the hotel lobby I was amazed to meet Nicholas Tomalin, idol of my generation of journalists and a close friend. "What the hell are you doing here, Nick?" I demanded. "I'm 28 and trying to make a name. I have to do this. But you're an old man of 41 who's won all the prizes and has nothing to prove." Whatever answer he mumbled, I knew the truth: he had succumbed to the lure irresistible to most reporters, to put himself where the action was. Next day on the Golan, Tomalin was killed by a Syrian rocket. I thought very consciously: whatever I am doing at 41, I shall not still be sitting under barrages, and stuck to that resolve.

But an amazing number of war reporters go on and on. Robert Fisk and John Simpson are in their mid-60s. Both are fine journalists but I venture to suggest their motive for staying on the road, or rather under fire, remains the familiar one: wars confer an adrenalin rush such as no other story matches. When a conflict commands headlines, readers and viewers cling to every word a correspondent writes or broadcasts. Many writers and TV presenters contrive to do their business without braving

unmost danger "pieces off-camera" are often shot beside artillery positions, which while looking "warry" are relatively safe. But the bravest photographers and cameramen take reckless risks.

I have never forgotten watching - from a personally comfortable vantage point - a 1975 firefight beside Saigon's Newport Bridge. The BBC and ITV crews leapfrogged each other towards the action, each haunted by fear that their rivals might get closer shots. Don McCullin, a byword for courage as well as awesome photography, suffered a bad thigh wound in Cambodia in 1970. Yet as soon as he recovered, he went back for more. I knew that if I was once wounded, saw my own flesh mangled and bleeding, I could never have faced a battlefield again.

Every conflict attracts some of the best practitioners in journalism but also a parasitic body of "war junkies" - young men and women with doubtful qualifications and precarious freelance accreditation, there for the thrills.

Though I am cynical about the ethical commitment of war correspondents, so often intensely self-centred, I never doubt the brilliance and dedication of the good ones. Battle has inspired some peerless journalism, from the likes of Alan Moorehead in the second world war, James Cameron in Korea, David Halberstam and Neil Sheehan in Vietnam. Among the current generation of war reporters, I admire Christina Lamb of The Sunday Times as much as any, because she writes from a deep

war. I believe this fatally flawed his understanding of the challenges and difficulties. Good journalism is about trying to find out and publish things those in authority do not want known. When politicians and tycoons chide me about the shortcomings of our trade, which heaven knows are real enough, I respond that we might do a better job if they led to us

less frequently. We aspire to assemble jigsaw puzzles with many pieces missing. We can seldom, if ever, discover and publish "the truth": only fragments of truth.

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SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES

Langues vivantes – LV2

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ANGLAIS

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ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS

Exit Bin Laden

PROGRAMME

by David Remnick May 16, 2011 *The New Yorker*

When the news of [Bin Laden's] death finally came, it inspired a nightlong burst of triumphal celebration at Ground Zero, in Lafayette Park, and elsewhere. But, when the cameras turned to those who had lost family and close friends ten years ago, their quiet sense of relief was generally mixed with revived sorrow. For them, there was no glee, no illusion that the lost had been returned. And it was in that restrained spirit that the President called on the country to renew old decencies. "On September 11, 2001, in our time of grief, the American people came together," he said. "We offered our neighbors a hand, and we offered the wounded our blood. We reaffirmed our ties to each other and our love of community and country."

At the moment, however, it is hard to recall Obama's announcement without also recalling the bizarre political context of the days that immediately preceded it. In recent weeks, one of Obama's leading opponents in the polls for the 2012 election had been a swirly-haired hotelier and reality-show Barnum, who gets around in a black helicopter. Germophobic and handshake-averse, Donald Trump was an unlikely candidate, yet he won support for expressing doubt that the President was a U.S. citizen. Perhaps Barack Obama was born in Kenya; perhaps he was not the Christian he claimed to be but a secret Muslim. The global jihad that bin Laden sought to inaugurate did not create the xenophobia that buoyed Trump's ambitions, but it helped to electrify it. Here was another reminder of how bin Laden, by the jujitsu of terror, managed to bring out the worst not only in his admirers but in his adversaries.

No President, no matter how serious, can fully ignore the reality-show aspects of his country. Obama finally concluded that he had to make a concession to its lesser angels. He sullenly announced that he had prevailed on the State of Hawaii to release his "long form" birth certificate. Three nights later, at the White House Correspondents' dinner, he deflated Trump with stinging bonhomie. The truly astounding aspect of the dinner was not the political japery but Obama's knowledge that, as soon as the weather in northern Pakistan cleared, his own black helicopters would ferry a crew of Navy SEALs to bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad.

This serious and necessary act has led to serious and necessary questions: Was bin Laden under the control of Pakistan, our putative ally, and its intelligence agency, the I.S.I., or was he really able to hide just down the road from an élite military academy? Will the death of bin Laden in the wake of the anti-authoritarian uprisings of the "Arab Spring" deal a decisive blow to jihadist movements throughout the Middle East and South Asia? And, perhaps most urgently, will the death of bin Laden accelerate the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan? Afghanistan was one of the places where Al Qaeda was born, and where it was sheltered. But Al Qaeda long ago fled to all corners, changing its mailing address to franchise cells in Waziristan, Peshawar, southern Yemen, and housing projects in European cities. Bin Laden's death underscores the question of why we go on losing young men and women daily in the defense of an indefensibly corrupt government in Kabul.

The most stirring aspect of Obama's speech announcing bin Laden's death was its sobriety, its refusal of "Mission Accomplished" theatrics. One of the most surprising features of his Presidency has been its stubborn repudiation of drama—surprising because of his penchant, as a campaigner, for highly charged set-piece addresses, not least in Des Moines, Philadelphia, and Denver. But, as President, Obama has revealed himself to have a certain disdain for the emotional, for the memorable phrase and the theatrical gesture. Moments like Tucson are the rarity.

To some, it has seemed that Obama's determination to avoid the vulgar and the cheap is a form of superiority, a bearing designed to make everyone else seem vulgar and cheap. But his seriousness is a welcome antidote to a political culture infected with self-congratulation, delusion, and paranoia. The United States has, at long last, dealt with Osama bin Laden. Dealing with his legacy will pose a still greater challenge. We remember the dead, as more die every day as a result of his example. Even now, on a clear day, far distant from the battlefield, we can still detect the smell of destruction that came through our windows for weeks after the towers fell. We hear the roaring of the jets. The political future should be entrusted only to those who honor that memory and refrain from exploiting it. ♦

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Britain

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The profit motive

## Where lucre is still filthy

BATH AND LONDON

Squeamishness about profitmaking is hampering the government's bid to reform the public services

THE profit motive is alive and well at the Circle hospital outside Bath, in south-west England. The hospital was designed by the architect Norman Foster, and is run by Circle Healthcare, a firm part-owned by its employees and set up by Ali Parsa, a former banker at Goldman Sachs, in 2004. It treats a mixture of National Health Service and private patients. Corridors are wide and gleaming, operating theatres newly equipped. Doctors and nurses have more say in management decisions than in many English hospitals.

Mr Parsa's mission is to provide clinical services to the NHS—while turning a profit. From this summer Circle Healthcare will also run Hichingbrooke hospital in Cambridgeshire, the first major hospital within the NHS system to be wholly managed by a private firm. Mr Parsa wants to expand the model—but fears a newly nervous mood in government about profitmaking in the public services.

Trade unionists and lobby groups are queuing up to denounce any expansion of the private sector's role in health care. Both parties in the coalition government seem sympathetic to their case. In the wake of his drubbing in the electoral-reform referendum on May 5th, Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat deputy prime minister, has played up to many Lib Dems' scepticism about private involvement in the NHS by calling for Monitor, the health regulator, to promote collaboration among providers

rather than competition, as was originally envisaged in the government's stalled health reform.

Meanwhile David Cameron, the Conservative prime minister, spoke this week about bringing more private providers into the NHS, then listed the things they must not be allowed to do, such as "cherry-picking" easy-to-treat cases. Mr Parsa and others fear they will be left fighting for scraps—slithers of health care, where margins are tight and there is little room to expand.

### Bottom of the class

The unravelling of the coalition's health plans has been accompanied by a broader unease about profitmaking in the public services. A white paper on public-service reform that Mr Cameron said would lead to a "range of providers competing to offer a better service" has been delayed. According to a leaked memo of their meeting, Francis Maude, the Cabinet Office enforcer, recently told John Cridland of the Confederation of British Industry that there was to be no "wholesale outsourcing" of public services.

The squeamishness is acute in education. Despite introducing "free schools" inspired by the Swedish system—funded by the state but run by parents' groups, charities and others—Michael Gove, the education secretary, has rebuffed suggestions that education companies should be able to make a profit from them, as firms can in

Sweden. He insists that he has enough not-for-profit providers: "We don't need the profit motive," Mr Gove says flatly. (In welfare, at least, there are no such qualms. A new scheme, the Work Programme, offers payment by results to providers for placing the long-term unemployed in jobs and keeping them there.)

To some foreign observers, this reticence about private involvement looks odd. There is ample international evidence that competition among private providers yields better results. For example, a report last year by America's National Bureau of Economic Research found that increased competition in health care was correlated with improved financial and clinical outcomes; adding a rival hospital and instigating patient choice substantially increases the quality of management. As Nick Seddon, of the British think-tank Reform, points out, "It's a fallacy to think you can choke off the profit motive without losing momentum and innovation."

And the current debate somehow overlooks the fact that for-profit companies are already delivering many support services in health, education, prisons and other public services. Family doctors have been private operators since the foundation of the NHS in 1948. The profit motive has been making further steady advances in the state sector since Margaret Thatcher's outsourcing campaign in the 1980s. Tony Blair let privately owned treatment centres provide specialist services within the NHS. His wider reforms were restricted by internal battles in the Labour Party; all the same, a recent report from the London School of Economics found that introducing competition among NHS hospitals in 2006 helped to reduce patient deaths.

Yet somehow the tenor of debate in Britain is, and always has been, skewed, emphasising the damage that market re- >>

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► form might do to existing structures and downplaying potential advantages to users and taxpayers. As Jeremy Bentham, a 19th-century philosopher, noted, "Public opinion is but little favourable to the system of contracts. The savings which result to the state are forgotten whilst the profits...are recollected and exaggerated." Many Britons fail to distinguish between how a service is run and how it is funded, assuming that private provision must also mean private rather than state financing.

Perhaps because, in some cases, the state never had a monopoly over public services, the issue is viewed differently elsewhere. Britain is unusual among rich democracies not in how much private involvement there is in its public services, but how little. Only 4% of acute-care beds are provided by private companies. In Germany, the proportion of hospitals run for profit (32%) overtook the number of pub-

licly run ones (31%) two years ago (charitable and voluntary organisations account for the rest). The Spanish region of Valencia allows for-profit firms to run over 20% of its health-care services, with the sort of long-term deal British providers hanker for. New European democracies are experimenting with similar public-private mixes. Two-fifths of Slovak hospital provision is delivered by private operators.

At heart, the coalition remains pro-reform. It wants to change the way health, education and welfare work. But it is in danger of being paralysed by fear—of "re-toxifying" the Tories' image on the NHS, as well as of mutiny among Lib Dems. The real risk may not be that the profit motive will wreck the public services, but that compromises will neuter the reforms. In other words, the coalition's bid to overhaul the public sector might end up looking as fragmented as Mr Blair's. ■

The Economist, June 4th 2011

The Lib Dems draw blood

Bagehot

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS

ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

LANGUES VIVANTES-  
LV2

Coalition squabbles over the NHS put a wider reform agenda at risk

IN OLD-fashioned zoos, animals that mauled a keeper were taken away and shot. Once a furry inmate acquires a taste for human flesh, the theory went, it can never be trusted again. The junior partners in Britain's coalition government, the Liberal Democrats, have just taken their first big bite out of the Conservatives, demanding that a plan to reform the National Health Service (NHS) be delayed and stripped of its boldest elements.

Plenty of Conservative MPs would dispatch the Lib Dems now if they could. Many never trusted their coalition partners, and Lib Dem attacks on the NHS plans—notably their calls to slow and dilute reforms promoting market-based competition—have confirmed their worst suspicions.

The scrap leaves Tory centrists on the defensive. Modernisers around David Cameron have spent the past year arguing that, when times are hard and tough policies are needed, a coalition government is a better vehicle for promoting radical reform than a purely Tory government would have been, especially one hobbled by a narrow parliamentary majority. As modernisers tell it, because voters can see two parties from different political traditions thrashing out policies together, they are more willing to accept that the coalition's bolder plans are in the national interest, and are not just a plot by "nasty" Tories.

Those arguments in favour of coalition rule now face a stern test. Senior allies of Nick Clegg, the deputy prime minister and Lib Dem leader, are remarkably candid about the three-part process that led up to their mauling of an NHS reform bill (a bill that Lib Dem MPs had earlier supported on its first trundle through Parliament). First, the NHS is uniquely precious to British voters, Clegg allies note: no other institution can match its status as a totem of state benevolence. Second—despite Mr Cameron's efforts to present himself as a defender of the NHS—the Conservative Party as a whole remains "massively vulnerable" to suggestions that they are planning to privatise the health service. Third, the Lib Dems were hammered on May 5th in local and regional elections, as well as in a referendum on whether to change Britain's electoral system. Private polling after that drubbing revealed that disgruntled Lib Dem supporters were unimpressed by talk of Mr Clegg securing policy wins within the coalition. Angry ex-Lib Dems wanted redder meat: proof that Mr Clegg was stopping wicked Tories from doing wicked things.

Put those three factors together, and a row about health was "exactly the right issue" for a party looking to demonstrate its new doctrine of "muscular liberalism", says an ally of the deputy prime minister. In private, Mr Clegg still supports reform of the NHS, including greater use of non-state providers (though he thinks the political presentation of the reforms by the Tory health secretary, Andrew Lansley, has been wretched, and that the changes could have been achieved without new legislation). But given a chance to craft a political narrative about nice Lib Dems saving the NHS from nasty Tories, admits the Clegg ally, "we're going to get our pound of flesh."

What does all this reveal about Mr Cameron's coalition? Were Conservative modernisers right to argue that two-party government makes difficult reforms easier to pull off? Or has the NHS row confirmed a deeper Tory hunch: that just as leopards have spots, Lib Dems are perfidious and sneaky, making the coalition an obstacle to bold policymaking? There is something to the first argument and, alas, the second too.

On the positive side of the ledger, the coalition set important reforms in motion in its first year. The two parties agreed to eliminate the budget deficit within one parliament, to give state schools much more autonomy and to redesign the welfare system so that taking a job almost always pays. Both Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg remain publicly committed to those reforms: many Lib Dems disagree, so Mr Clegg deserves credit for his consistency. Attacking the Tories on health offered a unique political prize, says a Lib Dem source, but his party is not going to make a habit of it: "you can't be a party of opposition in government."

A Conservative minister is warier. The NHS row is a big event but an unreliable guide to coalition dynamics, he says. Nothing else is as sensitive as health policy, and the Lib Dems have been supportive elsewhere. Yet, he adds, it will have big consequences if the Lib Dems develop a taste for playing the "nice" party in the coalition.

Violence begets violence

NOM :  
Prénom :  
Signature :  
The oldest quandary

**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES**  
**ANGLAIS**  
**ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS**  
**PROGRAMME**

Série LV – LV2

**The fault-line between liberty and security divides politics like nothing else**

Jul 15th 2010 *The Economist*

EPOCHS and -isms are usually named after monarchs, prime ministers and the occasional chancellor of the exchequer, not home secretaries from fag-end governments. Yet in May 1993 the Age of Howard began. Until then, newly appointed home secretaries had nodded along during their department's induction ritual. Mandarins, brandishing charts showing crime rising since the 1960s, would counsel their new master against futile, costly quests to reverse this apparently inescapable fact of modernity.

Michael Howard ignored them. The last home secretary in John Major's Conservative government built prisons, toughened sentences and curbed freedoms. For liberals, he remains an ogre, while the right credits him with a fall in crime that broadly continues to this day. What they agree on is that he made the weather. In criminal justice, counter-terrorism and anything else that pits liberty against security, a decade and a half of toughness was inaugurated. A job once held by patricians went to a string of Howard lookalikes under Labour.

Now it seems the Age of Howard is fading. The Tories and the Liberal Democrats are fleshing out the civil libertarianism they promised in opposition. Labour's planned ID cards are done for. David Cameron, the prime minister, wants to shrink the DNA database. Ministers have suggested replacing short sentences with community punishments. This week Theresa May, the home secretary, announced a review of counter-terrorist measures.

Many of the coalition's liberals—including Nick Clegg, the deputy prime minister—have thought seriously about their creed. Excitable depictions of Britain as a "police state" are generally avoided. They are eager to suggest alternatives to policies they regard as draconian, rather than merely opposing them outright. And they are intellectually honest, at least in private, about the trade-off between public safety and freedom. Civil-liberties campaigners have sometimes undermined their cause by denying that it entails any loss of security.

But the hazards of liberalism are political as well as physical. Even those voters who resent health-and-safetyism and other yokes of the nanny state have never been taken by civil liberties in general. Mr Clegg's surge in the polls during this year's general-election campaign collapsed once light was shone on his home-affairs policies.

The coalition is already vulnerable to charges of otherworldliness, what with its largely rich and southern power-base and the blue-blooded duo of Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg fronting it. The latter's preoccupation with voting reform and constitutional tinkering during a time of fiscal crisis risks adding to that impression. A crusade for civil liberties may do the same. It is not hard to imagine the government looking out of touch next to an earthier Labour opposition.

Some also suspect that the coalition's liberalism will begin to jar with some in its own ranks. Liberty versus security is a question that divides not merely the elites from the electorate, and the government from the opposition. The fault-line also runs between Conservatives and other Conservatives, and between the Tories as a whole and the Liberal Democrats. Not even fiscal austerity is as divisive; most Tories are fully behind that. An exclusively Conservative government would have had a hard enough time pleasing its doves, such as Dominic Grieve and Ken Clarke, without alarming its hawks, such as Liam Fox and Michael Gove. A two-party coalition will find it all the more difficult.

But Labour itself cannot evade the dilemma. Indeed, it is even more confounding for the party, given the nature and breadth of its traditional support. "Woolly minded Hampstead liberals"—as Jack Straw, one of Labour's most Howardist home secretaries, once described them—are certainly a constituency that Labour has struggled to hang on to. But so is the white working-class. Designing a home-affairs policy that enthruses both these tribes seems impossible.

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**Europe must do more to support Arab democracy, out of self-respect and self-interest**

Feb 24th 2011 | The Economist

WHEN people took to the streets of Tunis, France offered to help President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's security forces. When they filled the squares of Cairo, Italy praised Hosni Mubarak as the wisest of men. And when they were slaughtered in Tripoli, the Czech Republic said catastrophe would follow the fall of Muammar Qaddafi, Malta defended Libya's sovereignty and Italy predicted that the protests would lead to an Islamic emirate. With every new Arab uprising, some European country has placed itself on the wrong side of history. So it is no surprise that the European Union has been slow to tell regimes to listen to demands for democracy and to condemn violent suppression.

When it comes to action the EU has fared even worse. It moved to freeze the assets of the Tunisian and Egyptian strongmen only after they had fled or resigned. Mr Qaddafi, despite his use of aircraft to kill Libyans, faced no immediate sanction from the EU (it halted trade talks and said it was "ready to take further measures"). Even the Arab League, the world's biggest club of autocrats, suspended Libya's membership. European warships and planes have been deployed, not to help Libyans but to stop refugees and migrants from landing on European shores, or to bring home EU nationals. President Alyaksandr Lukashenka of Belarus might ask why he and his lieutenants have been singled out for punishment by the EU, which has frozen their assets and banned them from travelling to the union. After all, he only stole an election, cracked protesters' skulls and jailed opponents.

One explanation is that it is still early days; the EU took more than a month to impose sanctions on Belarus. Another is that, given their history of imperial meddling in the Arab world, European countries should stay out of the revolts. The third is the fear of provoking collapsing regimes into taking European expatriates as hostages. Yet it is hard to avoid the suspicion that too many European countries are still more worried about stability in the Middle East than about democracy. For now, they have neither.

In truth, nuanced EU statements will hardly have been noticed by the protesters. Wrist-slapping sanctions would do little to change the actions of desperate rulers. But if only to send the right signal to other Arabs who are watching events, Europe needs to stand unequivocally on the side of those trying to cast off dictatorships. Just avoiding gaffes would be progress.

A better test of European diplomacy will be whether, in the longer term, the EU can help north African countries establish lasting democracies. Europe has a wealth of experience in helping to reform former totalitarian states. The democratisation of eastern Europe, though incomplete, is a striking success for the "soft power" of the EU, a body without much of the hard sort. But if enlargement has been the EU's most successful foreign-policy tool, the attempt to promote reform in borderland countries with little hope of joining has largely been a failure. The EU's "neighbourhood policy", launched in 2003, aimed to create a "ring of friends" by extending aid and benefits, such as access to the single market, in return for economic and political reforms. The idea was for an ever-closer association in which neighbours could enjoy "everything but institutions".

Yet the EU has little to show for the billions of euros it has spent. Belarus remains Europe's last dictatorship, Ukraine is moving backwards, the Arab-Israeli conflict is unresolved and punctuated by violence, and north Africa has languished, until this year, under the rule of autocrats. To its east, the EU has tried a bit harder to promote political reform, due in part to the demands of its ex-communist members. But in the south the EU has focused mainly on economic development; this area gets the lion's share of neighbourhood-policy funds. Nicolas Sarkozy's vanity project, the "Union for the Mediterranean", a political club that has been paralysed since its inception in 2008, has if anything boosted Arab monarchs and presidents-for-life.

Stability has been paramount for many reasons: preserving Arab-Israeli peace treaties; fighting jihadist terrorism; curbing weapons of mass destruction; protecting oil and gas supplies; and preventing mass migration to Europe. These are not trivial concerns. Europe must deal with the neighbours it has, not the ones it would like. Its mistake was to lose belief in their ability to change for the better. But now that the Arab world is being remade from within, European policy must change too.



No more royal weddings

Bagehot

SIGNATURE:

Our columnist's wedding present for Prince William and Catherine Middleton: a republic

IN A few days Prince William, the 28-year-old heir-but-one to the British throne, will marry Catherine Middleton, a 29-year-old university chum whose parents run a successful business selling party goods. In central London the machinery of state flummery is in motion. Along the Mall, Union flags are being hung from crown-topped poles, palace railings gleam with fresh paint and plume-helmeted horse guards rehearse in the parks. A grandstand for television anchors has been erected opposite Buckingham Palace: hours of special programming loom.

The mood of the British public is harder to gauge. The press is full of dresses and hats, but also of opinion polls saying that barely a half of the British are interested in the wedding, and only a third are certain to watch it on television. Councils report a north-south divide in applications to hold street parties—and far fewer overall than when Prince William's parents wed in 1981.

What is going on? Most simply, experience has taught the British that to cheer a royal wedding today is to risk feeling a chump tomorrow. After decades of royal divorces and marital wars conducted by tabloid leak or tell-all book, sighing over a new princely union requires a Zsa Zsa Gabor-like leap of faith.

Perhaps, optimists might also hope, the British feel a twinge of collective remorse over the short, pitilessly scrutinised life of Prince William's mother, Diana, Princess of Wales. Perhaps the public simply want to give two young people some space.

Optimists make a plausible case that Prince William will thrive if he embodies his mother's impatience with protocol and empathy with suffering, and learns from the middle-class warmth of Miss Middleton's childhood, or the rise of her mother's family from poverty only two generations ago. A big dose of normality, it is agreed, will do the monarchy wonders.

Bagehot, a pessimist, disagrees. On paper, the monarchy looks pretty safe: support for a republic remains constant at about 20%. But the question—Do you want to keep the monarchy?—is too crude. The queen and her offspring are different things at once: they are "a family on the throne", to quote the original Bagehot, embodying national (and Commonwealth) unity and continuity. Though the job description has evolved to include displays of human emotion, being a monarch still removes the queen far from normal experience. After nearly 60 years, she might as well be a unicorn or other mythical beast. At the same time, the royal family does touch the real world, albeit the part of it inhabited by what remains of the landed upper classes: a life of moors and deer-stalking, of summers under Scottish rain, dogs and horses, the church, the armed forces, the same few boarding schools and the right sort of nightclubs. That is more perilous territory: the British, in the main, dislike such people.

To put it plainly: if the royal family are like unicorns—existing outside society—their place is reasonably secure. If they sit atop high society, they are unsafe. Though her father was an earl, Diana's loathing for horses, summers in Balmoral and the rest was a key plank of her case that she was a modern princess and a better parent than her husband, the Prince of Wales. She took her sons to theme parks in anoraks while their father took them, dressed in tweed, to kill animals. She spent her summers in the sun, or with film stars. She was dazzlingly famous more than she was posh, and she was adored.

Prince William, it can be countered, may share his father's tastes for country life and field sports, but he spends much of his time in royal unicorn mode, or something like it. He is an officer in the army, the navy and the air force, popping away from his helicopter rescue squadron to represent Britain's bid for the football World Cup. This is not a life open to any other 28-year-old. Short of putting Prince William in a super-hero's cape, the royal household could scarcely do better. Surely, it is argued, a middle-class wife can only extend his appeal. Maybe: marrying a duke's daughter might have been riskier. But what if all and any contact with the class system is lethal to today's royal family?

Daylight and magic

Miss Middleton's journey from home-counties affluence to palace, via the right sort of boarding school, may inspire some as a story of social mobility. It inspires others to vitriol: a writer in the Times recently described hers as a tale of "shiny new money systematically raising a girl so perfectly to a prince's eye level that she is virtually indistinguishable from the real thing."

Get the British started on this sort of nonsense, and it does not stop. Newspapers filled recently with suspicious pieces asking why Prince William would not be wearing a wedding ring. He does not like jewellery, palace aides said soothingly. They could not say: actually, Englishmen of his upbringing think it naff for men to wear visible wedding rings. David Cameron, the prime minister, has said he will not be wearing a morning coat to the wedding. Other prime ministers have worn such formal gear to state occasions, grumbled the Daily Telegraph. Mr Cameron cannot say, actually I am an old Etonian who in private life might wear a morning coat: that is why I cannot wear one in public.

Enough. Give the British a reason to resent each other, and they will seize it with gusto. Prince William's mother used the royal family's fustiness as a weapon in her war against them; that marital fight ruined lives. By the time of its tragic ending, the British public were left queasy, cynical and divided. Miss Middleton may well be a fine person, but if her life's journey pinpoints Prince William's place in society too closely, she could end up harming him. Class shows up Britain at its worst. For the sake of the country, but also as an act of kindness, pension the royals off. Time for compassionate republicanism: it might be the best wedding present the young couple could have.

NOM :  
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**UK Uncut and US sister group stage more protests at banks**

Over 40 UK branches saw action by campaign group, including a 'big society reading room', a 'job centre' and a teach-in

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Jonathan Paige *The Guardian*, Sunday 27 February 2011

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UK Uncut, the anti-cuts campaign group, staged protests at more than 40 bank branches throughout Britain on a day when the group's American counterpart, US Uncut, staged at least 50 protests. The fast growing British group, still under six months old, staged the Big Society Bail In protests to show the range of services it says have had to be cut in order to support the financial sector. Last week the group focused on Barclays, which admitted it paid just £113m tax in the UK in 2009 on reported profits of £11.6bn.

This week the protests were aimed at 84% state-owned RBS, which has revealed that more than 100 of their bankers were paid more than £1m last year, while total bonuses reached close to £1bn on the bailed-out bank's reported losses of £1.1bn for 2010. Other banks' branches, including NatWest and Lloyds, in which the Treasury holds 41% of shares, were also targeted. In Islington, protesters turned up at a branch of RBS with buckets of soapy water, washing lines and clothes pegs in to highlight claimed council cuts to services for the elderly. Supporters included the Labour MP for Islington North, Jeremy Corbyn and pensioners from the borough.

Emma, speaking for the demonstrators, said: "The banks caused the financial crisis yet it's ordinary people across the country having to pay for it, through cuts to vital public services. By propping up banks like RBS with billions of pounds of bailout money the government has forced cuts to services like laundry help for the elderly, which is why we're here today." "The cuts are a political choice, not a necessity." In Brixton, 20 people brought tents and sleeping bags into NatWest to create a homeless shelter, while a branch of Lloyds in Oxford Street saw a teach-in featuring lecturers from other tax campaign groups including the Robin Hood Campaign and Tax Justice. A bank branch in Birmingham temporarily became a "job centre" while protesters in Nottingham set up a "big society reading room".

Many smaller towns also staged actions. Protesters in Redhill, Surrey set up a "hospital" in a branch of Natwest, while a bank branch in Eastleigh, Hampshire was turned into a "leisure centre" and one in Lewes became a drama club. Daniel Garvin, a spokesman for UK Uncut, said: "The day went extremely well. There 40 actions across the UK, which have hammered home the link between the crisis caused by the banks and the cuts to our essential services. The movement has gone international with the US staging 50 protests. It's become a global issue, proving people can work across borders to tackle issues like corporate tax avoidance and cuts to services."

US Uncut, despite being formed three weeks ago, has already come to the attention of the rightwing Fox News host Glenn Beck, who suggested the protests are part of a global conspiracy that includes anti-union law protests in Wisconsin and the revolts in the Middle East. In Washington DC, over 100 protesters temporarily closed down a branch of the Bank of America, which received and repaid \$45 billion in the 2009 US federal bailout. US Uncut said it has exploited the tax code to pay no federal income taxes in 2009, while paying its top executives millions of dollars.

"We were inspired by UK Uncut to stage a teach-in," said Rizvi Qureshi, of US Uncut DC. "It went on for about half an hour, before people left of their own accord and carried on protesting outside. There was a very small police presence and the protest ended without any trouble. "This is just the beginning of a larger national campaign about tax avoidance in response to federal budget cuts. We hope to do something equally creative in the future."

Protests have taken place in Boston, New York and the Midwest. Many actions are still underway on the west coast of the US, from Seattle in the north to San Diego in the south. A protest is also taking place in Nova Scotia, Canada, with more planned across the country. RBS said: "We fully respect the right to peaceful protest. Minimising disruption to our customers is our priority." The group's chairman, Sir Philip Hampton, said the number of millionaires was lower than a year ago and that a quarter of the group's 18,700 investment bankers would not receive a bonus from the £950m payout pool agreed with UK Financial Investments.

The Guardian - 26 March 2011

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SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES 5-  
ANGLAIS 2  
ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

Saturday: Free education for young Scots? Only if the English students pay full whack

BY Ian Jack

My daughter studies at a Scottish university and has three good friends there (perhaps more than three, but I want to keep this illustration simple). One is from the US and pays tuition fees of pounds 12,600 a year. Another is from Scotland and pays nothing. The third is from Germany and, more surprisingly, also doesn't pay. My daughter, as a student from England, pays pounds 1,820 in the form of a loan from the UK government. I don't mind this. My daughter chose the university, and she's happy among the town's grey ruins and the cold blasts from the North Sea, just along the coast from where I grew up (which I find sentimentally comforting). And in any case, an English university would charge pounds 1,400 a year more - though that would be for three years rather than four. As for her American friend, her parents would need to fork out three times as much for a place in the Ivy League.

We've come to understand that British universities increasingly depend on a global market, and if by recruiting from abroad Scottish universities can provide free education for Scottish students, well, good for Scotland.

But what does "abroad" in this context mean? Germany doesn't seem to fit the definition, because my daughter's German friend gets her education just as free as her other friend from Falkirk. In fact, none of the 11,000 undergraduates at Scottish universities who have homes in the European Union - excepting those from England, Wales and Northern Ireland - pays a penny. On the one hand, European law forbids discrimination between member states, so if Scottish students go free, then so must every other EU student. On the other hand, it permits discrimination inside member states. The UK is a state. England and Scotland are merely nations within the state. A boy from Berwick, therefore, will be charged pounds 1,820 to attend Edinburgh, while another boy from Athens or Vilnius or Palermo will be sitting in the same library and listening to the same lectures at no cost. Edinburgh is Berwick's nearest university - under an hour away by train - but unfortunately a mile or two over the English border. The example is extreme - at Edinburgh, students from the home counties would easily outnumber those from Northumbria - but who wouldn't see the system that allowed it as crazy and unfair?

Almost certainly, the inequity is about to get worse. Last week in his leader's speech at the Scottish National Party conference, Alex Salmond quoted a line from Burns to promise that "the rocks will melt with the sun" before he allowed tuition fees to be imposed on Scottish students. The SNP may not form the next government after the elections in May, but Labour and the Lib Dems have made similar if less eternal pledges that cover the lifetime of the next parliament. Scottish universities, meanwhile, face a crisis in funding brought about by the remodelling of higher education in England, where much steeper fees will replace cuts in teaching budgets. The knock-on effect, translated by the UK Treasury's Barnett formula, is that Scotland's universities are looking at an annual shortfall of between pounds 202m and pounds 155m, depending on whether you believe the predictions of Universities Scotland, the body that represents the institutions, or the more optimistic belief of the Scottish government.

In headline terms, the Scottish government has presented this as "the pounds 93m funding gap". How do you get down to pounds 93m from pounds 155m? Students from the rest of the UK comprise 12% of Scotland's university population. The great majority come from England to study at Edinburgh, St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen; in the first two, their proportion can reach from 30 to 40%. Balancing the need to sustain this inward flow against the large amounts of badly needed cash it could provide, the Scottish government found that if universities charged fees of pounds 6,375 to students from elsewhere in the UK, they would generate additional annual income of pounds 63m. The pounds 6,375 wasn't a stab in the dark. It was based around an expected average at Russell Group universities in England of pounds 8,500, which, over an undergraduate course lasting three years, produces much the same total as pounds 6,375 does over four. When this or something like it happens, as it probably will, you could argue that Scotland was simply heeding the laws of a market in which a certain kind of English student, one with relatively prosperous parents, wants a degree from an old and reputable university. Alternatively, you might see it as the milking of the English middle class and a covert redistribution of wealth from the south to the north. The certainty is that the future of free education for young Scots depends on it, just as Wales will depend on English students paying the full whack at Welsh universities when Welsh students have their fees capped at the current level of pounds 3,290.

As for the charmed life of the EU student, nothing seems likely to change.

If public sector workers do deploy the primeval strike weapon, working parents and patients will suffer, not a Tory government

The Guardian | Wednesday 15 June 2011

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
ANGLAIS  
ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS  
PROGRAMME

# Unions can't resist the call to arms. But who'll get hurt?

**A**re we really to go on strike again now, in the 21st century? Is there no other way of fixing a row in the public realm than through so primeval a weapon as withdrawing labour from the public welfare? It is like "protecting" Libya by bombing it, or curing poverty with a luxury summit.

Britain's union leaders have spent two decades in relative seclusion. A few, like Bob Crow of the RMT, have charged about the jungle, exploiting weak managers and worse ministers. For the most part unions have concentrated on inventing fancy names like Unite, Prospect and Unison, and doing a solid job looking after their members in the workplace. Now a Tory government has given them a whiff of former glories. Like knights summoned to crusade, they cannot resist the trumpet and the armoured steed.

The public sector union, Unison, is preparing the biggest ever strike ballot, of all its 1.2m members, to bring "huge swaths of the public sector to a halt" in the autumn. It is opposing cuts in public sector pensions and a two-year pay freeze from next April. Unions variously representing civil servants, teachers and university lecturers are also preparing for a national strike on 30 June against the coalition's cuts in general. Even headteachers are expected to back "rolling industrial action", closing their schools in the autumn.

The NHS yesterday delivered the cabinet the most emphatic defeat by a professional lobby since the days of Edward Heath. Already the hospital consultants are threatening industrial action. The British Medical Association has five motions advocating action at this month's conference, mostly in defence of goldplated pensions which, in the case of many doctors, relate to six-figure salaries. The BMA's Andy Blake chanced his arm this week in reportedly saying that any loss of income to his doctors would leave them "very worried they may be forced to leave the NHS, and at the effect this would have on patients". Forced to leave by whom? Blake may yet do to the reputation of doctors what the credit crunch did to bankers.

The threatened strikes are all in the public sector, whose six million workers

embrace 62% of today's trade unionists. The action is both against the government as employer and against the government as custodian of an embattled economy, with a mandate to cure it. It is thus highly partisan. I do not recall union leaders calling for strikes against Labour's borrowing, though in-house economists must have warned that it would spell eventual disaster for members. David Miliband implied as much in his undelivered "honesty speech", revealed last week, which is perhaps why he did not become Labour leader.

The unions are handicapped in winning public support by data showing that, so far, the public sector has been hit less by recession than the private sector. Public sector workers did well out of the boom years. State spending rose from just over 36% of gross domestic product in 1999 to 51% in 2010. Pay rose to match. In addition, 85% of state workers are now covered by pension schemes, against just 35% in the private sector. The gap between public sector pension contributions and entitlements was forecast to double in just four years from 2009. This was clearly unsustainable.

On pensions the chancellor, George Osborne, sought to sugar the pill of reform in March with a report from the former Labour minister, John Hutton, proposing precisely the changes against which the unions are now considering strike action. These were higher pension contributions, a delayed retirement age and an end to final salary-based schemes. It is hard to believe the unions would have struck against Hutton, had he proposed it under Labour. When Unison's Dave Prentice said pension reform was just "to make it cheaper for private companies to tender for work", he was hardly meeting the point.

Pay and pensions are quite separate from job cuts, where the government's opponents have a stronger case. Everyone knows that when spending rises it goes on overheads, and when it falls it falls on the front line. That is how all big organisations behave. Unions are part of the problem. They tend to defend pay levels before they defend jobs - as with the demise of London's docks.

Given that all the political parties accepted the need for cuts last year, the unions should have negotiated against a jobs cut and for accepting a

pensions curb and pay freeze instead. That would at least have been public spirited. It is what German unions did last year through their works councils. And public sector workers elsewhere have accepted 10% pay cuts to protect jobs. I know of no case of this in the British public sector.

The impact of the coalition proposals on public sector pay and pensions is no more regressive than that of the recession on employment generally. As usual, it is the poorer groups of workers, such as sales and building workers in the private sector, who are suffering most. In the public sector at least, the government has pledged to protect the incomes and pension contributions of those earning less than £20,000. Instead, it proposes to hit hardest those on six-figure salaries, some of whom may see their contributions rise by £10,000 a year. This should be seen as a highly progressive tax.

**I**s it against this that the unions will be going on strike? To succeed, the strikers cannot threaten to bankrupt a company or punish shareholders. They must win public support to press concessions from ministers. It is hard to see how they will do that by withdrawing services. When secure and well-pensioned civil servants boast of their ability to close schools and make hospitals "work to rule", it hurts not the government (which would save money) but working parents and patients.

Either way, there must be other ways of resolving these distributional disputes. History marks a nation's maturity when conflicts between groups are no longer decided by armed combat but through political institutions. Surely the same applies to industrial disputes. The crude infliction of inconvenience and expense on third parties as a way of bringing pressure to bear on government surely falls into the same category.

All politicians were variously to blame for the chaos into which the public finances were reduced in the first decade of this century. Certainly all have an interest in rescuing them. There must be a better way of doing so than by one sectional interest going on strike against another.

SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES  
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PM wins row with Nick Clegg over crackdown on Muslim extremists

Counter-terrorism review insists groups must reflect British mainstream values to get funds

Mark Townsend and Hannah Olivennes, *The Guardian*, Saturday 4 June 2011

David Cameron will emerge as the victor from a bitter cabinet battle over multiculturalism this week as the government unveils a hardline approach to tackling Islamist extremism. Home Office sources say that Cameron has quashed Nick Clegg's argument for a more tolerant attitude to Muslim groups by insisting on a strategy centred upon the notion that violent extremism is incubated within the ideology of non-violent extremism.

The shift in approach will be outlined when the government's counter-terrorism strategy is unveiled by the home secretary, Theresa May, on Tuesday. Central to the Prevent strategy is a broader definition of extremism that will be extended beyond groups condoning violence to those considered non-violent but whose views, such as the advocacy of sharia law, fail to "reflect British mainstream values". A Home Office source said: "There will be a direct challenge to these [non-violent] groups."

The Prevent review has been delayed for five months because of disagreements within the coalition cabinet. In his view that engaging with non-violent extremists can be used as a bulwark against violent extremists, Clegg has been joined by the attorney general, Dominic Grieve, the Tory chairman, Baroness Warsi, and others including Charles Farr, the head of the office of security and extremism. They argue it is crucial to maintain a distinction between violent and non-violent extremism and that it is necessary to engage rather than alienate.

Warsi, who sits on the cabinet subcommittee dealing with integration, is understood to disagree strongly with the new direction of Prevent but has been dissuaded from publicly criticising the strategy. Among those supporting the prime minister on a crackdown on Muslim groups was the education secretary, Michael Gove, and Lord Carlile, who is in charge of the Prevent review.

Ostensibly the strategy echoes Cameron's contentious speech to an international counter-terrorism conference in Munich last February when he suggested that "state multiculturalism" had failed. During the speech the Tory leader categorised those who espoused an ideology of Islamic extremism alongside those who supported violence. He said: "Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist world view, including real hostility towards western democracy and liberal values." A Home Office source said: "When a prime minister states something so unequivocally, it is unlikely they will be allowed to deviate from that."

The strategy will warn Muslim groups that they will only receive public funding under certain conditions. Groups would be allocated funding on short-term projects but only after proving they do not promote or support extremist views. "Under the old Prevent strategy we sprayed a lot of cash willy-nilly and the new strategy is opposed to that," said the source.

Haras Rafiq, director of Centri, a counter-extremism consultancy, welcomed the strategy, but said the main challenge was implementation. "They need to build a criteria to establish which organisation they fund has extremist views, which one doesn't, and ensure extremist groups do not receive funding from other pots." One group, the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, which has links to the hardline Muslim Association of Britain, received £250,000 in the year up to April but has already had its annual public funding withdrawn, the *Observer* has learned.

During the Munich speech Cameron said it was "nonsense" to fund groups with extremist elements, adding: "Would you allow far-right groups a share of public funds if they promise to help you lure young white men away from fascist terrorism? Of course not."

The strategy, however, will shy away from naming groups, effectively dismissing speculation that the initiative will proscribe non-violent, extremist Islamist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, a step which Cameron has publicly supported but which legal sources advise is not possible.

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**What Britons really think about immigration**

New study shows that economic pessimism has led many to feel negative about immigrants – but findings are not all bad news

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- Nick Lowles, *The Guardian*, Saturday 26 February 2011
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Fear and Hope, the report Searchlight Educational Trust is publishing on attitudes to immigration, identity and multiculturalism, gives those of us committed to the fight against extremism nowhere to hide. The survey of 5,000 people, the largest of its kind ever conducted, is stark, brutal and unequivocal.

Some 39% of Asian Britons, 34% of white Britons and 21% of black Britons now believe all immigration into the UK should be stopped permanently, or at least until the UK's economic situation improves. Meanwhile, 52% of Britons agree with the proposition "Muslims create problems in the UK", and 43% of Asian Britons, 63% of white Britons and 17% of black Britons agree with the proposition that "on the whole, immigration into Britain has been a bad thing for the country". In addition, 48% of Britons say they would consider supporting a new far right-wing party, if it shunned violence and fascist imagery. These findings will be shocking to many. They shatter many of our liberal preconceptions. And they demonstrate conclusively that when it comes to the narrative of migration and race, our politicians and our community leaders are now running far behind those they seek to represent.

A new politics of identity, culture, and nation has grown out of the politics of race and immigration, and is increasingly the opinion driver in modern British politics. There are now in effect six "identity tribes" in our society. These are: confident multiculturalists (8% of the population); mainstream liberals (16%); identity ambivalents (28%); cultural integrationists (24%); latent hostiles (10%); and active enmity (13%). The cherished "middle ground" of British politics is occupied by two of these groups; the cultural integrationists, motivated by authority and order; and identity ambivalents, who are concerned about their economic security and social change. Together they make up 52% of the population.

The current failure of the political mainstream risks pushing the identity ambivalents to the right, unless they tackle the social and economic insecurity which dominates their attitudes. This is a challenge for the current government – which is implementing deep spending cuts – and for the Labour Party, which is the traditional home of many of these voters. Almost half of all voters who do not identify with a party are identity ambivalents.

Our report reveals a clear correlation between economic pessimism and negative attitudes towards immigration. The more pessimistic people are about their own economic situation and their prospects for the future, the more hostile their attitudes are to new and old immigrants. The means test appears to have a greater impact upon attitudes towards integration and identity than the cricket test.

Despite the challenging nature of the report, there is much which is positive. Political violence is strongly opposed. Over two-thirds of people view "English nationalist extremists" and "Muslim extremists" as bad as each other. There is a real appetite for a positive campaigning organisation that opposes political extremism through bringing communities together.

But at its heart, Fear and Hope exposes the dangers that lie ahead if the issues highlighted in the research are not addressed. It throws down a challenge to the political parties to really understand what is happening in the body politic and then do something about it.

The future is unwritten and it is all to play for. If we can understand the new politics of identity, then we can win them over. If we fail to do so then we risk their fear turning to hate. It is the challenge we all face, and one we can no longer afford to ignore.

*Nick Lowles is the director of anti-extremist group Hope Not Hate*

Frying the couch potato; Those lazy days of TV watching are gone as viewers Google, tweet and multitask – as often in front of a laptop or a tablet as a TV

BY MARSHA LEDERMAN

VANCOUVER -- Television-watching rituals have evolved to the point where the term couch potato may no longer apply; we're busier than we've ever been on those couches. Take David Purdy, for instance. While watching television – probably in HD and possibly something selected through video on demand – he is Googling constantly on his tablet, maybe to investigate an unfamiliar reference in a documentary, or find some background on an athlete if he's watching sports. Sure, Purdy is vice-president and general manager of television products at Rogers Communications, but increasingly, this is how we're watching TV, with a type of engagement that goes far beyond making the odd passing comment to the person at the other end of that couch.

“That program-synchronous interactivity is commonplace for me now, and I'm 45,” Purdy said from Toronto this week. “If you're 25, you grew up doing it. And if you're 15, I think the thought of having to do one thing at a time is so frustrating, your head would explode.”

Television isn't just about television any more. It's a multi-tasking, multimedia experience. Watching a favourite program might not involve a physical television at all, and may never have involved a network, studio or cable provider. The evolution has been mind-blowingly rapid and continues at breakneck speed, with changes ahead even industry gurus and top brass can't predict. The change is so profound that Canada's big television festival – the former Banff World Television Festival – has been renamed this year to reflect the shift in production and viewing habits. The Banff World Media Festival opens on Sunday.

“The change over the past four years has been quite impressive,” says Mark Greenspan, executive director of NextMedia, which handles the digital side of the Banff festival. “We're seeing the audience interact with television or video content in a number of different ways ... and I think within this decade the way that we consume and participate in content is going to shift dramatically.”

As he points out, it already has. Big television events – season finales, playoff hockey, the royal wedding – are trending on Twitter as viewers create a global living room where they can share the moment with others in a digital space. Increasingly, favourite television shows can be sourced anywhere, any time. Video-on-demand offerings have increased exponentially. Broadcasters are offering programs online. Last year alone, both Netflix and the game-changing iPad became available in Canada. Blockbuster filed for bankruptcy. We're now watching “television” on computers, smart phones and tablets.

We're also watching programs that were created outside the traditional television industry. Some Web-based series have achieved tremendous success, including *Funny or Die* (now televised), *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* and *The Guild*, which, going into its fifth season, has attracted more than 100 million views and has resulted in DVD sales, a graphic novel and a huge fan base.

Initially written as a 30-minute pilot for television, *The Guild* was rejected by broadcasters who felt a show about a group of online gamers wouldn't have wide appeal. So creator/writer/star Felicia Day took her co-producer's advice: “Since my audience was on the Internet, she said there's no reason to go anywhere but the Internet to release the show,” says Day, who will be honoured at Banff for pioneering the growth of the independent Web series platform. “I truly believe that if I'm opening the doors for other people behind me to tell stories that are not as acceptable in the whole scheme of Hollywood, then I'm doing something good with my life.”

Day, 31, is the embodiment of multiplatform success. Very early on, she was promoting *The Guild* on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks, and has partnered with Xbox and other non-traditional content-delivery services. She was hired by Electronic Arts to create the Web series *Dragon Age: Redemption*, based on the video game *Dragon Age II*. She also lands traditional acting jobs, including a role in the Vancouver-shot series *Eureka*. And she did the voiceover for the iPhone game based on the Vancouver-based Web series *Riese*.

“I feel like we're reaching an interesting turning point this year,” she says. “As all of our technology puts the screens everywhere, people are looking at how to scale content in a much different way. The DVD business is kind of dying, and cable providers are feeling threatened and looking for new ways to make sure that their business model stays intact.”

The industry is grappling with how to monetize the non-traditional TV viewing experience. The 30-second ad may remain the revenue backbone – for now – but in the whirlwind of change, content providers and deliverers are exploring other ways of making a buck.

“There's this term: trading analog dollars for digital pennies,” says Greenspan.

“Because the monetizing features aren't as robust within the digital-media side of things as the traditional broadcast side, the concern is, how do you ride the balance between an existing business model versus an emerging business model?”

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## Does College Make You Smarter?

Students make little progress in intellectual growth in the first two years of college. Why is that?

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/01/24/does-college-make-you-smarter/products-of-rote-learning>

### Products of Rote Learning

Updated January 25, 2011, 05:24 PM

**Leon Botstein**, music director and conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, is the president of Bard College.

Why is anyone surprised to find that standards and expectations in our colleges are too low? High school graduates — a rapidly dwindling elite — come to college entirely unaccustomed to close reading, habits of disciplined analysis, skills in writing reasoned arguments and a basic grasp of the conduct, methods and purposes of science.

Colleges have responded pusillanimously to the trend to rank institutions not by academic criteria, but by graduation rates.

All many of them know is rote learning, and fear of mediocre standardized tests and grades. No vital connection between learning and life has been forged in our schools, much less any affection for voluntarily using one's mind in the rigorous, sustained and frequently counterintuitive way that leads to innovation and the advancement of knowledge.

But our colleges and universities do pitifully little about combating student passivity and absence of curiosity. Some institutions are too proud to develop serious programs of remediation. The prestige of undergraduate teaching is at an all-time low. First- and second-year students are subjected to bland introductory courses taught primarily by graduate students. Or they choose electives from a random array of courses designed by faculty for their own convenience that mirror their own concerns, not a considered diagnosis of the needs and interests of students.

Research and graduate education dominate American higher education, placing undergraduate education at the margins. Since the specialized and competing interests of faculty from disparate fields seem hard to reconcile, all but a handful of institutions fail to have significant programs in undergraduate general education designed to equip students with serious skills, inspire them to raise their sights and help them discover what they might be interested in. Even colleges dedicated just to undergraduates routinely imitate the balkanized curricular structure of the graduate university.

America may still have the world's finest university system. But it is in danger. It is unreasonable to expect high standards and educational idealism to thrive on a shaky and crumbling foundation of elementary and secondary schooling. Yet it is wrong just to blame students and high schools. Higher education must set the standards for schooling below college.

Colleges and universities have walked away from that responsibility. They have responded pusillanimously to the trend to rank institutions not by criteria of academic rigor but by graduation rates, encouraging institutions to hold on to students at all cost lest there be the specter of attrition. The irony is that by making it easier to graduate, the rates of completion still continue to fall both at four- and two-year colleges. The low level of political discourse in the country today, in an era when more Americans than ever before have finished high school and college, should be enough of a reminder that just giving out diplomas, the way the Wizard of Oz did to the Scarecrow, is not good enough.

But before we enter another cycle of that convenient game of blaming teachers and educators let us remember that the culture in which colleges operate hardly inspires love and respect for the life of the mind. Quick fame and easy wealth trump the disciplined and sustained pursuit of knowledge. But that reality should define the task and not let colleges and universities off the hook. Colleges and universities should help raise standards in high schools, concentrate on fashioning distinct, rigorous and engaging undergraduate programs of study, and reward teaching.

We must set the bar of achievement higher without fear of criticism. Despite some appearances to the contrary students who now go to college and incur the expense of time and money do want to excel. We just need to pay serious attention to them and deepen their motivation and resolve.

Topics: Education, colleges, students



**SERIE LANGUES VIVANTES**  
**ANGLAIS**  
**ANALYSE LV2 TEXTE HORS**  
**PROGRAMME**

Série LV – LV2 anglais

March 10, 2011 *The New York Times*

**The Modesty Manifesto**

By **DAVID BROOKS**

We're an overconfident species. Ninety-four percent of college professors believe they have above-average teaching skills. A survey of high school students found that 70 percent of them have above-average leadership skills and only 2 percent are below average. Men tend to be especially blessed with self-esteem. Men are the victims of unintentional drowning more than twice as often as women. That's because men have tremendous faith in their own swimming ability, especially after they've been drinking.

Americans are similarly endowed with self-esteem. When pollsters ask people around the world to rate themselves on a variety of traits, they find that people in Serbia, Chile, Israel and the United States generally supply the most positive views of themselves. People in South Korea, Switzerland, Japan, Taiwan and Morocco are on the humble side of the rankings.

Yet even from this high base, there is some evidence to suggest that Americans have taken self-approval up a notch over the past few decades. Start with the anecdotal evidence. It would have been unthinkable for a baseball player to celebrate himself in the batter's box after a home-run swing. Now it's not unusual. A few decades ago, pop singers didn't compose anthems to their own prowess; now those songs dominate the charts.

In a variety of books and articles, Jean M. Twenge of San Diego State University and W. Keith Campbell of the University of Georgia have collected data suggesting that American self-confidence has risen of late. College students today are much more likely to agree with statements such as "I am easy to like" than college students 30 years ago. In the 1950s, 12 percent of high school seniors said they were a "very important person." By the '90s, 80 percent said they believed that they were.

In short, there's abundant evidence to suggest that we have shifted a bit from a culture that emphasized self-effacement — I'm no better than anybody else, but nobody is better than me — to a culture that emphasizes self-expansion. Writers like Twenge point out that young people are bathed in messages telling them how special they are. Often these messages are untethered to evidence of actual merit. Over the past few decades, for example, the number of hours college students spend studying has steadily declined. Meanwhile, the average G.P.A. has steadily risen.

Some argue that today's child-rearing and educational techniques have produced praise addicts. Roni Caryn Rabin of *The Times* recently reported on some research that found that college students would rather receive a compliment than eat their favorite food or have sex. If Americans do, indeed, have a different and larger conception of the self than they did a few decades ago, I wonder if this is connected to some of the social and political problems we have observed over the past few years.

I wonder if the rise of consumption and debt is in part influenced by people's desire to adorn their lives with the things they feel befit their station. I wonder if the rise in partisanship is influenced in part by a narcissistic sense that, "I know how the country should be run and anybody who disagrees with me is just in the way."

Most pervasively, I wonder if there is a link between a possible magnification of self and a declining saliency of the virtues associated with citizenship.

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The Independent - 11 June 2011

THE SATURDAY COLUMN

Tony Blair and the painful remembrance of politics past -- BY Christina Patterson

For Proust, it was a madeleine. For Proust, it wasn't a voice on the Today programme, at a time when you should have been up, but were still cowering under the duvet. For Proust, it wasn't a voice that was quite light for a statesman, or a former statesman, but also quite warm and pleasant and a little bit husky. For Proust, it wasn't a voice that sounded reasonable and intelligent and authoritative, and wise. But for some of us, on Thursday morning, it was. For some of us, it was a voice, a voice we hadn't heard for quite a while, that brought it all flooding back.

What it brought back was the hope - the hope, on a balmy May night, full of music, and laughter, and tears, and surprise, that things could "only get better". What it brought back was the belief that things could be different, and politics could be different, and the country could be different, and that the country could be run by people who had a heart, and a brain. What it brought back was a man with a plan that looked good, and sounded good, and, for a while, was good, and what it brought back was a war.

The man, of course, was Tony Blair. He was talking about his book. But it wasn't a new book. He was talking about a book that has already sold 700,000 copies. He was talking about a book with a new introduction, which is now in paperback, and which he hopes will sell a few hundred thousand more.

He was also talking about the Arab Spring. And Libya. And Syria. And Israel. And Palestine. He was also talking about reform. He wasn't just talking about the reforms he'd made, but about the ones that a Conservative prime minister had made, a Conservative prime minister who'd been trying to copy him. So what, the interviewer asked, did he think of the reforms dreamt up by the man who was trying to copy him?

"I believe," said the only man ever to have won three elections for the Labour Party in a row, "that all countries' public services need reforms. For me," he said, "coming from the Labour perspective, if you like, I was always determined that the reforms should help the poorest and most disadvantaged. Insofar as he is doing that, I would support it, and insofar as he is not, I don't." It's possible that the casual listener, cowering under the duvet, or brushing their teeth, might have missed the significance of that "Labour perspective", and of that "if you like". It's possible that they might have forgotten that the current leader of the Labour Party would have used the word "party", or "movement". The current leader of the Labour Party would have used the word "party" or "movement" because he'd think that it was important to remind everyone that he was coming at this, and every other issue, from the left.

Tony Blair used the word "perspective" because he knows that most people in this country don't like to think in terms of political parties any more, and because he, unlike the Archbishop of Canterbury, knows that whoever else the people of this country voted for at the last election, it wasn't the Labour Party, and because he knows that under his successor's successor, who of course has his "complete and total support", which is what you say when someone doesn't, they probably won't for quite a while. He used the words "if you like" because he knows that a lot of people don't like, and because it's a way of deflecting attention away from the slightly embarrassing Labour bit to the more important words that will follow.

And those words are very, very important. Those reforms, to schools, and hospitals, and welfare, and public services, did help "the poorest and most disadvantaged". They didn't lead to peace and goodwill on earth, because nothing ever does, and they didn't stop bankers from raking it in, because nothing ever seems to, and they didn't stop the "filthy rich" from wanting to get even richer, because the "filthy rich" always want to get richer, and it's probably better to have them around, creating some jobs and paying some taxes, than watch them eff off to Monaco, even though you sometimes wish they would. But those reforms did put an awful lot of money into schools for inner-city children, and employment schemes for young people, and childcare schemes for children on sink estates.

All that money didn't mean that there weren't any poor people any more, and it may have meant that some of the poor people thought that paying for their rent, and food, and clothes, wasn't anything that had all that much to do with them, and it may even have meant that some of the poor people had more poor children than they would otherwise have had. But it did mean that poor people weren't being punished for the mistakes made by rich people, and it did mean that a government that said it was very "relaxed" about rich people, and things like the financial services sector, which is, after all, 30 per cent of the British economy, never forgot that being poor isn't a choice that poor people make.

When Tony Blair talked about these kinds of reforms, it felt like the taste of a sweet, light cake, eaten long ago. When he talked about the reforms that he was hoping for in the Middle East, it didn't. When he said "we have to be players, we can't just be spectators", and "if you decide not to act, to stand back, that inaction is also a decision with consequences", and "our plan is not just about changing the politics of these countries", it felt like the taste, or the memory of a taste, of something bitter. More than half a million people have died in Iraq as a result of a Western attempt to change its politics. People continue to die there, nearly every week. In Afghanistan, they die nearly every day. Last week, three young British men died in three days. Foreign and military spending in the country now makes up 97 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP. What this means is a country that's locked in a war the West can't win, and can't afford. What it means is a country that's doomed to financial disaster when it leaves.

It's strange how you can hear a voice, while cowering under your duvet, and think that that voice belongs to a man who did quite a lot of good in the world, and a truly, truly terrifying amount of harm.