Democracy in England

Possible and Necessary

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and other supporters of Democracy 2015

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Contents

Why this pamphlet?

Democracy 2015 was a campaign that lasted from 2013 to 2014. The activists, mobilised by Andreas Whittam Smith's call to arms in *The Independent* newspaper, talked to people up and down England who were concerned about the failures of our political system. Their views reflected and reinforced much of what had been written and said by many thoughtful observers of different political hues, from Larry Elliott of *The Guardian* to Peter Oborne (lately) of *The Daily Telegraph*, political commentators such as Anthony King and Jonathan Freedland, and many, many others. It seems that a consensus has emerged that is neither left nor right.

The movement exists no longer, but this pamphlet reminds us of some of the issues it raised, and which will surely be raised again by others.

The main points made are that in this country we have regressed politically, that this damages us, is counter to our great tradition, and makes us less fit to face the challenges of the future, when many predict that the Anglosphere will diminish in influence anyway because of the dramatic economic development of countries with very different cultures.

There is a perception that England's political settlement, which was the foundation for its economic and cultural advance and an inspiration to the world, is disintegrating. Many believe that 'the people' must take back power from the political class, not only because it is dysfunctional, but because the digital age has made possible greater participation and democracy. England's rise and the success of our economy and culture were consequences of our very particular political settlement. If we abandon that, then we are unlikely to solve our economic woes, let alone thrive in the very different world that is coming about, in which non-Anglophone countries may set the pace and the terms.

Our transition to a more democratic, modern society is trapped by political arrangements which obstruct progress. Some of the suggestions made to Democracy 2015 by people up and down the country are included in a section called 'The Way Out'. They are presented here as a contribution to debate.

Introduction

There is a spectre haunting Europe; the spectre of democracy.

From Catalonia to Greece, from Rome to Liverpool, Budapest and Paris, anger against the political class explodes. Disgust at the political class is widespread.

The political class has undermined our economies, fought unjust wars, stolen powers from local communities, corrupted our institutions, created the conditions for extremism and rearranged our lives to suit global commercial interests.

Not content with the slaughter of Iraq, Western leaders have incited mayhem and misery in Libya, Egypt and Syria, coaxing to prominence and power a horrific new utopianism in the Muslim world.

Western leaders say they did not mean to do these things, but they did them. This violence was a consequence foreseen by many: our politicians were warned, but they closed their ears. Now they want to reverse their policies, but it is too late. The homes have been bombed, the children maimed, sweethearts killed and the fathers tortured; countries, communities and cultures have been smashed beyond repair.

Not content with putting their citizens in danger from a fanaticism to rival Bolshevism and Nazism, the politicians encouraged the subversion of Ukraine's elected government and provoked Russia. There is a new war in central Europe which is the direct consequence of EU and NATO expansionism.

At home, though, the rich are richer than ever before, and though basic necessities are available to most, the people see the debts accumulating, note our dependence on the goodwill of foreign countries and perceive that the future is uncertain. Fear is hovering over Europe, fear of failure. Many of our industries are hollowed out, much of our middle class struggling, too many are unemployed, more jobs will go to automation or the newly developed economies, insecure or zero-hour work is common and our young people have little confidence that they will have a life without anxiety.

Today England is held up as the one country in Europe where the economy is on the mend. The 2015 election reassured many that our system works. Turnout improved. The party which promised least, and had been slated most, won. It might

not be loved, but it was perceived as more realistic. The radical party, UKIP, won many votes but minimal representation. Proponents of localism and democracy, such as the writers of this paper, might be thought to be reassured by the spectacular rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP); except that those nationalists have won on a thoroughly reactionary pair of slogans. On the one hand, they advocate the statism that has failed the poor so terribly over so much of the world in the twentieth century, while on the other they fan anti-English xenophobia.

The fundamental, long-term problems remain. We are not responding to the challenge of the rising economies and the threats of globalisation; politicians have spent our taxes and national revenues on buying votes, and allowed our best companies to be sold to foreign predators. They have peddled fantasies of rejuvenation, from financial services to the creative industries, and bought off criticism with unproductive jobs funded from our taxes.

Ours is a case of the debauching of a European country by the political class. Although unable competently to manage public services, let alone the trading economy on which our future depends, the political class has centralised power to an extraordinary degree and curtailed democratic accountability. Politicians everywhere and in all eras have targeted vulnerable groups for demonisation and vilification and in England they have reviled the working classes, the very people whose forebears realised our political system and once made our economy the most enterprising in the world.

England has become a country in which the voices of the working-class majority mean nothing. It is ruled by an oligarchy, sustained by a professional political class, who vaunt that we live in a democracy just because every so often half the population are allowed to elect one of two lots of careerists. This might not matter if they were doing well by us. But we year by year go further south.[1]

Recently improved employment figures mainly reflect advances in existing successful areas of the country. Elsewhere there are communities with little industry. Since the de-industrialisation of the 1980s, collapsed communities have barely survived. There are permanently unemployed families and a growing gap between those with opportunities and those without. Our economic advance is uncertain in a future in which we are dependent upon others for energy and have sold our key resources to strangers. Young people are unable to set up homes and families. We have spurred on home-grown terrorism. The future is scary.

The peoples of Europe are united in only one thing: their revulsion for the political class that squats on them like a great polyp, guzzling the resources and the energy of the people. Our problems have come about because of the professional political class. This short pamphlet explains what has happened and contributes to the debate on how we can restore democracy.

The digital revolution has made democracy possible. The failure of the political class has made democracy necessary. And urgent.

The present danger

The balance of power in the world is changing but our political class is not helping us adapt to the new circumstances. We need to rebuild our economy and ensure that the institutions which make its growth possible are in place.

For over 200 years the world has been dominated by the Anglophone countries. The British Empire broke down the walls between countries and cultures and then set the standards by which the world would be run; it was followed by the USA whose wealth has attracted and whose power has frightened the rest of the world over the last sixty or more years. There were threats: the French challenged the British in the nineteenth century and the Germans a hundred years later. Then the Germans again and the Japanese; Russia competed but lost. In 1989 the triumph of the Anglosphere appeared assured, as it seemed superior in everything from political systems to economic development to cultural leadership.

Three happenings have started to alter this state of affairs. The first is the change in China's circumstances, from one of the poorest countries on earth to almost the richest in a mere 25 years: a phenomenon as life-changing as the Industrial Revolution.[2] China is now influential in almost every country. Second, the economic crisis in the West is recognised largely as a consequence of incompetent politics, such that faith in the Anglophone version of democracy has been shaken. Third, the Anglosphere lost prestige and gained many enemies when it attacked Iraq and other Muslim countries; few outside the political class believe that these cruel and barbarous things were done for the reasons propounded. They just amount to old fashioned imperialism and bullying.

So we are suddenly in a world in which Anglophones are not necessarily the pace-setters or the leaders. China is promoting international institutions that will exclude the USA; Russia rejects NATO and the EU's aggressive assumption that it will expand unceasingly, and at Russia's expense; Central Asian, Latin American, African and perhaps soon Middle Eastern countries find congenial alliances outside the West.

Our political leaders have not generally paid much attention to these changes. They continue to pontificate about how other countries should behave and even to march into them, like prefects in old fashioned schools, to chastise. They appear not to have learnt to let go of that British Empire mentality with which we arrogate

the right to tell others how to live. Like the boss who does not realise that he has been superseded, and that conditions have changed, they avoid the coming problems and challenges while preening themselves on past glories.

And there are a great many things with which they ought to be dealing, aside from how to control the ever burgeoning costs of the health and welfare services, the current obsession. But when our politicians do try to manage, the result is all too often failure: recent disasters have included the Child Support Agency, GP contracts, the foot and mouth epidemic, the Millennium Dome and the failure to control immigration. A great number of those on everybody's lips are analysed for us in a book by an eminent academic, *The Blunders of our Governments*, so we do not need to list them all here.[3] These and many other grand projects have wasted billions. These costs matter because the UK's debts are insupportable without a degree of economic growth which would be spectacular, given the limitations of today's economy, and is at present impossible.

Although it has advanced sectors, England's economy is unbalanced, with far too little manufacturing, too much reliance on financial services and large areas of the country dependent upon hand-outs because new industries have not replaced those superseded. We also import too much.

Although England is doing better than any other country in the EU, in many of which spendthrift politicians have done their best to stymie economic development, the future prognosis is not good because of three other factors which inhibit new start-ups or further development of existing companies: the damage done by the EU, the disadvantages of which outweigh the advantages; the sale of our industries to foreign capitalists;[4] the continued slowness in reforming school education after nearly sixty years of diagnosis and prescription.

Worse, the politicians have allowed companies to be sold off to the extent that over half the output of the UK economy is foreign owned.[5] Iconic companies such as Boots and Cadbury, created over many generations, have gone to foreign opportunists.

There are benefits to having an open economy but the disadvantages are painfully obvious: owners put the interests of their own countries before those of ours so that investment, research and development and employment will be lost later if not sooner. The most serious consequence of losing companies with sophisticated

cultures and technologies is that we thereby lose jobs and de-skill our workforce. In cases such as ICI and Cadbury, local communities which had grown up to serve these global organisations disappear; so do opportunities for our scientists and technicians, who may then be forced abroad. Employees or potential employees found no use for their skills and experience. In some areas of the country where traditional industries have either collapsed or gone into foreign hands, most people are supported by the taxpayer, either in public sector jobs or on benefits. As if these difficulties were not enough, foreign takeovers mean that the government loses tax: Boots, BAA, Abbey National and many others pay much less tax in the UK once their headquarters are overseas.

Then there is security, and especially energy security. Other countries don't allow us to run their infrastructure from abroad so it is astonishing that overseas capitalists can own ours. Why should decisions about investment in our energy be taken in Dubai or Germany?

Allowing foreign wealth funds to own land and build new developments is acceptable as long as they are subject to planning controls that take into account cultural and life quality factors. But there is a risk in that, if huge areas of our cities are owned by countries with which relations may deteriorate. What if one of the major Arab investors in the UK fell to ISIS, for example?

The sale of assets brings in capital and can prolong the lives of enterprises; but it can either directly deprive England of economic and social benefits, or subject us to controls or influences of people who have no interest in our success.

The UK pays a heavy price to belong to the EU, the benefits of which are limited. True, we have access to the continental markets, but then so do other countries which do not pay the price of membership. Policies that can damage us are made by people unaccountable to those they affect, often engineered by wealthy lobbyists and cartels with contacts and deep pockets. Unsuccessful countries that take out of the EU can determine what is to be done in our country. The EU is much less a free trade area than it is a vehicle for the imperial ambitions of its functionaries.

The principal defence of remaining a member is ideological, a belief that somehow we will be better off ruled from Brussels than London, part of a future superstate[6], and that it's nice to be part of an international project of togetherness.[7]

Yet the reasons why the Anglosphere created the modern world and the reasons why Europe leapt ahead of the rest of the world in cultural and economic development from the sixteenth century is now understood by historians[8] as being attributable to the variety and competitiveness of the many different countries and cultures.[9] Those persecuted in one could take refuge in another; scientists and artists unappreciated in Brunswick or Marseilles could go to London; writers and sculptors had a variety of potential patrons and governments competed for talent just as businesses competed for advantage. The glory of Europe is the fact that its peoples are politically divided. A common market is ideal, but in politics small is beautiful. Think about how the Renaissance came about, and the Hanseatic League.

Although the whole theory of the EU is wrong, ahistorical and ignores the key role that England has always been able to play in checking the rise of tyranny in Europe simply by being detached from it, most critics today focus rather on the immediate practical problems caused for us by membership of the EU. Our fishing industry has been largely destroyed because we share our rights to the seas with others; jobs and small businesses suffer restrictions; our membership fee is subject to fraud and corruption that are endemic in EU institutions; our health, welfare and education services are being called in question because they cannot cope with the EU citizens from poorer countries who take advantage of them under the freedom of movement rules; and the UK is unable (unlike Canada, Australia, Norway, Switzerland and other much smaller countries) to negotiate its own trade agreements.

Growing resentment against the EU political class all over Europe has brought about the rise of anti-EU parties of both right and left. In England the big parties are being forced to take ordinary peoples' concerns about the EU into account as they find themselves deserted for new rivals. Given the problems, political and economic, that are endemic to the EU our politicians should focus on how to rebuild our economy and make trading alliances and commercial partnerships around the world without reference to the continent.

A successful economy is necessary to ensure that we are not dependent for energy or technology on others, able to maintain a high standard of living, sophisticated standards of education and culture and to remain worthy of the respect of bigger countries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, educated people from all over were moved by England's example. They saw England as

civilised because of its rule of law, its diffusion of power and knowledge and its sturdy and enterprising working classes. These things, they thought, were the basis of England's economic and technological success. Chinese political thinkers agreed when they wrote and broadcast, in 2006, the immensely successful television series *The Rise of the Great Powers*. Economic success, it demonstrated, was a product of the political culture. Why should we want to subject this culture to the dictates of officials from very different traditions, whose default mode is an authoritarianism we abjured?

So, of the matters that our political leaders should be grasping, the principal ones are our economic future and the political arrangements that underpin it. Of course there are other pressing issues: employment creation, the fragmentation of family life with its repercussions for children and old people especially, the dependency culture, housing in the cities, vocational training, criminality, how best to regulate commerce and its power to shape our behaviours; the list is endless. But first we need to attend to the fundamentals.

Going south

Economists are predicting that we have slid backwards, de-developed and need to re-imagine ourselves as of the 'south', a developing country. This has happened largely because we changed the political and ideological framework; economic development will not happen without attention to that.

Over the last few years we have been encouraged to believe that our economic crisis is only the one brought on by the banking failures of a few years ago and that it will be resolved if we can but reduce public sector debt. Public sector debt, the consequence of politicians spending money they cannot raise from taxes in order to (1) buy votes and (2) wage foreign wars, is of course important. But our economy's problems go much deeper, even though our political class and the financial and business leaders often seem in denial. It has taken a few clear minded journalists and economists to point out the dangers ahead.[10] Some argue that we have regressed to being a developing country and that we should be working out how to develop into a modern economy.[11]

In the chaotic 1970s, it was assumed by many that the UK was suffering an irreversible decline as its heavy industries collapsed and government interference and high taxation repressed enterprise. Britain's version of statism, though by no means as extreme and certainly not as violent as that in the communist countries, had similar effects on economic life. In the 1980s, at about the same time that a new Chinese leader was planning to ditch the statist policies of his predecessor and return to the market economy of the pre-communist period, the British government also privatised state-owned enterprises, cut taxes, reduced the powers of the trades unions and deregulated markets. Before long, growth rose to five per cent, one of the highest rates of any European nation.

These reforms laid the foundation for years of prosperity that continued, though with a severe recession in 1990-92, until the financial crisis of 2007. They also caused widespread disruption and large scale unemployment. Because of its liberal market ideology, the government did little to lay the foundations for new industrial development, anticipating that the market would do the job itself and being chary of repeating the expensive mistakes of early governments in the 1960s and 1970s which had tried unsuccessfully to encourage new industries.

Despite these omissions, the reforming government was re-elected three times as working-class voters rejected their traditional party, Labour, which prescribed more statism and which was associated most closely with the failures of the 1970s.

After the 1990-92 recession the full benefits of the reforms kicked in and unemployment reduced rapidly as new enterprises started. But it became very apparent that the resuscitated economy was severely imbalanced. It had lost the greater part of its manufacturing industries to competition, often subsidised, from the developing economies. Because of this, by 2007 we had the world's third largest current account deficit. London in particular was, and is, very dependent upon our reformed financial services industry, professional services and ICT. According to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 'In 2011, knowledge intensive industries accounted for around a third of UK output and a quarter of total employment. A more diversified economy is less vulnerable to problems overseas.'[12] Paying vast salaries, the financial sector sucks away talent from other industries, just like the public sector, and expands the gap between rich and poor; despite the sector's ability to earn overseas, the UK persists in having a balance of payments deficit; we do not pay our way.

Many of the other 'industries' are domestic and, while enriching us at home, do not help reduce the trade deficit, i.e. help us pay for what we buy from abroad (construction, health and social care, transport), and what we buy from abroad has increased year by year. The new industries of business consultancy or format television design are derided by economists as 'bullshit industries'[13] with little power to create long-lasting and substantial industries and jobs. Our successful manufactures are now mostly owned by foreign companies and very little of what goes into, for example, cars is contributed by British firms. 'The British are like the barely educated natives of a newly decolonised country – relying on the skills and capital of others to endow them with productive capability.'[14]

Just like the reforming government of the 1980s, the Coalition, faced with a crisis made very much worse by the massive increases in public sector spending under the previous Labour prime minister, Gordon Brown, decided that if only it cut back the state then the private sector would forthwith provide the new enterprises and new jobs. This has happened, but only to a limited extent. Possibly because of investors' short-sightedness, possibly because talent is still sucked into the public sector and the City by too-high wages, and possibly because several generations of the hungry classes have been deprived of a useful education and taught to see

themselves as supplicants of the state rather than the enterprising people of their grandparents' generations, the recovery has been limited. And as the greediest parts of the state, those parts which swallow up the largest share of taxpayers' money, have not been cut, the politicians have not achieved even that objective. They crow that we are better than the other EU countries, but that is not much of a boast. The Mediterranean countries may have appalling levels of unemployment but we too have millions idle, of whom too many are under 24.[15]

Why does this matter? We need to import food for a fast growing population, we need raw materials and energy when competition for these resources from the hugely populated countries such as China, India and Brazil is becoming ever more intense.

Despite all these difficulties and despite relative decline, our country remains a leading exporter with networks around the world and soft power to be exploited by talented entrepreneurs and traders. Although its financial system is criticised, it is also an immense asset, which is why the EU appears determined to shackle it or get it under Brussels control.

These advantages derive from our past as the greatest trading nation and the political and cultural leadership that we exercised for 200 years. Those are excellent foundations on which to build. But if growth and employment are to expand, we need radical improvements to our skills, our schools and our infrastructure from the civil service to urban planning.

If the economists are right and Britain is heading towards underdevelopment, then we need a change of mindset. Our political leaders should be focussed above all on development. What are the political structures and international agreements best suited to a developing economy? How can government harness the skills and energy of the most able people and get young people to choose industry and enterprise? What can we learn from successful developing economies?

England has taught the world how to run a society for the benefit of its members and how to release them to contribute as equals in society. It must not be allowed to decline into insignificance, or this example will be lost, to the detriment of all humanity. But if we fail to right our economy, all our great institutions and humane procedures will be little more than amusement for tourists.

Trapped transition

England discovered freedom, or rather showed how the power-hungry can be tamed and obliged to consider, involve and not repress, their fellow citizens. Power was widely dispersed until recently when our political development went into reverse. Just at the time that the digital revolution and the internet has reduced the need for expertise, when travel and communication make participation in politics easier than ever before, we have gone back to an age when political leadership was the sport of rich men from a gated world. If we were true to our history, we would be using these developments to extend and deepen democracy, but we today seem unable to make the transition to a more democratic society.

When all women were able to vote in 1928, it was the culminating moment in a long process by which participation in politics had been made possible for more and more people. As early as the ninth century, England had evolved the idea of equality before the law, dispersal of power and decision-making through discussion and consensus. The realisation of those principles took over a thousand years; the famous milestones include Magna Carta, the trial and execution of Charles I, the Glorious Revolution, the Great Reform Acts and the Representation of the People Act of 1928.

Power was little by little made more accountable; more and more people were involved in the political process; central government was circumscribed so that communities might run their own affairs; the law began to work for the poor as for the rich.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europeans looked to England as the example of how a society should be run. In Clerkenwell, over a small shop, there is a plaque which commemorates that Italian liberals met there in the eighteenth century to plan the freeing of their country from imperial rule and its democratisation on the English model; in the same period Germans and Russians, Spaniards and Poles met in London to learn from our achievements: limited government, parliamentary accountability, popular representation and a legal system in which the people might have faith.[16]

Despite reprehensible passages in its history, the Anglosphere has provided the best known environment for people to flourish, established models of human welfare and standards of behaviour admired everywhere; has initiated the institutions of global governance and peace-keeping; has created societies in which conflict is by and large restrained and political transitions are peaceable.[17] England over those 1,000 years developed the rule of law, the institutions of representative government and the concept of rights.

Not only was it other Europeans who sought to learn from us. Wherever there is an English-speaking country, these ideas are implanted. In many other parts of the world, particularly where the English or Americans had colonies, they are aspirations. An early manifestation of concern for human rights, the campaign against slavery, was initiated in England in the eighteenth century[18] and was the forerunner of movements of social welfare, public health and mass education which are copied all over the world.

Compared with most other countries, Anglophone societies have been more socially mobile, more open to enterprise and providing of opportunities to participate and to succeed. Any one of these achievements is extraordinary in the perspective of past human societies in which a great gulf between power-holders and people was normal and in which violence and exploitation were fatalistically accepted. Today, all over the world people want their countries to be 'modern'; it is the Anglophones who created the very idea of modernity, so sometimes people have confused being modern with being Anglo-American. Until recently that is, when alternative models of modernity have had to be recognized.

The Anglosphere has been resilient. Over the centuries it beat off challenges from ideologically-inimical Spain, France, Germany and Russia. And yet today three happenings have lessened admiration for the Anglosphere. First, the bloody war on Iraq and the meddling in other Muslim countries, using the promotion of democracy and rights as an excuse, is perceived as aggressive and hypocritical. Second, the huge success of authoritarian China has made the world question the efficacy of the Anglophone model, which was supposed to be the only one able to deliver development. Third, the present economic crisis overhanging the Western world has shaken confidence in Western institutions, particularly as the crisis is perceived as a consequence of politicians' incompetence.

Critics argue that what is wrong with the West is no mere economic crisis that can be solved by economic policies but that the economic problem is the symptom of a social crisis, the failure to adjust to the new realities of a world in which China, India, Brazil and Russia are becoming influential economies. We have to learn to survive in a world economy in which we are hugely outnumbered by people who are not only hungry and determined but also day by day educated and trained to standards that rise inexorably.

Others do not believe that there is an economic and social crisis as much as a political crisis. What do they mean?

The English political system – the democracy our politicians boast about so much – has adapted over the centuries to new circumstances, yet now cannot make the transition needed if it is to function effectively in the twenty-first century world of new media, or the globalised world. Our politicians cannot solve our problems but, befuddled by outdated ideas of superiority, trapped in their local politics and motivated by personal and party ambitions, are creating new ones.

And yet, in the era of the internet, this is extraordinary: new media are the developments that have finally made it possible to realise democracy. The story of English politics until recently was of ever more participation and accountability, so we should be best placed to extend democratic politics using the new tools of information-sharing, crowd-sourcing and investigation. Instead we are controlled by a daily more narrowly selected and ideologically driven club of professional politicians – what we call here the New Class. We analyse the New Class in the next section.

What made England great? Does that still count? Anglophone political institutions made enterprise and competition possible. Our forebears called it ‘freedom’; they realised that it was this relative ‘freedom’ which made the Anglosphere burgeon from being a small island offshore of Europe to being first the economic, then the political and finally the cultural power of the world.[19] English exceptionalism lies in its political culture which, by making development possible, changed the world.

For centuries, elites and their intellectual supporters claimed that commerce is a bad thing and exploitative, and that a harmonious society can only be created where the desire to do business is curtailed and controlled by the state. Monarchs often just wanted to seize the fruits of commerce; nineteenth century intellectuals

claimed that they believed the best society to be one in which everyone is equal and receives the same. Others considered that only kings and nobles should have exceptional resources; they tried to control what ordinary people could eat or own and so they tried to control what was bought and sold.

We now know that it is humanity's instinct for trade that is the key to progress[20] but that progress cannot take place unless that instinct is indulged. In 1978 China had repressed trade for 30 years; in the subsequent 30 years it has transformed from a medieval to a twenty-first century society simply by liberating people to make their own living. China does not have democracy as we understand it, but trade has revolutionised almost every aspect of the country. The big issue in China now is whether the political system will rein back trade, or whether trade will undermine the political system.[21]

From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, England witnessed struggles over whether and how enterprise should be regulated or smothered by the state. During the English Civil War state control was decisively challenged and our political institutions reached a stage that made possible enterprise, the doing of trade and the building of durable and capitalised businesses.[22] While English traders and peddlers expanded their activities without fear, in many other countries courts established monopolies and restricted both trade and education. They allowed officials to interfere and often to stymie innovation and enterprise, while England was doing the opposite. Merchants and artisans in the English towns managed to establish themselves as people of independent means able sometimes to compete with landowners in wealth and power. Entrepreneurs or simple traders could feel confident in investing their surplus in new ventures because they could assert their legal rights to ownership and be taxed only according to law. Compared to their counterparts in most of the world, English business people were relatively free and secure.[23]

Another factor that made England exceptional among European societies was individualism. Not the extreme individualism of the modern Anglosphere, that rejects any sense of responsibility to others and puts personal satisfaction above all, but the individualism that makes young people leave home to strike out on their own; that leads peasants to confront the local lords as men of equal rights if not equal wealth or education; and that leads women to expect – though they might not always get – property and standing. Which came first, individualism or the rule of law, is up for debate, but together they constitute the foundations of what

anthropologists call English exceptionalism, or what made the English different from all other contemporary societies.[24]

Legal rights are a part of a wider tradition of constraining the power of the government and the powerful. As early as King Alfred (849-899), the ruler accepted that decisions be made by consensus. Various agreements including Magna Carta (1215) subsequently reasserted constraints on the monarch. In the 1640s, Parliamentarians in England rose up in revolt against a king who violated ancient traditions about the power of the king, and sought to spend money without consent. The Glorious Revolution (1688) settled the question forever, that taxation should only be levied upon people with the right to vote.

Nearly a century later, in exactly that tradition, a group of British citizens living in the New World rose up in rebellion because a tyrannical king had forgotten that right and tried to impose taxation without representation. The American-based opposition managed to do what the England-based opposition had so far failed to do: create a constitution that enshrined those principles of dispersed power, separated power, of the decentralisation of control. And, as happens in all societies where power is dispersed, the wealth-creators can get on and create the wealth.[25]

In the USA, power is dispersed between the central government and the 50 states that can make most of the laws that affect people and run their own fiscal policy. This allows innovation in many ways, but it is not simply just a geographical dispersal of power that matters. Within the federal structure itself, there is dispersal of power between executive, legislature and judiciary. There are many checks and balances, and although far from perfect, the American constitution has largely prevented the advent of that great wealth-destroyer, a centralised state that consumes GDP and stifles innovation.

The dispersal of power between different levels of government, and the dispersal of power within government, both limit the possibility of politicians accumulating power. Moreover the extension of the principle of election down to the smallest local levels such as police chief, judge and library committee ensures that participation is as universal as any society has ever managed.[26]

What the USA has is simply the English system of the seventeenth century taken to its modern and logical realisation;[27] but in England today we not only have not extended the dispersal of power, we have seen our politicians taking away power

from local communities, geographical and professional; in fact they have reversed our progress.[28]

After the dispersal of power, England's greatest contribution to humanity has been the rule of law, or a working system reflecting the idea that all are subject to the law, including those who make it. Only a minority of societies has this; usually the party in power or the ruler(s) and the police or military are in reality above the law. The very idea that all might have equal rights was revolutionary in many countries until recently. In most countries even today people fear the law as being merely the rules made by the powerful to preserve their power; they dread the forces of law and order which impose these rules.

In England in the ninth century, King Alfred systematised tribal laws and required that legislation have popular consent. The Norman kings in the eleventh and twelfth centuries strengthened the existing system of impartial and universal law, and where bad kings tried to circumvent the law, the nobles forced them to obey. With the spread of Christianity, particularly in its Protestant formations, came Christian ideals of the individual soul and equality before God. In fact Protestantism in England can be interpreted as an Anglicisation of the Christian message with (Roman Catholic) authoritarianism and much of the ritual rejected and a new emphasis upon the moral life of the individual, reinforcing the individualism of the English.

By the late seventeenth century, Parliament had established itself incontrovertibly as the source of power in England, to the decisions of which every person was subject. Parliament first won a Civil War against Charles I and then executed him for treason; after setting up a short-lived republic, Parliament invited his son and, a generation later, a foreign prince, to take the throne. As it made these decisions, Parliament affirmed the rules that clarified that that the king himself was subject to law and that law derives from the customs of the people enshrined in common law and the statutes of elected Parliamentarians.

England was not an electoral democracy when it initiated the great transformation termed the Industrial Revolution, but it had institutions that provided the political conditions for progress, of which the most fundamental may have been that rule of law, since it guaranteed property rights and legal, if not other forms, of equality. What are the other conditions? Limitations on central power; light touch legislation; economic freedom; local decision-making. The rule of law[29] was the basis of

commerce, because where universal law is more powerful than the whim of a powerful man, contracts can be honoured and upheld. The expansion of trade around the world was made much easier by that.

At home, a commercial society is civilising. Business brings people together, they form associations, alliances and friendships. People doing business need reputation, need to get on with others and to be known for fair dealing because they are accountable to their customers.

Intercourse stimulates innovation. Business requires communication and involvement in public affairs. More and more people join those who participate in opinion-forming and decision-making; intolerance and cruelty diminish; the arts flourish; concern for others, given concrete form by charities and foundations, seems to be a by-product of commercial success, because so many rich business people look for ways of sharing their wealth and time with others. Politicians often castigate business people as dishonest or unpatriotic, whereas it seems that it is more often politicians who are corrupt and selfish.

Countries where the economy is run by central directive, in which equality is supposedly enforced and where decisions are taken by political officials are harsh, unkind societies in which any initiative is frowned upon; ask the East Europeans.

Does this history matter? For many decades, our polity has been going in the direction opposite to that which the reformers and martyrs of the past aimed. It is an irony that while countries with authoritarian traditions, whether in Asia or Europe, have been step by step edging towards greater participation and accountability, England, where freedom was invented, has been allowing its elected politicians to take power away from us, to centralise, to over-tax, to hand power over us to unelected officials in other countries and to politicise and make less accountable the civil servants who should be answerable to us. All this has to do with the nature of the New Class, without the abolition of which we will neither reform our politics nor save our economy.

But surely, you may ask, the very specific political history of England, its contribution to humanity, no longer matters? Just as our sporting inventions, from football to cricket, our clothing and our language, have become so widely diffused as to be international, since everybody now agrees that the Anglosphere runs best, there is no longer anything special about us.

It is true that over 165 countries now profess to be democratic. It is true that, as after 1945 when National Socialism was defeated in Germany, and after 1989 when Russian socialism collapsed in Eastern Europe, the political and economic model that was to replace them was the Anglophone one. And continental European countries subscribe to the general principles, which is why they join the USA in trying to force other countries to adopt them too. So how it all came about is irrelevant – or is it?

If we understand that freedom had very particular antecedents and cannot easily be grafted on to other cultures and histories, then we will pay more attention to nurturing our own. And this realisation that what we call freedom cannot easily be imposed on, and is not necessarily relevant to, other cultures has grown for two reasons: first, the failure of the Anglosphere to establish its own political order in Muslim countries and, second, the rise to superpower status of a country with a different conception of freedom: China.

We write of a ‘realisation’ but not everybody has seen the light. This is understood much better by ordinary people than by the people with the power to act upon it. It is in the interests of the political class to deny or ignore these facts, for as long as they can. The political class is an obstacle to our working with the new international powers and, at home, a barrier to progress.

The next section describes this great polyp that sits atop our country, sucking the energy, attracting enmity and blocking improvements.

The new class

We talk routinely about our politicians as being detached from the rest of us, as living in their own world, speaking a language as artificial as the dialogue in bad soaps, members of a club serving its interests rather than those of the electors. That 'the political class' is not just a rhetorical insult but describes a real phenomenon is shown by the facts. Criticism of the class by no means suggests that there are not fine and public-spirited individuals in politics, but that the system militates against their behaving in our interests.

We refer to the New Class because its characteristics differentiate it from those who ran our country in earlier centuries. The New Class differs from previous ruling classes because its members are professionals whose entire careers are devoted to politics, from which they receive status, salary, perks, pensions and privileges.

There are exceptions, yet we can generalise that the politician today has no other professional activity and his or her life revolves around politics. In the past there were very few such people. In the nineteenth century Anthony Trollope wrote with revulsion of George Vavasor, who wanted to become an MP in order to make his way, because this was regarded as unsavoury. Vavasors are now the majority.

Because they start their careers so young, some even at school, most at university, they have little if any experience of life outside politics. This has various implications. As they have achieved little before politics, all their hopes for recognition and achievement are of politics. Without practical experience in the operation of, let alone the management of, institutions or companies, it is not surprising that ministers (almost all recruited from the House of Commons) make mistakes; in effect they gain their experience and learn judgment not while doing junior jobs in this or that industry or profession but while controlling multi-million pound public budgets. Being without the maturity which other people hope to develop with experience, they are often incapable of understanding or evaluating advice from experts, scientists, generals or diplomats. Their ignorance and inexperience also incline them to be ideological, imposing theories rather than solving problems empirically. Is it surprising that recent ministers have wreaked such havoc?

Even if an MP – or local government cabinet member – wanted to keep a career outside of politics going in order not to be a mere politician, he or she would find it

very difficult. Not only is the timetable now arranged to suit full-timers, but party officials and local activists, who have by and large come to think of the professional politician as the norm, would not permit it.

Up until the 1930s, party discipline in Parliament was weak and in local government almost nonexistent. In the 1980s it was still possible to go campaigning for a national party in a constituency far from the capital and find that the rosettes were of a completely different colour and the slogans at variance with the national organisation. Many councillors sat as independents, whether or not they had national party affiliations. Thus MPs and councillors were free to represent their constituencies. But the trend was for the party centre to impose control as far as it could.

After World War Two, class divisions were entrenched, with two broad distinctions: the Conservatives represented the propertied classes while Labour represented the industrial workers. Labour MPs thought of themselves foremost as part of the trades unions. There was no collective consciousness as MPs. However, the professionalisation described above, plus similarities in social background, attitude to life and beliefs that transcend party, have come to create a sense of being a distinct class.

Today, to be selected to stand as an MP or councillor, you need to be obedient to the central party organisation. The organisation controls access to the national list of candidates, a vital gate. But from gatekeeping, the parties have gone much further in their efforts to impose discipline. In 1997, Labour first introduced the idea that its candidates should be told what they could or could not say, through daily messaging. By the 2010 election, the Conservative Party was prohibiting its candidates from making any public statement which had not first been approved. Increasingly, as you can tell from listening to politicians in the media, conventional jargon is deployed which is common to politicians regardless of party. This is easy to enforce because politicians are so conformist by upbringing.

There is now a standard career path. You get involved with the party when at school or university. If you do not immediately get elected to office, and few MPs are elected before 30 years old, you get into what the political scientists call a ‘brokerage’ occupation which provides time, adequate money and access. In the case of David Cameron this was as a public affairs consultant for a television

company; Gordon Brown was as a television researcher. These kinds of jobs make it possible to do all the networking and probing required of the aspiring politician.

Conservative constituency activists noted in recent elections that they were being pressurised into shortlisting people without any local affiliation but who were liked by 'the Notting Hill set' (a euphemism for David Cameron's sofa cabinet). Since then there have been many reports of Labour's 'red princelings' being foisted onto constituencies. One in 12 of our MPs is related to another MP. Many come from a limited number of, usually independent, schools. So, to get on, it is essential to first be in.

The aspirant politician has to invest time and money before he or she gets payback. Once elected, the overriding objective is to remain; however, today, the loyal MP who has lost a seat will be able to find a job in the wider political sphere until re-entry is possible.

Before the late twentieth century, Parliamentarians did not go into politics expecting a reliable income or advancement. They spent relatively short periods in Parliament and few remained for their entire working lives. Only since 1971 has it been possible to make a living from politics. Moreover, there are many perks and a pension scheme; many services provided to MPs including special allowances for research and assistance. The salaries are now substantial, compared with those of most fellow citizens, so that fewer and fewer MPs have any professional income, other than what they can get paid for their political knowledge or contacts. This might seem adequate, yet, as we saw from The Daily Telegraph's expenses revelations of 2009, many MPs and peers have used means either grasping or dishonest to increase their take from the taxpayer so that there is a widespread – and unjust - assumption that to be an MP is to be a crook.

There has been an expansion in the staff of the House of Commons further to make MPs' lives comfortable. Recent governments have greatly increased the number of posts available for its supporters from junior ministerial posts to select committee memberships.

Of whom is the New Class comprised? We should look at it as a series of concentric rings. Members of the House of Commons form the core of the New Class because the power over the New Class is itself concentrated there. Until recently Parliament used to be the main goal, and a ministry the summit of

ambition; however, Tony Blair has shown that it can also be viewed simply as the springboard to opportunities perceived as more splendid or more lucrative.

Although being a Member of Parliament is the clearest single badge of membership of the political class, shared interests, values and ambitions are to be found among a much wider group of people, probably numbering several thousand. They form the outer rings. Those closest to the core are more powerful, those at the outer extent are still in some manner members of the class and bulwarks of it.

Many of these will be aspirant MPs, but others will have settled for different roles in the political system, such as:

Party employees;
Researchers and advisers to ministers, shadows, MPs, councillors;
Members of the House of Lords, who are increasingly retired or redundant elected politicians;
Political consultants and lobbyists;
Members of policy research institutes, usually receiving public funds;
Councillors;
Members of public bodies, agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (quangos);
MEPs;
Officials of charities, foundations and trusts.

The Charity Commission and the BBC were two high-profile bodies whose chairs were Labour Party adherents, the last Press Complaints Commission chair was a Conservative and the Metropolitan Police Authority provides jobs for several political activists. Devolution in 1997 greatly enlarged the opportunities for the New Class to pursue a professional political career when salaried posts were created for members of the Scottish, Welsh, Northern Ireland and Greater London assemblies, with attendant hordes of assistants and advisers. Because the members of these bodies are elected by proportional representation, the party organisations have complete control over who may be a candidate.

Regional assemblies for England then followed; the plan was to start them unelected and then turn them into fully fledged job opportunities for the New Class by having them elected. However, popular opposition to them has caused the plan

to be put on hold and, instead, unelected Regional Development Agencies were to be given new powers.

There is a large number of quangos with substantial staff.[30] Those on the boards of such operations may be assumed to be members of the class; as with certain roles in central and local government, particularly those which are largely ideological, they are appointed with reference to their loyalty to the New Class and its ideology.

The New Class is a clearly identifiable phenomenon and the consequence of a lengthy process of centralisation of power and professionalisation of politics. Do we really want our lives redesigned by people who have less experience of and knowledge of life than ordinary citizens who have struggled to earn a living? Do we want decisions about our country and its future to be made in the short-term interests of political parties or the career ambitions of people committed first to their own survival in politics? This is not democracy, but oligarchy. Especially when those in charge have deprived us of so many powers and rights.

The seizure of power

Many things that were originally initiated and managed locally have been taken out of the hands of the people or their representatives and given to state officials. The political class has carried out a power grab in many areas of English life, inimical to our development and contrary to our tradition.

As the New Class has grown, so more and more power has been sucked away from local communities and citizens towards London. One aspect of English political life most admired by continental observers in past centuries was the fact that localities were self-regulating and central government interfered little in daily life. A.J.P. Taylor famously noted that, until 1914, 'a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state'.

There were two consequences of this. One was that peoples' initiative was given full reign. We owe our extraordinary array of voluntary associations to our freedom from control. You only have to look at other societies, from Italy to Russia to China, to realise how exceptional is the way in which the citizens of England have been the architects of their own society. From the seventeenth century onwards it was local, voluntary, effort that set up networks of schools, health and welfare organisations, mutual aid societies, libraries and sports clubs. The enterprise revolution that we associate with commerce and industry and which swept England ahead of all the world, was not only a commercial revolution but it was a cultural one: it was the people who set up the institutions that every country now expects to have, not officials or princes.

The fact that central politicians did not interfere made for economically vigorous cities and regions. In recent decades many have lamented the decline of Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. But just as these cities became great when they managed their own affairs, so they could become great again if they stopped living off handouts from London and raised their own taxes, reviving the political culture that brought on board every active citizen. There are historical precedents: the Italian city states of the Renaissance, the Hanseatic cities of the Baltic and the German principalities before WW1 and the lander after 1949; England of the enterprise revolution; the USA. The argument of the Scottish SNP for independence is very persuasive; at present the Scottish government has

some power but less responsibility, in that it does not itself raise taxes and is therefore not answerable to those who pay them.

As we write, there is a debate going on in England about the new rules made by the minister for health, on what food can be eaten in hospitals. Not whether he should make such rules, but whether he has got them right! To anyone outside of England, the idea that a national minister should decide how potatoes be cooked in any hospital, let alone all hospitals, is bizarre. In most countries, services such as health, education, roads and planning are run by local governments, usually accountable at local elections. But today in England central government infantilises the people by not allowing them to manage their own affairs: it runs hospitals, decides police schedules, makes policies on school discipline and runs welfare, roads, colleges and fire brigades. Since local government raises only four per cent of its own money, of course it must do what it is told, not by the people, but by the paymasters in London.

In France, parishes run schools. In Sweden, health and public housing are run by municipalities. Danish hospitals are run by the counties. Americans participate much more in local affairs because their elected representatives are responsible for taxing and spending. And they do so because they got the idea from England, where welfare and health, schools and mutual help funds were the product of citizens joining together through trades unions, churches and self-help groups; of wealthy people donating their money to the community and poorer people their time; the institutions they created have been grabbed and ruined by politicians.

Today foreigners study the NHS as an example of what can go wrong, but before World War Two England had a much admired health service. There were gaps and there were problems, but these did not have to be resolved by wholesale centralisation in 1945. Unfortunately that was the fashion among politicians. Although thoughtful people knew already that the Soviet Union was an appalling failure, although the dangers of concentrating power in the capital had been illustrated by Nazism, nevertheless power-hungry politicians argued that nationalisation was ‘the modern way’. So the health service was made into a centralised, bureaucratic system. It functioned well at first, as the original workers and disciplines continued to run it as they had run the voluntary clinics and hospitals. Then the laws of organisation started to exert themselves. When institutions are big and impersonal, corruption and insouciance set in; where functions are not accountable to the people who use them, they deteriorate. As we

all know, a sufficiently large bureaucracy will generate enough internal work to keep itself 'busy' and so justify its continued existence without commensurate output.[31] Our supposedly glorious health service has given rise to the most revolting abuses and is crippling government finances. Of course, the concept of universal healthcare is right; but the delivery method is wrong.

The Thatcher governments concentrated power even as she attempted to reduce government involvement in the economy: they emasculated ministries and obliged them to take orders from the Treasury and the Prime Minister's office. Although attacked for privatising, those governments exerted dictatorial control over 40 per cent of the economy. Before Thatcher, universities were autonomous, having been founded through local and individual initiative of many different kinds; they are now in effect nationalised industries. Her successors went further. The Blair and Major administrations undermined Parliament, the civil service, the judiciary and the professions. Regulators and inspectors were sent everywhere. This was all-out war on the core principle of English politics, that wherever people can govern themselves, they should.

Central control failed in Russia, China and all the other centrally planned countries. China's successes of the past 30 years have come about largely because government demoted the planning and central control which had wrecked the Chinese economy and instead encouraged initiative below.

Change is possible.[32] France used to be equally centralised but in 1982-3 enacted the Gaston Defferre Laws. Local governments were instructed to levy their own taxes and run virtually all public services. In Italy, half of provincial services are funded locally. Three regions of Spain have autonomy, themselves deciding how much tax revenue they will supply to Madrid. In Sweden schools, clinics, social benefits, health and planning have been devolved to counties and municipalities.

England has turned its back on its own achievements and reversed direction, perhaps because, as the Empire broke up, we found ourselves with a class of people who were − and perhaps still are − trained to manage colonies and who were looking for outlets for their energies. Their mentality was not English but Imperial British. The Heath government's reforms of the 1970s smashed traditional, local government and replaced it by impersonal institutions far from the electors and not responsible to them for their spending, but to London ministries. There have, since, been half-hearted attempts to restore the semblance of local power.

No other self-styled democracy has taken away power from its communities to such an extent and one of the many negative consequences is dissatisfaction with public services; another is turning away from politics, in which the English used to be perpetually engaged.

Today in England, the lowest level of government is the district council, typically with a population of between 174,000 and 1.1 million. In Germany the lowest tier of government has 5,000 and in France 1,500. A French councillor has an electorate of 100 voters, an English one 2,000. No wonder so few English people vote in local elections.

Over a thousand years, the English created the best run, most participatory, society that humanity has ever known, and then cloned similar societies wherever it sent settlers; its principles are respected all over the world even where different cultures determine different outcomes. Democracy means government by and for the people and this no longer exists in England. Power has been seized from us and we are more and more like the serfs of countries we used to pity.

Battle against the working class

The denigration, some say demonisation, of the English working class and the assault upon their economic and cultural foundations is the principal reason that the seizure of power has been unopposed.[33]

From the moment that it became apparent that there was a working class civilisation, distinct from but essential to the national culture of the ruling classes, it was attacked and denigrated. The people of England created their own welfare and education institutions, their own communities which threw up enterprises and industry; they ran their own affairs and developed a culture which was remarkable to those who came from countries where there was no such working class, simply lords and serfs. The iconic names tell it all: Robert Owen, whose socialism was based on practical, concrete experience and not on the theories of continental refugees; William Cobbett, the world's first investigative journalist; the Levellers.

How has a dysfunctional, often incompetent and monochrome political class replaced people representative of the diversity and multiple skills and abilities of the English? In part this is because the system made it possible. Parliament gave its members more money and perks, attracting adventurers. Parties were taken over by careerists who ejected those for whom politics was a community duty rather than a source of income. The fact that ministers had come to be drawn mainly from the House of Commons meant that the parties could offer a career; being a legislator was something you hung around doing until you had pleased the leader so much that he made you a minister.

There were far more representatives of the working class in Parliament when capitalism was supposedly at its most rampant; the most notable fact about Parliament now is the expulsion of the working class.

Today in our country there are about 28 million people whose jobs would suggest they be classified as working class.[34] Oddly enough, many more people self-identify as working class, suggesting that there may be widespread sympathy for what we are about to say.[35] Which is that English working-class culture, which was the foundation of our political system, the soil in which our culture grew and provided the attitudes and expectations that created the enterprise revolution, has been subjected to suppression, humiliation and prejudice. The beliefs and habits of the workers have been mocked and denigrated, their institutions undermined or

obliterated, their livelihoods and communities wrecked. It is not we who have found this out. Since the 1970s and maybe even earlier, sociologists of every hue have been telling us that, as one of them put it, 'it is our misunderstandings, meddlings and manipulations which have transformed a British working class that was the envy and amazement of foreign observers in the nineteenth century into a so-called underclass which is often the subject of baffled despair today both at home and abroad'.[36]

What we call the Industrial Revolution came about because there was first an enterprise revolution such as no part of the world had ever experienced before. After the civil war and the Glorious Revolution, the freedom on which the English had long congratulated themselves became the soil in which independent enterprises, whether social or commercial or intellectual, could grow. Why? Partly because the authoritarianism of king and Roman church had thoroughly been put in their place, partly because the rule of law was affirmed, partly because there was greater affluence, and partly because the Protestant enthusiasm for learning and doing was catching. For poorer people, life was no longer just about surviving and conforming to the expectations of the rich; it was about getting out and making a career or a business, turning talents to account no matter how simple those talents.

By the early nineteenth century, as foreign observers noted, England had a working class civilisation. That is, the working classes had institutions – churches, banks, schools and welfare bodies – that had very little to do with the rich and nothing to do with the state. Later would come trades unions and the Labour Party. Early on the political classes were hostile to the autonomous institutions of the working classes and, since they had the resources of the state, law-making, taxation and prestige at their disposal, it proved difficult for the poor to survive the attack.

It has often been remarked that Britain's health service was the best in the world before World War Two, and for a few years thereafter.[37] If you go to London's Walworth Road today, you will see a fine building with a proud plaque, stating: 'The Peoples' Health is the Highest Law'. Within, a board will tell you that this clinic was rebuilt in 1937 and will list all the local worthies who contributed their time to running it. This reminds us that the people were served by a huge number of hospitals and clinics, run by local associations and served generously by physicians who could usually be relied upon to make the rich patients pay for the

poorer. Of the poorer, most were funded by insurance schemes set up as mutual friendly societies by working class people; the destitute, who were not enrolled, relied upon the many charitable bodies that grew up in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Of course there were gaps, anomalies and failures, but it was quite unnecessary to nationalise and centralise all these institutions, taking them out of local control, as was done by the Attlee government. But it was the fashion. Most people did not yet realise that the Soviet Union, the most complete experiment in command economy, had been an appalling failure.[38] The reality being hidden from them, English idealists enthused about the impartiality and system that the state could provide.[39]

If you give someone a fish, you feed her, but if you teach her how to fish you give her a life. When you take away from a community an institution that requires local initiative and commitment, you not only give it to faraway officials with no close interest in it and who are not accountable to the community which uses it, you also let the skills of the people grow rusty and turn them from initiators into importuners, demanding that everything be done for them. When big supermarkets or chain cafes occupy a town they not only undermine the local shops, they also deny the opportunity of creating a business and a livelihood to local people, who become the employees of investors in Seattle or Saudi. The ultimate destruction of the economic bases of working class life was a long drawn-out process. The statists first started to undermine working-class education. The 1870 Education Act was set up with the best of intentions – to fill gaps in the provision of independent schools, which were almost universal; by that time Working Men's Educational Associations and Mechanics' Institutes abounded too. England's earliest school dates back to 597AD; the network of grammar schools was founded by Edward VI in the 1550s, but most schools were not state-originated; in the eighteenth century, large numbers of elementary schools were started, both by the Church of England and by the dissenting sects; private initiatives by individuals or communities brought forth many more in the nineteenth century.

The negative aspects of the measures being taken were twofold. First, they were largely ideological. Intellectuals such as Matthew Arnold loathed the working class institutions, as well as the dissenting churches that inspired them, and wanted them taken over by the Anglican Church, the 'establishment' of the day. Secondly, because state-initiated schools were subsidised, they gradually undermined the poor peoples' schools, to the extent that the independent schools that survived

became exclusively those for the wealthy. Many measures expanded education and enriched provision over the following 100 years, but the tendency was always to bring schooling for the poor more firmly under central control, economic and ideological.

In the nineteenth century, schools for the poor shared the same aims and curricula as schools for the rich.[40] This gradually began to change, and in particular changed greatly after the introduction of comprehensive schools. For whatever reason, the standards of schooling for the poor went down rapidly and, according to Mount, 'the type of education provided for the bottom class was deliberately different… The bottom class was and is well aware of this, as was shown by the fact that those who manage to clamber out of it took care that their children should attend either fee-paying schools or good state schools.'[41] Although this upset many teachers and parents from the 1960s onwards, neither Tories nor Labour seemed to care very much. This is possibly because the party leaders almost always had their own children educated in private schools, or those rare state schools which shared the private schools' ethos.

One consequence of the ruin of state schooling is the extraordinary gap in attainment between the lowest achievers and the highest, a gap unimaginable in other developed countries; another is that fewer and fewer children of working-class origin have got into university; another is that social mobility has decreased.[42] England was before the last half of the twentieth century the most socially mobile country ever. Provided you conformed to the norms of speech or dress, you could move with ease into a higher class, as destitute immigrants found to their joy. At least six twentieth-century prime ministers came from very modest backgrounds and, even in the nineteenth century, at the apogee of aristocratic power, one of the most illustrious was the son of an Italian Jewish bookseller. That leading roles in society are almost closed to working-class people today is now widely acknowledged as being closely connected with the school system. In recent years both major parties have sought to solve the problem by removing the schools from political and teacher union control, by converting state schools into semi-independent status or encouraging parents to set up new independent schools with state money. In other words, they are trying to return to the traditional English system by which schools are provided locally and are as diverse in curriculum as in management.

Many millions of working class people were enrolled in friendly societies by the early twentieth century.[43] These were mutually owned associations providing insurance for their members. Benefits in cases of illness, widowhood or orphans and in later years retirement pensions were all provided. Starting in 1911, government began regulating and then subsidising and finally controlling what had been organisations run entirely by and for their members, who numbered around 20 million. Unfortunately the urge to control, to bring under the power of officialdom, caused them to be absorbed into the state, with corresponding loss of personal responsibility and influence.

Another example of how working class independence was sapped is housing. Dickens and many other social commentators of the nineteenth century were shocked by the squalor of much inner city housing. Friendly societies and trusts such as the Guinness, Peabody and others built good quality housing for the poor in those centres, as did some local authorities. But the preferred solution after 1945 was to have massive public sector house building projects that shunted families far from their communities, in some cases obliterating them entirely, and the creation of one-class ghettos which, over the generations, have contributed to many social problems and discontents from violence and drunkenness to drug taking and anomie. Furthermore, tenants of the council were in the power of mighty officials, reducing them to the status of tied serfs. In recent years the sale of council houses to tenants and the conversion of estates into self-governing bodies has in some areas sought to reverse the policies of 1945, though more because councils want to save money than because they want to restore self-determination to the working classes.

When instituted, income tax was intended to affect the rich. Working-class people did not start paying income tax until recently. But the ambitions of politicians grew and they started to understand how votes could be bought by taking money from the quiescent and giving it to potential supporters. So the people with least money have had an ever larger proportion of their wealth taken away from them, to be spent according to the whims of politicians and civil servants.

Many of the measures taken seemed at the time to be the only way to undertake necessary improvements or to fill the gaps. In the 1960s, developers in London and many cities were allowed − helped by corruption such as that practised by John Poulson − to tear down solid but old fashioned houses, rather than modernise and conserve them, and replace them with tower blocks, or with great estates run

by local government officers. The inhabitants got modern bathrooms but were turned into dependents of local politicians.

When politicians want to gather support for their projects they work hard to get their ideology accepted as ‘common sense’; statism (usually referred to as socialism) was the consensus until dethroned by market liberalism. Both ideologies were responses to issues and challengers which were real, but they were international ideologies that tended to be applied without regard to local conditions. Furthermore, professional politicians pick up ideologies that they can use in the political supermarket according to whether they see them as viable promotional tools for them and their parties. They also denounce those who stand in the way, or who are to suffer from the changes. Just as Lenin turned the middle classes into ‘former people’, Hitler had his ‘subhumans’ and Mao his ‘exploiting classes’, even in our milder and more polite revolution, we had to have a scapegoat. And who was selected? Those who had recently been our heroes: the working class.

A 2014 television series, *Benefits Britain*, was only the most recent in a long line of media portrayals of dysfunctional and degraded people as representative of the working class. Owen Jones opines: ‘The BBC's 2008 White Season of programmes portrayed the working class as backward looking, bigoted and obsessed with race.’ [44] The comedy shows *Little Britain* and *Shameless* present the working class as squalid.

The writers of this pamphlet know working class people who have enviable family lives and satisfying jobs; we know them as relatives and friends and we know them as anglers, bowls players, fencers and longboat lovers, ballroom dancers, collectors of memorabilia and twitchers, hill walkers and real ale lovers, raisers of domestic or edible animals, model builders and boatmen, dog racers and pigeon fanciers, fiddlers and panto stars, in fact as having a wealth of interests and activities the like of which you find in no other culture among the poor; yet from soaps you would think that the English working class think of nothing but sex, drink, cars and football.

A government-funded body conducted an elaborate study of soaps and the family and concluded that lower class families are portrayed as existing in a morass of failed relationships and a constant state of resentment and ill temper.[45] ‘It is taken for granted in hospital dramas, for example, that representatives of the bottom class will be ill-shaven, surly and chaotic, needing to be managed tactfully by

doctors and nurses. The family lives will be revealed as swamps of brutality, neglect and desertion, larded with lachrymose sentimentality. Yet the popular media once represented the lower classes as sturdy, indomitable, responding to misfortune and hardship with stoicism.'[46]

The media find every opportunity to revile the working classes, whether in their coverage of an outrage such as Hillsborough or the featuring of unfortunates like Jade Goody. Owen Jones again: 'Journalists revel in the contempt of the privileged for the less fortunate… caricaturing working class people as stupid, idle, racist, sexually promiscuous, dirty, and fond of vulgar clothes. Nothing of worth is seen to emanate from working class Britain.'[47] There is even a video game called *Chav Hunter*; chav, in this game, being the insulting term for a working-class man.

It's not just sensation-hungry popular media producers who do the dirt on the people; the so-called literary fiction writers also present the people as disgusting, incoherent and aimless; see for example Martin Amis, James Coleman and Irvine Welsh.

That there are problems is undeniable. One of the first studies to identify a moral decline among some sections of the poor was published in 1978, before the huge changes in employment that resulted from the Thatcher reforms.[48] But characterising the majority of working-class people in this way is extraordinary, and requires explanation. One obvious factor is that the media are largely run and populated by people who never normally meet working-class people. Previous generations mixed because of national service, religious worship and shared a sense of identity due to a consensus about patriotism, the monarchy and English institutions. Today it is quite easy for a rich person never to meet someone earning the average wage (£26,000) or one of the majority of the population who earn very much less than that while cleaning his office or binning her rubbish. If you do not know people, it is much easier to stereotype them.

Although most working class people do not fit the stereotype, there is a kernel of truth there, in that, as the 1978 study exposed, the deindustrialisation of much of England and the failure adequately to rebuild the economy after World War Two, resulted in many exchanging work for welfare, with bad effects on their attitudes and behaviour. High taxation before the 1980s dissuaded people from setting up business or investing in new products and processes and job creation was minimal until the 1990s.

The decline of working class education, and in particular the collapse of technical, vocational and science education, meant that too few were equipped for a market society which has to survive through innovation and trade; we seemed no longer to be producing the working class heroes, inventors, entrepreneurs and artisans, of the previous centuries. The famous benefits trap which has made it better off to be unemployed than employed, and which ministers are now wrestling to end, in some cases turned contributors into parasites. The acceleration of manufacturing decline because of the Thatcher reforms made matters worse because the prevailing ideology held that governments should not step in to create new industries and new jobs; although palliative measures such as the Youth Training Scheme and the Job Creation Programme were introduced, they were temporary and rarely produced viable businesses.

The combination of being unemployed, having idleness subsidised and being surrounded by the propaganda of consumerism and 'rugged individualism' (i.e. selfishness and greed) encouraged fecklessness, especially where the constraints of traditional family life were no longer disciplining people.

But 28 million shysters? Never. There are 28 million people who have to sit and suffer this calumny even as they struggle to bring up their families on incomes that are tiny fractions of their deriders', suffering overcrowded schools and a disappointing health service, vicious crime and competition for their jobs. And they know that the politicians will do nothing to help them; in recent generations, instead of creating jobs, politicians encouraged disability benefits and then turned on the 'scroungers'. They will be told that their poverty is due to their inadequacy, their fault; and if they complain about the fears they have of immigration they are 'bigots' or 'racists'. They have no voice. Whether it is the European Union, or punishment for criminals, whether it is immigration or schools, whether it is sending (mainly working class) soldiers to be killed fighting abroad for politicians' vanity, many appear to have concluded that those politicians will serve their own class interests and careers long before they take note of their kind.

Why? It's all about arithmetic. Because of our two-party system, until recently a citizen had in essence two choices. You could vote for the Tory party machine or the Labour party machine. So both parties relied on large numbers of votes from people who would never dream of switching to the other side. The only protest available to a committed Labour or Tory supporters was a spoiled ballot or not voting at all, so the number of voters has gone steadily down.

The politicians still have to work hard, but not for their core constituencies. In fact they insult their core constituencies on a regular basis. The public-spirited foot-soldiers of both major parties are very similar in temperament, but are equally despised by their leaders who, of course, are all affluent, have attended the same universities and share more or less the same ideology and domestic servants.

So for whom do the politicians work? For 'small privileged lobbies of the middle classes. They devise more and more methods of camping out on a very small slice of the electorate, marginal voters in marginal seats.[49] 'Because the political parties have sought to compete for the votes of ethnic minorities they have elevated multiculturalism. But this means that the interests of the working class are ignored and the only way in which the working class can get attention is by thinking of itself as a new ethnic group with its own distinctive culture. Yet at the same time middle-class people refuse to acknowledge that anything about the white working class is legitimately cultural.'[50] Diversity makes life even more difficulty for the English poor because it is a form of affirmative action, working against the locals.

Limited, controlled immigration was acceptable to most people. It was not until the Labour leadership understood that it needed a new constituency that the floodgates opened. When large numbers of the working class voted for the Conservatives in 1979, Labour grasped that 'the people' were abandoning it, so it needed a new 'people'. This it could provide through immigration, because immigrants by convention vote Labour, which, they are told, will assure them of housing, benefits and political positions for their community leaders. The first waves of immigration during the Blair years consolidated large areas of England as not integrated. The failure to control the arrival of dependents made this more extreme.

The Blair government in 2004, opposed bitterly by the Opposition whose leaders pointed out the risks,[51] signed up to allowing freedom of movement to members of the EU and numbers exploded as the indigent of much poorer European countries flocked to the UK, needing schools, hospitals and social housing.[52] For the political class this had two advantages: by going along with the EU, the politicians have opportunities for political careers in the EU once they are played out in Britain, and such careers are much better paid than at home. And, of course, as members of the ruling class they benefit from cheap domestics, lower wages in all service occupations and the rich texture of a varied cultural life as more restaurants,

delicatessens and knick-knacks are available to the rich. They rarely, of course, suffer the overcrowded state schools, the waiting lists at the surgery or the queue at the job centre.

We have described the ways in which the peoples' institutions were undermined or taken over in the twentieth century. We have described the demonisation of the victims, turned into unpeople by those who have stepped over them. We have pointed out that the working class is barely represented in political life and that little or no notice was taken of their concerns until the SNP and UKIP took off.

Why doesn't the working class fight back? The political system we created was in great measure formed through pressure and ideas and voices from below. After all, the rich everywhere opt for the status quo. Why should the middle classes want democracy if they are doing very well out of the oligarchy? Only the poor rock the boat because they need to, to survive. So where are today's John Ball and Wat Tyler, Robert Owen, Gerard Winstanley, John Lilburne, John Wilkes and William Cobbett? Where are our Nye Bevans, George Lansburys, Frank Chapples or Keir Hardies?

If they turn up, there are some things for them to do.

The way out

A great many ideas were put forward by people who engaged with Democracy 2015, whether online, by telephone or at public meetings. Here are some of them, assembled to try to give coherence to the often disparate suggestions:

Parliament

1. To replace the political class by legislators truly representative of the people we need to ensure that it is no longer possible to make being an MP into a career.

2. The first step is to reduce the term for which members can sit, to a maximum of two parliaments (either 10 or 5 years).

3. The next is to require, as was the case in the past, for MPs who are appointed ministers to resign and become in effect civil servants, as in the USA.

4. Ministers will always be accountable to Parliament, and should be subject to confirmation hearings, but will not be in Parliament; they will therefore be selected for their expertise and competence rather than because the Prime Minister has to placate colleagues in the Commons.

5. The rewards of MPs should be curtailed. For example, Parliament can allocate flats to out-of-London members for the duration of their terms, rather than assisting them to buy.

6. MPs should be legislators, citizens established in jobs and careers who take limited amounts of time out of their work to perform the only two functions of representation that matter: holding the government to account and scrutinizing legislation.

7. Funding of political parties and political lobbyists by taxpayer money should cease. Strict caps on donations and transparency in fund-raising will make the parties dependent on small, local donations and further hamper the power of the parties to ignore the electorate.

Devolution

1. Because of the call by the Scots for tax-raising and other powers for Holyrood, similar arrangements are being mooted for English cities and regions. Small is beautiful and, if the political class really does let go, we will see greater efficiency and greater citizen satisfaction.

2. Although central governments will continue to need to support poorer areas and communities, the reduction in the scope of large government is a necessity with which present parties are struggling to come to terms. In most Western countries the state is spending very much more than it is taking in tax; our governments cannot continue to tax the many to fund the projects of the few.

3. The bulk of the revenue needed by cities and regions should be raised by themselves, i.e. through local taxes, to render them relatively independent of the centre for all services that can be handled locally.

4. The management of the services to the people, from health to schooling to welfare, should be local and as close to those affected as possible, as it was before 1946. The difference today will be that many more people are well informed and can participate, thanks to mobility and the digital revolution. And the state will mediate.

The political world

1. The political world is changing. As pressure has been increasingly exerted through initiatives such as TheyWorkForYou and 38 Degrees, MPs have started to realise (a) that they are being held personally responsible in the manner of the past, before they in effect became party ciphers and (b) they had better represent their constituents' interests because, thanks to new kinds of political participation, it is no longer enough just to please the party leader. Hence the angry committees, such as that which demanded the presence of Rupert Murdoch and his family over the hacking scandal.

2. The election of George Galloway MP (who lost his seat in 2015) has been cited as an example both of the re-personalisation of politics and of the power of

social media, trumping that of offline media. This process must go further. We need more ‘independents’.

3. But to re-enfranchise the people more is needed than to wave farewell to the professional political class and divest the centre of its powers. Just as we make choices as consumers of clothes, food and hobbies, making most of us canny customers who get the best we can at the best price because digitalisation has given to everybody the power to compare and bargain, so we should be responsible for more important choices too. Instead of politicians taking our money (and most taxes are paid by people on average or low incomes) and then telling us what we can have for it, we need to spend our own; our choices, thanks to the internet, can be better informed because more relevant to our own circumstances, than those of officials earning secure salaries behind big desks. We don’t need experts and intermediaries any more, we can connect directly.[53]

4. Over the last generation there have been sporadic attempts to distribute wealth more widely, by permitting council tenants and private leaseholders to buy, at discounts, their homes, and by encouraging share ownership. These have had an effect and started to give many families relative independence, the dream of the early English socialists such as Robert Owen. Recent writers have suggested making plots of land more widely available, and prohibiting further demutualisation of friendly societies, which gave power to members rather than distant capitalists.[54]

5. Such measures will disperse economic power among the people as effectively as the localisation of government will disperse political power; although we cannot foresee a country without regressive taxation, the emphasis of modern politics should be not on finding ever more ingenious ways to take money from the people but on how to ensure that the poor too can have the economic stability and confidence from which rich people benefit.

6. Proposals by the party leaders to change the voting system are usually designed further to entrench the power of the parties; we must be wary of them. It may be that we need to change the voting system, but this must not be allowed to happen unless it increases citizen participation and the personal responsibility of those elected.

These prescriptions are not intended to be comprehensive, but ideas that should be debated and become the bases of a programme. Democracy 2015 was intended to bring democracy to our country. Even if Democracy 2015 did not succeed as was intended, it has nevertheless helped to consolidate and promote ideas and expectations which will be realised in the future.

Appendix

Democracy 2015

Democracy 2015 was initiated by Andreas Whittam Smith, founding editor of *The Independent,* on 4 September 2012. The initial group of volunteers met at the offices of *The Independent* with Andreas Whittam Smith and discussed what exactly 'Democracy 2015' meant and what was to be done to launch a new way of thinking about UK politics.[55] While we spoke, an article to introduce such thinking appeared in *The Independent* telling readers: 'Our democracy is desperately sick. This is your chance to help save it.'[56]

A second article on 5 September 2012 offered a Democracy 2015 manifesto with seven main points for readers to consider. Those who agreed were invited to get in touch, pledge their support and state which policy areas they were most interested in. In it, Andreas Whittam Smith wrote:

'Fact One: respect for our democratic arrangements is in sharp decline. We no longer vote at general elections in the numbers that we used to do. We trust members of Parliament and the governments they form less and less. Despair with the system was vividly expressed by the protesters camped outside St Paul's Cathedral in London.

'Fact Two: the politicians we criticise weren't parachuted into Westminster from another planet. We voted for them. Once they were like us. Now they have morphed into a political class. But they do not rule by divine right. We could change them. The next election is due to take place on 7 May 2015.

'The answer to our predicament is not to turn away from Parliament but to strengthen it.'[57]

Democracy 2015 did not begin with a particular political stance; it was about participation and understanding between the public and those in public office. So what happened beyond these publications? In practice, the plan was quite simple: to start a movement and then gain adherents who would form a majority in the House of Commons in 2015. Underpinning this would be a traditional organisation as well as a digital campaign. This was considered the only way to effect meaningful constitutional change to bring back democracy to the UK.

Initially, around 30 people came together, mostly university students or recent graduates from across the country, unified by the view that the democratic principles of the UK political system were compromised. Public responses to Andreas Whittam Smith's article in *The Independent* were recorded, a database of supporters created, and donations collected (with a maximum of £50 per person). All responses were used to create policy areas that were most important to the UK population and work began on holding awareness sessions across the country. The public were invited to Democracy 2015 evenings in Manchester, Birmingham and London. As a result, numbers beyond the base of London became involved in Democracy 2015's organisation and local factions began to develop.

Democracy 2015 enjoyed support in the largest cities across the country. As there was to be a by-election in Corby on 15 November 2012, activists debated whether to take part. After discussions and research into the constituency, independent Adam Lotun, who espoused our aims, received the support of Democracy 2015. He came 13th out of 14 candidates, with 35 votes.

According to Andreas Whittam Smith, 'The decision… was one of the mistakes I made. We dented the good reputation that we had been building up, painfully.

Thereafter the plan was to expand by holding public meetings around the country. By this means, we would gradually make known our ideas and recruit locally based volunteers. We started to go down this path, but whether through lack of resources for publicising meetings, or through poor direction or because our ideas were not easily saleable, at least not in early 2013, we didn't have sufficient success. That is when I said that we should pause, and although I have since kept in touch with many members of the team, the circumstances have never appeared favourable enough to re-start.'

Meanwhile the case for Democracy 2015 or something like it has grown stronger and stronger.

In September 2013 the team comprised the following volunteers:

1. Nagham Al-Turaihi
2. Madeleine Avery
3. Melissa Bartlett
4. Sophie Beardshall
5. Francesca Cane

6. Bryony Clarke
7. James Corcut
8. Hugo de Burgh*
9. Jonathan Dibb*
10. Oliver Duggan
11. Julia Fairbank
12. Matt Flatman
13. Josh Gartland
14. Glenn Jeffries
15. Luke Jones
16. Gracie Laurence
17. Laura Mainwaring*
18. Flora McCarthy
19. Emily McFadden
20. Luke Nightingale*
21. Nick Reading
22. Millie Riley *
23. Hetty Saunders
24. James Sibley
25. Lisa Soennichsen
26. Gabriel Spiers
27. Mike Warren
28. Luke Wells *
29. Andreas Whittam-Smith
30. Babs Williams
31. Will Wyeth

*Principal contributors to this pamphlet

Notes

[1] Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, *Going South: Why Britain Will Have a Third World Economy by 2014*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012

[2] The view that China will eclipse the Anglosphere is contested as much as it is advanced. For a counterpoint, see Joel Kotkin and Shashi Parulekar, 'The State of the Anglosphere', *City Journal*, Winter 2012: http://www.city-journal.org/2012/22_1_anglosphere.html

[3] Anthony King, *The Blunders of our Governments*, Bloomsbury, 2014

[4] The UK does have large investments overseas, Andreas Whittam Smith reminds us. However, they are unlikely to replace the jobs lost by those businesses sold to foreign interests.

[5] Alex Brummer, *Britain for Sale*, Cornerstone/Random House Business Books, 2013

[6] Hugo de Burgh considers that the whole project has flawed antecedents, although there were noble intentions. After World War Two opponents of the Nazis blamed nationalism for the wars that had caused such suffering and vowed to bring all the nations of Europe together to create a common identity. But nationalism was not to blame: the ideology that propelled the Nazis was a kind of transnational utopianism, very similar to communism, in that it sought to create a modern world in which the chosen people (the proletarians in Russia, the Aryans in Europe) would arise out of the destruction of an old, corrupt world. National feeling, or patriotism, was the main motivator of resistance to both Nazis and communists; just as in earlier phases of European history, Poles and Italians, Catalans and Danes all felt differently and fought back against the imperialism of Hitler and Lenin as much as against Charles V or Napoleon. England's crusade was against a vile ideology, which patriotism identified as the common enemy of humanity.

[7] David G. Green, *The Demise of the Free State, Why democracy and the EU don't mix*, Civitas, 2014

[8] The main text is probably E. L. Jones, *The European Miracle*, Cambridge University Press, 2013

[9] For more historians' views, see http://www.historiansforbritain.org/

[10] Elliott and Atkinson, *Going South*; Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now!* W. W. Norton & Company, 2012; Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, *Fantasy Island*, Constable, 2007

[11] Elliott and Atkinson, *Going South*

[12] 'Industrial Strategy: UK Sector Analysis', Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012

[13] An expression used by Larry Elliott, The Guardian's economics editor

[14] Will Hutton, 'The growth delusion', *New Statesman*, 26 July 2012: http://www.newstatesman.com/2012/07/will-hutton-growth-delusion-skidelsky-krugman-elliot

[15] Aliyah Dar, 'Youth unemployment statistics', House of Commons Library, 15 July 2015: http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN05871/youth-unemployment-statistics

[16] Jeremy Seabrook, *The Refuge and the Fortress: Britain and the flight from tyranny*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

[17] Pride in the English achievement in this key aspect of civilisation by no means implies disdain for other cultures or a refusal to acknowledge our debts to them. Of course we got much of our mathematics from Arabia, our science from China, our art and architecture from Italy, music and philosophy from Eastern and Central Europe and so forth. But our mode of organising society led to the transformation of the world.

[18] English traders participated energetically in slavery once they discovered that it was a trade well-established by African and Arab traders, as did other European countries. It is sometimes forgotten, in reporting the terrible history of slave exportation to the Americas, that the European involvement in this dreadful business was a short episode in its long history and that the English were the first to stand against it. They should be proud of this.

[19] John Milton expressed this clearly when he theorised the role of the media in society; Shakespeare put it in the mouths of several of his characters, including Henry V.

[20] As Matt Ridley puts it, 'Without trade, innovation just does not happen. Exchange is to technology as sex is to evolution. It stimulates novelty.' (Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Fourth Estate, 2011, p.71)

[21] It is unfortunate that we cannot really use any other example but China because the other countries liberated from socialism in the late twentieth century have so far not achieved anything like China's advances. Of course China has only been liberated from socialism from an Anglophone perspective, where the word socialism usually suggests state control of the economy and general repression, whereas in China it is taken to mean responsible government, making a priority of improving the welfare of all.

[22] Ephraim Lipson, *A Planned Economy or Free Enterprise: The Lessons of History*, Adam and Charles Black, 1944, pp.26-27

[23] The results of this over the next century are magnificently described by Ridley in *The Rational Optimist*, pp.220-223

[24] Alan MacFarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism*, Blackwell, 1978

[25] Much of this section was stimulated by an interview Hugo de Burgh conducted with Douglas Carswell in 2012, for his book *The West You Really Don't Know*, published (in Chinese) in 2013

[26] Jonathan Freedland, *Bring Home the Revolution: The Case For a British Republic*, Fourth Estate, 1998

[27] Freedland describes this much more fully in *Bring Home the Revolution*

[28] As we write, politicians are claiming to want to disperse power to cities and regions, prompted by the demands of the Scottish Nationalists that they honour promises of fiscal independence made during the debate about the Union, and the subsequent demands by English local government for similar treatment

[29] Alan MacFarlane has pointed out some indices of the effectiveness of law:

1. People agree to use law rather than force to settle disputes
2. People abide by legal decisions
3. People feel protected by their laws
4. A jury system where peers can witness accusations against them.
5. A lay magistracy ensures that justice is local, decentralised and comprehensible
6. If people feel law is in their interests, not made to change them and society, it is effective
7. People feel they have rights *and* responsibilities to uphold *their* laws

One consequence of people feeling that the laws are their laws is that the English have traditionally seen the administrators of law, the police, as our servants. The first policemen in England were local volunteers and part-timers. English police were effective because they knew their communities. They were not armed with guns and in most periods they wore a uniform designed to look as little like a military uniform as possible. A professionalised and militarised police force answerable to a faraway power is a recent idea, introduced from continental countries.

[30] Oonagh Gay, 'Quangos: key issues for the 2010 Parliament', House of Commons Library: http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/key-issues-for-the-new-parliament/decentralisation-of-power/quangos/

[31] This is a simplification of one of Parkinson's laws. C. N. Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law*, Penguin, 1957

[32] This section has drawn on Simon Jenkins, 'Mad As Hell', BBC News, 26 June 2005, a series of essays for *The Westminster Hour*: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/programmes/the_westminster_hour/4120134.stm

[33] The sources for this section include: Michael Collins, *The Likes of Us,* Granta, 2003; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin, 2013 (orig. 1963); John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, Faber & Faber, 1992; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, Yale, 2010.

[34] By working class we do not mean proletariat in the formal sense but simply poor people who, if they own the means of production, will own very little (carpenters' tools, for example) and who are not, and could not be, capitalists.

[35] Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class*, Verso, 2012, p.33

[36] Ferdinand Mount, *Mind the Gap*, Short Books, 2004, p.12

[37] James Bartholomew, *The Welfare State We're In*, Biteback, 2004

[38] Despite the revelations of countless writers, of whom the most recent and most moving is Orlando Figues, some who should know better continue to make excuses for the USSR, citing Stalin's personality or Russian culture, Lenin's inhumanity, the retrograde political culture of the Communists and the sheer stupidity of the intellectuals who thought they could run an economy from a desk. Recently, at a seminar in Peking, Italian historian of communism Silvio Pons claimed that the fact that 'the USSR defeated Hitler' was proof of the success of Soviet industrialisation, ignoring the huge provision of armaments from the USA, and thereby implying that the regime be judged a success. He also denied the role of Lenin in setting the standards of barbarity.

[39] Not just political people. Hugo de Burgh's maternal grandfather, with a private practice in Ipswich, rejoiced when it was superseded by the NHS. He had given countless unpaid hours to Ipswich Hospital and was famous for his services to the destitute.

[40] Mount, *Mind the Gap*, p.179

[41] Ferdinand Mount, *The New Few*, Simon & Schuster, 2012, p.270

[42] Mount, *The New Few*, p.52 cites Polly Toynbee in The Guardian in 2003 reporting that children born in the 1950s were far more socially mobile than children born in the 1970s.

[43] Mount, *The New Few*, pp.186-199.

[44] Jones, *Chavs*, p.8

[45] Lorna Duckworth, 'EastEnders gives negative view of families, says study', *The Independent*, 17 October 2002: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/eastenders-gives-negative-view-of-families-says-study-614295.html. See also, 'Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Childhood', Family and Parenting Institute: http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-client-groups/children-young-people/familyandparentinginstitute/140915Commercialisation%20and%20sexualisation%20briefing%20-%20FINAL%20VERSION%20(3).pdf

46 Mount, *Mind the Gap*, p.90

47 Jones, *Chavs*, p.119

48 Jeremy Seabrook, *What Went Wrong? Working People and the Ideals of the Labour Movement*, Gollancz, 1978

49 Jones, *Chavs*, p. 100. He also writes: 'According to Jon Cruddas, working class voters were taken for granted as the core vote with nowhere else to go, so that Labour politicians could tailor their policies to the privileged.'

50 Jones, *Chavs*, p.102

51 Nick Clark and Jane Hardy, 'Free Movement in the EU: The Case of Great Britain', Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, May 2011, p.6: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/08041.pdf

[52] Of course immigration has many positive aspects, with tremendous contribution to the economy and to services. Nevertheless there is another side.

[53] For an elaboration of this, see Douglas Carswell, *The End of Politics and the Birth of iDemocracy*, Biteback, 2012

[54] Mount, *The New Few*

[55] Oliver Duggan, 'Reclaim power: Independent founder's bid to rescue politics from party elites', *The Independent*, 4 September 2012: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/reclaim-power-independent-founders-bid-to-rescue-politics-from-party-elites-8102863.html

[56] Andreas Whittam Smith, 'Our democracy is desperately sick: this is your chance to help save it', *The Independent*, 4 September 2012: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/andreas-whittam-smith-our-democracy-is-desperately-sick-this-is-your-chance-to-help-save-it-8102862.html

[57] Andreas Whittam Smith, 'How you can bring our ailing democracy back to life', *The Independent*, 5 September 2012: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/how-you-can-bring-our-ailing-democracy-back-to-life-8105024.html