



Old Hickory's Diary - 3

Diary Entry date
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This time, Old Hickory looks at:

Clare Short and globalisation
Anthony O'Hear on citizenship
Hague on police morale
The story of the Monarch butterfly and GM crops
Michael Gove's call for Liberalism

The Metamorphosis of Clare Short

The Economist (16 December, p34) tells of Clare Short's conversion to globalisation as a solution to the problem of poverty. She produced a white paper to the House of Commons this week called *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*. Earlier, she was fairly good at condemning the crass protesters outside the various locations of the *World Trade Organisation* (WTO). Power, the *Economist* says, educates as well as corrupts. It holds that she has given up all she used to hold as a left wing firebrand. She is not only practising the opposite in office – for that happens fairly often – but also preaching it. And it is true that Clare Short is getting better. This week she has been on the media preaching the boon of free trade and eulogising the WTO. That organisation has got a large statist side to it so she still

has a fair way to go, but the transformation has been surprising. I did not see the interview with Jon Snow on *Channel 4 News* but I am told by list member, Kevin McFarlane, that she put Snow right on a number of points. I did catch her on *Newsnight* where she was quite clear. And she was on *Dimbleby* on Sunday 17 December on ITV.

At an IEA meeting with Lord Peter Bauer last year, he expressed despair as Clare was so very wrong headed. I wonder what he thinks of her progress so far?. The credit would seem to belong to New Labour on the one hand, and perhaps the advice she gets from the civil service on the other.

“Those fighting for free enterprise and free competition do not defend the interests of those rich today. They want a free hand left to unknown men who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow and whose ingenuity will make the life of coming generations more agreeable. They want the way left open to further economic improvements. They are the spokesmen of material progress.”

LUDWIG VON MISES

On *Dimbleby*, she had an interview with the host, followed by questions from an audience that held her old outlook. *Dimbleby* said that it seemed almost impossible to get capitalism to favour the poor. Clare Short answered that globalisation could either work well or badly for the poor. There was more capital than ever and if the poor were not helped, things would get way worse. Poverty had been greatly reduced in China. But the world population was due to go

up to nine billion so there was a need to develop faster to keep ahead.

Dimbleby said that there was evidence of regression as in Sub-Saharan Africa 46% of the population were living on

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less than a dollar a day in 1990 but now it was 48%. Clare Short responded that most of the poor were in south Asia rather than in Africa but she realised that things were dire in Africa. AIDS was a big problem there. Dimpleby then asked if she expected firms that were out to make profits to also help progress. She replied that Africa needed computers and that firms could supply this communications network to them whilst also making a profit. He cited Costa Rica where firms had pulled out of growing bananas. She replied that she was no expert in bananas but Costa Rica was not the poorest land in the world and they were doing relatively well. Why cannot people let investment move on to the poorer lands without opposition? It is wrong for people who are well off to complain about investment going into the poorer lands to bring them up to par. She could have added here that this is how the price system tends to work when left to itself and it tends to long run equality.

But she is haply still steeped too much in politics to have noticed that. She went on to say that the WTO was only five years old and that it looked as if it would prevent a repeat of the protectionism that led to war in the 1930s. The WTO is rule-based and gives many underdeveloped countries a voice for the first time. Nations join it freely. If the rules of trade are not fair, and she felt they often were not, then they could be renegotiated. The protestors that are out to destroy the WTO strike her as attacking the only institution that gives the poor a chance. All seem to favour free trade but only for exports. They do not like imports. The *Common Agriculture Policy* will have to go if there is to be free trade. Here Dimpleby butted in to say that there had been hopes for 30 years that the CAP would be reformed and it had not happened yet. He pressed her for a particular date but she was not able to give one, merely saying that 2003 would see a meeting when things will most likely come to a

head. The pressures for reform are far greater this time than they have been for the past 30 years. The CAP cannot extend to Poland and Hungary as it could not be afforded. So mighty change should follow the enlargement of the EU. Dimpleby then asked if the USA would ever change. Clare Short said that Clinton hadn't been able to honour many of the agreements he had entered into owing to opposition at home. But the churches might get that nation to help the poor for they are very strong in the US. Dimpleby then said that if she turned out to be wrong about all this, it would be a nightmare and she agreed. Yes, it would be a catastrophe she said.

She is won over to the ideals of the fools at the leadership of the WTO rather than to trade and the market itself. She holds great store by this silly institution rather than realising that by free trade itself there is a positive sum game. If anything, the WTO leaders are as backward as the stupid protesters with whom they share similar ideals. What Short imagines to be the coming catastrophe is far from clear. Advocates of a view usually do think that to imagine a catastrophe acts as an alternative spur to their project. It is a stick that complements the carrot in their advocacy. Those who advocated nuclear power had a similar need for an imaginary stick of oil running out in the 1950s and '60s as well as the realistic carrot of cheap electricity. But the melodrama of catastrophe is unadulterated tomfoolery.

She faced an audience as ignorant as she herself had been ten years ago. One poor fellow could not comprehend the arithmetic of it all and said that if the poor are to get richer then, surely, the advanced lands had to get poorer. Clare Short said he was cynical, but she should have said that his arithmetic did not apply to a positive sum game which is the market trading relationship. Others said that firms only wanted to make

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profits and had no desire to benefit the poor. But instead of saying that the firms' desires or motivation did not matter much, given the positive sum game of the market, she said that they were merely in despair and had nothing to offer. She then faced some crass opposition to cash crops, a long standing dogma amongst *Guardian* readers. Here she did a bit better by asking what was so wrong with the poor wanting to get some money for what they produced. Her questioner ranted out the claptrap about exporting coffee rather than using the land for self sufficiency, but she answered that she had visited the poor and knew they wanted cash. She should have said that only cash crops can give access to world markets, which are the sole solution to the famines that were common all over the world when we depended on the local harvest – but this is a fact she has yet to realise. She thinks that all the magic springs only from the WTO, though the plain fact is that the market mechanism is a boon to both sides. She still wants to shackle all lands with the health and education institutions that hamper the UK today. She has come a long way but is still an ignoramus. As Antony Flew would say, she is paid to know better.

Moral Decline in the UK

Anthony O'Hear, the professor of philosophy at the *University of Bradford*, had an article on moral decline in the *Daily Mail* on Thursday: "*Citizen Blair*" (p12). He was responding to the move to have citizenship taught in the schools. The professor thinks there is a crisis of values amongst the youth of the UK. He says they are roaming the streets out of control, wreaking havoc, and showing no respect to anything or anyone. He cites the recent murder of the Nigerian boy in Peckham.

Some youths may have good intentions but they are vague and without direction,

says the professor. They are ignorant of history and they hold Britain to have a past only of imperialism and racism. This idea tends to alienate them from their own country. So the government launch of a citizenship section on the National Curriculum, on 13 December, might have given the professor reason to hope. However, it turns out that it is mere *Political Correctness* (PC) and it is devoid of proper history, values or knowledge. Instead it is a Youth Culture passport of rights so that all can check whether their rights are being met. It is proposed that 5% of school time be devoted to the topic. It is the modern doctrine of morality that aims at an instant feel-good factor. This citizenship outlook is part of the problem rather than of the solution. PC pap is the factor in the current rootlessness of youth. Youthful concern about world poverty or the environment is all too easily transformed into hostility to trade and to the free market, says the professor. Talk of the evils of war or of racism ends up as hatred of one's own country, he says.

What is needed is a framework of values, by which youth can make sense of the world, says the professor. They can get that from their families. Schools ought to have a strong moral ethos underpinned by religious faith. Citizenship lessons can only take time off what ought to be taught in the schools. One of those proper subjects is history – and that is British history. All pupils, whatever their background, can learn what it is to be a citizen from British History rather than from the PC outlook of their teachers' imagination. Everyone in the UK is British, whatever their origins. A study of history would also foster an allegiance to Britain. But do not expect this to come from the government, says the professor, or from this latest citizenship education idea. It cannot even endorse the family as the ideal way to bring up children to be moral, let alone the religious ethos that still characterises the best schools. Instead, this new

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citizenship is out to rubbish Britishness. The government itself shows contempt for parliament and traditional liberties. It is doing its utmost to break up Britain by devolution on the one hand and by the European Union on the other. It should be doing the opposite of that if it wants to promote loyalty and actual citizenship.

There has been a demoralisation in the UK since 1945. This is largely owing to the decline in deference that is a result of the rise of the crass ideal of equality. This ideal has eroded the deference that contained some respect for others, and the new outlook that has replaced deference contains less respect. The adage has it that “familiarity breeds contempt” and it would seem that equality certainly does. Demoralisation is also the result of the welfare state spoiling the public by giving them many things for nothing and fostering the idea that they should have anything they want. The market, by contrast, encourages us to pay our way and to value what we earn. A hierarchy is haply not needed for what ought to be common decency and a modicum of respect for others. But all too many do want to indulge in the excitement of physically attacking others – more for the fun of it than for anything that they can rob. It is not clear that history lessons will restore the civil manners that Britain had from 1850 to 1950 – but good parenting might.

Playing the Race Card?

Hague also attacked PC this week and caused quite a stir in doing so. It was said that he muddled his statistics but he faced a full counter attack, on the BBC from Wednesday and in the *Guardian* on Friday, to a 17-page speech to the *Centre of Policy Studies*.

Hague’s thesis was that the *Macpherson Report* has drastically lowered the morale of the police with the result that the streets are less safe – even for blacks.

Hague vowed to “take on and defeat the attitude of the liberal elite that has never trusted the police and now wants us to believe they are all racists” (*Daily Mail* 14 December p2). This year’s *British Crime Survey* shows robberies up by 14%, muggings up 2% and violence against a stranger up 29%. The police have become like social workers in adopting a caring and compassionate outlook with the victims, but doing little about pursuing the culprits. The police like the new technology that they have been given, but it tends to take them away from the streets. Hague might have added that the forms the victims have to fill in merely to report a crime tends to make them think that the police can only waste their time. Hague says he had been talking to black teenagers who had told him that the police had “lost it” and it was they who got the worst of the street attacks. Various black activists on the BBC did not reject that idea, as the interviewers seemed to expect. In his speech Hague cited *The Voice*, a leading black newspaper, as holding that it was black teenagers who bore the brunt of street attacks. He thinks they are right that it is the black communities themselves that suffer the brunt of the street attacks and he seems to have taken that idea from the black media. 178 let out on the early release scheme re-offend, so Hague called for the repeal of that scheme. He also said the police numbers were way down since 1997.

On *Any Questions*, 15 December, Jack Straw claimed that Hague was “playing the race card” i.e., appealing to racism. In fact, it is Straw that is playing the PC anti-racist card, and he never grows tired of it. But it is a mere five of hearts that he wishes to do the work of an ace or a king and this is where the Jack is the knave. The *Macpherson Report* did not say that all the police were racists within the concept of institutional racism, says Jack. The Tories had welcomed the *Macpherson Report* in a speech in the House of Commons delivered by

Norman Fowler. Paddy Ashdown said that Hague was either a knave or a naïve fool on this when it is clearly Ashdown who is the latter. John Redwood said that they had not read the speech with sufficient care.

The backlash has continued and Hague repeated some of what he said in his speech in *The Sunday Telegraph*. *The Mail on Sunday* (p11) reported that Portillo thought the speech unwise. It was also said that Francis Maude thought much the same, but on *The World This Weekend* he denied that the speech was racist or that he or Portillo thought it unwise. The media took this as a division in the Tories and they trotted out the dogma that divided parties are never elected, forgetting that Wilson and Thatcher won most elections since 1960 whilst leading split parties. The last thing the media hacks do is to think. On Monday, the parents of the boy killed in Peckham complained that Hague was using his death as a political football and Straw repeated that in playing the race card Hague had gone too far. But Hague came back on 18 December to say that if Labour were to win the next election there would be other boys found dead on the streets. On Sunday 17 December, Clare Short said that Jack Straw was right and the black trade union leader, Bill Morris, also said on *Breakfast with Frost* that it was a return to the outlook of Enoch Powell. But the attack on the Nigerian boy was not racist and nor is the main idea that Hague has taken from *The Voice*. Maybe Straw feels it to be so. Hague's speech was an attack on an anti-racist report and Jack thinks that any attack on anti-racism has to be racist. If so, then that is merely a *non sequitur*. To say that a report has lowered police morale and that crime has risen as a result is not racist at all.

Frankenstein Fears Misplaced

In The Times (2) on 14 December (p12), there was a report that the campaign against

Genetically Modified (GM) foods was based on a misreading of some research on the Monarch butterfly. Mark Henderson wrote in the "Threat That Never Was" that the misreading was not confined to the Greens, though it was explicit in the pristine Nature article that GM crops were a threat to the butterflies in the wild.

The Monarch butterfly is a fragile moth, but GM crops do not really threaten to affect it. The butterflies emerge every year from Mexico to the Corn Belt of the USA and Canada where they lay their eggs. In 1999 a laboratory study suggested that they could all be killed off by GM maize. The Greens reacted with a campaign against GM food. John Losey and his team at the University of Cornell fed some Monarch butterflies pollen from GM maize and the result was that their growth was first stunted then, after four days, some 44% of the sample were dead.

The campaign that followed led to many supermarkets, such as Iceland, boycotting GM foods and many more considered whether to follow suit. The long-standing broadcaster, Alistair Cooke, attacked it as irrational, and in reaction many Greens, with their usual anti-rational attitude to any free speech that contradicts them, called for him to be sacked. In August 1999 another study at the Iowa State University was held to confirm the earlier conclusion. Lord Melchett of Greenpeace led a campaign of invading the trial GM crop farms to destroy them. When he went to court, he was let off as it was considered that the GM crops were a menace well checked. A fictional account running in the *Archers* had the same result in their fictional court case.

But they had all misread the original article, for it used a sample of Monarch butterflies as a substitute for the somewhat similar European corn borer to see if *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) would control them. They eat a great deal of

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crops in the USA despite their name. The Monarch butterflies were captured and they were only given Bt to eat – but that is not how things would be in the wild.

A conference meeting in November 2000 at Chicago brought together entomologists from the Universities of Minnesota, Maryland, Iowa, Michigan and Ontario. They found no significant difference between the Monarch butterfly survival rates in the GM areas compared with the areas of conventional crops. “If there are any differences, they are not very profound,” said Richard Hellmich, an entomologist at the University of Iowa and the US Department of Agriculture. A University of Maryland study actually held that the Monarch butterflies did much better with GM crops than with crops sprayed with pesticide.

More Liberty Please

Michael Gove has written his *Times* column this week on a call for more liberal opposition to ebbing liberty in the UK, and then come onto Radio 4s *The World Tonight* to push the theme. He looks to the Tories to protest against New Labour’s disregard of traditional liberties but fears that they are only too keen to endorse New Labour in their indifference to them. “Where are the liberals when you need them?” he asks. The Queen’s Speech shows that Labour is planning to criminalise everyone from fox hunters to shopkeepers who retain imperial measures (still more widespread than any rival units of measurement, owing to the success of the British Empire). The police are now to be allowed access to tax details that were private up till this year. The right to silence, to trial by jury and in some cases, like that of racism, the presumption of innocence is to disappear in the courts. Yet the reaction of Ann Widdecombe has been to say that New Labour has not gone far enough rather

than to protest that liberty should be upheld. Gove thinks that this is not really coherent of the Tories. They ought to realise that freedom is indivisible, so they ought to defend freedom as a whole rather than just economic freedom.

The right to silence is an oddity for the rule altered is that the lawyers should not be able to speak on silence of the witness rather than that the witness must speak, as one might think from the wording. It is one of the many oddities about the courts. Another is the idea that if the Press or the outside world have discussions that might inform the jury, this will prevent a fair trial. Ditto the court knowing about the past character and even criminal charges and convictions of the accused. If lawyers were liable later for covering up the criminality of their defendants then that might be a reform for the better.

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