
FOURTH WORLD REVIEW

*For Small Nations
Small Communities
Small Farms
Small Shops
Small Industries
Small Banks
Small Fisheries
& the Inalienable
Sovereignty of the
Human Spirit*

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**HRH The Prince of Wales
SKYSCRAPER ARCHITECTURE**



**THE CHARTER OF REAL
NATIONS**

Editorial:
A NEW RADICAL STRATEGY

FOURTH WORLD REVIEW No. 113

<i>Editorial:</i>	A NEW RADICAL STRATEGY	3	
<i>Feature:</i>	Skyscraper Architecture – HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES	6	
	Charter of Real Nations	9	
	– AIDAN RANKIN & PETER ETHERDEN		
<i>Forum:</i>	Josefine Speyer	JK Hutley	11
	Alan Ecob	Maggie Eucalyptus	
	Michael Crowther-Green	Howard Cheney	
	Judith Hubbard	Erica Lauber	
<i>Poem:</i>	Composed Upon Westminster Bridge	14	
	– MICHAEL HOROVITZ		
<i>Books:</i>	The Breakdown of Nations – LEOPOLD KOHR	15	
	<i>Reviewed by Dele Oguntimoju</i>		
	Seize the Day – 336 Tips for Living		
	– STEPHANIE WIENRICH & NICHOLAS ALBERY	17	
	<i>Reviewed by John Papworth</i>		
	Small is Beautiful – FRITZ SCHUMACHER	17	
	Blueprint for Survival – EDWARD GOLDSMITH		
	The Doomsday Book – GORDON RATTRAY TAYLOR		
	<i>Reviewed by John Papworth</i>		
	Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives	19	
	to Legal Tender – THOMAS H. GRECO, Jnr.		
	<i>Reviewed by Peter Etherden</i>		
	Creating New Money	20	
	– JOSEPH HUBER & JAMES ROBERTSON		
	<i>Reviewed by Peter Etherden</i>		
<i>Column:</i>	FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR	23	
<i>Item:</i>	Fourth World News	28	

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A NEW RADICAL STRATEGY

THERE ARE more professors, lecturers, students, colleges, libraries and other institutions devoted to the study of politics and economics today than there have ever been in the human record.

Perhaps it is the sheer profusion of the phenomena which accounts for the confusion that prevails and why any newcomer to the scene, a first-year student perhaps, will either find himself swallowing mountains of contradictory gibberish in the guise of theory or, if he is gifted with a modicum of perception, will be revolted by the sheer untenability of what he is taught.

The current orthodoxy that now grips what passes for informed journalism as much as the theoretical norms of the groves of academe, is that capitalism, having seen off the threats of communism and socialism, can claim to have justified itself not simply by having done so, but by creating standards of consumption which have brought untold riches to millions of people.

The former *lumpenproletariat*, once downtrodden, oppressed and impoverished, has been replaced with a property-owning democracy whose cars, TV sets, mobiles, abundantly stocked supermarkets, packaged holidays and the rest are all the evidence that may be needed to show that

communism doesn't work and that the free-market capitalism does. The Marxist insistence that capitalism would bury itself with its own contradictions has itself been buried by events; the roaring success of the motorway, digital, computerised shopping-mall society is abundantly in evidence on every hand. Communism did not abolish poverty, in many ways it made it worse, with the added burden of a jack-boot political system. Only free-market capitalism has shown it can not only deliver the goods but maintain democracy as well.

Contradictions

The alert-minded reader will not be slow to quibble at all this – and of course with justice. Nevertheless this is the picture of itself that current orthodox opinion, academic as well as journalistic, likes to project to its students as much as to its gullible mass readers, and it reeks of falsehood in every syllable.

We should note first that far from dispelling what Marx referred to as the 'contradictions' of capitalism, its modern corporate global form has very much enlarged them. The poverty-and-riches divide has not been abolished, it has been globalised. The affluence and the material prosperity, such as it is, of the millions of the developed world has been achieved by 'free' marke-

teers on the basis of two factors, neither of which can long be sustained. The first is by the economic enslavement of many millions more people in third world countries. The oil, the food, the cheap textiles, clothing, footwear, computer gee-gaws and other attributes of affluence are all too often the products of sub-standard working conditions and wages of millions of a new *lumpenproletariat* whose third world economies and finances are in the merciless grip of their own corrupt rulers working in tandem with global corporate barons.

lumpenproletarianism

Whatever forms of outraged protest, or even revolt, that may be essayed by the luckless victims it is improbable that they will prevail against the White House measures for its 'war on terrorism', not least with Mr Blair standing 'shoulder to shoulder' in support. 'Terrorism' is in any case a portmanteau word of convenient flexibility which can be calculated to encompass any degree of infiltration into the fragile precincts of freedom.

On whatever terms the struggle between exploited and the exploiters is waged, especially when factors such as religious fanaticism and environmental catastrophe are part of the mix, it would be rash to assume freedom itself could emerge from it unscathed. But in any case, what of the environment? It is this factor which indicates with an abundance of evidence which only a fool would discount that we are destroying those aspects of it within our technological reach which make organised existence in civilised societies at all possible. There are of course plenty of fools around, the lumpenproletarianism of physical existence which global capitalism has

exported to the third world is amply reflected in the lumpenproletarianism of the mind which prevails in the mass readership of the tabloid turgidities of the over-developed world.

The current well-being of these masses is simply a reflection of the success of global capitalism in bribing them with affluence as it has proceeded to export poverty globally in terms which are inherently untenable. Far from solving the problem of poverty, free market operations have enlarged it globally to a degree which will, as Marx foresaw, destroy it.

As Edward Goldsmith pointed out over thirty years ago in his *Blueprint for Survival* the idea of infinite industrial expansion in a finite world is simply absurd. This has not prevented both the academic and journalistic worlds from accepting it as something of no account and on which policy can continue to be formulated as though it need not be regarded.

This is not just a tilt at the tabloids; read any issue any week of *The Economist*, *The Spectator*, *The New Statesman* or the *Financial Times*, read *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and other dailies and their weekly counterparts, all having pretensions of leadership, and their moral and intellectual bankruptcy is their most pronounced characteristic.

The environment is not to any of them the basic fact of life, it and its multiple signs of distress are simply a 'story' to be slotted in amidst the reams of rubbish on which they dilate concerned with their insane preoccupation with 'growth', as though, when this wonderful planet earth has finally been made uninhabitable by their blinkered ignorance, there will be another to which we can resort. The idea that we must, as a matter of

dire urgency, abandon any further questing for 'growth' and focus instead on the need to conserve, to practice genuine economy, to cut out waste (however profitable) and to serve the needs of the planet instead of abusing and destroying it, is as remote from their every day perceptions as another universe.

Tripwire

A free market is very much a code phrase for grabbing what one can in the confident assumption that the market itself, (Smith's 'invisible hand') will correct any imbalances or excesses. It is an assumption that overlooks that a free market can only operate if it has freedom to do so. This is not mere tautology, it points to the fact that such freedom does not and cannot exist. Even if market mechanisms are presumed to replace moral imperatives, itself a heady and dangerous presumption, there are inevitable limits to how it can operate simply because we live on a planet having finite constraints and bounds.

The tripwire over which 'free market' theory stumbles, as indeed does nearly all current political discussion, lies in a failure to grasp that whilst the elements of any theory projected may have their own workable rationale when applied to a human-scale economy, once that scale is enlarged then factors pertaining to size itself become dominant and inevitably distort the play of the operative forces.

A local market with many merchants will of course establish its own price levels through the element of competition. Enlarge the market to giant state, to interstate or federal levels on a global scale, and we move from a world of competition to one of manipulation, manipulation of prices, of contract supplies, of consumer

preferences and of government regulations at the behest of cartels, monopolies, 'trusts', consortia and the like.

The 'free market' has become merely the freedom of a powerful minority to manipulate. This of course is where we are today. The hallowed concept of the sovereignty of the consumer has been consumed by the sovereignty of the economic conspirators and it is the factor of scale, with things becoming so huge as to be beyond the reach, far less the control, of the citizen in either economic or political terms which has enabled them to do it.

What is the radical answer to this? There just isn't one, not yet at any rate. A new body, the 'Socialist Alliance', has emerged and with its policy utterances about 'publicly owned and democratically accountable services' it indicates only too clearly that socialists stopped thinking over a generation ago, whilst a perusal of current Fabian Society literature is all the evidence one needs to see that the spirit of Stalin-worshipping Sydney and Beatrice Webb continues to haunt this staging post of would-be 'New Labour' cabinet ministers with the glowering repulsiveness of the old Kremlin monster himself.

Radicalism, after all, means going to the roots of things. These forces simply want to tinker with the top. What is so badly and urgently needed is a new strategy, one which liberates people from topside manipulation and control and which enables them to use their own creative powers to solve their own problems and to determine their own destinies. It is a subject which began to be tackled at the Radical Consultation held in Swindon in September 2001. It is one which will certainly not go away and on which a great deal more needs to be said. ■

SKYSCRAPER ARCHITECTURE

HRH The Prince of Wales

Based on an address given to the Invensys Conference in London, December 2001. Invensys happens to be a global marketing company which recently sponsored a conference on 'Buildings for the 21st Century'. It had the wit (or the rashness) to invite HRH The Prince of Wales to give an address and what follows is how he gave an audience of architects and planners what for.

ISUSPECT THAT *the destruction of the World Trade Centre is unlikely to mark the end of tall buildings in cities, although it may require rather more to be expected of them before new ones are constructed.*

However, I do believe it has now become more important than ever to question how such buildings should be built in future, and most crucially, how they may be designed to create not just safe, but also truly civilised environments. These questions relate not just to the matter of height, but of scale and context, and London offers an ideal backdrop to the issues at stake.

London's built form stands firmly in the tradition of most European cities, dominated by low to medium-rise buildings. The city's buildings and skyline are overwhelmingly the product of an era when neither technology, culture nor economics enabled the construction of very tall buildings. This has left a remarkable array of buildings that, whether large, medium or small, have lent a coherence and human scale to the urban environments they compose. In almost all cases, they worked within a code – either explicit or implicit – that expected, encouraged and enabled harmonious streets and neighbourhoods. And they must be pretty harmonious, for have you noticed how many architects actually prefer to live in such neighbourhoods and conservation areas – very often the ones constructed

within an 18th Century context? In my view, very tall buildings can undoubtedly threaten this sensitive balance. Indeed, they may very well wreck it.

Towers, of course, have long been very much a part of many historic city skylines (although at a considerably lower height than those being proposed today). But these Renaissance, Georgian and Victorian contributions to the skyline were usually as much associated with the notion of balance and hierarchy as the lower buildings around them. This, of course, was because towers were almost entirely reserved for monuments with a special ecclesiastical or civic status. Yet the 'skyscraper' in its modern form is something very different. Most obviously, it is a building whose function is utilitarian and commercial, rather than civic or sacred; a so-called 'statement building' that is self-referential, and fulfilling no communal purpose whatsoever. This, it seems to me, requires an exceptional degree of humility on the part of those who proclaim the benefits of such buildings, since, by implication at least, they are less concerned with civic status, community expression or public good, than they are with the benefits and preoccupations of the businesses that pay for them. These are giant buildings, with immense public visibility, but serving only a private, indeed, a privatised, purpose.

Yet if one looks at London's skyline, and compares it, say, to Paris, where building

heights are regulated far more precisely, one is immediately struck by how much less is protected here than abroad! The current debates about tall buildings here in London would be unnecessary and superfluous in Paris! In Berlin, too, where an immense programme of reconstruction and regeneration is going on – larger than in any other European city – the city leaders are insisting upon rigorous limitations to the height of new buildings.

So, the fundamental problem facing those who plan and design tall buildings is only partly, I believe, to do with the simple matter of building height (problematic though this can be), but rather more to do with the difficulties faced in connecting these heights into the fabric of a city. The essential value and virtue of a city is almost entirely defined in how successfully it is able to help people connect, whether for formal or informal exchange. This crucial function is defined and expressed in the networks of city streets, squares, parks and plazas, all of which require disciplined and well-articulated buildings to form and frame them. This, of course, has been the basic building block of urbanism for all of recorded history, and in all cultures, until the 20th Century, when this template for the traditional (or timeless) city became challenged by new notions of urbanism, the most potent of which was the Modernist vision of a city of towers in a new parkland landscape – a city on stilts and steroids. Its greatest polemicist and practitioner was Le Corbusier, who looked forward to the day when the entire city of Paris would be razed and rebuilt; when the –and I quote – ‘wretched pitched roofs are swept away, along with the casual cafes and places for recreation... that fungus which eats up the pavements of Paris’!

The consequences of making this vision a reality, as most now recognise, have been disastrous, producing the shattered urban wastelands that have desolated entire communities and disembowelled some of our greatest cities. The human and economic costs of this catastrophic experimentation with industrialised building, and mechanistic planning, has been huge, and the consequences will remain for decades, even centuries, to come.

‘The city is a place where people learn to live with strangers,’ wrote the urbanist Richard Sennett. A place, in other words, where the values and virtues of sociability and exchange are learnt casually, intuitively, and for necessity as well as pleasure. It is the very density and connectedness that the traditional city offers that makes such socialisation possible, and yet I fear that the tall, utilitarian building is ultimately alien to that purpose. In geometric terms, it has more in common with an up-ended suburban cul-de-sac than with the creative networked urbanism of streets and squares.

I am not opposed to tall buildings purely because they are tall. My concern is that they should be considered in their context; in other words, they should be put where they fit properly. Mind you, I also think there is a very legitimate concern about how tall these buildings should actually be. Trying to make them even taller than the other person’s building is surely taking the commercial macho into the realms of adolescent lunacy. Just as a residential bungalow would be an absurd building in the City of London, so, perhaps, is a skyscraper, for similar, yet opposite reasons. Both are out of scale in a place that remains essentially a tight medieval grid of streets and lanes, enclosed by historic buildings of modest height.

So, if new towers are to be built, then it

seems self-evident to me, that they should stand together to establish a new skyline, and not compete with or confuse what is currently there – as has already happened to a depressing and disastrous extent. If clustered, then the virtue of height becomes something that can, in the hands of creative architects, be truly celebrated. This solution, so clearly the case in Manhattan or La Defence in Paris, requires locations where intrusion into historically protected views, either at height or at street level, can be avoided, and is, therefore, difficult to justify in places such as the City of London, where the pressure to build at height is often greatest.

The City of London is, without doubt, a hugely successful financial centre. But it is a social disaster! Only a handful of people live there; only the City Churches and a few schools perpetuate the memory of its social life and culture; and the bleak towers, and many of the surrounding streets, stand deserted at night. But just a few hundred yards away, where low-level, smaller scale buildings remain, people are flocking back. In Clerkenwell, Spitalfields, Smithfield and the East End, the streets are teeming day and night, and the neighbourhoods are mixed and vibrant. The reasons aren't hard to fathom. These are places that have retained a genuinely urban architecture, built to a human scale and easily adapted to change. Factories, workshops and warehouses become offices, loft apartments and shops. These are buildings that fit, that give something worthwhile to the streets and help them thrive; streets where the sunlight occasionally slants along the pavement and where the good manners, variety and craftsmanship of the facades are timeless. People need to 'fit' into the public realm and this is why we always used to cultivate

manners, modesty, and gentleness. The same should be true of buildings, although I fear that so much of the Modernist aesthetic is based on the notion of 'standing out' rather than 'fitting in'.

A new sporting stadium that seats 80,000, requires, by law, every spectator to be able to find a place of safety within eight minutes. Yet, for tall buildings, there is no similarly strict rule for escape – and, indeed, were there to be so, then one wonders how viable the buildings would remain. The rush-hour strains caused by large numbers of people arriving at and leaving from these new buildings can only cause more congestion for a public transport system that can barely cope with existing numbers; what hope will there be if new towers are further to increase the commuters that use the trains and tube?

There is no doubt that towers, because of their very structural demands, also rely on huge amounts of electricity to power their lifts, air conditioning and other infrastructure. You cannot usually open windows – so nature's own cooling system is shut down. Heat losses escalate as one builds higher, because neighbours can no longer help to keep you warm. Externally, conditions can deteriorate, because of shadow, wind shear or echo. I remain somewhat sceptical of the claims now being made for overcoming these and other problems, as they are often based on unproven and in some cases even untested new technologies. I'm sure we would never contemplate such approaches if buildings were cars or aeroplanes!

It is, I believe, only by striving to integrate the best of the past with the best of the new; by tradition once again being defined and practised as something living and not dead, that we can be offered the choices that a truly contemporary architecture demands. ■

CHARTER OF REAL NATIONS

Dr Aidan Rankin and Peter Etherden

TO DRAW UP a plan or a blueprint for the creation of a human-scale non-centralised global order would be as foolish as it would be futile.

If the principle of the human scale is accepted then clearly each human scale community will be concerned to work out its own way of life, in accordance with its own judgements. Any suggestion of acting in accordance with a centralised plan would be the extension of a disease rather than the application of a remedy.

People will only act in accordance with a principle if they understand and accept the principle itself and to that end a major and multi-faceted drive to educate and to generally promote the principle of the human scale is now a task of the utmost urgency.

Since everything must have a start and a point of origin somewhere, what follows is simply certain proposals for action which could advance the principle to wider acceptance; they are neither comprehensive nor exclusive, they are the product of a number of trends already beginning to emerge, trends which appear to be moving in the direction of human control by means of the human scale and away from giantism, and to yield the promise of further useful developments.

'The supreme function of statesmanship is to provide against preventable ills.' Enoch Powell

The Charter

It is proposed that membership of 'The League of Real Nations' will be confined exclusively to those nations whose population numbers less than ten million and its objects shall be as follows:

1. To defend the political, economic, geographic and cultural integrity of its member nations, especially against the expansionist tendencies of the bigger nations and those afflicted with giantism.
2. To do everything possible to promote the principle of the human scale throughout the world.
3. To give support to ethnic or other human scale groupings, such as regions and bioregions, in their struggle for autonomous independence either individually or in concert with fellow members with economic or financial support and by giving diplomatic status and recognition to such peoples who may wish, if need be, to establish a government in exile.
4. To achieve the maximum degree of non-centralised political and economic operation in each country within its own frontiers, with particular reference to the empowerment of village communities whether urban or rural.
5. To reduce global war dangers by refusing to participate in any military, politi-

- cal or economic alliance with bigger nations.
6. To withdraw from membership and to refuse to give any further support to the United Nations Organisation, its specialist agencies or any of its subordinate or associated bodies and to promote the principle of neutrality in foreign relations.

It should be understood that what is being proposed here is not some kind of incipient mini-world government or any similar form of totalitarian global inanity. What is proposed instead is that in those areas where a clear functional need for an international body and for a common global acceptance of specific regulation exists (such as a postal union, maritime law, the use and control of oceanic resources, pollution controls, the containment of epidemics, emergency and disaster contingency provision, some forms of crime prevention, etc.) that separate bodies for each of these needs shall be established and that each should have a clear locus of control stemming from the basic unit of government within each nation in its village communities.

It does not follow that there need be a representative of every village in the world on the governing councils of such bodies. What does follow is that the means must be established whereby any substantial body of citizens of any region should be able, if it feels the need, to make its views known and be able to secure changes through its voting

power if it so wishes.

How this shall be done will doubtless vary considerably from one body to another. What humankind dare not risk is the danger of the kind of global tyranny on a world scale of which the Nazi and Communist dictatorships of the 20th century have shown is all too feasible if we are foolish enough to permit the present centralised forms of power to continue and to coalesce around one centre.

The emphasis of the organisation will be on the human scale and on human control.

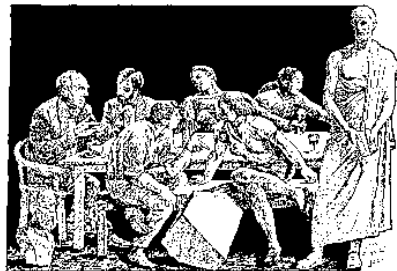
To that end the new body will be simply an association with absolutely minimal executive powers. The nearest comparable structure which comes to mind is that of the Commonwealth – formerly the British Commonwealth of Nations – yet even here there appears to be an undue emphasis on its secretariat and a disposition to develop organisationally in an increasing number of directions, as is common to governmental bureaucracies everywhere.

The new body will be wise to insist on an annual change of presiding officer and perhaps a triumvirate of senior executives, each of whom will serve a maximum of three years and one of whom will resign each year after serving as top executive.

■ *Discussion Papers are available from PO Box 36, Rye, Sussex, TN31 7EZ or from www.cesc.net/realnations (two papers).*

The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to the point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is Fascism – ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or any controlling private power.

Franklin D Roosevelt



FORUM

NICHOLAS ALBERY

I was completely overwhelmed by the extent and depth of the response to Nicholas's death. Having shared his life for over 25 years, I knew that I had married someone very special. But the obituaries and all of your comments confirmed quite how special he was. Nicholas was an enthusiast with dreams about how society could be better, and he had a unique style of working to turn his dreams into reality.

The Institute for Social Inventions was extremely important to Nicholas, and he made this very clear in a letter of wishes that he wrote before his death. He said that he wanted the institute to continue, and he asked his staff to take on this responsibility and they have risen to this challenge, and they are working to create a new and invigorated Board of Trustees that will provide guidance and support. In Nicholas's honour, we have decided to rename the parent charity (currently the Fourth World Educational Research and Association Trust) 'The Nicholas Albery Foundation'.

I would like to see the Foundation develop as a living memorial to Nicholas and his ideas; not just to keep the current projects going, but also to develop new ideas and new areas of work, and to enable

some of the existing work to be floated off and developed independently, as was done with The Befriending Network (an independent charity providing vital support for those terminally ill at home).

JOSEFINE SPEYER,

20 Heber Road, London NW2 6AA

UNREAL?

For several years you have argued – with both reason and emotional force – that what Britain needs most is the decentralisation of community power to village/neighbourhood level. I agree. You are surely right. In terms of all that is good in human nature, the problem you have identified is fundamental to our world today.

Yet if some genie from a bottle, or a representative from our Creator came in the clouds and were to effect the changes proposed in this Charter for Real Communities fully and set up a new political-economic system, then surely Britain would then find herself back in mediaeval times as to productive capacity? But with ten times the population! As a solution, the Charter has to be unreal.

Surely the desired decentralisation could be achieved by a grassroots-up politi-

cal structure which also enabled the control of all government expenditure to be exercised progressively from the bottom up on an annual basis – and without wrecking the economy!

ALAN ECOB

*2 The Bastion, Castlecrag,
New South Wales 2068, Australia.*

LOST

During the past few weeks, I have been cancelling all sorts of commitments to reduce my expenditure – a necessary exercise! However, I have a respect for the words you both write and edit. I was saddened to read, post September 11, of the way your words were treated – which reminded me of the text: ‘I have many things to say, but you cannot bear them now.’ I will not say there are no signs of hope while such as yourself have the courage to speak out – but in many respects, the Church has ‘lost the plot’.

MICHAEL CROWTHER-GREEN

8 Egerton Road, Reading, Berks RG2 8HQ

TO LIVE

‘Hatred never ceases by hatred; by love alone it is healed; this is the ancient and eternal law.’ (Dhammapada). Throwing bombs on any part of the earth’s surface can do only harm to some form of life. I was privileged to be in the lovely Church of St Mary’s Purton when John was shut-up. I was not surprised, only saddened to have what I already knew confirmed: the Church is dying and so is apiculture. The two go together if they are to live.

JUDITH HUBBARD

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HOPE

I write to say how much I value my copy of *Fourth World Review!* It warms my heart and gives me hope that people like you and your colleagues and people like us around the world will keep the faith and make a difference.

J K HUTLEY

*PO Box 23, Brunswick Heads,
New South Wales 2483, Australia*

PROVOCATEURS?

Thank you for the great book reviews, which I find useful and have led me to request my local library purchase the books. Also I often get some books on inter-library loans while waiting for the purchase and processing. I have already requested *Stormy Weather* (Books, FWR No. 111). In 1974 I was a Movement for a New Society printer’s apprentice, but am glad the Canadians are doing so well with New Society Press – they do us honour.

I wonder whether Friend Goderic Bader was telephoning from a prison? Since 1972 the local Friends meeting has not shown much interest in my inaction and I attend the local Unitarian Universalist Church, which claims they wish to become a ‘Green Sanctuary’ while re-paving their parking lot with asphalt for \$2,000 for each of ten additional spaces. Truly amazing!

It is delightful to hear your adventures with your new home but I worry about your visitors who make off with your music system without proper swap! They could have left you some kind of trade-in if only a tin whistle or kazoo. In Philadelphia we got air horns for a neighbourhood programme against crime; they are so loud they can be held in your bedroom and heard outside the house when activated, calling neigh-

bours for help. And as for masked intruders with chemical sprays, they remind me of the black-masked smashers in Seattle – likely hired by the police as provocateurs, one wonders?

MAGGIE EUCALYPTUS

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REGRESSING

Comments on ‘organic’ farming come under two headings – weed control and maintenance of fertility. The old way was by means of summer fallows and hand or horse hoeing. Both are inexpensive and labour demanding. Fallowing means a year without crop, and who is to do the hoeing? Labour is unavailable, country people get in their cars and drive to better paid work and to the extent that labour might be found, it is far too expensive for our low-priced products. Certainly skilled labour is non-existent. In wet seasons, as you must know from your garden, hoeing simply transplants the weeds. Don’t forget that our forbears sometimes had a hell of a life, with near starvation. At Ryton organic garden, you will see that they control weeds by means of covering the ground with black plastic and imported wood chippings.

As for fertility, one needs a frequent course of grass/clover leys. To sow them, one needs a soil easily cultivated so that one can make seed beds rapidly. This rules out all the clays and heavy land. Then, what is this ley to be used for? Only grazing or hay/silage. We have already more milk than we need, ditto beef and lamb. So do we mow it to waste?

I don’t know whether you will remember the Haughley Experiment which Lady Eve Balfour and a neighbour carried out for many

years until the old enemy, finance, forced them out. They divided their farms into three sections – organic, conventional mixed and stockless chemical. Nothing much transpired, yieldwise or healthwise. This was the forerunner of the Soil Association. It is hard to see how we are to replace the potash and phosphate which we constantly piss and shit out. At the moment we mine the not inexhaustible deposits all over the world. I understand that one of the reasons that the Moroccans are fighting the Polisario and ‘ethical’ Britain is arming the Moroccans is because of large phosphate deposits.

The way the human race is regressing, all the above is an academic discussion. Don’t let the buggers get us down!

HOWARD CHENEY

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VISION

It may be (just may be!) that the e-mail and computer civilisation, if that’s what one might call it, is bringing about a recognition of the oneness of life, and by the way of natural, ingrained self-concern a backlash in favour of the sense of responsibility at the local level (or wherever one is in relationship, psychology or otherwise!). The seeking and questing for a way out of the present miserable scene seems to be burgeoning all over the globe. The sense of perspective, however, seems still to be lacking almost everywhere.

ERICA LAUBER

*Garden Flat, 23 Abercorn Place,
London NW8 9DX*

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Their sleeping bags and boxes like a prayer,
But cast-off newsprint's the best their like to thief
From this heartless business efficiency display.
Smoke from mighty vehicle exhaust
And cancer snort clogs every ray
Of sun that percolates the coarse
Polluted surface of concrete-shadowed river:
Dear Christ! this filthy water's
Thick enough to walk on – but all trace of laughter's
Quickly spent, as another bomb scare sets the cops a-quiver.
Wordsworth, thou shouldst be living at this hour
In parliament, to put your grass-roots dawn back into power.

Michael Horovitz

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Noam Chomsky

BOOKS



◆ *The Breakdown of Nations* is one of the most fundamental radical theoretical statements of modern times. For the first time since Aristotle a leading thinker has sought to explain the primary causes of political and economic crisis in terms of the factors of size and scale; the perception of their significance has the effect of relegating most modern political and economic theorising to the dustbins of history. Such out of date theorising can no longer have any relevance to a world in the grip of mad forms of excess as a result of continuing to ignore them. We therefore make no apologies for continuing our series of reviews of a work which indicates efforts at social progress will continue to end in futility so long as its lessons are ignored. The author of this review is a London-based Nigerian lawyer and it is published by courtesy of *World Review*, 14-16 Carroun Rd, London SW8 1JT.

– Editor

THE BREAKDOWN OF NATIONS, by Leopold Kohr. GREEN BOOKS. £9.95. ISBN 1-870098-98-6.

 Reviewed by Dele Oguntimoju

AS a law student I had great difficulty memorising the masses of detail we had to learn in quite the same way as my colleagues with more conventional legal minds. I adjusted to this handicap by seeking to identify the underlying themes and principles which, once found, could be carried around with much less effort.

This is the approach that Leopold Kohr adopts in this essay on the causes of social misery, global conflicts, dictatorships, hol-

low democracies, mass poverty and the reign of the managers over the creative people. The task that he sets himself is to develop a 'single integrated theory through which not only some but all phenomena of the social universe can be explained'. He encapsulates the theory in the following readily portable sentence: 'Wherever something is wrong, something is too big.'

There are no shortcuts in the reasoning process by which Kohr reaches this conclusion. He begins by locking horns with the theories that have been put forward in the past, showing in each case how they succeed in explaining some but not all of the

social problems of this world. He then proceeds to lay the foundations for his own theory.

The common denominator of all social ills is size, because the capacity and propensity of any organism to cause damage is largely a function of its size: 'For bulk, size, mass, not only leads to power, like energy it is power.' From here he proceeds to show how mankind's obsession with bringing distinct social organisms together in the name of unity is in fact the main cause of conflict in the world. 'Nearly all wars have been fought for unification.'

Kohr points out that the Swiss, in contrast, have managed to preserve their unity and peace through conscious 'division' rather than 'union'. My fellow Nigerians would do well to pay attention at this stage. The national emblem of this country of more than 120 million people, made up of more than 250 nations, carries the motto, 'unity, peace and progress'. Forty-one years on from independence and the country is nowhere near achieving a single one of these ideals as the ongoing clashes between Muslims and Christians in the north of Nigeria demonstrate.

This is a book and a theory that speaks to all peoples, in all nations and for all ages. First published in 1957, it speaks with greater clarity than Nostradamus to the issues and events of the moment. To the nations of Nigeria he would have said peace and progress would be more readily assured if you gave up the ghost of unity and concentrated instead on securing balance between the federating units. For 'only the totalitarian delights in oneness and unity rather than the harmony produced by balanced diversity'.

To the unifiers of Europe, his warning is that 'only small states are federable.

Wherever a large state participates in a federal union, the federation cannot last. In due course it will either become a centralised state operating in the interest of its largest participant, or it will break into its component parts once the immediate reason for its creation, such as fears of a common enemy, has disappeared.'

To the globalisers he warns: 'So contrary to man's purpose are the concepts of union and unity that attempts at establishing one-world systems seem almost blasphemous.' To support his view he recommends a re-reading of the story of the Tower of Babel to 'learn what God himself thought of union'.

And as if with the events of September 11 and its aftermath in mind, he gives warning of how the consequence of removing the 'isolating boundaries' of small nations in the name of unity is that 'every minor cause of dispute is likely to produce a chain of reaction of global proportions'.


For us the citizens there are lessons as well. Kohr shows how our creativity and influence as individuals is diminished by the very growth of the state: 'wherever the element of mass is introduced, the individual is killed even if he survives physically'; thus, just as when a river bursts its banks the citizens become penned in, so the growing state encroaches on our space and quality of life.

Our creativity is choked off because large states require good organisation and good organisers prefer conformity to diversity. To succeed in the large state we must become more specialist in our skills: 'Our life's experience is confined to narrow segments whose borders we almost never cross but within which we become great single-purpose experts.'

Our political influence is diluted because with every increase in the popula-

tion of the state our share of sovereignty is spread ever more thinly. Thus, even as the state frees itself from the shackles of historic territorial boundaries in the quest for political and economic union, it is we the citizens that become imprisoned. Chapter 11 is all of one word in length. The answer to the question posed by the chapter heading, whether the warnings and the guidance in this book will ever be heeded, is given in the single word, No! The events of September 11 may yet prove this to be the one misplaced word in this otherwise truly remarkable book.

SEIZE THE DAY – 366 TIPS FOR LIVING, edited by *Stephanie Wienrich and Nicholas Albery*. CHATTO AND WINDUS, 2001. £12.00. ISBN 0-7011-6938-9.


 *Reviewed by John Papworth*

THE last of the many books on which Nicholas Albery worked before his untimely death, *366 Tips for Living* is a superb collection of highly relevant quotes, injunctions and proposals from a wide spectrum of current radical thinkers, making for an absolutely first-rate assembly of indispensable wisdom no one can afford to neglect.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, by *Fritz Schumacher*. SPHERE BOOKS, 1974. £2.50. ISBN 0-349-13132-5.

BLUEPRINT FOR SURVIVAL, by *Edward Goldsmith*. TOM STACEY LTD. 1972. ISBN 0-85468-262-7.

THE DOOMSDAY BOOK, by *Gordon Rattray Taylor*. PANTHER BOOKS 1972. 45p. ISBN 586-03604-0.

 *Reviewed by John Papworth*

WHY bother to re-review books written more than 30 years ago? Well, the cover of Gordon Rattray Taylor's carries the declaration, 'If you think you're going to survive the next thirty years... think again!' so, did

Rattray Taylor get his sums wrong? Are the sceptics who continue to declare everything is fine and that all this doomsday stuff is rubbish and that we have nothing to worry about, right after all?

They have plenty of apparent evidence. Schumacher, writing about the same time, declared in *Small is Beautiful* that 'growth' was unlikely to continue beyond 1980, and Goldsmith in his *Blueprint for Survival* (1972), predicted demand for oil would out-strip supply by the end of the century. In the same strain a *Sunday Telegraph* reviewer of the *Doomsday Book* declared, 'Man... will, most probably, drown in his own sewage before the century is out'.

None of these predictions, and many more of many more authors in the same strain, have been fulfilled. So, the conclusion, why worry, let's carry on regardless, seems very easy to reach and the generality of people continue to live in what can only be seen as a fools paradise. Why?

These authors, perhaps the most prominent of what has become an enormous library of similar literature from a wide range of scholars, have sought to deliver what is essentially the same message. It is summed up by Goldsmith when he declares, 'Indefinite growth of whatever type cannot be sustained by finite resources.'

All of them point to the same factors, a human population breeding like ants, an insane and insensate pursuit of economic growth, the availability of finite resources – not least of land, water and oil, the calamitous effects of industrialisation on our physical world in all its aspects including climate and oceanic temperatures and, running like a poison through the bloodstream of civilisation, the ineluctable factor of stress, stress which is blighting and destroying the inner harmony of countless people's

lives and producing every type of social tribulation as over-centralised power and the malignant social poison of advertising intrudes non-stop into their private space and proceeds to shit on it.

It is indeed this factor of stress which has already erupted around us which confirms the general tenor of the predictions these writers have made. The time factor they projected may apparently be out of kilter, but is it? They are dealing with issues of global and even of galactic dimensions and in the space/time context of their predictions the question of sooner or later, as measured in decades, is clearly of subsidiary importance.

What is important is the underlying reasoning which informs their calculations and the conclusions they and many others reach, and which form an irrefutable consensus of opinion that our whole way of life is on a down and heading for catastrophe of different forms on a global scale which can only result in the demise of the civilisation which has gestated it.

But who is listening? Who is taking any notice? The answer is, a great many alert-minded and informed people of many persuasions. They produce or sustain a wide range of literature seeking to grapple with some of the problems these authors have raised; they organise or attend meetings, conferences, demonstrations and protests, in collective terms almost non-stop.

And what is the result of all this activity on the everyday policy of governments around the world? In practical, effective terms absolutely none at all. The crisis factors these authors describe in graphic and undeniable detail are either totally ignored or treated with ostensibly ameliorative proposals which leave the main thrust of the mischief untouched.

As these words are written the Chancellor of the Exchequer has just announced, with a phalanx of media fanfares, his plans for the British economy. They are based on a projected growth of at least 2% per annum. Growth! When every word emanating from these authors is howling in actual or implied terms for a halt to industrial expansion. When every word is pitched to urge that we modify economic activity so that it accords with social and environmental realities.

The *Daily Telegraph* opined when Rattray's *Doomsday Book* appeared, 'Our politicians and planners should be obliged to go through this book from cover to cover.' Not one of them has apparently done so and government and industry today have become a conspiracy to dethrone human decency and to effect the destruction of human destiny.

The current Prime Minister and his cronies bleat endlessly about the economic advantages (for more growth!) to the British economy by joining 'EUrope', as though none of these authors had written a word and as though their warnings had never been uttered. At the same time the government he leads enacts more and more legislation to restrict liberty in desperate attempts to cope with the effects of a crisis his own policies are engendering.


And he cannot do otherwise. He is not concerned with human survival but with his own political survival at the next election. Were he to heed these warnings he would be faced with a need to restructure the economy in wholesale terms of objectives and values which would involve the abandonment of those which now hold sway. Even to attempt such a policy would pitch him out of office in a fortnight as a

consumerist surfeited electorate found the baubles of affluence they have been so assiduously indoctrinated to accept as a natural right began to disappear under their noses.

The captains of industry and commerce are in the same compulsive boat. If any of them began to heed the warnings and to act on them, for example to plan for reductions of mass industrial activity, if their fellow board members did not at once replace them, or if stock exchange valuation of their shares did not sink through the floor and bankrupt them, the workforce would soon put paid to proposals which threatened their jobs.

The fact is we are in a no man's land of opposing forces of self-destructive political and economic brigandage coupled to cunningly manipulated mass consumerist appetites, opposed by the natural constraints of the ecological facts of life coupled to the growing alarm of a tiny minority of alert-minded realists and champions of sanity and decency. Which side will win?

MONEY: UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO LEGAL TENDER, by Thomas H. Greco Jnr. CHELSEA GREEN, Vermont, 2001. Distributed in the UK by GREEN BOOKS. £19.95. 296 pages. ISBN 1-890132-37-3

 *Reviewed by Peter Etherden*

IN 1939 in an essay on the politics of Charles Dickens, George Orwell commented that if you hate violence and don't believe in politics, the only remedy left is education. For two decades Tom Greco, a former business school professor in Rochester, New York has been obsessed with the money problem. But like Dickens and Orwell, he has always believed in education. Over the past ten years Greco has


produced two excellent books: *Money and Debt: A Solution to the Global Crisis* in 1990 and *New Money for Healthy Communities* in 1994. It seems right that Greco's third book – a synthesis of the global and the local – should be published in Vermont, with its long libertarian tradition.

Greco wants to see the world of money turned upside down and believes it may be possible to do this peacefully by empowering people to create their own currencies. Healthy communities need their own local mutual credit systems and cohesive cultural regions like Skåne, Wales or Catalonia should issue local currencies for their own local use. While many alternative economists limit their ambitions to placing monetary reform on the political agenda, Greco prefers to put his trust in 'we the people'. In doing so he is championing a cause which has many philosophical parallels with the open source movement in the world of computer programming... the open money movement. Greco sets about his task of persuasion by discussing monetary realities and official illusions. He then provides the reader with a history of complementary currencies past and present to establish the point that there is nothing being proposed that has not been successfully done before. In doing so he provides an overview of the experiments with scrip issues in the depression years and writes with authority on Caslow Recovery Certificates, Larkin Merchandise Bonds, Ralph Borsodi's Constants and of the work of Silvio Gesell with 'demurrage' and 'stamp scrip' in the German-speaking villages of Schwanenkirchen and Wörgl in 1932. Greco's evidence ranges widely and includes fascinating first-hand insights into the current situation in Argentina, where a

third currency operates alongside the US dollar and the Argentinean peso. Greco then moves on to a study of the mutual credit systems developed by new age pioneers like Michael Linton (LETS) and Paul Glover (HOURS) as a prelude to the final part of the book where he provides a do-it-yourself manual for sound monetary management in healthy communities.

While working in Argentina 100 years ago Silvio Gesell remarked on the impossibility of finding even half a dozen people in Germany able to talk knowledgeably about monetary matters. Part of our job as radical economists is to alter this situation by placing money back at the heart of political economy. So give pride of place on your radical bookshelf to Tom Greco's latest book, alongside Gesell's *Natural Economic Order*, the writings of the American monetary theorists E.C. Riegel, Frederick Solly, Irving Fisher, Milton Friedman and Kenneth Galbraith and the works of the Austrian political economist Ludwig von Mises. And if socialism is equal money, as Bernard Shaw was wont to say, then our knowledge about it should start at the point of issue.

CREATING NEW MONEY, by Joseph Huber and James Robertson. NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION, London, 2001. £7.95. 92 pages. ISBN 1-899407-29-4

 Reviewed by Peter Etherden

SHORTLY before the events of September 11th, the UK-based Schumacher think-tank The New Economics Foundation published a slim volume co-authored by a German professor and a retired English civil servant that argued the case for seigniorage reform. The privilege of issuing money needed to be taken away from bankers and given back

to politicians and their civil servants. Lincoln's greenbacks were back on the agenda. The book casts much-needed light upon the murky smoke and mirrors world of *The Money Power* but also provides valuable insights into the messengers as well as their message. Professor Huber is a pioneer of green banking and ethical investment in Germany and a quarter of a century ago his co-author James Robertson wrote *The Sane Alternative* with its elegant arguments for choosing a sane, humane, ecological future rather than the hyperexpansionist path we were on at the time. Over the following two decades Robertson would publish two further classics, *Future Work* and *Future Wealth*, both 25 years ahead of their time just like all good radical works should be.

Many of our fundamental social contracts and conventions are based on notions that are erroneous and self-defeating. Among the more insidious is belief in the practice of granting to a few the privilege to create money based on debt and to charge interest for its use. In *Creating New Money* Huber and Robertson focus on the one crucial reform they believe will address this problem at the heart of our money-based societies. They argue that the change is technically feasible and economically desirable. Seigniorage reform would be the sharp precision instrument that would cut away the cancer promoting the hyperexpansionist future. In the ensuing metaphysical reconstruction of money and work and the realignment of the levers of wealth and power, the institutions promoting 'the growth imperative' in the misplaced notion that it was in their own best interest and that 'what was good for Enron was good for America' would be transformed, power

would be channeled into more socially productive purposes and the global economy kept on the rails for another few decades. In making their case, Huber and Robertson have decided to dangle in front of our small band of powerfully funded euroenthusiasts the carrot of monetary patronage. A cadre of radical eurocrats would mount a bloodless coup and, at a stroke, hundreds of prestigious private bankers with their corporate traditions stretching back into the dim distant European past with its monarchical and ecclesiastical intrigues would roll over and accept their new role as a department of the European Institute for Chartered Accountants. Is this realistic or just another pipedream from the ivory towers?

Seigniorage reform is widely accepted by monetary experts as the *sine qua non* of monetary reform, though not the only one. The trouble is that the real dispute has always been over strategy. So it is the tactical implications of the Huber-Robertson proposals that must be the focus of any critique. Huber and Robertson admit quite frankly that on such matters their own opinions differ. But neither believes that reform is futile. They both agree that politics is the art of the possible and seigniorage reform is a means to open up the debate and appeal to enlightened self-interest among 'the haves', many of whom are increasingly nervous of their ability to hold what they have. After September 11 there are no investments only speculations and real reform is not a zero-sum game... there will be losers as well as winners. There is little doubt that Huber and Robertson would have made first class colonial administrators and much can be learnt from them. But in *Creating New Money* they have contented themselves with the role of financial advisers to the East India

Company of our day. In making the case for removing money creation from the bankers and placing it in the hands of central governments (for this is the drift of their proposals) Huber and Robertson take their readers on a master class in money, banking and finance in just 35,000 words, making an excellent primer for business schools and a step towards putting money at the heart of political economy. It was the businessman's guru Peter Drucker in a landmark essay on Keynes' 'magical system' (*Virginia Quarterly Review*, Autumn 1946) who noted that his 'basic insight was the realization that the free market of the classical economists fails to adjust itself automatically as predicted because the economic forces of demand and supply, cost and price, are over-ridden by the psychological forces of money and credit'.

So with hindsight the key chapter may turn out to be the one entitled 'prospects', and it is to the authors' credit that they decided to include it. Here they address the question of the Huber-Robertson plan's potential opponents and beneficiaries, the nature of the triggers and the constituencies for change. The chapter starts with a quote from Machiavelli: 'There is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer, than to introduce a new order of things; for he who introduces it has all those who profit from the old order as his enemies, and he has only lukewarm allies in all those who profit from the new. This lukewarmness partly stems from fear of their adversaries ... and partly from the skepticism of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they have actually had personal experience of them.' (From *The Prince*, written in 1552.) Ay, there's the rub. ■

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A survey of the work of two of the most influential political thinkers of our time which explains their differences of approach, especially with reference to their major books *The Breakdown of Nations* and *Small is Beautiful*, written by one who enjoyed the personal friendship of both and who for many years has published their writings and promoted their ideas. The paper was originally presented to a dinner discussion of The Academic Inn, itself the brainchild of Leopold Kohr over half a century ago.

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FOURTH WORLD SPECTATOR

MICHAEL HOROVITZ is one of nature's gentlemen, and a highly gifted one at that.

He is a jazz poet – both creator and performer – and he sent me his latest publications for review. This presented me with a problem, for it would be inadequate to say I don't like jazz. I have in fact a profound aversion to everything about it and tend to regard the saxophone as the outward and all too audible evidence of some unfortunate elephant cow suffering uncommon difficulties in labour, and promoting a degree of discord any free, genuinely democratic government would at once abolish. Yet in support of my friend's work I once helped to purchase a box at the Royal Festival Hall for a jazz concert he staged, although during the event I promptly fell asleep.

Anyway I wrote explaining my feelings, to which he responded by observing that both Hitler and Stalin shared my views on jazz. I must say I was astonished that two such horrendous moral primitives should

be so far advanced along the path of civilised perception, but there we are. Anyway Michael came to a birthday bash I organised and he told me I had been listening to the wrong sort of jazz. As he gets older he gets gentler, more avuncular and endearing, but the noises he still makes when he sings his, well, I suppose I had better call them 'songs', have to be heard to be believed. In fairness I should add he has quite a following, and if by chance you are part of it, and want to see some of his latest work do apply. (Page 14 is the place.)

I AM CONSTANTLY on the receiving end of missives from a gentleman named Daniel who believes the world will be saved if we change our diet by abandoning meat and animal fats and live on nuts, berries, grasses, seaweed and lots of other vegetative growing things. He appears to write in a chronic state of explosive apoplexy and his letters are full of aggression, brimming over with abuse and vituperation to a

degree one is left speculating in Freudian terms on his infancy experiences. I wrote to him recently to enquire if he knew of any case that had been advanced with ill-mannered explosions of abuse and to suggest that if his manners were a product of his diet he might do worse than give some consideration to making profound changes in both. Well, not an enquiry embodying much tact of course, but I cannot recall that anyone has ever seen fit to nominate me as the patron saint of that estimable social grace, so I was not surprised at the tenor of the responsive missive, and merely wondered if the postman might not have scorched his fingers in handling it. It would appear my particular brand of 'Pseudo-Environmentalism Omnivorism Carnivorism Fundamentalism' and my 'fanatical, stubborn, deluded and blinkered subscribers' (by which he means you, Dear Reader), 'are more dangerous to the future of all life on this planet than all the puppets of political power put together.' Well at least he has a gift for making his message clear even if it is as dotty as a dream.

BY DEVIANT ROUTES I have my own access to some of the inner counsels concerned with the numbing task of choosing the next Archbishop of Canterbury. It seems, despite his manifest suitability on various grounds, that my old boss, the Bishop of London, is 'out' because, wait for it, he is opposed to women priests. Why such an outstandingly intelligent man... well, never mind. But since David Hope, the Archbishop of York, is also against women priests (!!!) we clearly can't have the two top Anglican posts occupied by men opposed to the considered policy (or is it a doctrine?) of the Church. Another widely canvassed name, I learn, is

'out' because 'he is just impossible', so the field narrows somewhat. The man I would like to see for the job, assuming I am myself passed up, is my present boss Barry Rogerson, Bishop of Bristol. He is the only senior churchman I know who seems remotely aware of what is going on in the world. Perhaps there are other suitable candidates, but if there are I wish they would make some noises to indicate as much. After all it is a bishop's job, if he is not to be some sort of statuesque administrative cypher, to make a noise, and of course an archbishop's job is to make even bigger noises. One suspects the Church is in the doldrums for much the same reason as the Tory conservative party: neither has the wit (or is it the moral courage?) to make really distinctive noises about anything that matters, so whether they are worried about women priests or the state of the railways it is rather like being exceedingly concerned about the colour of the wallpaper whilst having not the remotest awareness that the house is on fire.

Odd really to think our dear old Anglican Church was founded by a serial wife murderer, an adulterer and one who wreaked more destruction on our national cultural heritage than any other single person. Henry VIII was really a Tudor teenager who never managed to mature, and whose main response to any attempt to check his proclivities, like that of many a modern teenager, was to put the boot in. But in his case of course it was the axe. Given the decadent state of the Church at that time some sort of reformation was inevitable, Henry turned it into a wholesale desecration. Curious to reflect that he used the same technique to consolidate his devastation that Robert Mugabe is employing today in

Zimbabwe: by creating a new landowning class having a vested interest in maintaining it with cheap purchases of confiscated land.

But I rather wonder, is there any reason why I should be passed up for Canterbury? It is true I am not a bishop, but does one have to be a bishop to become an archbishop? I can find nothing in the Bible about it, nor in the *Book of Common Prayer*, and come to think of it I suspect I would make a jolly good archbishop. Since I have no tact or diplomatic gifts anyway I could proceed to speak my mind with abandon and without minding a scrap about giving offence to anyone as I proceeded to plead for God's kingdom on earth without restraint.

One of the besetting weaknesses of Anglicanism is that it is full of people always ready to take offence at something or other. Well I would give them something to take offence at, please God I would! I would begin by declaring a Fatwah on supermarkets, imposing a tithe on cars used for church attendance, pronouncing an anathema on any food from a factory and by leading an international crusade against commercial TV. I would also sack any bishop who failed to get arrested for sabotaging GM crops or for protesting against nuclear bombs or nuclear power. All that would no doubt spark off a spate of letters in that weekly bout of institutionalised ecclesiastical bromide *The Church Times*, but perhaps it would help people to understand that whilst it is a good thing for people to pray on their knees they are not meant to live on them.

But I have a suspicion I would not make the shortlist on the grounds that I am not spiritual enough. Perhaps they should give the job to my dear friend Mr Satish Kumar; he has spirituality oozing out of him and

enveloping him like a chocolate brazil nut.

I FEAR I MUST RABBIT ON a bit about Church matters for another reason. Channel Four recently did a programme entitled *The Real Queen*, purporting to be a true picture of Elizabeth II's reign. Instead it was an absolute Bin Laden hatchet job; wherever they could put the knife in, in it went. It might make some sort of antidote to the sickening sycophancy that tends to surround comment on royalty, but the general burden of this programme contained its own agenda. What emerged with the help of some adroit partisanship and camera work was the message that the major symbol of Britain's national identity and collective consciousness, its monarchy, was simply a useless historical relic full of all sorts of human weaknesses and failings and the sooner we get rid of it the better. It left me wondering how much European money had gone into making it. Which brings me back to my projected candidature for the See of Canterbury. I don't know what force the 39 Articles of Religion of *The Book of Common Prayer* now have, but once enthroned I would proceed to excommunicate the entire Blair government for being in contravention of article Thirty Seven. It states quite clearly, and all those Britsceptics and EUrofanatics should take due note, 'The King's majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England... and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

PIERRE, MY ELDEST SON, is about to marry and so, some months later, is my daughter Marie. Weddings really are one helluva business: guest lists, flowers, reception, music, photographer, church, organ, hymns, bridesmaids, wedding dress, rings.

I am sure someone will forget something but there we are. Anyway, I hope the service sheet will be rigorously proofed. One bride recently was most insistent that it should include a Bridal March; somehow the phonetics got the better of things and it appeared as the Bridle March.

I USED TO THINK Ezzy, he is really Marie's cat, was the embodiment of sagacity and wisdom. He manages to carry all the hauteur of some former fashion celebrity and constantly gazes at the world with the regal sufferance of a reigning monarch. He will allow one to tickle between his ears but touching any other part, however innocuous, is greeted with a scratch and a snarl. I have to say he is quite the most imperiously unfriendly cat I have

ever encountered. The other day I did some ironing and in no time he had curled up asleep on the ironing board with his loose fluffy ginger hairs all over the place. Anyway there is talk now of getting a kitten to keep him company and perhaps to civilise him a bit. We shall have to see.

Actually I am inclined to think he is rather stupid.

I FELT A PANG of sympathy for the late Auberon Waugh. He recounts in his autobiography how he had been invited to a Scandinavian conference to give a talk on 'Breast Feeding', a subject that had cropped up in a column he edited, and proceeded to prepare an address. It was only on arrival that he learned he was actually being asked to speak on 'Press Freedom'. ■

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Fourth World News



UK rail workers have gone on strike. • UK Post Office workers have gone on strike. • Scientists have proved bacteria can survive in outer space. • The EU is debating what sauces are permissible in foodstuffs. Its own in presuming to debate this is not being considered. • Men will soon be able to have a knifeless vasectomy by means of focussed ultrasound waves. • Bush fires have destroyed thousands of homes around Sydney, NSW. • Cyprus, normally warm and sunny, is in the grip of a freeze. • Russia is to build two destroyers for the Chinese Navy. • The UK is abandoning any further tax breaks or subsidies for its nuclear power industry, and bloody high time too. • Pakistan is investigating the scientific help given to Osama Bin Laden by two of its nuclear scientists. • A new money unit for 'EUrope' has been launched despite massive and scarcely reported protests in France and Germany. • India and Pakistan are preparing for war over their rival claims for Kashmir. Kashmiri people are not being asked their views. • Northern Ireland is in turmoil again. • Half a million incidents of stolen mobile phones are reported annually, mostly from school children, and the use of guns by muggers is increasing. • UK farmers are seeking the help of French farmers in their struggle to get a better deal from the Tesco supermarket chain. • The government (Tony, crony, phoney, Blair) is seeking to make the House of Lords a PM 'yes' body. • Hundreds of Zambian women marched topless in Lusaka in protest of rigged elections. • Shiploads of Chinese arms are being sent to Pakistan. • US military chiefs are asking for an extra \$20 billion to add to their \$330 billion budget. • Afghan peasants are being forced by starvation to eat bread made from grass. • British credit card consumers are now £700 billion in debt and getting more credit is as easy as pie. • A radio poll has indicated that 71% of people think we would be better off without supermarkets, but Tesco has become the first to make a profit of more than £1 billion. • A group called 'Farmers for Action' is going into battle against them. • It has been

revealed one of our royal princes has actually, one hesitates to proceed, well, really, has experienced the smoking of cannabis! The effects on the House of Lords, on the judiciary, the stock market, the environment or the prospects of Man U again winning the cup final, whilst still not apparent, have yet to be estimated. • The Post Office is going to cut 30,000 jobs with the aim, by some contortion of reasoning, (who said the age of miracles is past?) of increasing efficiency. One effect is to be a sharp reduction of postal delivery services. • Under a new ruling, people are to be allowed to see their files now held by MI5. • In three years farmers' markets have grown from 1 to 377 and their number is increasing rapidly. • A Welsh Chief of Police has suggested that since the law is losing the battle against drugs all of them should be legalised. • Dr Andrew Wakefield was the first doctor to report that the combined MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella) could cause autism and bowel disease. • Paul Marsden, a Labour MP, has been physically assaulted by a fellow Labourite MP in the House of Commons after opposing Blair's 'anti-terrorism' bill. He has submitted a written complaint to the Speaker. • The total cost of a basket of 15 foods in the UK is more than double the price than in New Zealand. This is because of the EUropean CAP, according to the Consumers Association. • Water and hydrolysed protein added to chicken breasts nearly (and very profitably) doubles their weight. The chicken breasts often originate in Brazil or Thailand, are processed in Holland and labelled as 'Dutch' when sold in large quantities to UK caterers. • Married people are likely to become a UK minority according to the National Office of Statistics. • After decades of deliberate neglect and destruction of Britain's rail system in order to divert resources to motorway building by both Labour and Tory conservative governments it is being discovered that millions of people do not own cars, are dependent on rail journeys even to get to work, whilst the system is falling apart and long suffering public anger is exploding. – SH

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