

The Best of

Quelle

The Labour Women

Hugh Macfarlane is more feminine than Jowell...

It is common knowledge that once one attains a certain station in life, one is no longer obliged to 'play the part', as it were. There are innumerable stories of extremely rich businessmen dressing like construction workers and wearing plastic watches they got out of Christmas crackers when they could scarcely walk – indeed, Warren Buffett, erstwhile second-richest man in the world (before both he and Gates were dislodged by Mexican 'telecommunications' tycoon Carlos Slim Helù), still lives in the same house he bought for \$30,000 50 years ago in Omaha, Nebraska. Lord Bittlesham, Uncle of Bingo Little in P.G.Wodehouse's masterpiece *The Inimitable Jeeves*, is renowned for coming down to lunch in a soup-stained velvet smoking jacket and a pair of carpet slippers. And, of course, there is a fine tradition of dishevelled academics which is maintained in style at our own Win:Coll:

This is why I was surprised to read about the Government's new pol-

icy for allocating places in its child-care scheme. Basically, a couple of local council employees are assigned to hang around the local CostCutters looking out for the shabbiest, most haggard, young, single mothers they can spot. They then approach them with details of this childcare program, under which the council will take the infant off its mother's hands for a few hours a day so she can go back to school or put in some overtime (or, of course, look after her other, hitherto neglected children). If our birdwatchers (oh yes...) can't meet their quotas at budget supermarkets, they must go round door-to-door to try and persuade hard-up parents to leave their children up to Nanny. Of course, there's a lot that could be said about this (and if there's one thing I like, it's stoking the fires of public debate. Or Tunnock's Tea Cakes.), even if we ignore the practical effects of such an intrusive policy. I once met some people who would beat you up if you so much as looked at them, let alone offered to

take their children as they slipped out of Aldi. I'm not concerned so much with the willingness to intrude and insult (although the willingness to be hospitalised in the line of duty is pretty admirable), but I think it's more interesting that the government is sufficiently ignorant of the character of its citizens to suppose that that sort of plan would ever work. To be honest but controversial, I think ideas like this are probably the work of the infamous Labour Women. There's a small clique of middle-aged, interfering, unattractive women who form one chamber of the government's socialist heart. You know the ones I mean – Harriet Harman, Tessa Jowell, Hazel Blears et al. The kind of women who, in spite of having apparently renounced their femininity, still advise on 'what women want' (although perhaps even their advice is safer than that offered by a magazine I saw recently, which was of the opinion that all married women want is no-holds-barred, no-strings-attached sex with younger Mediterranean men). I would be astonished if any mother, approached in the street and told that she clearly needed help and could probably do with earning a bit of overtime, agreed and signed up her child for care. It smacks of the influence of The Androgynous, imagining the struggling young parent seizing the chance to do what was best with smug benevolence.

But to return to my original point, and more specifically to return to our brave local council employee, standing determinedly in the rain outside Lidl

with a clipboard and a beady eye for unbranded clothing. But when he swoops, according to the guidelines he's been supplied with, will he swoop with accuracy? I suggest perhaps not. As I've said before, it's pretty likely that he'll be given an earful, if not actually a faceful, of fairly ripe stuff. If the rise of Topshop, the Pound Shop and the supermarket Own Brand have shown us anything, it is surely that people care less about brand names and recognisable images than they do about quality and price. Although I would never shop in any of those places myself, of course, I am reliably informed that their merchandise is relatively prime. Therefore, our earnest, well-intentioned front-liner is just as likely to end up peddling his scheme to a married mother-of-two member of the PTA as to a crack-smoking street prostitute (and child). One would result in grievous bodily harm – the other a lawsuit and vitriolic rebuke.

We must therefore ask ourselves if we can really entrust our well-being to a government which is so detached from reality as to think, not only that such a scheme is feasible (in the words of Take That, "if I don't know you and you don't know me how can we be fighting"), but also that employing Tessa Jowell and co. helps to even out the sex-balance in their party. That's one thing the French political system has going for it. Much as I like Sandra Brown, this reporter wouldn't say no to a *petite tranche* of Carla Bruni any day of the week. Unless he was on strike.

Pâté de Foie Gras

Tom Ooi laps it up...

My first thought was: “that advertising is just a bit over the top”. But squinting short sightedly at the placards the woman was waving, I realised that it was not actually advertising. “Boycott this restaurant!” they proclaimed. “It sells *Pâté de Foie Gras!*” Aha, my crystal clear mind divined, this restaurant sells *Foie Gras*, so let’s go there for lunch. Sadly, it proved that it was shut, but as we passed the dungareed one, quoth she in our ears, “Boycott this restaurant! It sells *Pâté de Foie Gras*”. Quoth I to her, “I can read, you know”, before hastening to another restaurant. Thankfully, her duty glued her to her place. She was just one of a flood of anti-*Foie Gras*-ites. They stand outside the premises of haute-cuisiniers, using their beards as megaphones, and proclaim against the pâté. “It is cruel and evil to force-feed geese in this way!” they megabeard.

OK, let us tear them apart as thoroughly as Picasso here and now. First of all, geese are no longer used in *Foie Gras*; ducks are. Another megabearded fact is that the ducks are not, in fact, force-fed: the time of year at which ducks are prepared is actually the same time that they would be stocking up their larders for migration anyway: they are simply given all the food they want, perhaps stretching a little beyond the normal limit, but only just. This is going to be a short article, for the joint reasons that the government’s extreme tarrying

has left me a little uncertain of the facts in another article I have written, leaving little time to do this one, and also that the megaboycottbeards have already been utterly trounced.

Let us now consider their reasons for attacking these *Foie Gras*-selling homes of haute-cuisine, rather than supermarket ‘*Foie Gras*’, or the Japanese beef, the cattle used for which actually need acupuncture to prevent their muscles from atrophying, they are so cramped. Why?

Well, just look at the kind of people outside that restaurant and you will see immediately that it is a class war: the women are wearing those threadbare dungarees, and the manner in which they address passers-by could fairly certainly assure you that they could not have the *Foie Gras* in that restaurant even if they wanted to. And no, no impoverished aristocrat uses *quite* that language! Why does she not burn down the *Foie Gras* section of Tesco’s rather than a good restaurant? Because she likes to have a bit of cheap *Foie Gras* at Christmas; similarly, she would as soon drink a bottle of cheap white at Christmas as smash a Guiraud ’83 over a restaurant-goer’s head.

And so, this article coming to a somewhat premature end, we proceeded to the nearest other restaurant, where our first course included *Foie Gras* on Melba Toast. Most of us escaped with our lives.

Liberty...

Roraig Finney should be on major warning...

There is a universal observation that can be made about government and the law that functions as the central tenet of modern libertarian and conservative philosophy: that government cannot by its nature resist the circumscription of human choice. This is not always an unfortunate thing: government regulation can protect the citizen from malign interference, or from exploitation, and can safeguard nature against the excesses of industry. Certain government regulation is to a certain degree a precondition for liberty: one cannot be free if one lives in constant fear of violence for example. Unfortunately, it is the nature of government not to limit itself to enabling a free existence for its citizens: whether with generous purpose or ill, whether to raise up the pitiable masses or to enrich the few, the state inevitably grasps for greater control over its subjects.

This quality of government is no more evident than in its attitude towards the human pursuit of happiness: whether one chooses to pursue happiness through sex, alcohol, tobacco or drugs, one will inevitably come into conflict with the preferences of the state. While the reasons may differ, an essential impulse of government is to restrict avenues to immediate gratification. These restrictions, like others,

are not always a bad thing: the responsibility to drink and drive safely is essential not for one's own protection, but for the protection of others. However, the most common motivation of the state to protect the individual from himself: this only can explain the tendency towards criminalisation of drugs such as cannabis within the confines of the home, where the only harm they can cause is to the individual who chooses to utilise them. The criminalisation of marijuana is one of the two most foolish and unjustifiable restrictions on freedom that society faces worldwide, along with the criminalisation of prostitution.

That cannabis is far more carcinogenic than tobacco is true, as is the fact that stronger variants may cause schizophrenia, but while one may sympathise with the impulse to prevent the individual from undertaking a course of self-destruction, the manifest right to advance oneself must surely be paired with the right to destroy oneself. Liberty does not merely consist of the right to pursue happiness, but of the right to lead oneself into unhappiness: the most necessary responsibility of government is not to restrict human choice, but to inform it. The state should ensure, as it does with tobacco, that the dangers of

...and Legalisation

cannabis are universally acknowledged, and then allow people to make their choice. Such a legislative decision would not only recognise an essential liberty, but provide another source of tax to compensate for any burden on the health service, and take another source of income out of the hands of the omnipresent criminal suppliers who presently monopolise the market.

While with marijuana one is presented with a case of comparative ease to argue with regards to legalisation, with harder drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, one finds a case of remarkably destructive products: while one can develop a destructive relationship with cannabis, it is of similar severity to one with alcohol or tobacco, well within the range of free choice; with heroin and cocaine one finds a far more serious chemical addiction, which is inevitably accompanied by destructive behaviour towards others. The fact that is of paramount importance, and which condemns hard drugs to illegality, is that while a relationship with these substances may originate in an exercise of free will, they will inevitably act to confiscate that free will, and to enslave and exploit their victims, and expose them to exploitation by others; while this happens anyway, it must be opposed

in every way that is open to society and to the state.

When one turns to an issue of such unpleasantness as prostitution, it is natural to react with disgust at the prevalence of such a trade: the visceral dislike one may take to prostitution lies both in the seamy, exploitative reality of the trade, and in the theoretical obscenity of the commodification of the human body. The case for legalisation operates along similar lines: the inevitability of the world's oldest profession and the right to free sexual expression. The reality is that the sex trade is inevitable: it is not inevitable that it should be horrific. A massive operation in human trafficking, modern slavery, takes place in the current climate of illegality: women and children are kidnapped and forced into degradation and poverty. This element of prostitution could be challenged by licensing and registration of brothels and prostitutes. This would not eliminate the problem, but might alleviate the present suffering of thousands. As for the theoretical case, it has always been the case that human sexuality has been dominated by the notion of control to some degree: however unpleasant, we surely have the right to choose what lives we lead and what conditions we set on our own sexuality.

The Local...

Bon Nicholson still can't vote...

Election results are delayed for the fourth time. A desperate leader with no mandate to rule frantically tries to re-assert authority over his country and escape disastrous election results. Zimbabwe? No, I'm talking about Britain.

I write this as I hear that the results for London mayor have been delayed for the third or fourth time. Ken Livingstone is blaming racism and the inefficiency of the routemaster. Turns out his ploy of fathering sufficient children to win the election outright isn't going to pay off since they're not old enough to vote yet (there's one bad policy that the conservatives stole). Brian Paddick limps on in a distant third, not too far ahead of the green party hippie (transport solution? More VW camper vans for all) and the BNP candidate, who has had to fight off allegations that an "art" film he was involved in at University was poorly disguised gay porn.

In the oxymoronic national local elections we have seen a stunning backlash against Labour since it emerges that poor families need money to eat and doubling their tax to pay for Iraq, NHS computers, crossrail, tax cuts for the rich but

not the post offices is not a good electoral strategy. Labour are haemorrhaging councillors to the Tories, while plaid Cymru are seizing Welsh heartlands. Meanwhile Gordon Brown's approval rating is lower than Neville Chamberlain's was when Germany invaded Norway and they, in terms of voter share, are now officially the third largest party in the country. The Lib Dems are glorying in their one percentage point voter lead over Labour, which officially makes them the country's whingeing lefties.

We are seeing the final victory of the Blairite-Cameronian-Cleggist breed of politician over the opaque, dour leader of yesterday. Some have seen Cameron's marketing of his family on the WebCameron blog or Clegg's admissions of sexual promiscuity as unnecessary and overly open, but this kind of honesty regarding personal lives is appealing to voters who feel that they can't trust U-turn Brown.

In truth it would be hard for Brown to show a video of his own family having breakfast since he probably wouldn't appeal as a Father. "Daddy, can I have a bike?" "I wish to first make clear that thanks

...Elections

to my system of tax credits we have got millions of children out of poverty, and onto bikes, and we have seen bike sales rise where they were at a 20% low under the last conservative government.” “Please?” “Go to your room for 42 days.”

The local elections are showing us the turning point of the Brown premiership. A few weeks ago he was an unloved but dominating leader, but he is now at the mercy of backbench rebels. He faces a serious challenge to his leadership, led by the hardline leftists such as Meacher, but given momentum by Charles Clarke. Clarke wants to be leader, but in all likelihood if Brown does lose power it will be to Jack Straw, the long-lasting mellow-voiced front bencher.

The path ahead for Labour seems fairly clear. Lose election, bring in Milliband, win election. David Milliband will, without a doubt, be Labour's messiah in the coming years. Almost a Clone of Blair, only with more front bench experience, the only tragedy is that Brown has kept almost the only member of his Cabinet who does not come under the headings of “yes man” or “crap” in such an iso-

lated post as foreign minister. Milliband, along with Straw, is outspoken and intelligent. This is in stark contrast to Ed Balls, minister for children, families etc., who looks set to fall with Brown, by virtue of being both a committed Brownite and having all the political nous of a deer in headlights.

The future may not be that bright for Labour, particularly if they delay the arrival of Milliband, or, heaven forbid, don't elect him at all. He may not be perfect, but he is the only high-level labour politician at the moment that can be said to conform to the new school of leader in the Blair mould. He would also be able to trump all the nepotistic MPs who went before him by employing his brother in the Cabinet (eat that Derek Conway).

The conservatives may have made huge gains in local elections, but each of their new councils are going to become miniature proving grounds for the conservative leadership. It's up to David Cameron to show that he is capable of helping people directly, and not just of skewering Brown at PMQs. And for the Lib Dems it'll just be the same as always. Nobody will care.

The New...

Pete Fuller and James Gheerbrant could do better...

On Wednesday night, the England football team's hopes of competing in Euro 2008 slipped through their fingers. Quite literally, in Scott Carson's case. Steve McClaren was sacked from the managerial post; surely the FA will not repeat the mistake they made last time of appointing a joke candidate? It is to prevent this that we have compiled a shortlist of the most suitable contenders.

First on the list has to be the enigmatic, charismatic Steve Coppell. He is, in so many senses, an absolutely outstanding applicant. He would bring bucket-loads of energy to the job, and his suave television persona and flowing golden locks would certainly endear him to the female supporters. On the other hand, the FA may be reluctant to appoint such a controversial character, and, on reflection, perhaps he is more suited to a career in IT consultancy.

So maybe we should think a little more outside the box to find the best man for the job. How about Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police commissioner? To be fair, he is the one Englishman with a decent track record in dealing with fleet-footed Brazilians. In addition to this, his squads are renowned throughout the world for their sharp-shooting. Many

have suggested that an uncompromising attitude is called for, and Blair, were he to get the job, would undoubtedly take no prisoners. In the dugout, Blair is the perfect candidate; but it is at the post-match press conference that things would begin to go awry. His tendency to lie to the media, coupled with his proclivity for hanging, limpet-like, to positions in which he is no longer welcome might persuade the powers that be to scrap his nomination.

In that case, perhaps a foreign candidate is required – someone who would have assured victory in Tel Aviv: Adolf Hitler. Surely he has the final solution to England's problems. He has a reputation for always getting what he wants, and – unlike Blair – would certainly bow out honourably if he was defeated in Europe. But defeat in Europe is a distinct possibility: his track record against the Russians leaves much to be desired. Appointing coaching staff may be problematic; Hitler tends to treat his subordinates with less kindness than they might wish for. It's also doubtful that Adolf would be willing to make the journey to South Africa for the 2010 World Cup...

Perhaps then we should look even further afield. Who could possi-

...England Manager

bly be more suited to showing our players the light and bringing them to international salvation than the big man himself – God. Certainly, he has had ample experience in man management, having reigned over the universe since the beginning of time. After his dealings with Jesus, keeping over-inflated egos in check in the dressing room should not be a problem either. Downsides? Well, quite frankly, at infinity years old, he's over the proverbial hill, and his agent has stressed that God has other, more pressing, commitments. FA insiders also tell us that not everyone within the association has faith in Him.

So then, our final candidate. It is someone who has a very strict disciplinary record, and certainly wouldn't allow any England players to stay up too late and ruin her dinner. She is also sure to *inject* some passion into this tired, demoralised England setup. As for the media, the downfall of so many of our other candidates, she is an extremely shrewd operator, but she does have a reputation for murderous training sessions. Kate McCann would be an ideal choice for the role, although she may wish – like Phil Scolari – to stay with her family in Portugal.

Best of...

COMMENT OF THE WEEK

Guy Francis (HoH(H)): “I inspect all the cracks in the house”

GEM: “Let the slag do the work”

GE: “I’ll bugger you some day, lad”

James Duerden to SKW: “Can we have it off now, sir?”

Rev. White: “It’s no good unless I can probe a cat”

Rev. White: “I’m giving up raunchy sex for Lent”

Was Jerusalem...

Joe Beecham doesn't have a visa...

Upon landing in England's green and pleasant fields (Heathrow International Airport), you are greeted first by miserable weather, and then by an announcement from the captain explaining that the airport ground crews are on strike, so there will be a 40 minute delay in opening the plane door. Once the ground crew are enticed back to work (a 3.5% plus inflation pay rise), you are greeted by temperature which is either Amazonian or Antarctic, due to the inability of the climate controls to produce a value between 1 and 50 degrees Celsius. Once you have walked the five miles to immigration (because the walkways haven't worked since 1998), you will encounter an immigration official. This person will reply to your "Good Morning" with an "Ug" and will automatically assume that you are a Colombian drug mule/Russian spy/hard-line Islamic fanatic trying to claim asylum, even if you are a British passport holder.

If you manage to get past immigration, you will be greeted by several conveyer belts, one of which does work but emits smoke

at regular intervals. If you get your bag on the day you arrive, you will be more fortunate than the eight other people on your flight who don't get their bags within 24 hours, and the three who will never see their luggage again. You then exit the airport and decide to take a taxi to your hotel in London. Unfortunately, as the taxi driver will refuse to talk to you unless the red light in the taxi is off, it will be several hours before you reach your destination. And when you do, you'll have a heart attack at the extortionate price he (or she) will try to charge you.

You'll finally arrive at your hotel, and as you check in, you'll have to say your name about five times, because the receptionist is from Slovakia, doesn't understand British names, and is willing to work minimum wage. The reason she can find work in Britain is because the young native British think that just because they have a second class degree in media studies from Luton University they are entitled to a £27k and benefits package in any job they want. Later on, a very nice Polish man will

...Buildded Here?

carry your bags to the wrong room (twice) and thank you profusely for a piteously small tip (try 40p).

Since you no longer wish to take the taxi around London, you decide to take public transport. You decide to take the bus. Since oyster cards were introduced, bus drivers are allowed to be innumerate, and so you'll have to work out your fare for yourself. Unlike the buses in most other European cities, you will not have a computer announcing each stop in various languages, so the chances are that you'll get off at the wrong stop. After wondering around completely lost somewhere around Big Ben, you walk into a Tourist Information Centre. The building itself is very well stocked with fair-trade, triple recycled leaflets. However, the ogre behind the counter is quite a different matter. Usually a single, bored, rapidly-approaching-middle-age woman who never got over the cancellation of *Crossroads*, she will view all tourists with contempt. If you want directions, she will be more than happy than grunt in the direction of a selection of maps, but if you want anything

more complicated, she will give you a withering stare reminiscent of the kind of look that you sometimes see on police WANTED posters. She will show extreme disinterest in you or your problems and proceed to phone a horoscope hotline while she "deals with your request".

By the time you manage to get what you came for, it's dinner time, but because this is London, the waitress in the dimly-lit pseudo-chic restaurant forgets your order, and then some two hours later gives you the lactose-intolerant, low-fat, low-sugar, low-taste option. You walk back to your hotel starving, and making a mental resolution never to come to Britain again. No wonder then that record numbers of tourists are going to other parts of Europe, and Britain is losing billions in revenue. It is not surprising either that record numbers of Britons are emigrating overseas. You'd think that the 10th richest country in the world might be able to do something, or at least begin to improve our supposed "service" economy.

BBBBW⁷

Hugh Macfarlane still has insane banter...

After they combusted onto the British scrap-metal scene at a festival earlier this year, Cornish separatist metal quartet The Baby-Bayoneting Bastards of Bath and Wells are a blend of post-cubism and warehouse grunge which has gained popularity through their outrageous and risqué publicity stunts involving park railings. The band was formed after lead singer Olaf Deathssson dropped his new baby from a balcony onto iron railings while in Bath, and blamed the people of that city on the grounds that 'we don't have anything as oppressive as iron railings, which are no more than spineless Imperial stooges, in Cornwall'.

BBBBW's debut album, 'This is What Conveniently Low Rafters were made for' is a fusion of 70s council House and Electroplated Metal. The first song, 'Slit my wrists and hope to die', sets the bar high for the rest of the album with its slow, gothic, thrusting bass and rhythmic, pulsating drum-bleeding that is guaranteed to have you trotting the finest damned fox of your life, and then gagging for more.

The album presses on without a moment's respite for the listener to 'Drink bleach, then we'll talk'. This album really lets the listener feel as if he is being swept along in an inexorable tide of metal-oxide angst, over which he has no control. In this way, indeed, it is reminiscent of the short destiny left to

the listener before he tops himself in despair at the futility of life.

Undoubtedly the highlight of this Heavy Metal *MagnumOpus* is the song 'Bugger, she found the Bodies in the shed where I keep my porn'. It contains the generation-defining lyric "...how much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood...death...suicide...silly haircuts...", which I found to be a delicious and poignant metaphor for our times. It left me quietly contemplating life as the pig-squeals of the quintessential death-metal guitar filled my bedsit.

One of the highlights of BBBBW's year was unoubtely their death-off against rival German band, Das Oxidation Techneek. It was here that they unveiled their new single, 'Dying is the Most fun a girl can have without taking her socks off' which was met by transports of delight and spontaneous suicides in the audience and rave reviews from music critics. However, grassroot BBBBW fans have denounced the band as a corporate 'sell-out', as their new single is of the Thermally-reduced Metal genre, as the band attempts to widen its fanbase. Listeners need not worry, however. Their Cornish zeal and healthy interest in razor blades still holds firm and I predict a Black, Black, Future for the Baby-Bayoneting Bastards of Bath and Wells.
