

thesocialistpostbag

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Although the press have focussed largely on the consternation that this has caused amongst backbench Conservatives, they have largely ignored one fact. The coalition has indeed introduced a substantial tax cut - choosing to annually lower the rate of corporation tax by 1% until 2014 (from 28% this year to 24% in April 2014). Of course the corporate press, out of touch with reality and the concerns of ordinary people, can't be expected to extrapolate a logical conclusion from this. What Danny Alexander should actually have said was: tax cuts for the rich and pay cuts for the rest. Now there's a catchy slogan for the campaign trail.

James Chisem
West Yorkshire

In crisis? Please try later

Recently, in a professional capacity, I was attempting to support a young man who had just been released from prison. He had no means of supporting himself and not a penny to his name. Although he had applied for benefits, we were assured that this would take several weeks to process. He was therefore desperately in need of emergency cash. The only means of getting any was to apply for a crisis loan via the DWP from the so-called 'social fund'. Despite countless attempts over three days to get through on the crisis loan telephone number, we failed on every occasion. A string of automated messages led to a final message which informed me that "all lines are busy, please call back later". Then the line went dead. The job centre refused to provide any support in getting through and there was absolutely nowhere else to go. People in crisis simply cannot wait until 'later'.

The unfortunate individual forlornly asked whether it was any wonder that people commit crimes in the face of these obstacles. He concluded that he may as well go back to prison as at least he would have food and support. Tragically, I could not fault his logic.

Bradley Chambers
West Yorkshire

As long as we pay...

I am very worried about all the cuts that are being made and already I think that the country is going back into recession. Unemployment is already rising and the Con-Dems have only been in about four months. I dread to think how many people will be unemployed by the end of the five years. My husband will be losing his job in about three weeks and quite honestly I don't know if he will ever be able to work again in this country. It's a shame we were coming out of recession and now the Con-Dems are rapidly throwing us back in. I am furious at their attitude, what they are actually saying is: "lose your homes and jobs but as long as we pay back the deficit it doesn't matter."

Margaret London

Not notable?

Danny Alexander, Liberal Democrat MP and chief secretary to the Treasury, certainly put the cat amongst the pigeons last week when he suggested in an interview with The Observer that the next five years would see no notable tax cuts.

Double fantasy

David Milliband should come with a health warning: might cause nausea. In an interview with the Evening Standard magazine he was asked who his hero was. He replied: "Robin Hood because he takes from the rich to give to the poor." Where was Dave's bow and arrow and pointy little hat when New Labour presided over 13 years of astronomical profits and wage restraint? Will he retire to the woods to prepare a raid on the super-rich's castles? Milliband is happy to posture and pretend that New New Labour will fight for working class people because, just like Robin Hood, he knows it's a fantasy.

James Kerr
Lewisham Socialist Party



Clean cricket

The world's sports media seem almost naively surprised at the allegations that some Pakistan test cricketers may have taken bribes from betting syndicates. Cricket, like any other professional sport, is run as a business and where there's money, fraud and dishonesty aren't far behind. In the past betting scams would have involved bribing players to fix the result; now we have betting on when or whether particular incidents take place.

Even if any guilty parties are banned from professional cricket for life the betting syndicates won't go away. There will be new players prepared to do the same. As long as we have capitalism we will have greed. The only way to really clean up sport is to clean up the society that it's part of.

Clive Walder
Birmingham Socialist Party

Review

The Third Man

by Peter Mandelson

NEW LABOUR politician Peter Mandelson's tome has now been overshadowed by the deluge of publicity received by his soul mate Tony Blair. Nevertheless, a review of *The Third Man* can provide an insight into the methods of the capitalists in their constant mission to disarm the working class.

Tony Mulhearn
Former 'Liverpool 47' Labour councillor

The purpose of this review is not to repeat the dross about personal rivalry which has been a feature of New Labour for a decade, but to analyse how Mandelson, a declared lover of the free market, a friend of the oligarchs, a foe of the trade unions, a drooling seeker of celebrities, and an implacable enemy of socialism, penetrated the very heart and took control of a party which generations of working class activists had spent over 100 years building into a mass organisation.

The self-centred character of the author is striking. The language is vacuous and obsessed with personality. Advising Gordon Brown that "If you look better on the outside, people will feel you're more in control of things" is typical of the empty phrases which pepper the book.

Delighting in name-dropping he relates how: "I had received a phone call from Matthew Freud, the PR supremo married to Rupert Murdoch's daughter Elisabeth. She had been one of my key advisors during my challenging stewardship of the Millennium Dome, and had become a good friend. Matthew wanted me to join them in Corfu for his daughter's birthday which was being organised at the house there of my friends Jacob and Serena Rothschild."

He enters the Greek taverna where the event was organised when Sun editor Rebekah Wade and Tory George Osborne competed for his company. "I planted myself next to George (Osborne) as he seemed to be the most insistent."

Mandelson worked for the Weekend World television programme with a political brief, before becoming Labour Party director of campaigns and communications in 1985.

He declares that Labour's policies in the early eighties were "hopelessly extreme" and how he, therefore, tailored Labour's policies to ensure the approval of the press barons.

In a parody of Stalinism, he established a "Shadow Communications Agency" which took decisions, not only on presentation, but the actual development of party policy.

The extent of his influence is summed up: "I was their [the me-



Peter Mandelson wears a prize for his role in the New Labour project.

dia's] one-man, one-stop source, for what Labour was doing, thinking and saying."

His hostility to the unions is encapsulated by his stance during the Wapping dispute when Murdoch broke the print unions. Labour's national executive committee banned the Murdoch press. Mandelson circumvented this by asking Murdoch's hacks to leave the official press conferences, while briefing them in private later.

Discussion on the NEC is dismissed as "ideological bickering". Tellingly, he quotes John Smith's assessment of Kinnock as being a formidable "infighter in dismembering Militant, but that was about it." Mandelson avers that Kinnock would "end up by being both the hero and the fall guy of history."

Three musketeers

MANDELSON'S OWN objectives are unambiguous. On entering parliament he immediately teamed up with Blair and Brown, dubbing the trio the "three musketeers".

"My aim was," he writes, "alongside Gordon and Tony... to complete the work Neil had begun to bring a genuinely modernised Labour Party back into government." Again: "Almost by default Philip (Gould), Gordon, Tony and I began laying the foundations for a new Labour Party virtually on our own. It was exhilarating."

The key element in creating such a party was found when John Smith died. A feverish debate in the media about the qualities of the two front runners, Blair and Brown, ensued.

Brown attracted substantial support, but the media pack smelt

blood. Brown, although right wing and a free marketeer, was seen as a product of old Scottish Labour. They recognised that Blair, like a confidence trickster with a permanent grin and engaging personality, had the qualities to sell New Labour to the electorate.

With the Tories mired in sleaze, leaderless and with support melting away, the capitalists needed a safe Labour Party to replace them. The 'Blair for leader' ball was set rolling by Alastair Campbell, key mouthpiece for New Labour. When asked on Newsnight whom he thought should be the next Labour leader he immediately answered 'Tony Blair'. The bulk of the press took up the cry. Thus the ruling class, through its placemen, installed Tony Blair as the leader of New Labour.

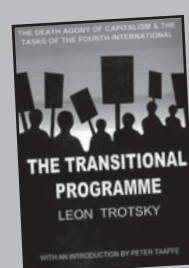
The miners and the Liverpool 47 council were defeated, the command economies had collapsed, and the leadership of the labour movement succumbed to the notion that class collaboration was the order of the day and in the rush to 'modernise' they aped the antics of the Gadarene swine.

Mandelson's capitalist outlook meshed with the pessimism of the trade union and labour leadership. Thus they embraced New Labour which saw the support from Labour's traditional base melting away.

Robert Harris's book *The Ghost* is based on a Blair-like character who was sent into the Labour Party by the CIA with the brief to turn it into an agency of US foreign policy. This is unlikely. But the success of the Mandelson project would suggest that such a notion is not too great an exaggeration.

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