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05/29/05 12:40 PM**Interview with British MP George Galloway** [Post [293658376](#)]**Category:** News & Opinion (General) **Topic:** International Affairs**Synopsis:** MP Galloway delivers another broadside against two ships of state!**Source:** [CommonDreams.org](#)**Published:** May 28, 2005 **Author:** Thom Hartmann**For Education and Discussion Only. Not for Commercial Use.**

Interview by Thom Hartmann

[Thom Hartmann] George Galloway!

[Thom Hartmann] Thom Hartmann here with you on AM 620 KPOJ in Portland and we're also going to record this and play it on our national program. Thanks so much, Mr. Galloway for being with us today.

[George Galloway] You're most welcome.

[Thom Hartmann] First of all, my apologies if I have your title wrong. I'm calling you mister. Is that how?

[George Galloway] Mister, mister's more than adequate.

[Thom Hartmann] OK. I'm wondering, what is your opinion on the legality of Guantanamo Bay and what do you think of the construction of a death chamber there, which was reported by the BBC yesterday?

[George Galloway] Well, it's an utterly illegal process which is being followed. People are being taken, in some cases from third countries. One of the British citizens, for example, was taken from the Gambia. Others have been taken from Pakistan. Others still from, from Afghanistan. They're taken by force, drugs forcibly injected into them, hooded, chained, and taken to a cage in the tropics where by all accounts they're being kept in conditions that you wouldn't keep a dog in in your country or mine. And if you did, you'd be, you'd be had up for cruelty by the authorities.

And then there's very clear evidence of systematic torture. There's the desecration of the Koran which may or may not have happened, depending on which edition of Newsweek you are prepared to believe. This is a big scar on the face of the United States. And it seems to me that too few citizens of the United States have fastened on to the fact that the protestations by your president and your government of being interested in human rights and democracy and freedom are quite negated by the very existence of Guantanamo Bay.

But of course, that's not the end of it. Bagram Air Base is exactly the same kind of place. Abu Ghraib prison, well we perhaps, on a family show, shouldn't probe too deeply into the disgusting obscenities that were going on there. And, it turns out, that where the United States itself is not prepared to physically torture people, it merely subcontracts out the task; sending people to the likes of Uzbekistan and

Egypt and other prison states where less squeamish governments will torture people for the United States and give the U.S. the testimony they get as a result. Which, of course, it goes without saying, is almost never of any use because anyone will say anything under torture.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah.

[George Galloway] And all sorts of wild goose chases are no doubt embarked upon as a result of all this. So I'm afraid Guantanamo is a blot on the landscape and the fact that the United States occupies it in Cuba without Cuba's agreement is just the icing on the cake.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah. George Galloway, Member of Parliament in the, in Great Britain, of the House of Commons. Why do you believe that Tony Blair decided to join president Bush in waging war when, as has recently emerged with this Downing Street memo, he knew that the case was flimsy, and do you think that either Blair or Bush or people in their administration should be prosecuted on any, on any level for this activity?

[George Galloway] Well, first of all I am sure that they will not be prosecuted, because it is only losers that are prosecuted. In the international system that we have there's no chance of the likes of Henry Kissinger, for example, the greatest living war criminal in the world today with the blood of millions of people in Vietnam and Cambodia and Laos and Chile and East Timor or in many other places on his hands. He will never appear in a court or be behind bars. That's for the tin pot tyrants, the tiny tyrants like Milosevic; they get sent there. The big tyrants never face justice.

I wish I knew the answer to your first question, why did Tony Blair join it? Certainly, it's been utterly ruinous to his political reputation. He will, he will be followed into the history books and into the grave with this mark of Cain on his forehead. He will be remembered for nothing other than that he followed George W. Bush over a cliff; took the rest of us with them, and we haven't yet reached the bottom, I'm afraid. All I can say from my own conversations with Mr. Blair, man to man, are that I think that both him and George W. Bush are possessed of a kind of messianic belief that somebody, God perhaps, gave them the job of shouldering the white man's burden, which is the world. That someone gave them the right to step outside of international law; go anywhere, do anything, pay any price in other people's blood, to reshape the world in their image; in the image that they want to see. And I think that both men will be damned in history. Both men have made their respective countries the two most hated countries in the world. They have endangered the lives and safety of our citizens. They have damaged our economic and cultural and social interests, and they should face prosecution, but never will.

[Thom Hartmann] Mr. Galloway, you called for a police inquiry into ballot fraud and ghost voting in Bethnal Green and Bow. In America, now, we just have this, just recently released, Congressman John Conyers went to Ohio and held hearings, 13 or 12 members of Congress, several weeks of hearings under oath, and determined that there was considerable election fraud in this last election where George Bush became president. And of course we know now that, in fact it was first reported on the BBC - Americans didn't know it but, but folks in the UK knew - within weeks of the 2000 election, that George Bush's brother Jeb and Kathleen Harris in Florida had conspired to remove the names of thousands of legally registered, tens of thousands of legally registered African Americans - largely Democratic voters - from the rolls there in Florida. What do you think is the solution to making elections, both in the United States and the United Kingdom, and around the world for that matter, open, fair and accurate?

[George Galloway] Well, you know, we're used to sending observers to third world countries and former banana republics to observe their elections. But the British election recently, and your election just a little more distantly, and the one in 2000 for that matter, really, if they had been observed by third world observers would have been declared bogus and deeply flawed.

Your president stole the presidency in Florida using his brother and his brother's close friends to cheat the people of the United States out of their freely elected president who was undoubtedly Al Gore. Even if you only counted the votes that actually made it through the hoops in order to be cast, the president was really Al Gore. And in Ohio, and I've read the stuff that Congressman Conyers is doing and I commend it, it's clear enough on the face of it that there was substantial fraud in that state and thus delivering the Electoral College vote for president Bush.

In our country, the government have vastly inflated the number of people voting by post which, as the courts have found, is wide open to electoral fraud, and electoral fraud there has been. I don't need to deal with the allegations, which are in their thousands. I can just deal with the cases that have already been dealt with. Six new Labour councillors were struck off and thrown out of the council in Birmingham, which is Britain's second city, having been caught red-handed in a room around a table at the dead of night, at midnight, with thousands, and I mean thousands, of other people's ballot papers that they were happily filling in, and they are now facing criminal prosecution as a result. Another new Labour councillor in the town of Blackburn, where the Foreign Secretary Jack Straw represents, and he was a close associate of Jack Straw, and he was a 65 or 67 year old man, has just been sent to prison for three and a half years for having been caught red-handed doing exactly the same thing.

When you add the thousands of allegations that there now are of voter fraud in the last election then I've called for the police to move in en masse, because we are heading down the road towards a kind of corruption that we never thought we'd see. Perhaps it's an innate sense of democratic superiority on our part. We use to think that that kind of ballot-rigging and voter fraud was something that happened in other countries, not in the mother of democracies, Great Britain.

[Thom Hartmann] Now this was a vote by mail problems that you had in the UK. Here in Oregon, we have the only vote by mail system in the state and I think we always thought that it was impregnable. It was, it was immune to this sort of thing.

[George Galloway] Well, yours may be, yours may be. Ours is very far from that. And when the electoral rolls are in the state that they are in... In my own constituency, for example, there were no less than 14 voters registered in one flat in Brick Lane, which is a heavily Asian, Bengali area, a Bangladeshi area in my constituency, and when we went there, not only were there not 14 voters living there, which would have been odd in any case given the size of the apartments, but there were no voters living there. Indeed, there was no one living there, it was utterly derelict. Now, somebody registered them and many hundreds, maybe even thousands of others for votes that they would cast by post who simply didn't exist. And of course, the scam is that someone picks up the ballot papers when they are posted out by the authority, fills them in and returns them.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah. George Galloway, Member of Parliament, Member of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. What lessons have you learned, if I can change the topic just for a moment to economics, and then if you have another moment,

[George Galloway] Of course.

[Thom Hartmann] I'd like to get back to the loss of freedoms in the wake of 9/11, but I'm curious about privatization in the UK. It's all the rage in the United States. I was over there when you were privatizing your railroads, could you speak to the citizens of America about the dangers of privatization, please?

[George Galloway] Well, what a way to run a railroad! That's what most people in the country are saying now, and how's this for a turnaround? British Rail, which was owned by the state, which was a nationalized railway, was probably the least loved institution in the United Kingdom when Mrs. Thatcher privatized it. Now, fully 80% of the people of the country, 80, eight zero percent of the people of the country want the railways taken back into public ownership because they realize now that we're paying three times the subsidy to the private owners of the privatized railways that

we were paying to the nationalized railways and we've got a dirtier, more dangerous, and more expensive service as a result. It takes longer now to go from London to Birmingham on the train than it does to go from where I'm sitting in the House of Commons to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and it's only 110 miles from London to Birmingham. We've had a whole series of railway disasters caused by people cutting corners to save costs, to make more profits. We've had delays that would make your hair stand on end; people in the depths of winter being delayed 5, 7 hours on railway journeys, and we have rolling stock which has not improved since the public sector days. All that's happening is that we're giving huge state subsidies to private owners who are putting it in their pockets.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah.

[George Galloway] Now, we are the only country in the whole world that privatized our Air Traffic Control space; even the United States did not do that.

[Thom Hartmann] We're talking about it here.

[George Galloway] Yes, you're talking about it. Mr. Blair was ahead of you. He was ahead of Mrs. Thatcher, who wouldn't have dreamt of any such reckless measure. And we've now handed over control of our Air Traffic Control space to people whose primary responsibility, who's very legal and fiduciary duty is to use their investment to make a profit for their shareholders. That's got to be legally their first priority; to make a profit for their shareholders.

Now, just like an equally deadly privatization, though it doesn't sound like it, it might sound banal, when we privatized the cleaning services in hospitals, we immediately passed on to companies a duty not primarily to keep the hospitals clean, but primarily to make a profit for their shareholders. The result has been an explosion, a veritable explosion, in re-infection rates; so-called MRSA which is a kind of super bug mutant, which is actually killing 10,000 people a year in Britain. And there are many hospitals, including the one in my own constituency, miscalled the Royal London Hospital, though you'd never find a member of the royal family in it, I can assure you, where you're as likely to come out sick as you are to come out cured because of the state of the cleaning services in the hospitals. And that's directly linked to the privatization of that service.

So I say to the people of the United States that the rest of the world is falling out of love with privatization. Some things are too important to be left to the private sector. And just as some things are too important or specialized to be left to the public sector, nobody's saying that every cafe or fish and chip shop on the corner should be owned by the state - that would be absurd. But there are some things like Air Traffic Control, like national railway networks, like the cleaning of hospitals, like the teaching of our children in schools which are too important to be left to people who are doing it for profit.

[Thom Hartmann] Well said, and in fact, Senator Bill Frist, the fellow who's leading the United States Senate now, his family fortune was built on hospitals, previously public hospitals being made private, and we're seeing the consequences of that in the United States with exploding health care costs and other problems.

[George Galloway] Yes. Well we say here - it might be a little unfair - we say here that if you fall down in the United States, the ambulance man must feel for your wallet before he feels for your pulse.

[Thom Hartmann] Yes, and to some extent it actually is true. My last question for you is sort of a two part here. I know you have to get back to the work you're doing and I very much appreciate you spending your time with us, sir.

[George Galloway] You're welcome.

[Thom Hartmann] First of all, Senator Norman Coleman, whose committee you testified before and to whom you spoke the week before last, as I recall, or last week - recently. There are reports, which I've been unable to absolutely confirm, but

apparently, from the searches of the senate web site, it looks like your testimony has disappeared from the record.

[George Galloway] That's right.

[Thom Hartmann] Do you know about that, and what are your thoughts on that?

[George Galloway] It has been. It has been. It has been airbrushed from the, from the record. And in a way, if you saw the testimony, you'll know why. Because what I managed to do, and I thank God for the breath that he gave me to do it, was blow away the smokescreen that these people are trying to throw up to divert attention from the very real crimes, high crimes and misdemeanors that they themselves are responsible for. And I've had, and I'm not exaggerating this, more than 12,000 emails from the United States. 12,000 emails, and it's not easy in the United States to find out the email address of a British parliamentarian.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah.

[George Galloway] And these people have all written to me. Many of them have drawn attention to the fact that although for one day, just 24 hours, my testimony was on the web site it has now been wiped off it. And that tells you all you need to know, really, about the quality of the commitment to democracy and open government that these people really have as opposed to the talk that they talk.

[Thom Hartmann] Well, and finally, with regard to democracy, what do you see the problem with the new laws we're debating, enhancing actually the so-called Patriot Act here in the United States. I know you have these kinds of things going on in the UK, the curtailment of freedoms, the loss of liberties in the wake of 9/11. I'm assuming that you've probably seen the Power of Nightmares, the BBC documentary which nobody in the United States has seen. Do you think that these changes are necessary or useful? What's your, what's your opinion of this?

[George Galloway] Well I'm afraid I'm an advocate of the great Dr. Johnson, the English man of letters who said that patriotism was the last refuge of the scoundrel. He didn't mean, of course, the patriotism which is a noble, genuine love for what's best about your country and its beauty and its achievements and so on, but those who wrap themselves in flags and blow the tinny trumpet of patriotism as a means of fooling the people. As a means of getting them to fall in behind the colours and march off to ignoble wars; wars of conquest, wars of aggression, wars for exploitation.

And that's what I think this Patriot Act is all about. It's about fooling the American people into believing that if you just arm the state with enough fly swats you'll be able to whack away all the beasts that are coming your way. But the truth is, these mosquitoes are coming out of a swamp; a very real swamp of grievance, of bitterness and hatred at our injustice and at the policies that we are following. And unless we drain that swamp by reversing the policies of injustice that have germinated this threat then it doesn't matter how many Patriot Acts you pass, it doesn't matter how many fly swats you hand out, how many mosquito nets you wrap yourself in, you're not going to be able to stop them hurting us again.

[Thom Hartmann] Yeah. Well said. Mr. George Galloway, thank you so much for sharing your time with us today.

[George Galloway] You're welcome. Any time.

[Thom Hartmann] I do appreciate it. I truly appreciate it.

[George Galloway] Thanks.

[Thom Hartmann] Thank you very much for being here on the Thom Hartmann program.

[George Galloway] Bye

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Galloway fires again!

"No damn man kills me and lives." -- General Nathan Bedford Forrest, CSA

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