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Today						

Blair laid bare: the article that may get you arrested (**Update3: Demonstrator now held a gunpoint!**)

By: Henry Porter/rikki on: 19.09.2006 [18:15] (8522 reads)



In the guise of fighting terrorism and maintaining public order, Tony Blair's Government has quietly and systematically taken power from Parliament and the British people.

The author charts a nine-year assault on civil liberties that reveals the danger of trading freedom for security - and must have Churchill spinning in his grave.

http://www.independent.co.uk/multimedia/archive/00169/p1-29_06_06_169624a.jpg

Published 29th June
Front Page: The Independent

The original arrest for holding a placard quoting George Orwell was reported last week by rikki, and brought to this website:

<http://www.iraq-war.ru/article/92251>

Now, the protestor has actually been forced to attend court, and charged. See article below...

Update: at the Sunday demonstration following this article, a demonstrator was threatened with arrest "for having a copy of The Independent"

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article1152047.ece>

Update2: After more than two months and a number of further arrests, these heroic demonstrators are STILL returning

Update3: But after several days of more sensitive policing, the hammer comes down again

(39838 bytes) [c]

Police charged the anti-war protester Steve Jago yesterday under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005.

His alleged crime?? To be in Whitehall last month with a placard quoting George Orwell and armed with several copies of an article from the magazine Vanity Fair entitled 'Blair's Big Brother Legacy'.

It was to prove a prophetic headline. Officers seized the article and said its content was evidence that Mr Jago wanted to break the law.

So is it really seditious? And are our freedoms under attack from a thoughts police empowered by new laws.

Read the Independent article about the SOCPA law in full. The first part is background, if you need it, and Steven Jago's "case" comes up near the end:

Sometimes the police move in and arrest the picnickers, but on this occasion the officers stood at a distance, presumably consulting on the question of whether this was a demonstration or a non-demonstration. It is all rather silly and yet in Blair's Britain there is a kind of nobility in the amateurishness and persistence of the gesture.

This collection of oddballs, looking for all the world as if they had stepped out of the Michelangelo Antonioni film Blow-Up, are challenging a new law which says that no one may demonstrate within a kilometre, or a little more than half a mile, of Parliament Square if they have not first acquired written permission from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. This effectively places the entire centre of British government, Whitehall and Trafalgar Square, off-limits to the protesters and marchers who have traditionally brought their grievances to those in power without ever having to ask a policeman's permission.

The non-demo demo, or tea party, is a legalistic response to the law. If anything is written on the

placards, or if someone makes a speech, then she or she is immediately deemed to be in breach of the law and is arrested. The device doesn't always work. After drinking tea in the square, a man named Mark Barrett was recently convicted of demonstrating. Two other protesters, Milan Rai and Maya Evans, were charged after reading out the names of dead Iraqi civilians at the Cenotaph, Britain's national war memorial, in Whitehall, a few hundred yards away.

On that dank spring afternoon I looked up at Churchill and reflected that he almost certainly would have approved of these people insisting on their right to demonstrate in front of his beloved Parliament. "If you will not fight for the right," he once growled, "when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not so costly, you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance for survival. There may be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no chance of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves."

Churchill lived in far more testing times than ours, but he always revered the ancient tradition of Britain's "unwritten constitution". I imagined him becoming flesh again and walking purposefully toward Downing Street - without security, of course - there to address Tony Blair and his aides on their sacred duty as the guardians of Britain's Parliament and the people's rights.

For Blair, that youthful baby-boomer who came to power nine years ago as the embodiment of democratic liberalism as well as the new spirit of optimism in Britain, turns out to have an authoritarian streak that respects neither those rights nor, it seems, the independence of the elected representatives in Parliament. And what is remarkable - in fact almost a historic phenomenon - is the harm his government has done to the unwritten British constitution in those nine years, without anyone really noticing, without the press objecting or the public mounting mass protests. At the inception of Cool Britannia, British democracy became subject to a silent takeover.

Last year - rather late in the day, I must admit - I started to notice trends in Blair's legislation which seemed to attack individual rights and freedoms, to favour ministers (politicians appointed by the Prime Minister to run departments of government) over the scrutiny of Parliament, and to put in place all the necessary laws for total surveillance of society.

There was nothing else to do but to go back and read the Acts - at least 15 of them - and to write about them in my weekly column in The Observer. After about eight weeks, the Prime Minister privately let it be known that he was displeased at being called authoritarian by me. Very soon I found myself in the odd position of conducting a formal e-mail exchange with him on the rule of law, I sitting in my London home with nothing but Google and a stack of legislation, the Prime Minister in No 10 with all the resources of government at his disposal. Incidentally, I was assured that he had taken time out of his schedule so that he himself could compose the thunderous responses calling for action against terrorism, crime, and antisocial behaviour.

The day after the exchange was published, the grudging truce between the Government and me was broken. Blair gave a press conference, in which he attacked media exaggeration, and the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, weighed in with a speech at the London School of Economics naming me and two other journalists and complaining about "the pernicious and even dangerous poison" in the media.

So, I guess this column comes with a health warning from the British Government, but please don't pay it any mind. When governments attack the media, it is often a sign that the media have for once gotten something right. I might add that this column also comes with the more serious warning that, if rights have been eroded in the land once called "the Mother of Parliaments", it can happen in any country where a government actively promotes the fear of terrorism and crime and uses it to persuade people that they must exchange their freedom for security.

Blair's campaign against rights contained in the Rule of Law - that is, that ancient amalgam of common law, convention, and the opinion of experts, which makes up one half of the British constitution - is often well concealed. Many of the measures have been slipped through under legislation that appears to address problems the public is concerned about. For instance, the law banning people from demonstrating within one kilometre of Parliament is contained in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act of 2005. The right to protest freely has been affected by the Terrorism Act of 2000, which allows police to stop and search people in a designated area - which can be anywhere - and by antisocial behaviour laws, which allow police to issue an order banning someone from a particular activity, waving a banner, for instance. If a person breaks that order, he or she risks a prison sentence of up to five years. Likewise, the Protection from Harassment Act of 1997 - designed to combat stalkers and campaigns of intimidation - is being used to control protest. A woman who sent two e-mails to a pharmaceutical company politely asking a member of the staff not to work with a company that did testing on animals was prosecuted for "repeated conduct" in sending an e-mail twice, which the Act defines as harassment.

There is a demonic versatility to Blair's laws. Kenneth Clarke, a former Conservative chancellor of the exchequer and home secretary, despairs at the way they are being used. "What is assured as being harmless when it is introduced gets used more and more in a way which is sometimes alarming," he says. His colleague David Davis, the shadow Home Secretary, is astonished by Blair's Labour Party: "If I had gone on the radio 15 years ago and said that a Labour government would limit your right to trial by jury, would limit - in some cases eradicate - habeas corpus, constrain your right of freedom of speech, they would have locked me up."

Indeed they would. But there's more, so much in fact that it is difficult to grasp the scope of the campaign against British freedoms. But here goes. The right to a jury trial is removed in complicated

fraud cases and where there is a fear of jury tampering. The right not to be tried twice for the same offence - the law of double jeopardy - no longer exists. The presumption of innocence is compromised, especially in antisocial behaviour legislation, which also makes hearsay admissible as evidence. The right not to be punished unless a court decides that the law has been broken is removed in the system of control orders by which a terrorist suspect is prevented from moving about freely and using the phone and internet, without at any stage being allowed to hear the evidence against him - house arrest in all but name.

Freedom of speech is attacked by Section Five of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which preceded Blair's Government, but which is now being used to patrol opinion. In Oxford last year a 21-year-old graduate of Balliol College named Sam Brown drunkenly shouted in the direction of two mounted police officers, "Mate, you know your horse is gay. I hope you don't have a problem with that." He was given one of the new, on-the-spot fines - £80 - which he refused to pay, with the result that he was taken to court. Some 10 months later the Crown Prosecution Service dropped its case that he had made homophobic remarks likely to cause disorder.

There are other people the police have investigated but failed to prosecute: the columnist Cristina Odone, who made a barely disparaging aside about Welsh people on TV (she referred to them as "little Welshies"); and the head of the Muslim Council of Great Britain, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, who said that homosexual practices were "not acceptable" and civil partnerships between gays were "harmful".

The remarks may be a little inappropriate, but I find myself regretting that my countrymen's opinions - their bloody-mindedness, their truculence in the face of authority, their love of insult and robust debate - are being edged out by this fussy, hairsplitting, second-guessing, politically correct state that Blair is trying to build with what he calls his "respect agenda".

Do these tiny cuts to British freedom amount to much more than a few people being told to be more considerate? Shami Chakrabarti, the petite whirlwind who runs Liberty believes that "the small measures of increasing ferocity add up over time to a society of a completely different flavour". That is exactly the phrase I was looking for. Britain is not a police state - the fact that Tony Blair felt it necessary to answer me by e-mail proves that - but it is becoming a very different place under his rule, and all sides of the House of Commons agree. The Liberal Democrats' spokesman on human rights and civil liberties, David Heath, is sceptical about Blair's use of the terrorist threat. "The age-old technique of any authoritarian or repressive government has always been to exaggerate the terrorist threat to justify their actions," he says. "I am not one to underestimate the threat of terrorism, but I think it has been used to justify measures which have no relevance to attacking terrorism effectively." And Bob Marshall-Andrews - a Labour MP who, like quite a number of others on Blair's side of the House of Commons, is deeply worried about the tone of government - says of his boss, "Underneath, there is an unstable authoritarianism which has seeped into the Labour Party."

Chakrabarti, who once worked as a lawyer in the Home Office, explains: "If you throw live frogs into a pan of boiling water, they will sensibly jump out and save themselves. If you put them in a pan of cold water and gently apply heat until the water boils they will lie in the pan and boil to death. It's like that." In Blair you see the champion frog boiler of modern times. He is also a lawyer who suffers acute impatience with the processes of the law. In one of his e-mails to me he painted a lurid - and often true - picture of the delinquency in some of Britain's poorer areas, as well as the helplessness of the victims. His response to the problem of societal breakdown was to invent a new category of restraint called the antisocial behaviour order, or Asbo.

"Please speak to the victims of this menace," he wrote. "They are people whose lives have been turned into a daily hell. Suppose they live next door to someone whose kids are out of control: who play their music loud until 2 am; who vilify anyone who asks them to stop; who are often into drugs or alcohol? Or visit a park where children can't play because of needles, used condoms, and hooligans hanging around.

"It is true that, in theory, each of these acts is a crime for which the police could prosecute. In practice, they don't. It would involve in each case a disproportionate amount of time, money and commitment for what would be, for any single act, a low-level sentence. Instead, they can now use an Asbo or a parenting order or other measures that attack not an offence but behaviour that causes harm and distress to people, and impose restrictions on the person doing it, breach of which would mean they go to prison."

How the Asbo works is that a complaint is lodged with a magistrates' court which names an individual or parent of a child who is said to be the source of antisocial behaviour. The actions which cause the trouble do not have to be illegal in themselves before an Asbo is granted and the court insists on the cessation of that behaviour - which may be nothing more than walking a dog, playing music, or shouting in the street. It is important to understand that the standards of evidence are much lower here than in a normal court hearing because hearsay - that is, rumour and gossip - is admissible. If a person is found to have broken an Asbo, he or she is liable to a maximum of five years in prison, regardless of whether the act is in itself illegal. So, in effect, the person is being punished for disobedience to the state.

Blair is untroubled by the precedent that this law might offer a real live despot, or by the fact that Asbos are being used to stifle legitimate protest, and indeed, in his exchange with me, he seemed to suggest that he was considering a kind of super-Asbo for more serious criminals to "harry, hassle and hound them until they give up or leave the country". It was significant that nowhere in this rant did he mention the process of law or a court.

He offers something new: not a police state but a controlled state, in which he seeks to alter radically

the political and philosophical context of the criminal-justice system. "I believe we require a profound rebalancing of the civil liberties debate," he said in a speech in May. "The issue is not whether we care about civil liberties but what that means in the early 21st century." He now wants legislation to limit powers of British courts to interpret the Human Rights Act. The Act, imported from the European Convention on Human Rights, was originally inspired by Winston Churchill, who had suggested it as a means to entrench certain rights in Europe after the war.

Blair says that this thinking springs from the instincts of his generation, which is "hard on behaviour and soft on lifestyle." Actually, I was born six weeks before Blair, 53 years ago, and I can categorically say that he does not speak for all my generation. But I agree with his other self-description, in which he claims to be a moderniser, because he tends to deny the importance of history and tradition, particularly when it comes to Parliament, whose powers of scrutiny have suffered dreadfully under his government.

There can be few duller documents than the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 or the Inquiries Act of 2005, which is perhaps just as well for the Government, for both vastly extend the arbitrary powers of ministers while making them less answerable to Parliament. The Civil Contingencies Act, for instance, allows a minister to declare a state of emergency in which assets can be seized without compensation, courts may be set up, assemblies may be banned, and people may be moved from, or held in, particular areas, all on the belief that an emergency might be about to occur. Only after seven days does Parliament get the chance to assess the situation. If the minister is wrong, or has acted in bad faith, he cannot be punished.

One response might be to look into his actions by holding a government investigation under the Inquiries Act, but then the minister may set its terms, suppress evidence, close the hearing to the public, and terminate it without explanation. Under this Act, the reports of government inquiries are presented to ministers, not, as they once were, to Parliament. This fits very well into a pattern where the executive branch demands more and more unfettered power, as does Charles Clarke's suggestion that the press should be subject to statutory regulation.

I realise that it would be testing your patience to go too deeply into the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill, which the Government has been trying to smuggle through Parliament this year, but let me just say that its original draft would have allowed ministers to make laws without reference to elected representatives.

Imagine the President of the United States trying to neuter the Congress in this manner, so flagrantly robbing it of its power. Yet until recently all this has occurred in Britain with barely a whisper of coverage in the British media.

Blair is the lowest he has ever been in the polls, but he is still energetically fighting off his rival, Gordon Brown, with a cabinet reshuffle and a stout defence of his record. In an e-mail to me, Blair denied that he was trying to abolish parliamentary democracy, then swiftly moved to say how out of touch the political and legal establishments were, which is perhaps the way that he justifies these actions to himself. It was striking how he got one of his own pieces of legislation wrong when discussing control orders - or house arrest - for terrorist suspects in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights, which is incorporated into British law under the Human Rights Act. "The point about the Human Rights Act," he declared, "is that it does allow the courts to strike down the act of our 'sovereign Parliament'." As Marcel Berlins, the legal columnist of *The Guardian*, remarked, "It does no such thing."

How can the Prime Minister get such a fundamentally important principle concerning human rights so utterly wrong, especially when it so exercised both sides of the House of Commons? The answer is that he is probably not a man for detail, but Charles Moore, the former editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, now a columnist and the official biographer of Margaret Thatcher, believes that New Labour contains strands of rather sinister political DNA.

"My theory is that the Blairites are Marxist in process, though not in ideology - well, actually it is more Leninist." It is true that several senior ministers had socialist periods. Charles Clarke, John Reid, recently anointed Home Secretary, and Jack Straw, the former foreign secretary, were all on the extreme left, if not self-declared Leninists. Moore's implication is that the sacred Blair project of modernising Britain has become a kind of ersatz ideology and that this is more important to Blair than any of the country's political or legal institutions. "He's very shallow," says Moore. "He's got a few things he wants to do and he rather impressively pursues them."

One of these is the national ID card scheme, opposition to which brings together such disparate figures as the Earl of Onslow, a Conservative peer of the realm; Commander George Churchill-Coleman, the famous head of New Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist unit during the worst years of IRA bombings; and Neil Tennant, one half of the hugely successful pop group Pet Shop Boys.

The idea of the ID card seems sensible in the age of terrorism, identity theft, and illegal immigration until you realise that the centralised database - the National Identity Register - will log and store details of every important action in a person's life. When the ID card is swiped as someone identifies himself at, say, a bank, hospital, pharmacy, or insurance company, those details are retained and may be inspected by, among others, the police, tax authorities, customs, and MI5, the domestic intelligence service. The system will locate and track the entire adult population. If you put it together with the national system of licence-plate-recognition cameras, which is about to go live on British highways and in town centres, and understand that the ID card, under a new regulation, will also carry details of a person's medical records, you realise that the state will be able to keep tabs on anyone it chooses and find out about the most private parts of a person's life.

Despite the cost of the ID card system - estimated by the Government as being about £5.8bn and by the London School of Economics as being between £10bn and £19bn - few think that it will attack the problems of terrorism and ID theft.

George Churchill-Coleman described it to me as an absolute waste of time. "You and I will carry them because we are upright citizens. But a terrorist isn't going to carry his own. He will be carrying yours."

Neil Tennant, a former Labour donor who has stopped giving money to and voting for Labour because of ID cards, says: "My specific fear is that we are going to create a society where a policeman stops me on the way to Waitrose on the King's Road and says, 'Can I see your identity card?' I don't see why I should have to do that." Tennant says he may leave the country if a compulsory ID card comes into force. "We can't live in a total-surveillance society," he adds. "It is to disrespect us."

Defending myself against claims of paranoia and the attacks of Labour's former home secretary, I have simply referred people to the statute book of British law, where the evidence of what I have been saying is there for all to see. But two other factors in this silent takeover are not so visible. The first is a profound change in the relationship between the individual and the state. Nothing demonstrates the sense of the state's entitlement over the average citizen more than the new laws that came in at the beginning of the year and allow anyone to be arrested for any crime - even dropping litter. And here's the crucial point. Once a person is arrested he or she may be fingerprinted and photographed by the police and have a DNA sample removed with an oral swab - by force if necessary. And this is before that person has been found guilty of any crime, whether it be dropping litter or shooting someone.

So much for the presumption of innocence, but there again we have no reason to be surprised. Last year, in his annual Labour Party conference speech, Blair said this: "The whole of our system starts from the proposition that its duty is to protect the innocent from being wrongly convicted. Don't misunderstand me. That must be the duty of any criminal justice system. But surely our primary duty should be to allow law-abiding people to live in safety. It means a complete change of thinking. It doesn't mean abandoning human rights. It means deciding whose come first." The point of human rights, as Churchill noted, is that they treat the innocent, the suspect, and the convict equally: "These are the symbols, in the treatment of crime and criminals, which mark and measure the stored-up strength of a nation, and are a sign and proof of the living virtue in it."

The DNA database is part of this presumption of guilt. Naturally the police support it, because it has obvious benefits in solving crimes, but it should be pointed out to any country considering the compulsory retention of the DNA of innocent people that in Britain 38 per cent of all black men are represented on the database, while just 10 percent of white men are. There will be an inbuilt racism in the system until - heaven forbid - we all have our DNA taken and recorded on our ID cards.

Baroness Kennedy, a lawyer and Labour peer, is one of the most vocal critics of Blair's new laws. In the annual James Cameron Memorial Lecture at the City University, London, in April she gave a devastating account of her own party's waywardness. She accused government ministers of seeing themselves as the embodiment of the state, rather than, as I would put it, the servants of the state.

"The common law is built on moral wisdom," she said, "grounded in the experience of ages, acknowledging that governments can abuse power and when a person is on trial the burden of proof must be on the state and no one's liberty should be removed without evidence of the highest standard. By removing trial by jury and seeking to detain people on civil Asbo orders as a pre-emptive strike, by introducing ID cards, the Government is creating new paradigms of state power. Being required to produce your papers to show who you are is a public manifestation of who is in control. What we seem to have forgotten is that the state is there courtesy of us and we are not here courtesy the state."

The second invisible change that has occurred in Britain is best expressed by Simon Davies, a fellow at the London School of Economics, who did pioneering work on the ID card scheme and then suffered a wounding onslaught from the Government when it did not agree with his findings. The worrying thing, he suggests, is that the instinctive sense of personal liberty has been lost in the British people. "We have reached that stage now where we have gone almost as far as it is possible to go in establishing the infrastructures of control and surveillance within an open and free environment," he says. "That architecture only has to work and the citizens only have to become compliant for the Government to have control.

"That compliance is what scares me the most. People are resigned to their fate. They've bought the Government's arguments for the public good. There is a generational failure of memory about individual rights. Whenever Government says that some intrusion is necessary in the public interest, an entire generation has no clue how to respond, not even intuitively. And that is the great lesson that other countries must learn. The US must never lose sight of its traditions of individual freedom."

Those who understand what has gone on in Britain have the sense of being in one of those nightmares where you are crying out to warn someone of impending danger, but they cannot hear you. And yet I do take some hope from the picnickers of Parliament Square. May the numbers of these young eccentrics swell and swell over the coming months, for their actions are a sign that the spirit of liberty and dogged defiance are not yet dead in Britain.

This article is taken from the current issue of Vanity Fair

Charged for quoting George Orwell in public

In another example of the Government's draconian stance on political protest, Steven Jago, 36, a management accountant, yesterday became the latest person to be charged under the Serious

Organised Crime and Police Act.

On 18 June, Mr Jago carried a placard in Whitehall bearing the George Orwell quote: **"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."** In his possession, he had several copies of an article in the American magazine Vanity Fair headlined "Blair's Big Brother Legacy", which were confiscated by the police. "The implication that I read from this statement at the time was that I was being accused of handing out subversive material," said Mr Jago. Yesterday, the author, Henry Porter, the magazine's London editor, wrote to Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, expressing concern that the freedom of the press would be severely curtailed if such articles were used in evidence under the Act.

Mr Porter said: "The police told Mr Jago this was 'politically motivated' material, and suggested it was evidence of his desire to break the law. I therefore seek your assurance that possession of Vanity Fair within a designated area is not regarded as 'politically motivated' and evidence of conscious law-breaking."

Scotland Yard has declined to comment.

Enemies of the state?

Maya Evans 25

The chef was arrested at the Cenotaph in Whitehall reading out the names of 97 British soldiers killed in Iraq. She was the first person to be convicted under section 132 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act, which requires protesters to obtain police permission before demonstrating within one kilometre of Parliament.

Helen John 68, and Sylvia Boyes 62

The Greenham Common veterans were arrested in April by Ministry of Defence police after walking 15ft across the sentry line at the US military base at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire. Protesters who breach any one of 10 military bases across Britain can be jailed for a year or fined £5,000.

Brian Haw 56

Mr Haw has become a fixture in Parliament Square with placards berating Tony Blair and President Bush. The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 was designed mainly with his vigil in mind. After being arrested, he refused to enter a plea. However, Bow Street magistrates' court entered a not guilty plea on his behalf in May.

Walter Wolfgang 82

The octogenarian heckled Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, during his speech to the Labour Party conference. He shouted "That's a lie" as Mr Straw justified keeping British troops in Iraq. He was manhandled by stewards and ejected from the Brighton Centre. He was briefly detained under Section 44 of the 2000 Terrorism Act.

<http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article1129827.ece>

"Thanks to Lambros"

Update on Sunday 1st July Demonstration

SOCPA woman's child threatened by police this afternoon
rikki | 03.07.2006 03:00 | Repression | Social Struggles | London

Inspector Hart from charing cross threatened a mother today that she would be arrested and that her seven-year-old daughter would be taken to the police station and handed over to social services. her crime? Singing outside Downing Street with a statement about bullying round her neck "and reading today's Independent".

mp4 format film (best viewed with free VLC player) - video/mp4 6.7M
<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/media/2006/07//344039.mp4>

wmv format film - video/x-ms-wmv 7.2M
<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/media/2006/07//344040.wmv>

This week's stop and search notification

On a sunny sunday afternoon, eleven police attended the scene when 'barbara tucker' (who HAS notified police of her ongoing demonstration) stood outside downing street with 'stephen jago' (who was front page news in 'the independent' newspaper this week for being arrested with copies of henry porter's 'vanity fair' civil rights article on him), and mother 'charity sweet', (who was also in 'the independent' after being stopped and searched for reading said newspaper outside downing street).

They sang some songs and steve had a banner with appropriate quotes written on it: **'to no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, justice or right' - magna carta**, and **'the only stable state is the one in which all men are equal before the law' - aristotle**. His banner also had 'the

independent' front page attached to it.

After being asked to move by the gate police, more and more police began to turn up, taking notes on the banner quotes, and discussing tactics for a long while. eventually, inspector hart arrived. and the by now eleven police had a final conflagration before moving in. Barbara tucker and Steve jago were both told they were being 'reported' to the crown prosecution service for possible summons for holding an 'unauthorised' demo in the socpa designated area.

Barbara began blowing a whistle and shouting that she HAD notified the police of her ongoing protest, and that by law they MUST authorise her demonstration. she claimed that since inspector hart personally knew this, he must be corrupt. he warned her not to make such allegations publicly, but she offered to defend them in court.

Inspector hart also talked to 'charity sweet' and warned that she faced arrest, although it is not clear that she was 'reported'. she told him she had her seven year old daughter with her and asked what on earth would happen if she were arrested. he told her the child would be taken too, and handed over to the care of social services at the police station. fearing for her child under such intimidation, she gave up her protest, and the crowd that had gathered shouted out 'shame' at the now uncomfortable inspector.

The police then retreated for more discussion, inspector hart warned again that barbara and steve would be arrested if they didn't leave. his question 'are you going to stop?' was met with a 'no'. the police talked more, then rather lamely, he came over one last time to say that they might be arrested later if they continue.

All eleven police got in their car, their van, and on their bicycles, and they beat a retreat, leaving the demonstration to continue.

Barbara tucker has now been 'reported' more than thirty times, and has only received one summons. as she pointed out, the summons relates to the 17th may when she made a complaint of assault to the police, and was told that if she pursued the complaint, the police would issue a socpa summons against her in return.

Although today was clearly a victory for the protestors, it is worrying that this level of intimidation goes on, and it may have only been the presence of several cameras that ensured the peaceful conclusion.

this law must go!

rikki

<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/07/344035.html>

Demo outside Downing Street this afternoon

After the rather public humiliation of superintendent terry this week in court <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/09/350716.html>, Barbara Tucker was back outside Downing Street this afternoon, attracting crowds as she sang anti-war songs with fellow activist, Charity.

Meanwhile, Steve Jago, whose own draconian bail conditions are likely to be lifted on Tuesday in a further slap in the face to Superintendent Terry, stood near-by reading orwell's 1984.

Image

The three activists once again defied SOCPA legislation **designed to free Tony Blair from the embarrassment of being publicly reminded of his war-crimes.**

For the first time in months, police were conspicuous by their absence. the Downing Street diplomatic corps were there as usual of course, but no community support officers passed near, no foot-soldiers from charing cross arrived, no vans full of hired police thugs turned up, and the three brave protestors held their peaceful demonstration right outside downing street.

Given all the intimidation, harrassment, and what has now been shown as unlawful actions by Superintendent Terry's charing cross gang in the past, it was a pleasant change to see the peaceful demo taking place in safety this afternoon.

the war is far from over, but a small battle has certainly been won, and today was proof of this.

rikki

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<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/09/350931.html>

SOCPA - protestor held at gunpoint, handcuffed and arrested for swearing

rikki | 19.09.2006 00:23 | Repression | London

Outside Downing Street this evening, Barbara Tucker was arrested by machine-gun carrying police, thrown against the railings, and rear-restraint handcuffed. her alleged crime? - behaviour liable to

cause alarm or distress - namely swearing.

After the court hearing last week, when lawyers trashed the police socpa case against her and also had bail conditions lifted, we all thought there would be some respite from the met's clear campaign of intimidation and harrassment, while further cases go through the court. indeed, yesterday, it appeared that was the case, when her protest drew no police attention. (see above article)

What a difference a day makes... Peaceful Barbara Tucker stood outside Downing Street early this evening, with her pink 'Blair's Genocide' banner round her neck, and a yellow placard quoting the human rights article of free expression (suspended by h.m.govt.).

She was approached by two officers from charing cross police station who claimed not to know who she was, nor that she has been the subject of 50 previous reports for 'unauthorised' demonstrating. as per usual, they claimed that she had not notified her demo, despite the fact that she notified by email on march 6th and has had numerous meetings with the police since then.

Also, rather than 'report' her for possible summons, these two officers threatened her with arrest! she started shouting the place down, pointing out that last week's court case had been thrown out by the judge as 'void ab initio' - meaning it should never have even come to court and had been flawed right from the start. she shouted about harrassment, and amongst this outburst, she used some swear words. the diplomatic protection officers came out from behind downing street gates, and brandishing their machine guns, including actually pointing one at a supporter who was trying to get close enough to take down police identifications as she was thrown against the railing, they used handcuffs behind her back to effect an arrest under section 5 of the public order act.

This legislation is often used by police against persons who swear at them, doesn't usually require rear restraint, and is generally dealt with by an on-the-spot fixed penalty notice. however in barbara's case, two vans turned up, she was bundled in the back of one and taken to charing cross police station, where she was held for nearly four hours. there she managed to speak to her lawyer eventually, but this was after an independent police review team kicked up a fuss. police had told her that the lawyer didn't want to speak to her, while he was being told that she was being abusive and could not speak to him.

Police were originally talking about holding her several hours for interview (virtually unheard of for a section 5 offence), but under intense pressure and multiple phone calls from her lawyer, she was finally released at around ten this evening. she refused to take the penalty notice telling the police to send it directly to her solicitor's ready for appeal.

This endless campaign of intimidation against this lone peaceful woman is indefensible. the metropolitan police must surely have taken leave of their senses. their only defence is that she notified them of her demonstration by email rather than on one of their application forms, and because of this they have embarked on this endless course of harrassment. notification by email is surely not a criminal offence, and anyway, peaceful people should not need to notify anything anyway.

It is time the police, and particularly superintendent terry, came under proper public scrutiny for their actions. at the very least, terry and his associates should have a restraining order put on them to stop them approaching the vicinity of barbara tucker.

In another small illustration of the contempt these people have for free speech, one of her supporters had to rescue her banner and placard after they had been thrown in a passing refuse cart by police at downing street.

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<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/09/351013.html>

25 comments

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William Rookwood, meeting with the Inspector
by sjreese on 29.06.2006 [20:11]

Our story begins, as stories often do, with a young up-and-coming politician. He's a highly religious man, a member of the new conservative party. He is of single-minded convictions and has little respect for the political process. He arranges for a special project at code name 7/7 in the interest of 'national security'. At first, it is believed to be a search for biological weapons for which cost is no object. But the real purpose behind the project is power, total agamonic domination. The project, however, ends violently... but not in vain, for a new way to wage war is discovered from the blood of their victims. Imagine a Terror - imagine the worst kind of disease you can think of, and then imagine that you and you alone have the cure. How best to use such a weapon? It is at this point in our story that along comes a spider. He is a man who seems to have no conscience; for him, the ends always justify the means. It is he who suggests that the weapon be used not against an enemy of the country but rather the country itself. Three targets are chosen to maximize the impact of the attack: a bus, a

tube, and a water-treatment plant. Several die within the first minute. Thousands more die in the following months. And at last the true purpose of their plan comes into view. Before the attack on the transit, no one would have predicted the outcome of the elections. No one. But after the election, lo and behold, a miracle. Some believed that it was an act of God himself, or that a pharmaceutical company owned by one of the party members made them all insanely rich. But the real genius of their plan was the fear. Fear became the ultimate tool of this government. Not long after, a group of religious extremists are captured, tried, and executed while a memorial is erected to canonize their victims. And our young politician is soon appointed to the position of PM. The rest, as they say, is history.

Jago: Can you prove any of this?

WR: Why do you think I'm still alive?

And it would be even worse, but for judges making a stand...
by stopwar on 29.06.2006 [20:29]

"Judge quashes anti-terror orders"

ht tp://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/5125668.stm

STOP PRESS...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [00:02]

According to Sky News, New Labour looks like being defeated again at a by-election in the South Wales constituency of Blaenau Gwent.

ht tp://www.sky.com/skynews/article/0,,30000-13530522,00.html

Fingers crossed. Each Labour defeat brings the end of Blair a little closer. Not that I think Brown will be much better, but he does at least have an ounce of socialism in his body.

Now, defeat looks official...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [00:35]

ht tp://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/5127262.stm

South Wales has always been socialist. Previous MPs were Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot. People were against the Iraq war, and are now very much against Tony Blair.

BBC TV totally avoiding election coverage atm. Currently showing extended coverage of US (abc) news. I see what you mean, Mike!

According to Sky TV...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [00:48]

in another by-election, Labour has done so badly, they could even be in FOURTH place!!!

Rejoice! Bye bye Blair.

Victory speech from Dai Davies...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [01:39]

mentioned the word revolution once, socialism twice, and "the people" many times.

Hopefully this is THE wake up call for the People of Britain - from the post-war miners, to the Greenham Common anti-nuclear protestors, to the principled stand against bogus political principles, South Wales is again providing a lead to the rest of the people of Britain.

And I notice that it is Cardiff (not London) that is holding the pro-Palestinian protest this coming Saturday:

ht tp://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/06/343786.html

Yeah stopwar...
by 666adrian on 30.06.2006 [07:26]

...just heard that, they even got beaten by UKIP!
He`ll have to have a American-style election if he wants Labour to stay in power.

@adrian
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [08:56]

The antiwar party won (twice!) in South Wales, and only 600 votes short of pulling it off in a VERY middle class area.

People across the UK must follow the example of Blaenau - as I said, this is also being driven by the memory (and spirit?) of giants of British post-war socialism such as Aneurin Bevin, Michael Foot, and now Peter Law. Also, by reaction to a cynical Blair "modernisation" drive to privatise parts of our National Health Service - now being frantically covered up:

ht
tp://www.orange.co.uk/news/topstories/23283.htm?linkfrom=Today&link=link_2&article=I30225299

Where is "Welsh windbag" Neil Kinnock in all this, I'd like to know.

I stand corrected...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [10:59]

People in London have obviously been shamed/stirred into action by their Welsh counterparts.

There will now be a Vigil "Against Israeli War Crimes" in Parliament Square between 5 pm and 7.30 pm this evening. Whether or not police permission has been given isn't stated, so probably not. Now bearing in mind that someone has recently been arrested there for carrying a copy of Vanity Fair, this should be an interesting gathering.

ht tp://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/06/343859.html

And now also on 1st July in Leeds...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [11:06]

which is not yet a fascist-controlled city, and hopefully would never tolerate the sort of legislation that has been inflicted on Blair's "Green Zone" in the centre of London.

Meet outside Leeds City Art Gallery, 2 pm.

ht tp://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/06/343857.html

Latest from New Labour...
by stopwar on 30.06.2006 [15:30]

by elections just a blip. The reforms continue. F*** the Welsh valleys.

Oh well... We'll see.

London demonstration "Against Israeli War Crimes"...
by stopwar on 01.07.2006 [09:32]

went off without a hitch. About 200 demonstrators, including a group of "real" jews (Bless Them!) and hardly any police presence.

Pictures and report at:

ht tp://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/07/343936.html

@ stopwar on 30-6-06 [00:35]
by Mike-Malaysia on 04.07.2006 [23:50]

So you've realised the plastering of US news on the BBC? Sinister isn't it. We all know US MSM news sees the world revolve around the USA. To show this news on Brit TV is very telling of the way the establishment via the BBC is trying to attach us to the rot that is corporate/MSM USandalism.

Unfortunately loss of elections/by-elections may (stress on 'may') only lead to a change of face. UK politics is nyon {geordie word} wholly corrupted. People fall foul of the change of face while the same rotten foreign policy continues. Small these days meaningless tinkering in domestic policy, as characterised by the BuSh / Judas Kohn, sorry John Kerry election show this perfectly and is mirrored

in UK politics. Browns ounce of socialism (disputable as he's so closely bound to a neocon-nazi-zionist aka mass murder Tony bLiar) will affect domestic policy, not the murderous genocide perpetrated overseas. Its all bells and whistles stopwar. It really is.

Those politicians who are actually genuine uncorrupted by the NWO (whatever flavour you believe the NWO takes) are few and far between. They are also denied positions of power due to the party system. Party politics has destroyed politics.

A radical change is needed in British politics and general ethos. I cannot envisage such a change happening unless revolution occurs. A revolution of the people. Outrage. The movie V (sadly just a movie) characterises it well when all the people dress as V in Nov5th outside parliament in solidarity. Who knows perhaps this solidarity could come via the stop-the-war coalition, but I fear that coalition is in its death throws.

left-out (lefto)
by Mike-Malaysia on 04.07.2006 [23:51]

The movie "V for Vengeance"

@Mike
by stopwar on 05.07.2006 [07:10]

I agree with most of what you say. My own observations also lead me to conclude that the main parties of British politics are almost completely corrupt. This is obviously very worrying.

However, I wouldn't say that the anti-war movement is in its death throws. As a mentioned on another thread the stop-the-war coalition are now on a collision course with New Labour - and the collision will happen at the September 23rd New Labour conference in Manchester.

See:
<http://www.stopwar.org.uk>

for details.

Blair chose to change the conference venue from Blackpool, and I'm sure he is already regretting that decision. I hope the socialists from South Wales can help to motivate those in places like Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, etc.

stopwar
by Mike-Malaysia on 05.07.2006 [11:02]

OK death throws is maybe not such a good description. "Ineffectual continual rut" is perhaps a better.

I hope you are right - that enough ppl manage to topple bLiar but there isn't one atom inside of me that believes anything will change on the foreign policy scene, meaning bLiars overthrow largely an irrelevant fleetingly pleasing spectacle. :(

Mike
by stopwar on 05.07.2006 [14:58]

It'll have to be the people, who take their country back.

And the people are sheep - they need someone to take a lead. I wish it could be Tony Benn. Big wish...

Unfortunately people like
by Mike-Malaysia on 05.07.2006 [16:29]

Benn, GG, Meacher etc. (not a very big etc mind you) dont take the lead and because they don't delve properly into the acceptance of the 9-11 conspiracy, they still put fake hope in the illusory parliamentary system. Thinking they can use 'the system' that the rots pixie dust created to actually defeat the rot.

Barmy!

Don't hold much hope for GG doing much...
by stopwar on 05.07.2006 [17:19]

and a lot of people don't trust him anyway.

I suggested Benn, because he IS a man of honour and integrity, and the people respect him. They WOULD follow such a person.

This isn't really
by _merk_ on 05.07.2006 [17:19]

Top News. (No offence meant to the commentators.)

@Merk
by stopwar on 05.07.2006 [17:21]

It has had 500 hits in the last hour. How many articles here achieve that?

the hits might be
by _merk_ on 05.07.2006 [17:48]

high because it's under top news ? :) Whatever, I'll be quiet now.

Maybe top news because readers expect more
by wings on 05.07.2006 [18:01]

The Brits most likely understand US has been controlled by London since the Federal Banking system took over US. Rothchild is out of London, correct? That's where the money comes from to do any of the damage around the globe through labor, military or government. It's all about money and power. Now the US, like UK have out of control governments, with men who have coins in their eyes, and the dumbfounded citizens are quickly learning they are merely slaves.

there is no difference between bush and blair
by wings on 05.07.2006 [18:13]

citizens of either country have been pampered and prodded to live a lifestyle of luxury and convenience, and they find it hard to relinquish that precious lifestyle to help change foreign policy or stop an illegal war.

Who wants to turn off their entertainment systems to get involved with fighting corruption? It's easy to type our opinions on Iraq-war, and we probably are targeted for doing so, but it's hard to carry a sign for eight hours like Pawlouski does. And does sign carrying really change anything? What are the solutions to freeing the globe of corruption? Cleaning the slate and starting all over? That may be a solution already coming our way. North Korea doesn't seem to be bothered by propaganda. If they have 10 test missiles to waste ... how many do they have for use in war?

Agreed, wings...
by stopwar on 05.07.2006 [20:49]

the citizens of both countries have been "comfortably numbed". Having seen bits of both cultures recently, I think the UK is getting worse more rapidly. And you can take another track from Pink Floyd's "The Wall" album if you wish - "Waiting for the Worms". I just hope it doesn't get to that. Hope enough people wake up and realise what has been happening.

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