

RUNNYMEDE

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EDITORIAL

TOWARDS THE SUPERSTATE

Even the most diehard neoliberal economists are ever-more forced to confess that the so-called 'trickle-down' effect is a myth. In reality, their model is like some gigantic vacuum cleaner hoovering up wealth whilst laying waste to the real economy. A new supranational feudalism is unfolding in plain sight.

It is a common mistake to view all this as a largely economic phenomenon. For with the wealth goes power. Wealth and power are the Janus faces of the same coin.

Orwell's 1984 is a much quoted work. Mostly it is cited in support of civil liberty and personal privacy and against the surveillance state. His other prophecy ... of a world dominated by small number of continental and sub-continental superstates in permanent, contrived, war with one another ... is often overlooked.

But the institutional demand of neo-liberal globalisation is 'bigger and ever bigger'.

In this country we look forward to the increasing centralisation of NHS services, the operational mergers of police forces, the mergers of so-called 'local' government into ever bigger and more faceless unitary authorities and thence to 'super-cities' and 'city regions'.

So it is at the international level. The African Union, NAFTA, SEAC, ASEAN all creep at a glacial, but relentless, pace towards the supranational model.

The supranational model is inherently oligarchic and top-down. It puts virtually all the major decisions beyond both the elective mandate of individual states, and very often beyond any hope of court challenge. Individual countries will do as they are told, by we, the wise, the elite, the 0.01%.

A central principle of the new feudalism is that it is no longer permissible for countries to negotiate treaties on an individual, case-by-case basis, on the former, and well-proven, intergovernmental principle. All must be imposed top-down.

By far the most advanced of the supranational experiments is the European Union. It is very deliberately a model for others to emulate. The list of so-called 'competences' (it is essential that all aspects of this process must be shrouded in euphemism), transferred to the EU makes depressing reading. The title of the item 'UK Parliament – What Is The Point Anymore' is apt. We might well ask this question of the forthcoming General Election. Russell Brand has already given the answer.

So we listen to the politicians' universal chorus of manyana manyana ... 'it is all globalised now'; 'there is nothing we can do'; 'it is all out of our hands'.

But they continue to draw their salaries. They continue to exist. Not only that, they become increasingly pre-occupied by the perquisites of office, the real power having gone. According to Jack Straw and Malcolm Rifkind the going rate for lobbying is now £5000 per day.

The post war world thought it had seen the end of empire. As matters transpired colonial imperialism was replaced by a far more voracious economic imperialism. At least the colonial powers had a degree of responsibility for their subjects.

And now, blow-me-down, if they are not building a new empire in Brussels! Its construction is all but complete, once the euphemisms concerning 'integration', 'competences', 'ever closer union' have been cut away. The final capstone will be 'fiscal union'.

The governments of the EU are thus in office but not in power. They are no more than cyphers. After Bismarck's unification of Germany many of the small states such as Saxony and Bavaria were permitted to keep their princes, palaces and a few toy soldiers as a fig-leaf of continuing local determination. So it is again.

And what are the consequences of this wonder? The biggest corpus of law and regulation ever written in human history, the meddling in the Balkans in the 1990's and the Ukraine more recently, the calls for the militarisation of the EU, the constitutional embedding of neo-liberal ideology, stagnation and sclerosis, austerity on a grand scale, the bankrupting of several peripheral economies in the pursuit of the impossible dream of a single, homogenous continental economy, major decisions by secret cabals, corporate power broking on a grand scale. The list goes on.

The current crowning glory is TTIP. That such an abomination grows out of such an oligarchy is as inevitable and ineluctable as the progress of the seasons.

Yet there is a single, simple lesson to be learned, from this and throughout history ... empires always have this strong tendency to do imperial things.

ACCESS MEETING; DEMOCRACY, CAN WE MAKE IT WORK?

One of my rare invitations to speak will be to participate in the following event at the new ACCESS centre in Oxfordshire. Please note numbers are limited, so get your application in early.

DEMOCRACY: CAN WE MAKE IT WORK?

Anthony Barnett; *founder of OpenDemocracy*

Frank Taylor; *Editor, Runnymede Gazette; What is Democracy and Why Don't We Have It?*

Peter Coville; *Occupy; Post Democracy and the Ideas of Colin Crouch*
Plus Q&A and discussion sessions.

SATURDAY; 11TH APRIL

Meet 12.30pm for Lunch for 1.30pm – 6.30pm session

NB; Bring your own lunch; It's really for people to meet and chat informally before the session

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For further info: <https://www.facebook.com/ACCESSAbingdon>

To reserve a place: <http://democracycanwemakeitwork.eventbrite.co.uk>

THE LAW AS THE FIRST PROPERTY OF THE COMMONS?

The issue of jury nullification has appeared before in these pages. The BCG item by Dan Bunting is one of the best yet to appear. There are a number of references worthy of further research by interested readers. For example Lilburne, at his treason trial in 1649, held that it was not merely the facts of the case, but the law itself which was on trial. In doing so he echoed what was, at that time, a sound tradition of the Common Law. A summary transcript of this historic trial is available online as is the seminal Penn and Mead case.

Common Law ought to be rooted in natural justice and ethics, which considerations ought to take priority over any statute. For this reason, an excerpt from Matthew Hale's '*History of the Common Law of England*' of 1713 is included. This section records how the Statute of King Richard I of 1189 incorporated, and gave equal status to *lex non scripta*, or unwritten law. This was defined as that law '*which has*

existed from before the time of memory'.

The famous Bonham's case of 1610 set the parameters of when a statute might be struck down. Sir Edward Coke ruled that ' ... *And it appears ... that in many cases, the common law will control Acts of Parliament, and sometimes adjudge them to be utterly void; for when an act of Parliament is against common right and reason, or repugnant, or impossible to be performed, the common law will control it, and adjudge such an Act to be void; and, therefore in ... some statutes are made against law and right, which those who made them perceiving would not put them in execution ...* '

Thus, by this judgement, statutes must not be seen as absolutes. Perhaps the adage that 'rules are made for the guidance of the wise and the obedience of fools' might be apt. Natural ethics and justice must be the fundamental lodestar of all adjudication.

For sure, the general perception of ethics and natural justice has evolved over the centuries, our ideas on the status of women, and our notion of what constitutes 'cruel and unusual punishment' being two of many examples. But this elastic, evolutionary quality is one of the many great strengths of Common Law.

Sadly, this version of Common Law has, over the course of the last two or three centuries, been progressively swamped by the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty and legal positivism. Fundamental to these intimately connected ideas is the doctrine that a law is a law because it is a law, because the government says so, and the only permissible response is blind obedience under all circumstances.

As a result, instances of jury nullification are rare in this country. Bunting cites the Ponting case. He might also have mentioned the 1996 case in Liverpool where three women (two of whom were ... significantly ... representing themselves) were acquitted of damaging a Hawk aircraft destined for export to Indonesia.

The facts of the case were fully and proudly admitted. The central issue was whether the women acted under a moral priority higher than the law itself. As it is fully entitled to do ... for a jury is sovereign (some might say that acting as jurors the individual members are sovereign) ... and can come to any conclusion it wishes, for any reason it wishes and is answerable to no-one ... one. the jury agreed and acquitted. Thus effectively, and in this specific instance, it quashed the law on criminal damage.

Bunting is entirely correct in that no summing up in a British court will inform the jury of such a right. As he says, the British legal profession and judiciary adopt a "*don't ask, don't tell policy*" where everyone keeps it quiet."

For obvious reasons the legal and political establishment detests the idea jury nullification. For jury nullification takes the power out of their hands and vests it in the people, through their juries.

Any debate on the Commons or the Common Weal will always focus on land and resources ... that which is a common birthright and of which we are common custodians rather than owners.

What is so often missing from such counsels is the notion that the Common Law itself (one of several reasons why 'Common Law' is called 'Common Law'), is, or ought to be, part of the Common Weal. If we hold that statutes are relative and not absolute, and that the power over such matters rests with the jury, the law ceases to become the property and exclusive preserve of a legal, political and bureaucratic elite.

Then it becomes *our* law.

Frank Taylor

RUSSELL BRAND'S REVOLUTION

Robert Kirchner; The Libertarian Alliance Blog

We'll get to the book in a bit, but first I have to say a few things about the phenomenon of Russell Brand himself. Frankly, I'm a bit worried for Russell Brand. He has shown tremendous personal courage in recent years, transforming himself from a bad-boy British comedian/celebrity, whose comedy revolved around his own dionysian excesses of sex, drugs and odd fashion sense, into a prominent voice for radical change, a razor-sharp critic of the media Spectacle [1] he is part of, and of the ruling class interests that this Spectacle serves. He is in recovery from his addictions, one day at a time, and he speaks with personal authority against the uselessly punitive War on Drugs in the UK and US. He has been able to use his celebrity status to penetrate territory where radicals have long been denied entry: popular TV talk shows in Britain and the US, not only putting forth radical leftist political perspectives, reaching millions of viewers, but also exposing the prevailing vapid discourse of these forums and of the other glitterati personalities who inhabit them.

In 2013, he was interviewed by Jeremy Paxman, an attack-dog pundit of the BBC: Brand not only called for massive redistribution of wealth, and cheerfully admitted that he doesn't vote; he rebuked Paxman and the political class for pretending that voting makes a difference. The initially sneering Paxman was reduced to whimpering lame protestations. Brand went on to start "The Trews" (a portmanteau of "true news"), a regular on-going Youtube series in which he interviews radical thinkers on a range of current political and social issues. And now he has written a book, *Revolution*. [2]

Well, the Spectacle, and its ruling class owners, do not suffer such public challenges gladly. The Observer's Nick Cohen, for example, dismissed *Revolution* as "atrocious: long-winded, confused and smug; filled with references to books Brand has half read and thinkers he has half understood." Their knives are now out for Russell Brand, waiting for a misstep. Given Brand's volatile personality (he has been diagnosed with attention deficit and bipolar disorders), it is a testimony to the strength of his addiction recovery work (or, as he would probably say, to the help of his Higher Power) that he hasn't, under this kind of pressure, self-destructed already. Meanwhile, we anarchists find ourselves in a rather awkward position: we've been offering serious critiques of capitalism and state violence since forever, but the first person in decades to reach a mass audience with such critiques, including many young people, is this charismatic bad-boy celebrity, Russell Brand. We don't do charisma.

Moreover, Brand is not a systematic ideologue. His political theory remains somewhat inchoate. There are clearly some things he is against (gross political and financial inequality, consumerism, immigrant-bashing), and some things he is for (real democracy, non-violence, sane environmental policy). But readers of *Revolution* expecting to find therein a comprehensive blueprint for a new society, with step-by-step instructions on how to get there, will, like Nick Cohen, be disappointed. (Though anarchists should not be ruffled by this: on the contrary, we have long eschewed top-down political programs in favour of bottom-up emergence of democratic solutions.) But what will Brand call for next, and will we be able to agree with him, on either substance or strategy? Many are urging him to stand for Parliament or Mayor of London, some out of sincere admiration, others in the hope that he'll get buried in the quagmire of electoral politics, and that will put an end to his whinging about social problems. Given his (self-acknowledged) predilection for attention-getting behaviour, this may be a difficult temptation for Brand to resist.

This brings us now to what may be the central question for followers of the C4SS website: is Brand, in fact, an anarchist? What he says is,

I don't know much about anarchism, I only know about anarchy from graffiti, the Sex Pistols, and as a kind of slur or reprimand from my mum: "Is that what you want? It'd be anarchy!" (pp. 74-75)

But this occurs as the lead-in to an interview with the noted anarchist anthropologist David Graeber, whom Brand approvingly cites for his ideas on debt cancellation.

Well, according to David Graeber, there's more to anarchy than not tidying your bedroom, spitting, and having a Mohican. In fact, it isn't defiantly disorderly at all; it is society that has no centralized power.... David as an anarchist is opposed to centralized power in any form. He believes that people should be

entrusted and empowered, that given the opportunity, released from the chains of authority and the spell of a corrupting media, we will form fair and functioning systems; they may not be perfect, but remember, we're not competing with perfection, we're competing with corruption, inequality, and destruction.... I asked him what he envisaged ... "My dream [said Graeber] is to create a thousand autonomous institutions that can gradually take over the business of organizing everyday life, pretty much ignoring the authorities, until gradually the whole apparatus of state comes to seem silly, unnecessary, a bunch of buffoons useful for entertainment perhaps, but no one we have to take seriously." I like the idea of creating autonomous organizations to perform necessary social functions that are not motivated by profit. This along with the principles of equality, nonviolence, and ecological responsibility are necessary pillars of Revolution.

I think this passage, combined with his public anti-voting stance, is sufficient to identify Brand as, at the very least, anarchist-friendly. And he refers back to Graeber's anarchism, repeatedly and with approbation, through the rest of the book. Moreover, later in the book (ch. 27, 30), he quotes Noam Chomsky at length, another anarchist public intellectual, regarding US foreign policy. He also seems to recognise that M.K. Gandhi was essentially anarchist, in his tactics if not his nationalist goals. But most tellingly, Brand is aware of the anarchist organizational principles [3] underlying Alcoholics Anonymous and its various 12-step fellowship offspring, to which he (presumably) owes his own recovery from addiction.[4] In ch. 32, he characterizes Alcoholics Anonymous as "a successful, worldwide, leaderless, anarchist collective with millions of members" (emphasis mine).

This does not keep Brand from calling, intermittently, for statist solutions to social problems. He's in favour of tighter laws against greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of environmental degradation; a better financed National Health Service (NHS) and other health and welfare benefits for vulnerable members of society; getting corporate money out of politics; more rigorous tax enforcement against big corporations; and many other things that statist leftists typically call for. But so have many avowed anarchists, from Proudhon to Chomsky, as interim measures to deal with particularly egregious forms of suffering and injustice, without abandoning the ultimate goal of a stateless society. (Personally, I don't believe that working for statist policy reform is a fruitful strategy, even in the interim, but other anarchists may disagree.) Even within C4SS.org, the point has repeatedly been made that, in the face of massive upward redistributions of wealth through state-enforced monopolies and rents, anarchists should hardly be focussing their ire on NHS and the few remaining "welfare-state" institutions and policies which redistribute small amounts of wealth in the opposite direction.

In Brand's case, though, I suspect that this mixture of anarchist and statist positions is merely due to a failure to think it through and recognise their incompatibility. Brand writes with passion, often based on personal experience, in a style that is sometimes funny (as one would expect from a professional comedian), and sometimes movingly poetic, particularly in his descriptions of the underclass society he grew up in. Which is to say that Brand is clearly more of a poet than a philosopher: to paraphrase Emerson, Brand's mind is not hobgoblinded by ideological consistency, foolish or otherwise. But on the whole, the various solutions Brand proposes through the course of the book are overwhelmingly anarchist in spirit, including relocalization of the food system, abolition of personal titles (Dr., Lord, Mr. President, etc.), nonviolence (on this point he is consistent)[5], promotion of worker cooperative businesses, and a general disposition to engage with people in democratic discussion and see what emerges.

So, the book is called Revolution. What kind of revolution, then, does Brand have in mind? Robert Colville of The Daily Telegraph sneered that Brand "has not even the faintest fragment of an inkling of how his Revolution will come about" and "[a]s for how things would work afterwards, don't ask." I think though, that the mystification is Colville's, not Brand's; it stems from Colville's obvious (professionally obligatory) ideological hostility to Brand, and, more interestingly, from his rather outdated (though still widely shared) conventional understanding of what a revolution is – i.e. simply a popularly supported coup d'état: the old regime falls (peacefully or violently) and a new regime assumes power, enacting some program of change. But this has never been the anarchist understanding of revolution, and it is not Brand's either. For anarchists, revolution is not a single cataclysmic political event, but an ongoing social process of "building the new society in the shell of the old", or as Gandhi put it more succinctly, "be[ing] the change you want to see in the world".

Brand takes this a step farther — and here he may part company from some "ni-Dieu-ni-maîtres" anarchists, not to mention completely befuddling establishment critics like Colville. For Brand insists that we cannot "be the change" without undergoing a personal spiritual awakening that puts us in relationship with

a loving Higher Power. As Brand says, “I know society can change, because look at how I’ve changed,” from fame-besotted heroin addict to activist. And that change, according to the 12-step program in all its incarnations, requires “a decision to turn one’s life and one’s will over to to the care of God as we understood God” (Step 3). What distinguishes this position from Evangelical Christianity (or various other forms of fundamentalist religion) is the eschewal of dogmatism: as millions of recovered alcoholics and other addicts have found, it is sufficient to trust in a “Power greater than oneself” — however that is conceived. That won’t win over militant atheists like Richard Dawkins, (whom Brand pokes fun at throughout *Revolution*), but it should reassure the rest of us that Brand does not aspire to become a new Jerry Falwell.

Indeed, Brand is nothing if not eclectic in his spirituality: he describes a number of religious experiences in *Revolution*, from Kundalini Yoga and Transcendental Meditation to an altar call in an Eritrean church. He shows an almost indiscriminate openness towards unconventional forms of spirituality, just as he sometimes seems to fall for any sort of anti-establishment political argument. But auto-didacts like Brand come by their intellectual quirkiness honestly; and “quirkiness” is, of course, a purely subjective judgement. So, the reader may be inspired or put off by Brand’s exploration of religion. But it should be understood that, for Brand, this spiritual openness to change is precisely how the *Revolution* starts.

Notes:

[1] I’m using “Spectacle” in the sense of Guy Debord and the Situationists, i.e. capitalism’s tendency to replace authentic social relations with objects, such as consumer products and celebrities. Brand, by the way, devotes chapter 15 of *Revolution* to Situationism, so he’s well aware of this phenomenon.

[2] This is not Brand’s first book. He has written two autobiographical books, called *My Booky-Wook*, and *Booky-Wook 2*.

[3] For discussion of the classic anarcho-communist Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin’s influence on Bill W., the co-founder of AA, see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/38398959/Benign-Anarchy-Voluntary-association-mutual-aid-and-Alcoholics-Anonymous>.

[4] Brand has to be slightly cagey on this point, due to Tradition 11, which says, inter alia, “we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films”. That is, one doesn’t “out” oneself or one another as members, not merely out of respect for confidentiality, but also so that the fellowship doesn’t come to be publically associated with particular high-profile personalities. Brand merely says that he’s part of an “abstinence-based recovery” program and fellowship; he doesn’t identify it as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or any 12-step group. I should add that my inference that it is a 12-step fellowship is merely an assumption on my part, based on no personal acquaintance with Brand.

[5] As I never tire of pointing out to my fellow Quakers, the logical conclusion of nonviolence is anarchism; one can’t have a state without violence.

JURY NULLIFICATION - DO THE RIGHT THING?

Dan Bunting; British Constitution Group Bulletin

(Editor’s Note) I am very pleased to have been granted permission by barrister Dan Bunting to reproduce his article about Jury Nullification. A few years ago I was hoping to write an article about the training jurors receive and asked my local court at Shrewsbury Shropshire, to explain what guidance Jurors were given—their response was pretty frosty and sharp to say the least. They demanded to know who I was, my address, telephone number, why did I want to know etc. The concept of Jury Nullification seemed to be a concept too far for them to discuss — so I gave up. Dan Bunting’s article covers a variety of aspects which I think reader will find enlightening. Please note that this article does not form legal advice, if you require that, see a solicitor! JG

Introduction

In the unlikely event that you are reading this on the subway whilst off to do jury service in

Washington, D.C. then you may notice, as you get off at Judiciary Square stop, billboards saying “Jury duty? Know your rights. Good jurors nullify bad laws” – these have been posted by the Fully Informed Jury Association – an American organisation dedicated to informing US jurors of their rights, in particularly their right to jury nullification.

A Judge will tell a jury in England (and America as we understand it) that they have to take the law from him (or her) – the jury’s job is to find out what facts they are satisfied are proved and apply the facts to the law as told by the Judge, and that is how they reach their verdict. However, after all this a jury will just say ‘guilty’ or ‘not guilty’. They do not answer a list of questions, or give reasons, they just give the verdict.

Jury nullification is the process whereby a jury acquits someone who they believe to be guilty, either to express their disapproval of the law itself (thereby ‘nullifying’ the law) or the particular circumstances of the way the prosecution was brought (often because it is oppressive, or unjust to convict in the case that they are trying).

So it’s an American thing. Does it happen here?

It’s not an American invention at all – it’s as British as it comes.

The origin is often taken as Bushell’s case (although there were previous instances going back to ‘Freeborn’ John Lilburne and before). William Penn (of Pennsylvania fame) and William Mead, a fellow Quaker, were accused of addressing a ‘tumultuous assembly’ – unlawfully preaching in effect. The jury refused to find them guilty, despite repeated orders from the trial Judge, who eventually got so fed up with this he found them in contempt and banged them up.

Some paid a fine and got out. Others, lead by Bushel, applied for habeas corpus. This writ was granted, establishing beyond doubt the right of a jury to return a verdict according to their conscience, and there was nothing that a Judge could do about it.

There have been many famous, high profile examples (as well as countless more that have gone unreported) from England since then (one example plucked at random is Clive Ponting). It is believed (by all lawyers that I have spoken to) to occur fairly regularly with sympathetic defendants. I can think of several cases where a swift ‘not guilty’ verdict was given by a jury in circumstances that would suggest it was more to do with the fact that the prosecution was misconceived or trivial (or the defendant did not deserve to be punished for their conduct) than the legal merits of their defence (to put it politely).

America is certainly a lot more robust about discussion and reporting of court cases than we are (the reporting in a routine American case would have Dominic Grieve in overdrive). And of course they have a constitutionally protected right to free speech that we lack (a prosecution for jury tampering against Julian P. Heicklen for handing out leaflets to incoming jurors advocating jury nullification was dismissed recently, although not on first amendment grounds).

Would advertising the jury’s right to do this be allowed here?

We can be pretty sure that a billboard of this nature put up at St Paul’s tube station would not go down well with the Judges in England. As for standing outside the Old Bailey handing out leaflets explaining the jury’s rights? I would be interested to see how a Judge dealt with that.

But would they be able to stop it? There’s a couple of avenues a Judge could try:

Perverting the course of justice

An approach to an individual juror or jury in an attempt to get them to acquit would certainly be (Miah & Akhbar [1997] Cr App R 12). In this case, it is probably too remote for this to be seen as influencing the course of justice.

An interesting question is whether getting a jury to vote according to their conscience is ‘perverting’ the course of justice. The question is ‘would this lead to injustice?’ (Firetto [1991] CLR 208 – not online)? I imagine that no Judge would want to tackle the question of whether a jury returning a verdict contrary to their oath, but in accordance with their conscience, is an injustice, or an example of justice in action (let alone whether it could be proved that there was an intention to pervert).

Contempt of Court

An “act ... calculated to interfere with the due administration of justice” is a contempt. This requires a ‘real risk’ that the due administration of justice will be prejudiced. This runs into the same problem of perverting – can informing the world at large (including jurors) of their legal rights prejudice the course of justice amount to a contempt (Owen 63 Cr App R 199 – not online)? It would seem unlikely, unless it is targeted against a particular juror.

Anything else?

There is a specific offence of Intimidating a juror or potential juror (s51 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994) but this wouldn’t apply to a billboard that sets out to inform rather than intimidate.

There are rules (made by the Advertising Standards Agency) as to what can be advertised. It doesn't appear that a bill-board would be necessarily in breach of the rules (although there is a broad discretion, which they may exercise out of caution).

It seems to me that if this was general 'public service announcement' then there is not much a court could do about it (I would be interested to see what, if any, directions would be given about it). If it referred to a particular case, then it is different – the Contempt of Court law would apply. More interesting is if it was for a class of offences (for example, possession of cannabis). Leafleting then would probably not be allowed, and I imagine that the ASA would decline to authorise any advertising. Do judges tell jury's about this right?

No. There's sort of a 'don't ask, don't tell policy' where everyone keeps it quiet. We celebrate the jury in the case of Penn and Mead (a plaque commemorating the triumph of liberty it represented is in the Old Bailey today), and Lord Devlin's famous quote that "trial by jury is more than an instrument of justice and more than one wheel of the constitution: it is the lamp that shows that freedom lives" is frequently cited with approval, Judges are certainly less vocal about supporting this historical right from the 17th Century when it comes to the present day.

There's no real written rule about this, but a Judge who informed a jury of this right would be inviting them to act contrary to their oath, and it never happens. An advocate who told the jury about this would get a right bollocking. For example, juries also (probably) have the right to acquit the defendant at any time after the prosecution case, but they are not allowed to be told that (Speechley [2004] EWCA Crim 3067) either by the Judge or the defence lawyer.

We have come to a strange sort of compromise where nullification is allowed, but not allowed to be talked about. Certainly a Judge can't direct a jury to convict, whatever the circumstances (Wang [2005] UKHL 9) and the common law firmly recognises the right of a jury to bring in a 'perverse' verdict (see the Canadian case of Krieger [2006] 2 SCR 501 for an even more extreme example, as well as a good discussion of the issues), but unless you are a lawyer, you may well not know this.

Is jury nullification a good thing?

One view is that it's what juries do best – it's a good check on the arbitrary power of the executive. Whilst juries decide issues of guilty in serious cases, Parliament cannot pass laws that are too draconian, or else they will just be met with a string of acquittals. On the other hand, as Lord Mansfield said in Shipley (1784) 4 Dougl 73, this introduces a lack of certainty into the law, and leave justice being a bit of a lottery.

As for my view? It's probably, like most lawyers, slightly mixed. I can see the good sense of it, and welcome it when juries 'do the right thing'. But I can also see the dangers if the principle runs riot. Maybe a discretion about talking about it is no bad thing, although it is hard to see that citizens should not be informed of their rights. On balance then, I'm in favour of it, and in favour of letting juries know their rights.

In the end, jurors are the only people in Court who can do justice – everyone else is there to do law – and this is a necessary consequence. Law and justice should be the same thing, it mostly is, but only a fool would pretend it is always.

This entry was originally posted in In the news, The Law, Explained on 05/11/2013 by danbunting
Original article at: <http://ukcriminallawblog.com/2013/11/05/jury-nullification-do-the-right-thing/>

EXCERPT FROM 'THE HISTORY OF THE COMMON LAW OF ENGLAND'

Matthew Hale; 1713

The Laws of England may aptly enough be divided into two Kinds, viz. Lex Scripta, the written Law: and Lex non Scripta, the unwritten Law: For although (as shall be shewn hereafter) all the Laws of this Kingdom have some Monuments or Memorials thereof in Writing, yet all of them have not their Original in Writing; for some of those Laws have obtain'd their Force by immemorial Usage or Custom, and such Laws are properly call'd Leges non Scriptae, or unwritten Laws or Customs.

Those Laws therefore, that I call Leges Scriptae, or written Laws, are such as are usually called Statute Laws, or Acts of Parliament, which are originally reduced into Writing before they are

enacted, or receive any binding Power, every such Law being in the first Instance formally drawn up in Writing, and made, as it were, a Tripartite Indenture, between the King, the Lords and the Commons; for without the concurrent Consent of all those Three Parts of the Legislature, no such Law is, or can be made:

But the Kings of this Realm, with the Advice and Consent of both Houses of Parliament, have Power to make New Laws, or to alter, Repeal, or enforce the Old. And this has been done in all Succession of Ages.

Now, Statute Laws, or Acts of Parliament, are of Two Kinds, viz. First, Those Statutes which were made before Time of Memory; and, Secondly, Those Statutes which were made within or since Time of Memory; wherein observe, That according to a juridical Account and legal Signification, Time within Memory is the Time of Limitation in a Writ of Right; which by the Statute of Westminster 1. cap. 38. was settled, and reduced to the Beginning of the Reign of King Richard I or Ex prima Coronatione Regis Richardi Primi, who began his Reign the 6th of July 1189, and was crown'd the 3d of September following: So that whatsoever was before that Time, is before Time of Memory; and what is since that Time, is, in a legal Sense, said to be within or since the Time of Memory.

And therefore it is, that those Statutes or Acts of Parliament that were made before the Beginning of the Reign of King Richard I and have not since been repealed or altered, either by contrary Usage, or by subsequent Acts of Parliament, are now accounted Part of the Lex non Scripta, being as it were incorporated thereinto ... !

EUROPEAN COMMISSION CHIEF WANTS TO CREATE NEW EU ARMY

Joshua Krause; Activist Post

The European Union is unique among the nations of history. Most governing bodies are built around a culture and language that is shared amongst the people they rule, which is then followed by a shared system of laws, courts, defense forces, currency etc. Or, in the case of an empire, the system hinges upon military dominance, which then enforces those conditions on every culture it can gobble up.

But the European Union is the only nation (to my knowledge) that attempted to use monetary and economic policy (the Euro) to unite a diverse set of culture, before turning into a real government in its own right. The only thing missing from the EU, is its own standing army. While each EU nation has a military, they still exercise some degree of sovereignty over their defense forces (at least on paper). However, that may not be the case in the near future.

The European Commission chief has called for the creation of an "EU joint army" that would "react credibly" to any external threat and defend the bloc's "values." While the UK and France are wary it could undermine NATO, Germany has backed the idea.

"An army like this would help us to better coordinate our foreign and defense policies, and to collectively take on Europe's responsibilities in the world," the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said in an interview to Germany's Welt am Sonntag newspaper. He added the EU's image "has suffered dramatically and also in terms of foreign policy, we don't seem to be taken entirely seriously. A joint EU army would show the world that there would never again be a war between EU countries." Of course, this has nothing to do with creating a peaceful European superstate. It has everything to do with countering Russia, and expanding the economic and military influence of Brussels. "You would not create a European army to use it immediately," Juncker said. "But a common army among the Europeans would convey to Russia that we are serious about defending the values of the European Union."

Juncker's proposal has been supported in Germany, where last month Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen also spoke of an EU army, calling it the main goal for the bloc. In her comment on Juncker's proposal, she told Deutschlandfunk radio station that a "European army is the future."

I can't help but draw a comparison to the United States. When our Constitution was ratified, I

wonder how many colonists, who at the time were wary of standing armies, expected their fledgling nation to one day become a global military superpower? Likewise, I wonder how many Europeans supported the EU, and never expected it to expand beyond an economic block. It just goes to show you that no government starts and ends as a minor endeavor. You give them an inch, and they will eventually take a mile.

But I digress. Besides countering Russia, this appears to be Europe's subtle attempt at undermining American power. It's no secret that many Europeans are getting fed up with America's meddling on the continent. The situation in Ukraine has created a serious rift between Western Europe and the United States, which probably started with the whole "Fuck the EU" fiasco last year.

It's become painfully clear to every European leader, that America does not view them as equals. They are mere vassal states to the American empire, and they must do as they're told.

However, the leaders of Europe don't want to be a cog of the American empire. They want their own empire. And with the exception of France and Britain, they don't much care for NATO, which is so thoroughly dominated by the United States, that it acts as nothing more than America's Eurasian war dog.

Though these two forces share a common enemy with Russia, they want to deal with Putin on their own terms. Countries like Germany derive a third of their energy needs from Russia, as do many other European nations. So war is really not in their best interest. While the US sits thousands of miles away, gleefully positioning its pawns on the chessboard of Eastern Europe, and practically begging for another world war, it's the people of Western and Central Europe that will face the wrath of Russia. They've been there and done that before, and I don't think they're ready for another round.

It appears that the EU feels it is better suited to taking on the role of NATO. They want to defend their economic block against Russia, but they know there's a chance that war can be avoided. The US on the other hand, is treating World War Three as a foregone conclusion.

But no matter what happens, the common people of Europe are going to lose. When it's all said and done, they will either be dominated by America, the European Union, or by Russia. That is the real foregone conclusion.

Joshua Krause is a reporter, writer and researcher at The Daily Sheeple, where this first appeared. He was born and raised in the Bay Area and is a freelance writer and author. You can follow Joshua's reports at Facebook or on his personal Twitter. Joshua's website is Strange Danger.

UK PARLIAMENT - WHAT IS THE POINT ANYMORE?

British Constitution Group Bulletin

Last year the 1st November was a significant date; it signified a major neutering of our democracy - the Lisbon Treaty rule changes for Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) came into force. This has effectively transferred 43 important areas of legalisation / governance that should be wholly the remit of a sovereign nation to the European Union council. Previous to these changes the UK had the right to veto – that has now gone, or is going, to be final by April 2017.

It is becoming increasingly clear, that there is a total collusion by the media in playing down the continued erosion of our right to self governance. The following areas of competence will change from unanimous approval by all member states (which had a veto option) to QMV:

- 🕒 Initiatives of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Administrative co-operation – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Asylum – Nice: QMV; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Border controls – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Citizens' initiative regulations – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Civil protection – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Committee of the Regions – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- 🕒 Common defence policy – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV

- ⌚ Crime prevention incentives – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Criminal judicial co-operation – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Criminal law – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Culture – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Diplomatic & Consular protection – Nice: Unanimity Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Economic & Social Committee – Nice: QMV Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Emergency international aid – Nice: Unanimity Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Energy – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ EU budget – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Eurojust – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ European Central Bank – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ European Court of Justice – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Europol – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Eurozone external representation – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Foreign Affairs High Representative election – Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Freedom of movement for workers – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Freedom to establish a business – Nice: Unanimity Lisbon QMV
- ⌚ Freedom, security, justice, co-operation & evaluation – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Funding the Common Foreign & Security Policy – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ General economic interest services – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Humanitarian aid – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Immigration – Nice: QMV; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Intellectual property – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Organisation of the Council of the EU – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Police co-operation – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ President of the European Council election – Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Response to natural disasters & terrorism – Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Rules concerning the Armaments Agency – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Self-employment access rights – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Social Security Unanimity – Nice: QMV; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Space – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Sport – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Structural & Cohesion Funds – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Tourism – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Transport – Nice: Unanimity; Lisbon: QMV
- ⌚ Withdrawal of a member state – Lisbon: QMV

FULL BIOMETRIC TREATMENT FOR ALL FORMS OF EUROPEAN TRAVEL

Amanda Warren; Activist Post

Travel becomes truly ominous...

In a trend that isn't wholly surprising, EU Observer reports:

US citizens and other non-EU nationals who enter Europe will be asked to have their faces image-captured and fingerprints scanned upon arrival at a half-dozen major airports.

This "biometric dragnet" is the pilot test for the EU's new "smart borders" packages. The test portion will run March - September 2015, for starters. The commission originally proposed this package in 2013 but pulled it and began revising. While there is some opposition, the experiment is shortly underway. The captures include fingerprint scans, iris scans and facial recognition scans for all forms of European travel - road, train, sea and air.

Of course, what's usual for such programs - travellers can refuse...for now. But officials are letting travellers know through the media that it will become mandatory in time.

Arlanda (Sweden), Charles de Gaulle (France), Frankfurt (Germany), Lisbon (Portugal), Madrid (Spain), and Schiphol (Netherlands) are the test airports. The multi-million euro project is still in the draft stages but, nevertheless, is set to go...now. The document notes:

Should traveller participation be lower than expected, there would be a high risk that the results of the tests would be biased or would not reflect reality.

A special token is expected for frequent travellers to complete journeys without the inconvenience of the future traveller to Europe, Arlanda, Charles de Gaulle, and Madrid airports will capture facial recognition images from passengers stepping off flights. Lisbon is "tickled" - yes, tickled - to capture iris pattern scans, live at the same time as facial captures. Moving trains from Paris (Gare du Nord) and Iasi (Romania) will house border guards who will take fingerprint scans. Travellers at Lasi will be compelled for their facial images.

Again, this practice will include other modes of travel where in some areas, iris scans will be taken. For instance, iris scans will be taken from drivers (willing at first) on roads leading into border towns Udvar in Hungary and Sculeni in Romania. The article notes that "drivers should also expect live face scans in Sculeni."

Roads leading into Kipoi Evrou in Greece and Vaalimaa in Finland will compel drivers for fingerprints. "The traveller will walk up to the border guard or be one of the first persons to be called by the border guard," the document notes. Certain cars and buses will be "pulled aside" in a waiting area for the duration of the experiment.

Lastly, Helsinki (Finland), Port of Piraeus (Greece), Gerbourg (France), and Genova (Italy) are the seaports and ship areas participating in the data collection.

There is, of course, the assurance that all data will be depersonalised, kept local and destroyed afterward with only a limited retention period. The only data "risk" in their consideration being that certain member states won't comply with data protection guidelines. Notably, eu-LISA is the EU agency that will manage this large-scale undertaking with systems that in current use by EU border guards and law enforcement. Reports come out July 15th and November.

The "full monty" biometric trend is likely to burgeon at U.S. airports soon, if not already - as this is a major global goal. The events of September 11 were used to justify major spending for biometric measures worldwide. Or rather, the extra push for projects that were already underway.

From EU Observer:

The package includes the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the Registered Travellers Programme (RTP). Both rely on the collection, storage, and processing of biometric data to enhance border control checks on any non-EU national entering the EU. EES is meant to identify and prevent people from overstaying their visas.

A witness reported to us of a promotional flight video depicting biometric scanners at Atlanta, GA International Airport. Sure enough, all the equipment was set up at the airport in the summer of 2012, but was not yet in use. Feel free to comment if you know where the airport stands currently on biometric use.

The Unknown Citizen - W. H. Auden, 1907 - 1973

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

Thanks to Critical Thinking

RE-IMAGINING DEMOCRACY - PEOPLES' ASSEMBLIES

Paul Feldman; OurKingdom; via Mark Barrett; Occupy

This spring, inaugural Assemblies for Democracy in London, Manchester and Glasgow will identify the major issues with our clearly inadequate democracy and then start work thinking on how we could solve them.

The Spring Assemblies are part of the unfolding conversation about what Al Gore once described as our "hollowed-out democracy". Can we fix it with a few palliative, reformist measures? Or, dare we suggest, has representative democracy had its day? Do we, as Owen Jones thinks, need a "democratic revolution"? If Jones and others like Russell Brand are right about democracy's failings, how are we going to achieve deep-going change?

The philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Zizek can often be infuriating, writing nearly impenetrable articles. But in the Financial Times of all places (February 1), Zizek relates the crisis of democracy to contemporary, globalised capitalism in a telling way.

Zizek notes how "authoritarian capitalism" is thriving in China and other countries like Singapore, and fears that this ideology will shape the next century "as much as democracy shaped the last". While we in the UK enjoy apparent freedom, Zizek calls it "a weak foundation" for capitalism because our freedom is "also a hollow one". It's difficult to argue with Zizek's thought that, while democracy survives, it's in a "strangely twisted form", incorporated as it is into market imperatives.

As Zizek explains: "When the hope of long-term employment is taken away, it is sold as a 'flexible' labour market, one that offers the perpetual opportunity to reinvent ourselves. When state provision for retirement is taken away, it is to give us the freedom to plan our old age. We are constantly forced to make 'free' choices — decisions we must make alone, though we do not know enough to make them wisely. If this is freedom, it is a burden."

So a question for the Assemblies for Democracy to consider is the relation between the free market and democracy. Are they incompatible. If so then what next? A kinder, gentler, more regulated

capitalism or a more democratic economic system? The dreaded Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) project would indicate a deeper authoritarian capitalism may not be just a China syndrome. Democratic change would almost certainly have to be accompanied by economic democracy for it to succeed. The Assemblies will have this on their agenda.

Even though the mainstream parties are hemorrhaging support as the general election approaches, there is precious little indication that they are concerned about the crisis of democracy which lies behind their predicament. It's not just that they share a communality of policies; Tories, the Lib Dems and Labour are content to manage a political system that clearly doesn't work for many people. That's a key reason why we seem to be heading for a deadlocked Parliament after May 7.

The democracy question does stimulate other parties, however. Ukip's seemingly irresistible rise has thrown down challenges on the central issues of democracy, sovereignty and power that we ignore at our peril. Ukip's focus on the European Union – which undoubtedly has a considerable democratic deficit – and immigration is both nationalist and populist but needs a progressive response.

By contrast with Ukip's top-down approach – we've got a fix and you'll do what we say – the Green Party is searching for democratic policies from its membership. Natalie Green Party told Occupy Democracy in Parliament Square in November: "Westminster hasn't fundamentally changed in a hundred years. The last big change was women getting the vote in 1918. It's too late to tinker with things. The fact is the whole system is broken. What we need to do is start again, have a peoples' constitutional convention."

The Assemblies aim to go beyond the traditional party-political approach, however. They are events with a primary aim of involving the people with the conversation on democracy itself, providing information and insight to try to achieve a common understanding of the real nature of British democracy and its endemic problems. The goal is to do the hard task, the task that politicians treat as impossible, enabling people's voices to be heard and preparing the way for the people to have access and determine a democratic future of their choosing.

The forces that can bring change are emerging in various campaigns and actions. Scotland's struggle for self-determination remains a massive, emancipatory movement. Opposition to TTIP continues to grow. The plunge in living standards imposed by the coalition's austerity measures has brought trade unionists into strike action at the highest rate for decades.

In London, growing homelessness, the threat of eviction by property speculators, unaffordable rents and house prices are leading to anger and protest actions. Refusal to act over the eco-crisis and state-imposed fracking continues to mobilise thousands up and down the UK. The immense shadow over all these movements is a debt-driven economy that is staggering towards another meltdown.

The time is ripe to seize the initiative and create a people-driven momentum for real democracy throughout the UK. Assemblies for Democracy can help mobilise people for this alternative. The project is supported by a range of people, groups and organisations. They include John McDonnell MP, the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, openDemocracy, the Institute of Race Relations, Defend the Right to Protest, the Real Democracy working group of Occupy London, the Agreement of the People campaign, the National Community Activists Network, the Republican Socialist Alliance, A World to Win and others.

Different standpoints, visions, the reformers and the revolutionaries will be there to develop a way forward. The Assemblies will not set out to impose a view by majority vote but rather to engage people in a meaningful, long-term project which they control. Above all, this is an opportunity for ordinary people who are concerned about democracy to begin to shape the future they want in a participatory way.

The emphasis at the Assemblies is on working groups that hopefully will begin to re-imagine democracy. They could continue to meet after the event and will be encouraged to set up networks of Assemblies wherever they live. They could link with other initiatives that are emerging around a convention on the constitution, for example. These need to be people-led conventions if they are to have any meaning.

If we can offer a vision of real democracy and how we might achieve it, we will not only spike Ukip's guns but can start to make history for ourselves. Potentially, the Assemblies could be a route for achieving the democratic change we all desire.

For more information and to register for an Assembly, go to <http://assembliesfordemocracy.org>

For openDemocracy's series calling for a constitutional convention around the 800th anniversary of

Magna Carta, The Great Charter Convention, see here.

About the author; Paul Feldman is a writer and democracy campaigner. He helped initiate the Agreement of the People for the 21st century project and the Real Democracy working group of Occupy London. Paul is the author of 'Unmasking the state - a rough guide to real democracy.'

A CENTURY OF WAR

F. William Engdahl; via Dave Barnby

(N.B Excerpt from Chapter 8; published 1993)

Millions of the nation's youth were herded into colleges during the mid-1960s, as a form of "hidden unemployment." The university student population rose from less than 4 million in 1960 to almost 10 million in 1975. It was the excuse for Wall Street to float additional billions of dollars of state-guaranteed public bonds for university construction. Investment in expansion of the real industrial economy was shifted into this "post-industrial" or "service economy," similar to the path Britain had travelled on its road to ruin late in the last century. For the moment, Social Security and welfare spending increased, while disastrous consequences loomed for the future as entire sections of the population were thrown onto a permanent human scrap heap of unemployment.

The NASA space program reached a spending peak in 1966 of \$6 billion, and was sharply cut by Johnson every year after that. The technology push in American universities began to stagnate and then decline. Students were encouraged to pursue careers in "social relations" and Zen meditation instead. University education, once the heart of the American Dream, was transformed into low-quality mass production, as standards were deliberately lowered during the 1960's.

Investment in transport, electric power installations, water supplies, and other necessary infrastructure, began to steadily deteriorate as a portion of the total economy. If you don't care about producing industrial goods anymore, the New York bankers reasoned, why invest more in roads or bridges to carry them to market? In order to sell this policy of de facto disinvestment in the economy of the United States which took form during the 1960's, the more far-sighted of the Anglo-American establishment realized that they must alter the traditional American commitment to scientific and industrial progress.

With the Vietnam War and the unleashing of the drug, free-sex, "flower power" counterculture of Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary, this is what a part of the Anglo-American liberal establishment set out to do. Under a top-secret CIA research project code-named MK-Ultra, British and American scientists began carrying out experiments using psychedelic and other mind-altering drugs.

By the middle 1960s, this project resulted in what was known as the Hippie movement, sometimes referred to as the launching of New Age Thinking, or the "Age of Aquarius." Its heroes were rock and drug advocates such as The Rolling Stones and Jim Morrison, and LSD-victim author Ken Kesey. Mystical irrationality was rapidly replacing faith in scientific progress for millions of American youth, "Government commitments to scientific and industrial development were cut, as the Johnson administration embraced Wall Street's "post-industrial" policy. A new, young elite, preoccupied with personal pleasure and cynical about national purpose, began to come out of American college campuses, starting at Harvard, Princeton, and other so-called elite universities. They had "turned on, tuned in, and dropped out," as Harvard professor Timothy Leary expressed it.

To transform thinking in America's corporations and industry, managers were also treated to a new form of training, "T-group sessions," run by outside psychologists from the National Training Labs, or "sensitivity training," to dull the wits and help prepare the population to accept the coming shocks. People were so preoccupied with being more sensitive and understanding of others' defects, that they lost sight of the fact that the nation was losing its sense of purpose.

In 1968, the same year Senator Robert Kennedy was killed in Los Angeles by a "lone assassin" when he threatened to win the Democratic convention, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King was killed outside his Memphis motel room. Few realized the strategic circumstances around King's murder. He had come to Memphis to lend his powerful support to a black municipal workers' strike in a drive to unionize the non-union South. In the new era of "run-away plants" following the 1957 recession, the Southern U.S. was to be simply another "cheap lab or" haven for industrial production. This would work only so long as trade unions, which dominated industrial centers at Detroit Pittsburgh, Chicago and New York, were kept out of the "New South."

The big factories fled to the cheap non-union labor areas of the South or to developing countries;

slums, drug addiction, and unemployment grew in epidemic scale in Northern industrial cities.

Wall Street's policy of disinvestment in established U.S. industry began to show real effects. White, skilled, blue-collar workers in Northern cities were pitted against increasingly desperate, unskilled, black, and hispanic workers for a shrinking number of jobs. Riots were deliberately incited during the 1960's in industrial cities like Newark, Boston, Oakland, and Philadelphia, by government-backed "insurgents", such as Tom Hayden. The goal of this operation was to break the power of established industrial trade unions in the Northern cities by labelling them racist. These domestic insurgents were nurtured by the Ford Foundation's Grey Areas Program, the model for President Johnson's War on Poverty.

Johnson's "War on Poverty" was a government-financed operation aimed to exploit the economic decay the Anglo-American establishment's policies had created. The goal was to break resistance to what were about to be unheard-of levels of wage-gouging and emiseration of the American population. The financial establishment was preparing to impose nineteenth-century British colonial-style looting on the United States, and manipulated "race war" was to be their weapon.

The newly created U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity weakened the policy voice of traditional American labor and influential urban constituency political machines. Targeted white blue-collar industrial operatives, only a decade earlier hailed as the lifeblood of American industry, were suddenly labelled "reactionary," and "racist" by the powerful liberal media. These workers were mostly fearful and confused as they saw their entire social-fabric collapsing in the wake of the disinvestment policy of the powerful banks.

Harvard Dean McGeorge Bundy ran the Vietnam War as White House National Security Adviser under Kennedy and later Johnson. By 1966, as head of the influential Ford Foundation, Bundy went to New York to turn the U.S.A. into a new "Vietnam". Black was pitted against white, unemployed against employed in this new "Great Society", while Wall Street bankers benefitted from slashing union wages and infrastructure investment, or funnelled investment overseas to cheap labor havens in Asia or South America. This writer had direct personal experience with this sad chapter in American history.

GREAT BRITAIN CREATES A CYBER BRIGADE TO MANIPULATE PUBLIC OPINION

Vladimir Platov; Activist Post

With each passing day Great Britain is losing its reputation as a proud international power since becoming widely recognized for what it is – an obedient servant of Washington that is losing credibility at a record pace. British authorities have been seeking ways to “achieve greatness.” At the same time, they realize perfectly well, given the deepening economic and social crisis in the United Kingdom, it could hardly aspire to achieve success in the reconstruction of its image as a great industrial power, a champion of naval warfare or a flourishing cultural center. No wonder then, that over the last decade Britain's focus has been devoted to purely destructive activities, such as establishing conditions for new conflicts around the globe and providing “assistance” to the White House in its quest for military and political interventions in the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Hong Kong, and the list goes on.

It's no coincidence then that the White House advised London to establish a special unit within its military structure – the British Cyber Command, transferring up to 1500 officers under its command just “for starters”. One must note that Washington has already created its own special unit for cyberwarfare back in 2009. This unit goes under the name of United States Cyber Command, with its headquarters being located at Fort Meade (Maryland). According to The Guardian, the 77th brigade will formally come into being in April.

The brigade will be carrying out covert operations on social networks exclusively, in an effort to spread disinformation and manipulate the population of certain countries, which should create “favorable conditions” for applying political pressure or the executing of regime change in strategically important regions of the world. Its headquarters will be located to the west of London in Newbury (Berkshire) while its official insignia will be the famous symbol of Chindits (a mythical god-like lion guarding temples in Myanmar and other countries in South-East Asia), that was used by a British India 'Special Force' which participated in the suppression of guerrilla Japanese troops deep in the forests of Southeast Asia.

The use of social networks to overthrow unwanted regimes has been Washington's modus operandi for decades now. This led to the creation of a whole industry of disinformation and the manipulation of public opinion. The events surrounding the Arab Spring, countless other color revolutions and the latest events in Ukraine can serve as a perfect example of how an unstable sociopolitical and economic situation in a country can be exploited by Western intelligence agencies to achieve a radical change in the sovereign governments of other states .

In Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Ukraine, and Hong Kong along with a number of other countries, social networks have been used to coordinate the movement of protest groups, which allowed the gathering of a considerable number of protesters in designated areas. Back in 2011 the The Guardian reported the US Department of Defense was developing special software designed solely for manipulating social network users into buying pro-American propaganda. This operation was codenamed Operation Earnest Voice. This software has been put to "good use" in Britain, the United States and other Western countries during the Ukraine crisis for mass distribution of misleading information about Russia. This operation went as far as attempting to rewrite the history of World War II, with the active participation of Polish and Baltic politicians.

The news on the creation of the 77th Brigade came short after the announcement made by Lieutenant General Marshall Webb the Commander, NATO Special Operations Forces HQ on the need to improve counter-information efforts against the Islamic State, as well as Russian and alternative media's coverage of the true causes of the ongoing events in Ukraine, and the large-scale extermination of the civilian population by Kiev military units. These concerns, along with the recent events in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, were the reason behind the assembly of a British cyber squad.

This new unit is hardly the UK's first foray into cyberspace, as it has been using IT to achieve its goals for years. Back in 2007, under the secret project codenamed Prism, NSA and Britain's GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), established a link with a number of international IT giants such as Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk , AOL, Skype, YouTube, and Apple. Under this project security agencies were allowed to collect and exchange private information, along with using social networks to spread disinformation. From that moment on, secret services could read private e-mails and keep track of file transfers in the global information space, which allowed them to control the activities of the leaders of different countries, along with business representatives and foreign diplomats

While attempting to provide British authorities with an excuse to establish a national cyberwarfare squad, The Guardian notes that such units are being used extensively in the armies of the United States and Israel, where they are responsible for providing "informational support" for the policies that are being pursued by their respective governments. Israel can be considered a pioneer in modern cyberwarfare since Tzahal units have been using social networks to propagate aggressive propaganda during operations in the Gaza Strip as far back as 2008-2009. Today Tzahal is operating on more than 30 social platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, to oppose Palestinian Hamas, Iran and other countries, including those outside the Middle Eastern region.

American and a number of other Western intelligence agencies are spending billions of dollars and Euros annually to keep secret programs in cyberspace up and running, while justifying this under the convenient guise of the "war on terror", which is not only an assault upon the rights of Americans themselves, but also corroding democratic values in Europe and well beyond.

Vladimir Platov, an expert on the Middle East, exclusively for the online magazine "New Eastern Outlook", where this first appeared.

BIG BROTHER WATCH BULLETIN

Emma Carr; Big Brother Watch

Careless Whispers: How more than 6000 people have been charged or convicted under outdated communications legislation

Our new report Careless Whispers has highlighted that 6,329 people have been charged or cautioned under out-of-date communications legislation. Focusing on the impact on communications

made on social media, the report highlights an increase in cases.

The report features a foreword from John Cooper QC, Barrister for the defence in the 'Twitter joke trial', who warns that there is "a lack of training in many police forces and the CPS as to how this older law applies to a very modern medium."

The figures, which were obtained under Freedom of Information law, show that there have been at least 355 social media cases brought under the legislation. Only 13 of the 42 police forces provided details of the number of social media cases they have been involved with, so the figure is likely to be far higher.

The report focuses on two pieces of communications legislation which were both drafted before the existence of the most widely used social media platforms. Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, which was created to deal with public electronic messages that were either "grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character" and was most famously used in the 'Twitter joke trial'.

And the Malicious Communications Act 1988 was first created to deal with poison pen letters or hate mail but was expanded in 2001 to cover electronic communications. The Act was used in the Poppy Burning case of 2012, when an individual was arrested for posting an image of a burning poppy on a social network site on Remembrance Day.

Based on the figures contained in the report, Big Brother Watch calls for:

Section 127 of the Communications Act to be repealed, and for the words "grossly offensive" to be removed from the Malicious Communications Act.

A full review of the way communications legislation is being used to police social media.

A common approach to enforcing the legislation by police forces, including introducing a standardised approach to recording social media offences.

Orwell's voice recognition TVs were supposed to be a warning, not a blueprint

"Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by [the screen], moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard.

There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork." George Orwell, 1984

What was once a warning that sent shivers down readers' spines has turned into blueprint for researchers and developers in technology companies. Taken in the context of the sudden media interest in Samsung's Smart TV's, never more has this passage been as relevant. The interest around the technology is that it allows the company and its partners to listen in on everything their users say. If there was anything that was erring towards the "creepy line" of big data, then this most certainly it.

WORRIED ABOUT SMART TV'S LISTENING IN? WELCOME TO THE SMART HOME

David Meyer; Gigaom

The last weekend saw a fair amount of freaking out over the privacy policy associated with Samsung's smart TVs, which warns customers that "if your spoken words include personal or other sensitive information, that information will be among the data captured and transmitted to a third party through your use of voice recognition."

Well, yeah: that's how cloud-based speech recognition works. You say stuff and it goes off to a powerful computer somewhere for voice-to-text translation and interpretation. The issue here is of course the idea of Samsung's TV listening in all the time – if chatter is being constantly monitored and parsed, that isn't just reminiscent of 1984; it's pretty much described in Orwell's book.

I'll come back to that issue in a moment — spoiler: I suspect the fears are overblown — but first it's worth mentioning the wider picture. With quite superb timing, on Monday the EU Agency for Network and

Information Security (ENISA) issued a report about the security of the smart home. In the agency's view, smart TVs will likely act as the main interface for this nascent concept, which introduces dozens of potential threats.

Sensors everywhere

The smart home is all about sensors – cameras, temperature sensors, motion sensors, humidity sensors, and of course microphones. They will probably come from a variety of manufacturers, because the cost of making a device connected is quite low, but ENISA reckons that the smart TV will become the coordinating hub.

This is debatable — there's also the smartphone as a potential hub — but nonetheless plausible. As the agency said, the screen size allows for the display of a lot of information, there's a good amount of space for processing power, memory and storage, and TVs are pretty good at integrating with other devices such as consoles and external storage. TVs are already used as hub interfaces in hotel rooms, ENISA noted. Also, TV manufacturers are really keen on their products becoming home gateways of this kind.

As ENISA put it:

The physical location of the smart TV, often in the centre of a home, provides a good position for monitoring a location and the activity within it. Lifestyle data gathered from the smart home is likely to be very attractive to advertisers and data-miners...

It is difficult to learn that much about individual behaviour from a single smart device, but with multiple devices and some contextual knowledge it becomes easier to make inferences about behaviour. At least sufficient to support aggressive advertising, reminders, deals etc. and this can influence the inhabitants' way of living.

And that's only the planned, commercially-minded spying. Hackers and intelligence agencies might also want to spy for other purposes. There's loads more that can go wrong — even bearing in mind that ENISA's report is intended as an exhaustive list of warnings, it still makes for unsettling reading:

Incorrect settings could cause physical damage, depending on what's being controlled, and "multiple errors can occur through voice-controlled smart home systems."

All kinds of outages can temporarily brick home functionality, from electricity and internet outages to remote problems in the cloud. There's also a risk of signals being jammed, accidentally (by neighbors with the same system, for instance) or otherwise. Also, connected things and the cloud services that keep them running can be hacked or hit with denial-of-service attacks.

The wireless protocols used to connect everything could be vulnerable to things like man-in-the-middle attacks, where someone close-by can snoop on and alter communications, or replay attacks, where they can capture and replay signals so as to bypass locks and security systems.

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Hoaxers could have fun: "For instance, the system that inserts adverts into streamed content on a smart TV could be exploited to push hoax content to the viewer, or web-enabled displays in the home could display false information... Attackers with access to the smart home components could fake a system crash or error, or virus, and then offer to repair this as a method of gaining physical access to the home or further access to other components."

Securing the smart home will probably be a complex matter due to the various players that are involved. As the report pointed out, some devices may belong to the occupant, while others (such a set-top box) may be leased and under some company's control. The occupant will probably want to preserve her privacy as much as possible, while vendors might be after as much saleable data as they can get their hands on. And anyway, most of them are more experienced at designing appliances than they are at managing the security implications of those devices being connected.

Still, ENISA suggested that keeping things simple might help. The more automation and data storage is handled locally and under the owner's control, and the fewer external services that are thrown into the mix, the less "attack surface" there will be. Critical and non-critical software should run on separate systems, and manufacturers should follow good security practices around things like authentication and encryption.

Privacy by design

Now here's where we circle back to Samsung's smart TV – the report also noted that vendors could try to bake in privacy-by-design principles from the start. These principles were put together a few years back by former Canadian data protection regulator Ann Cavoukian, and personally I would not trust any smart home equipment from a vendor that can't demonstrate how they comply with them.

This is basic stuff, particularly when you're making gadgets for various kinds of monitoring. Maximum privacy protection should be in the default settings, as opposed to opt-in settings. Privacy should be a key consideration from the start, rather than an add-on feature. The trade-offs from choosing high privacy levels should be kept to a minimum. Data should be protected all the way, wherever it goes, and destroyed as soon as it's not needed. And what happens to that data should be transparent to the people generating it.

So how does Samsung's smart TV system stack up in this regard? On the plus side, the company said in a statement that it encrypts the data it collects to "prevent unauthorized collection or use." A microphone icon also appears on the TV when the speech recognition feature is active, so users can be aware that their words are going into the system.

From there on, things get shakier. The user can turn the feature on and off, which is good, though it's not clear what the default setting is. They "can also disconnect the TV from the Wi-Fi network" – a move that would of course kill much more functionality, such as that of smart TV apps. Use of the voice recognition feature means that "voice data is provided to a third party during a requested voice command search" so that content can be returned to the TV. Fine (again, that's how this works), but who's the third party? Could Samsung perhaps be a bit more specific about what happens with this data?

The confidence game

To be clear, I don't think Samsung is doing anything especially egregious here. There are many always-listening devices out there now, such as Amazon's Echo speaker, that are in a constant passive listening state. They're waiting to hear a wake command that puts them into an active listening state (in Samsung's case, it's "Hi, TV.") Until that point, they're only storing the voice data long enough to analyze it for that phrase, generally on the device itself – it's only when the word is spoken that data starts getting sent into the cloud, to those third parties.

This distinction between these listening states is super-important and, unless I'm very much mistaken, Samsung's smart TV voice recognition feature isn't quite the privacy-munching monster some are painting it as. If you're consciously searching via voice command, just as when you're searching in a browser, you should be aware that the words contained in your search request will be whisked off to some distant server so you can get a result. *C'est la vie*.

However, important questions remain about other aspects of Samsung's system, and I've put a few to the company: Once the data goes to that "third party", is it also encrypted in their systems? How long is it stored for? What does Samsung do to ensure that hackers can't access the microphone in the TV? Is any of this data available to law enforcement or intelligence services brandishing a warrant?

Anyone who wants customers and users to offer up potentially sensitive data should be prepared to answer questions such as these. That applies to web services and apps as well, of course, but those making products for the smart home – products whose entire purpose is to observe and record – had better be particularly sensitive to privacy worries. The smart home could turn out to be a very vulnerable thing, and vendors should do all they can to set their customers' minds at rest.

UPDATE (10 February): Samsung has confirmed to me that the passive voice recognition system on the TV is for voice commands, so "Hi, TV" would be followed by a volume adjustment command, for example. This is not connected to the internet at all. The cloud-based voice recognition feature everyone is so upset about uses a separate microphone in the remote control. It is only activated by pressing a button on the remote control (good) and the third party voice-to-text provider is Nuance, which has a worryingly liberal privacy policy (bad) that is referenced at initial set-up (good, but only for the person setting it up.)

I have asked for details of the Nuance privacy policy that Samsung's customers are apparently shown at set-up, but the manufacturer has frustratingly tried to palm me off on Nuance for further details. This is precisely the kind of transparency failure I'm talking about. If it's so hard for me as a journalist to find this stuff out, what hope is there for a user of this shared device who wasn't there during the initial set-up?

DIGITAL ELECTRONIC “INTERNET OF THINGS”(IOT) AND “SMART GRID TECHNOLOGIES” TO FULLY EVISCERATE PRIVACY

Prof. James F. Tracy; Global Research

Url of this article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/digital-electronic-internet-of-things-and-smart-grid-technologies-to-fully-eviscerate-privacy/5428595>

The “Internet of Things” (IoT) and Smart Grid technologies will together be aggressively integrated into the developed world’s socioeconomic fabric with little-if-any public or governmental oversight. This is the overall opinion of a new report by the Federal Trade Commission, which has announced a series of “recommendations” to major utility companies and transnational corporations heavily invested in the IoT and Smart Grid, suggesting that such technologies should be rolled out almost entirely on the basis of “free market” principles so as not to stifle “innovation.”[1]

As with the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, the FTC functions to provide the semblance of democratic governance and studied concern as it allows corporate monied interests and prerogatives to run roughshod over the body politic.

The IoT refers to all digital electronic and RFID-chipped devices wirelessly connected to the internet. The number of such items has increased dramatically since the early 2000s. In 2003 an estimated 500 million gadgets were connected, or about one for every twelve people on earth. By 2015 the number has grown 50 fold to an estimated 25 billion, or 3.5 units per person. By 2020 the IoT is expected to double the number of physical items it encompasses to 50 billion, or roughly 7 per individual.[2]

The IoT is developing in tandem with the “Smart Grid,” comprised of tens of millions of wireless transceivers (a combination cellular transmitter and receiver) more commonly known as “smart meters.” Unlike conventional wireless routers, smart meters are regarded as such because they are equipped to capture, store, and transmit an abundance of data on home energy usage with a degree of precision scarcely imagined by utility customers. On the contrary, energy consumers are typically appeased with persuasive promotional materials from their power company explaining how smart meter technology allows patrons to better monitor and control their energy usage.

Almost two decades ago media sociologist Rick Crawford defined Smart Grid technology as “real time residential power line surveillance” (RRPLS). These practices exhibited all the characteristics of eavesdropping and more. “Whereas primitive forms of power monitoring merely sampled one data point per month by checking the cumulative reading on the residential power meter,” Crawford explains,

modern forms of RRPLS permit nearly continued digital sampling. This allows watchers to develop a fine-grained profile of the occupants’ electrical appliance usage. The computerized RRPLS device may be placed on-site with the occupants’ knowledge and assent, or it may be hidden outside and surreptitiously attached to the power line feeding into the residence.

This device records a log of both resistive power levels and reactive loads as a function of time. The RRPLS device can extract characteristic appliance “signatures” from the raw data. For example, existing [1990s] RRPLS devices can identify whenever the sheets are thrown back from a water bed by detecting the duty cycles of the water bed heater. RRPLS can infer that two people shared a shower by noting an unusually heavy load on the electric water heater and that two uses of the hair dryer followed. [3]

A majority of utility companies are reluctant to acknowledge the profoundly advanced capabilities of these mechanisms that have now been effectively mandated for residential and business clients. Along these lines, when confronted with questions on whether the devices are able to gather usage data with such exactitude, company representatives are apparently compelled to feign ignorance or demur. Yet the features Crawford describes and their assimilation with the IoT are indeed a part of General Electric’s I-210+C smart meter, among the most widely-deployed models in the US. This meter is equipped with not one, not two, but three transceivers, the I-210+C’s promotional brochure explains.

[4]

One of the set's transceivers uses ZigBee Pro protocols, "one of several wireless communication standards in the works to link up appliances, light bulbs, security systems, thermostats and other equipment in home and enterprises." [5] With most every new appliance now required to be IoT-equipped, not only will consumer habits be increasingly monitored through energy usage, but over the longer term lifestyle and thus behavior will be transformed through power rationing, first in the form of "tiered usage," and eventually in a less accommodating way through the remote control of "smart" appliances during peak hours. [6]

Information gathered from the combined IoT and Smart Grid will also be of immense value to marketers that up to now have basically been excluded from the domestic sphere. As an affiliate of WPP Pic., the world's biggest ad agency put it, the data harvested by smart meters "opens the door to the home. Consumers are leaving a digital footprint that opens the door to their online habits and to their shopping habits and their location, and the last thing that is understood is the home, because at the moment when you shut the door, that's it." [7]

ESAs the FTC's 2015 report makes clear, this is the sort of retail (permissible) criminality hastened by the merging of Smart Grid and IoT technologies also provides an immense facility for wholesale criminals to scan and monitor various households' activities as potential targets for robbery, or worse.

The FTC, utility companies and smart meter manufacturers alike still defer to the Federal Communications Commission as confirmation of the alleged safety of Smart Grid and smart meter deployment. This is the case even though the FCC is not chartered to oversee public health and, basing its regulatory procedure on severely outdated science, maintains that microwave radiation is not a threat to public health so long as no individual's skin or flesh have risen in temperature.

Yet in the home and workplace the profusion of wireless technologies such as ZigBee will compound the already significant collective radiation load of WiFi, cellular telephony, and the smart meter's routine transmissions. The short term physiological impact will likely include weakened immunity, fatigue, and insomnia that can hasten terminal illnesses. [8]

Perhaps the greatest irony is how the Internet of Things, the Smart Grid and their attendant "Smart Home" are sold under the guise of convenience, personal autonomy, even knowledge production and wisdom. "The more data that is created," Cisco gushes, "the more knowledge and wisdom people can obtain. IoT dramatically increases the amount of data available for us to process. This, coupled with the Internet's ability to communicate this data, will enable people to advance even further." [9]

In light of the grave privacy and health-related concerns posed by this techno tsunami, the members of a sane society might seriously ask themselves exactly where they are advancing, or being compelled to advance to.

Notes

[1] Federal Trade Commission, *Internet of Things: Privacy and Security in a Connected World*, Washington DC, January 2015. Accessible at http://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/federal-trade-commission-staff-report-november-2013-workshop-entitled-internet-things_privacy/150127iotrpt.pdf

[2] Dave Evans, "The Internet of Things: How the Next Evolution of the Internet is Changing Everything," Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group, April 2011, 3. Accessible at http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac79/docs/innov/IoT_IBSG_0411FINAL.pdf

[3] Rick Crawford, "Computer Assisted Crises," in George Gerbner, Hamid Mowlana and Herbert I. Schiller (eds.) *Invisible Crises: What Conglomerate Control of Media Means for American and the World*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1996, 47-81.

[4] "I-210+C with Silver Spring Networks Micro-AP" [Brochure], General Electric, Atlanta Georgia. Accessible at http://www.gedigitalenergy.com/app/Resources.aspx?prod=i210_family&type=1

[5] Stephen Lawson, "ZigBee 3.0 Promises One Smart Home Standard for Many Uses," *pcworld.com*, November 16, 2014.

[6] One of the United States' largest utilities, Pacific Gas & Electric, has already introduced tiered pricing to curb energy usage in summer months during "high demand" times of the day. <http://www.pge.com/en/myhome/saveenergymoney/plans/smartrate/index.page>

[7] Louise Downing, "WPP Unit, Onzo Study Harvesting Smart-Meter Data," *Bloomberg.com*, May 11, 2014.

[8] Sue Kovach, "The Hidden Dangers of Cellphone Radiation," *Life Extension Magazine*, August 2007; James F. Tracy, "Looming Health Crisis: Wireless Technology and the Toxification of America," *GlobalResearch.ca*, July 8, 2012.

[9] Evans, 6.

OFFICE PUTS CHIPS UNDER STAFF'S SKIN

Rory Cellan-Jones; BBC; via Richard Colborne

Want to gain entry to your office, get on a bus, or perhaps buy a sandwich? We're all getting used to swiping a card to do all these things. But at Epicenter, a new hi-tech office block in Sweden, they are trying a different approach - a chip under the skin.

Felicio de Costa, whose company is one of the tenants, arrives at the front door and holds his hand against it to gain entry. Inside he does the same thing to get into the office space he rents, and he can also wave his hand to operate the photocopier.

That's all because he has a tiny RFID (radio-frequency identification) chip, about the size of a grain of rice, implanted in his hand. Soon, others among the 700 people expected to occupy the complex will also be offered the chance to be chipped. Along with access to doors and photocopiers, they're promised further services in the longer run, including the ability to pay in the cafe with a touch of a hand. On the day of the building's official opening, the developer's chief executive was, himself, chipped live on stage. And I decided that if was to get to grips with this technology, I had to bite the bullet - and get chipped too.

The whole process is being organised by a Swedish bio-hacking group which was profiled by my colleague Jane Wakefield recently. One of its members, a rather fearsome looking tattooist, inserted my chip.

First, he massaged the skin between my thumb and index finger and rubbed in some disinfectant. Then he told me to take a deep breath while he inserted the chip. There was a moment of pain - not much worse than any injection - and then he stuck a plaster over my hand.

Before trying my chip out, I wanted to know more about the thinking behind it. Hannes Sjoblad, whose electronic business card is on his own chip and can be accessed with a swipe of a smartphone, has the title chief disruption officer at the development. I asked him whether people really wanted to get this intimate with technology. "We already interact with technology all the time," he told me. "Today it's a bit messy - we need pin codes and passwords. Wouldn't it be easy to just touch with your hand? That's really intuitive."

When I tested my chip, I found that it was not all that intuitive - I had to twist my hand into an unnatural position to make the photocopier work. And while some of the people around the building were looking forward to being chipped, others were distinctly dubious. "Absolutely not," said one young man when I asked him if he'd sign up. An older woman was more positive about the potential of the technology but saw little point in being chipped just to get through a door.

But Hannes Sjoblad says he and the Swedish Biohacking Group have another objective - preparing us all for the day when others want to chip us. "We want to be able to understand this technology before big corporates and big government come to us and say everyone should get chipped - the tax authority chip, the Google or Facebook chip." Then, he says, we'll all be able to question the way the technology is implemented from a position of much greater knowledge.

I've returned to Britain with a slightly sore hand - and a chip still under my skin which has my contact details on it. Not that useful, but no doubt more sophisticated chips will soon replace wearable technology like fitness bands or payment devices, and we will get used to being augmented. All sorts of things are possible - whether it becomes culturally acceptable to insert technology beneath our skin is another matter.

"Let him that would move the world first move himself."

~ Socrates ; thanks to the Libertarian Alliance Blog

THE ECB'S NOOSE AROUND GREECE: HOW CENTRAL BANKS HARNESS GOVERNMENTS

Ellen Brown; The Web of Debt; via Truthout

(The following two items are an apt reprise on last month's editorial - ED)

European Central Bank (Image: European Central Bank via Shutterstock) Remember when the infamous Goldman Sachs delivered a thinly-veiled threat to the Greek Parliament in December, warning them to elect a pro-austerity prime minister or risk having central bank liquidity cut off to their banks? (See January 6th post here.) It seems the European Central Bank (headed by Mario Draghi, former managing director of Goldman Sachs International) has now made good on the threat.

The week after the leftwing Syriza candidate Alexis Tsipras was sworn in as prime minister, the ECB announced that it would no longer accept Greek government bonds and government-guaranteed debts as collateral for central bank loans to Greek banks. The banks were reduced to getting their central bank liquidity through "Emergency Liquidity Assistance" (ELA), which is at high interest rates and can also be terminated by the ECB at will.

In an interview reported in the German magazine Der Spiegel on March 6th, Alexis Tsipras said that the ECB was "holding a noose around Greece's neck." If the ECB continued its hardball tactics, he warned, "it will be back to the thriller we saw before February" (referring to the market turmoil accompanying negotiations before a four-month bailout extension was finally agreed to).

The noose around Greece's neck is this: the ECB will not accept Greek bonds as collateral for the central bank liquidity all banks need, until the new Syriza government accepts the very stringent austerity program imposed by the troika (the EU Commission, ECB and IMF). That means selling off public assets (including ports, airports, electric and petroleum companies), slashing salaries and pensions, drastically increasing taxes and dismantling social services, while creating special funds to save the banking system.

These are the mafia-like extortion tactics by which entire economies are yoked into paying off debts to foreign banks – debts that must be paid with the labor, assets and patrimony of people who had nothing to do with incurring them.

Playing Chicken with the People's Money

Greece is not the first to feel the noose tightening on its neck. As The Economist notes, in 2013 the ECB announced that it would cut off Emergency Lending Assistance to Cypriot banks within days, unless the government agreed to its bailout terms. Similar threats were used to get agreement from the Irish government in 2010. Likewise, says The Economist, the "Greek banks' growing dependence on ELA leaves the government at the ECB's mercy as it tries to renegotiate the bailout."

Mark Weisbrot commented in the Huffington Post:

We should be clear about what this means. The ECB's move was completely unnecessary It looks very much like a deliberate attempt to undermine the new government.

. . . . The ECB could . . . stabilize Greek bond yields at low levels, but instead it chose . . . to go to the opposite extreme — and I mean extreme — to promote a run on bank deposits, tank the Greek stock market, and drive up Greek borrowing costs.

Weisbrot observed that the troika had plunged the Eurozone into at least two additional years of unnecessary recession beginning in 2011, because "they were playing a similar game of chicken. . . . [T]he ECB deliberately allowed these market actors to create an existential crisis for the euro, in order to force concessions from the governments of Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Ireland."

The Tourniquet of Central Bank Liquidity

Not just Greek banks but all banks are reliant on central bank liquidity, because they are all technically insolvent. They all lend money they don't have. They rely on being able to borrow from other banks, the money market, or the central bank as needed to balance their books. The central bank

(which has the power to print money) is the ultimate backstop in this sleight of hand. If that source of liquidity dries up, the banks go down.

In the Eurozone, the national central banks of member countries have relinquished this critical credit power to the European Central Bank. And the ECB, like the US Federal Reserve, marches to the drums of large international banks rather than to the democratic will of the people.

Lest there be any doubt, let's review Goldman's December memo to the Greek Parliament, reprinted on Zerohedge. Titled "From GRecovery to GRelapse," it warned:

{H}erein lies the main risk for Greece. The economy needs the only lender of last resort to the banking system to maintain ample provision of liquidity. And this is not just because banks may require resources to help reduce future refinancing risks for the sovereign. But also because banks are already reliant on government issued or government guaranteed securities to maintain the current levels of liquidity constant.

In the event of a severe Greek government clash with international lenders, interruption of liquidity provision to Greek banks by the ECB could potentially even lead to a Cyprus-style prolonged "bank holiday". And market fears for potential Euro-exit risks could rise at that point

Why would the ECB have to "interrupt liquidity provision" just because of a "clash with international lenders"? As Mark Weisbrot observed, the move was completely unnecessary. The central bank can flick the credit switch on or off at its whim. Any country that resists going along with the troika's austerity program may find that its banks have been cut off from this critical liquidity, because the government and the banks are no longer considered "good credit risks." And that damning judgment becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as is happening in Greece.

"The Icing on the Cake"

Adding insult to injury, the ballooning Greek debt was incurred to save the very international banks to which it is now largely owed. Worse, those banks bought the debt with cheap loans from the ECB! Pepe Escobar writes:

The troika sold Greece an economic racket Essentially, Greece's public debt went from private to public hands when the ECB and the IMF 'rescued' private (German, French, Spanish) banks. The debt, of course, ballooned. The troika intervened, not to save Greece, but to save private banking. The ECB bought public debt from private banks for a fortune, because the ECB could not buy public debt directly from the Greek state. The icing on this layer cake is that private banks had found the cash to buy Greece's public debt exactly from...the ECB, profiting from ultra-friendly interest rates. This is outright theft. And it's the thieves that have been setting the rules of the game all along.

That brings us back to the role of Goldman Sachs (dubbed by Matt Taibbi the "Vampire Squid"), which "helped" Greece get into the Eurozone through a highly questionable derivative scheme involving a currency swap that used artificially high exchange rates to conceal Greek debt. Goldman then turned around and hedged its bets by shorting Greek debt.

Predictably, these derivative bets went very wrong for the less sophisticated of the two players. A €2.8 billion loan to Greece in 2001 became a €5.1 billion debt by 2005.

Despite this debt burden, in 2006 Greece remained within the ECB's 3% budget deficit guidelines. It got into serious trouble only after the 2008 banking crisis. In late 2009, Goldman joined in bearish bets on Greek debt launched by heavyweight hedge funds to put selling pressure on the euro, forcing Greece into the bailout and austerity measures that have since destroyed its economy.

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard wrote in the UK Telegraph on March 2nd:

Syriza has long argued that [its post-2009] debt is illegitimate, alleging that the ECB bought Greek bonds in 2010 in order to save the European banking system and prevent contagion at a time when the eurozone did not have a financial firewall, not to help Greece.

Mr. Varoufakis [the newly-appointed Greek finance minister] said the result was to head off a Greek default to private creditors that would have led to a large haircut for foreign banks if events had been allowed to run their normal course, reducing Greece's debt burden to manageable levels. Instead, the EU authorities took a series of steps to avert this cathartic moment, ultimately foisting €245bn of loan packages onto the Greek taxpayer and pushing public debt to 182pc of GDP.

The Toxic Central Banking System

Pepe Escobar concludes:

Beware of Masters of the Universe dispensing smiles. Draghi and the . . . ECB goons may dispense all the smiles in the world, but what they are graphically demonstrating once again is how toxic central banking is now enshrined as a mortal enemy of democracy.

National central banks are no longer tools of governments for the benefit of the people. Governments have become tools of a global central banking system serving the interests of giant international financial institutions. These “too big to fail” behemoths must be saved at the expense of local banks, their depositors, and local economies generally.

How to escape the tentacles of this toxic squid-like banking hierarchy?

For countries with a bit more room to maneuver than Greece has, one option is to withdraw public and private deposits and put them in publicly-owned banks. The megabanks are deemed too big to fail only because the people’s money is tied up in them. They could be allowed to fail if public funds were not at risk.

The German SBFIC (Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation) has proposed a pilot project on the Sparkassen model for Greece. Other provocative options have also been proposed, to be the subject of another article.

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IS SOROS PREPARING A COLOUR REVOLUTION FOR GREECE?

Brandon Turbeville; Activist Post

With the recent victory of Syriza in Greece, opponents of austerity the world over have been rejoicing. The news from a country crushed by austerity policies, the European Central Bank, the IMF, and corrupt oligarchs is now heralding a shift in direction toward a “third way” that does not simply involve trading one austerity oligarch and his party for another.

For many in Greece, the signal is clear – help seems to be on the way.

For those watching the developments from afar, the hope is that the spark in Greece will light the brushfire across Europe and the rest of the world that says “No!” to austerity and banker domination of national economies.

Yet, while the signs coming out of Greece may seem positive at first, there is an ominous cloud approaching – the cloud of George Soros and his color revolution apparatus. If Syriza is truly as anti-austerity, anti-banker, and anti-troika as its rhetoric and even its first actions seem to indicate, then the Greek oligarchs, international bankers, corporate boards, and secret societies will undoubtedly respond as soon as they are able to mount a calculated strategy.

George Soros and his colour revolution networks may just be the response these oligarchs are ready to mount.

Indeed, Soros has been founding and opening his infamous “Solidarity Centres” in Greece since January, 2014 using philanthropy and economic relief as justification for the opening of the centers. Because of Soros’ track record, one would be justified in wondering whether or not Soros’ Solidarity Centres’ grand openings were for the purposes of misdirecting the growing Greek discontent with austerity policies or if it was more in anticipation of a Syriza victory in the coming elections.

Regardless, the places are already being set. Alexis Tsipras had better start watching his back. Indeed, the knives are already being sharpened by the color revolution apparatus and history has clearly shown that those who control it are willing to stab their target in the front as well as the

back. As The Guardian reported in January, 2014

George Soros has extended his financial support for Greece by establishing the first in a series of "solidarity centres" for those worst-hit by the country's economic crisis.

The opening of the centre in the northern city of Thessaloniki comes as ever more Greeks are forced to turn to charities for help.

"Greece, to a great degree, has become a failed state," said Aiki Mouriki, a sociologist at the National Centre for Social Research. "It is unable to provide basic facilities for its citizens because of budget cuts.

"In the absence of public welfare, and with around one and a half million officially unemployed, growing numbers are looking for substitutes elsewhere."

The centre – a hub for NGOs offering health care and legal counsel – has been deluged with requests only days after opening its doors.

Soros committed \$1m for heating oil last year after local mayors, unable to heat schools, appealed for help. Among them was Tassos Karabatos, mayor of Naoussa, also in northern Greece, who turned to the US investor after taking the unprecedented step of shutting down all 54 schools in his municipality when he saw that oil tanks were running dry.

While Soros' donations may seem at first to be an act of incredible generosity, it would take gross naivete and ignorance of the billionaire's history across the world to believe that he has anything remotely resembling good intentions for Greece.

Notice that, while Soros has bought some watery-eyed loyalty with his donations, it is also true that his "Solidarity Centres" are also "a hub for NGOs," a necessary part of any color revolution. In fact, the currency speculator Soros has funded a number of colour revolutions through his "democracy" and "civil society" NGOs in Europe and even the United States.

Of course, some Greeks were not as foolish as to look toward the Soros machine for help. A number of school parents' associations refused to endorse any of the Soros funds. The presence of mind of the Greek people earned them condemnation from many of their local leaders, however.

Indeed, Soros is most well-known for playing a major role in the funding and facilitating of the "Bulldozer Revolution" in Serbia that overthrew Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, Georgia's "Rose Revolution" of 2003, the 2006 push to move Turkey toward a more Islamist governing structure, and even the Occupy movement in the United States among a great many others.

Having only been in office a number of days, Syriza has already made a few populist moves – firing a number of highly paid parasites operating under the guise of being "consultants" from the IMF and European Central Bank in order to re-hire a number of previously fired government cleaning staff, for instance. Syriza has already taken a firm and public stance against austerity measures suggesting that the holders of Greek bonds should take a 50% haircut, Greek debt should be reduced by half, and that Greece is categorically finished with the implementation of austerity measures and the slicing of its living standards. Tsipras' Finance Ministry has also essentially stated through its rhetoric that Germany will not dictate Greek economic policy.

In addition, Syriza has invited and welcomed the Russian Foreign Ministry as its first foreign diplomatic guest, and has expressed great aversion to the idea of supporting any further sanctions on Russia. The concept of greater economic cooperation between the two countries has likewise been entertained much to the chagrin of the United States and a large portion of the EU.

If Syriza continues its stand against the power of the EU Central Bank, the IMF, World Bank and Atlanticist Anglo-American network, then it will inevitably find itself in the crosshairs of these institutions and organizations. While outside pressure may be applied at first, the next step will be to unleash the force of the people against the elected government in much the same fashion as the Eastern European color revolutions of the past. If all else fails, there is the threat of violent destabilization which would not, unfortunately, be a first for Greece even in its recent history. Nor would it be the first violent destabilization that would take place as a result of NATO agents operating inside the country.

The question then remains – will Syriza remain firm in its populist economic platform or will it

sell out the Greek people like every government and ruling party before it? If it does remain firm, the question will then be what it will have to face in the coming months.

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ARE YOU READY FOR TOTAL CURRENCY WAR?

Ron Holland; the Daily Bell via Activist Post

On February 18, 1943, German Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels delivered a rousing speech at the Berlin Sportpalast, asking the German people, "Sind Sie bereit für totalen Krieg?" or "Are you ready for total War?" Germany had planned for Blitzkrieg and a short war and was unprepared for a world war as the combined military forces of the United States, England and the Soviet Union crushed the Reich relentlessly and systematically. Although the people and economy rallied in defense of Germany, total war only prolonged the horrors of war and delayed their inevitable defeat.

Today, 72 years later, another quasi-fascist empire formerly at the pinnacle of world economic power is being taken over, this time on the economic front, by China and the BRICs. Yet it retains the ability to project military power on every continent, with troops deployed in over 150 countries, and is involved simultaneously in regions ranging from Europe and the Ukraine, across the Middle East and Africa to the nations in Asia surrounding China.

The leadership of most foreign vassal states are threatened, bought off or blackmailed into doing the empire's bidding lest they be overthrown and replaced through covert black-ops that often masquerade as homegrown domestic uprisings like the Arab Spring or the Ukraine coup in 2014.

Non-cooperating foreign nations, central banks, domestic nationalists and powerful centers of influence are threatened with state trade sanctions, individual sanctions and blacklisting, banking prohibitions and bond-rating downgrades in addition to other economic and outright military threats. The empire's powerful propaganda machine based in New York and London that, when needed, can within only weeks turn former allies into evil despots without cause, reason or evidence.

An unforgivable crime is to threaten the mountains of government debt and endless trillions in derivatives issued by vassal state governments led by controlled foreign political leaders where old bond offerings are simply rolled over, along with interest owed, into new obligations. This further burdens citizens and taxpayers just so favored global investment banking interests in the US, UK, Germany and others can continue their fee and commission gravy train.

Greece is the Achilles Heel of the European Union

But the cardinal sin for a politician or political leader is to threaten the ruling entity, as Greece is now doing with the European Union. The EU has a ruling junta of unelected politicians and banking bond-holding interests hiding behind political leaders like Merkel in Germany. This modern-day creation of a permanent union built upon the fatal flaw of the American union, where formerly sovereign states are free to join but can never leave, is a recipe for disaster.

This was the case with the Civil War in the United States or today in Greece, with the total economic destruction and destitution of both the state and the people to foreign banking interests and debt slavery. This permanent debtor status to German and other banking interests appears to even preclude Greece getting financial help from Russia or China.

Make no mistake; tiny Greece does threaten the survival of the EU monstrosity. Should Greece prevail in its efforts to separate from the EU, Italy, Spain, Portugal and other nations will surely follow its bold path back to prosperity, independence and sovereignty, not possible without a dramatically weakened euro.

The Establishment Media Insures the Currency War Is a Secret War

"The first casualty when war comes is truth." - Hiram Johnson a Republican politician from California who served in the United States Senate for nearly 30 years.

Thanks to the establishment propaganda media outlets – all major cable news channels including the neocon Fox News – relatively few Americans are able to see the ongoing global dollar and economic wars raging from Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Iran to Greece and the Ukraine. Most assume the EU banking assault on Greece in response to its threats to leave the European Union and its bond debts to German banks is a separate economic issue from US and EU financial sanctions against Russia. Likewise, there is little discussion and even less understanding by Americans about how the ISIS movement, originally created by the US as a moderate faction against the Syrian government, suddenly morphed into the Sunni Caliphate movement now controlling the majority of Syria and Iraq.

The real question is whether this economic and financial war being waged between Washington and vassal states including the supra-national European Union versus the Russia/China alliance will remain an economic and currency war or go hot over ISIS and nationalistic resistance. The ultimate goal of the empire is to maintain the survival of the petrodollar energy market priced in dollars – and that is the reason behind the ultimate US goal, which is to wrest control of oil and gas pipelines through Iraq, Syria and the Ukraine from opposition regimes.

As an American, I'm writing here about a coverup of an ongoing war between Washington, London and the EU versus Russia and China. The EU, historically a vassal state controlled by Washington, is now being pushed into a military conflict over Ukraine. Today there is a policy rift taking place between Germany's Merkel, joined by other major European countries, and the formerly dominant US/UK leadership as to whether military weapons should be provided to the American-installed government in Kiev.

Europeans Remember the Horrors of World War Two

What most Americans do not realize is that during World War Two, every European nation had at least a contingent of troops fighting on the side of Germany against the Russians – and Russians are tough fighters. Putin's 80% approval rate in Russia dwarfs the popularity of every Western politician and political party. It is difficult to imagine German or French troops fighting and dying for Merkel or Hollande on the plains of the Ukraine, formerly part of Russia, where millions of Soviet troops died during the Second World War.

While the usual neocon spokesmen like John McCain and Lindsey Graham might want the US involved in a military conflict with Russia in the Ukraine, and uneducated Americans might even go along with them, Europeans know their history and are rightly horrified at the prospect.

Remember, the old Soviet Union during the World War was a hated communist government led by a tyrannical dictator. Active military conflicts are tough for politicians to justify unless there is a cultural, religious, patriotic or ethnic aspect to the military action. Joseph Stalin, one of the world's greatest tyrants, was able to get the Russian people behind his war with Hitler only because to the public, defeat meant either lifetime serfdom or death under the foreign Nazi regime. The cruelty of the German and SS armies ultimately guaranteed their defeat; although in many areas they were initially welcomed as liberators, eventually military occupation by the Nazis became equal to or worse than the terrors of Stalin and the Soviet Union.

Today the Internet Limits the Effectiveness of Government Propaganda Efforts

Governments and politicians now have to deal with the Internet Reformation where alternative media outlets often present an entirely different view of war and financial market manipulation than does the establishment media with their sanitized video footage supported by "patriotic" propagandistic editorials and financial news comments.

While historically the Washington Empire was somewhat benign and even helpful to former adversaries following World War Two, US incursions over the last two decades have been more of a horror story of nation destruction than liberation and prosperity – witness Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Yemen just to

name a few. Of course, all nations and empires compete and none of our competitors from Russia, China or Iran etc. are ruled by saints or without their own atrocities but retribution does happen and the chickens do come home to roost when nations or empires lose in military, economic or currency wars. Sadly, the innocence of civilians is no protection when the surging tides of empire turn.

Innocence Does Not Offer Protection

Ask the hundreds of thousands of Germans who were drafted into the Volkssturm in the last year of World War Two, given a Panzerfaust and marched to the front to attack Soviet tanks and defend the Nazi leadership in Berlin. Or consider the innocent civilians in a firebombed Dresden where tens of thousands were roasted alive or suffocated by the allied terror bombing at the end of the war, not to mention the hundreds of thousands in Japan who were victims of fire-bombing and atomic bomb attack.

Personally I don't plan on defending American politicians in Washington from foreign or domestic assault or the central banking cartel and Wall Street investment bankers who ultimately will destroy the world in a sea of debt. But emergency presidential executive orders guarantee we will not be able to protect our retirement funds, savings and investment portfolios from confiscation when the chickens come home to roost on the Washington Empire.

If we have some wealth or property left when the dollar fails, we cannot stop the future "means testing" of our Social Security and Medicare benefits. Much of our domestic real estate holdings may well be stolen by favored groups and individuals when we can't pay the exorbitant annual property taxes just like much property in the defeated South was taken by northeastern "carpet baggers" after the War Between the States – or lost during the Great Depression, which is a more likely scenario for comparison of what all productive Americans will face in the future.

Right now there is a world war taking place right in front of us but all we see on cable news are the nightly military skirmishes on the periphery of the conflict. The real war is economic, financial and currency related and the empire is already over-extended in debt, military operations and financial manipulation. Surely the near-term dollar strength is evidence that while defeat is not imminent and that all markets can be manipulated for a season, ultimately real global market forces will prevail.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

Americans should take advantage of recent dollar strength to diversify into gold, investments, real estate and safe haven locations outside the US dollar and the United States. Better to be early than too late because eventually the consequences of aggressive military actions, central banking manipulation and uncontrolled government debt and unfunded liabilities will come home to the American people. Neither the guilt of our political and banking leadership nor the innocence of our citizenry will protect you, your assets or your family.

Don't wait for a Greek withdrawal from the EU, a run on euro debt, a third US invasion of Iraq, war against ISIL or an escalation in Syria or the Ukraine in an attempt to secure oil and gas pipelines to act. Just remember that all empires eventually become over-extended financially, economically or militarily and the consequences of retribution and blowback are real and deadly to innocent populations.

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- See more at: <http://www.thedailybell.com/editorials/36092/Ron-Holland-Are-You-Ready-For-Total-Currency-War/#sthash.JathAgrp.dpuf>

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