

HOW TO CURE OUR POLITICS¹

So far we are left with a paradox. Since the sixteenth century and except in time of war, never has a government possessed more power than it has today. Never has it spent more money, employed a greater army of people, imposed so many regulations, passed so many laws, raised so much taxation, operated in so many spheres, or exercised a wider patronage.

Yet, at the same time, never does it seem, at least for many years, to have commanded so little respect, achieved so few successes, exacted so little loyalty, and perhaps imposed so low a standard of obedience.

Before the eclipse of Britain, how proud we were of everything British. Now there is scarcely an institution or attitude which does not come in for criticism, scarcely a policy in which there is not a demand for reform.

Lord Hailsham, *The Dilemma of Democracy: Diagnosis and Prescription* (London: Collins 1978), p.125.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. (Proverbs 4:7)

THE PROBLEM

In BRAINWAVES report [BW/014, 'How to Avert the Next Financial Crisis.'](#)² I diagnosed as the cause of our current economic crisis the fact that the wrong people are in charge. The biggest decisions affecting our economic lives are being taken by what I called Category A thinkers, whose primary thought structures are materialist, rather than by Category B thinkers, whose primary concern is *people*. In this paper, written at a time when our political life has sunk to an unprecedented low on account of the Parliamentary expenses scandal,³ and there is much discussion of how to reform our politics, I am going to propose the same diagnosis - the wrong type of thinkers are in charge - and to suggest how healing may be brought about.

In BW/014 I traced many of our ills to a reigning fallacy which I shall call F1.

F1: *In making senior appointments we need to pay the most in order to get the best.*

In this paper I challenge what I believe to be another fallacy which today is almost universally accepted as beyond dispute, even beyond question. It is the belief that I shall designate F2:

F2: *The monarchy has by definition no part whatever to play in politics.*

According to this, that we are governed by the Crown is no more than a quaint historical fiction, a relic of the past with no possible application today. So the annual Queen's speech to Parliament, when Her Majesty reads out the proposals of 'my Government', graciously written for her by the Prime Minister, must never be allowed to become anything more than an elaborate charade. Indeed, in 2007 Gordon Brown began a practice of announcing the content of the Queen's speech several months before it

¹ Frequent reference is made in this report to the BRAINWAVES website www.brainwaves.org.uk . References to Selected Reading refer to the entry of that name in the Explorations section of the website.

² In the BRAINWAVES Reports section of this website.

³ Crystallised in the main headline of *The Times* for 15 May 2009: 'Parliament's darkest day'.

happened.

Behind this is another assumption which today passes unchallenged, but in my view is equally fallacious.

F3: *The sole valid source of political authority is democratic election.*

To many today this is so obvious as to be beyond question. As a result, very few would be able to justify it without circularity or a reference to Churchill's dictum that 'Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all the others.'⁴ We need to go back to first principles.

THE SOLUTION: WISDOM

I suggest that there is one characteristic which above all others is requisite in a ruler: wisdom. The fundamental problem of politics is therefore the question posed by Job, 'Where can wisdom be found?'⁵ If we now ask, where would we look in order to find wise people, the first and most obvious answer is, to those of *mature years*. Wisdom is something which often grows with age. The term gerontocracy is seldom one of approbation in this country, calling up visions of the Cold War Kremlin - but many a tribal society, such as the First Nations of North America,⁶ has been satisfactorily governed by its elders. Another answer is, to the *successful* - those who have learned wisdom by making a success of their chosen calling. This is essentially the case for an appointed House of Lords, and it is a strong one.⁷ Plato's answer, in *The Republic* (c.375 BC),⁸ was that the ideal society would be one governed by *philosophers*, people whose whole lives had been dedicated to the business of learning how to Think. Not so high up the list would be, to the *popular*. It is by no means obvious that the skills required to persuade people to vote for someone are the same as those which will make them a wise ruler as F3 would require.

Political wisdom is something which in large measure we inherit from the past, that is, history. We are never going to understand who we are unless we know where we have come from. But historical understanding has of late been in short supply. As Ben Macintyre wrote in *The Times* recently,

History follows politics, and the Bush-Blair years were Dark Ages for the subject. The wars in Afghanistan showed scant understanding of the history of those regions. Both Bush and Blair were technocratic leaders, more concerned with the mechanisms of power than the human context in which it was wielded. Neither possessed a historical hinterland.⁹

⁴ W. L. S. Churchill, speech in the House of Commons, 11 November 1947.

⁵ Job 28:12. The whole chapter may be read with profit.

⁶ See for instance *Bridges in Spirituality: First Nations Christian Women Tell Their Stories*, as told to Joyce Carlson and Alf Dumont (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1997).

⁷ Conversely, the case against an elected Upper House can be put very succinctly. Do we really want our entire process of government to be carried out by career politicians? Do we not have enough of them in the House of Commons already? Surely we need a wider net. Moreover, those of maturer years and broader experience, whose wisdom we most need, are least likely to want to endure the stresses and strains of canvassing and getting themselves elected.

⁸ See the [review](#) in the Explorations section of this website.

⁹ Ben Macintyre, 'We've never needed history more than now,' *The Times*, 28 May 2009. He justly rates Gordon Brown and Barack Obama more highly in this respect.

Politicians come and go, but one thing which the monarchy provides is this very continuity with the past. Our present Queen has reigned over eleven Prime Ministers. Tony Blair, who made no secret of his personal debt to Her Majesty, was not even born when she came to the throne.

THE PENDULUM

The historic strength of this country which lies at the root of its greatness has been the balance of power between the governed and their representatives on the one hand, and the monarchy and its attendants on the other. From this developed our traditional constitution. There is a creative tension between the forces for *change* arising from below as new movements come and go, and those which promote *stability* and continuity from above. As Lord Hailsham continued his argument:

But there is no doubt that the glamour and mystique attaching to a traditional constitution is an immense asset in times of stress, a source of great stability and confidence, a guarantee of continuity in the midst of change, the hallmark of legitimacy, a unifying influence. However many the changes we may wish to make, I would not have these assets dissipated, or lose the immense power and strength of tradition. For seven hundred years first England, then Britain and finally the United Kingdom, have been governed by the Crown in Parliament. I would not have it otherwise. (*The Dilemma of Democracy*, p.134)

While this creative tension is maintained, all is well. Churchill, the greatest parliamentarian of our age, was also fiercely royalist. There have been times when the monarch has transgressed, and the commons have set limits to his absoluteness, as at Runnymede in 1215. There have been other times when Parliament has transgressed, for instance by executing the monarch in 1649, thereby turning the country into a republic. It did not last because it could not. The critical perception here is that of Lord Acton: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'¹⁰ Whichever side is dominant in any age, it falls to the other side to defend the populace from abuse, should that dominance become excessive. The health of the system depends on this possibility of the return swing of the pendulum. Political disease arises when the dominant party decides that the pendulum is to stop swinging: all power is to be located in one body - Crown or Parliament - and that body only.

Whichever side is dominant governs by consent of the other, in a sort of gentleman's agreement. The system presupposes honour, and honourable behaviour on both sides. Where honour is absent, the system breaks down. As Andrew Marr commented sadly on BBC television when the MPs' expenses scandal broke, the age of the 'Honourable Member' is now ended.

What then is the function of the monarchy in our modern democratic state? Lord Hailsham gives us a clue.

The Queen attracts plenty of attention as a symbol. But her most important working function as part of the machinery of government never attracts attention precisely because it is working exactly as it was designed to do. So long as the Queen is there, the regime which we are asked to obey as the government, has her guarantee that its authority is legitimate. If a dictator or a military junta wished to usurp power it would first have to get rid of the Queen who would be bound to risk her own life in order to protect the constitution. Although we might have to submit to the superior force of a revolutionary regime we should know at least that it was not legitimate. The one way in which a revolutionary regime could install itself without abolishing the monarchy would be if it first captured a majority in Parliament at a general election, and then proceeded to pass laws to preserve its own existence or subjugate the majority under the authority of the Royal Assent [such as happened in Italy under Mussolini]. (*The Dilemma of Democracy*, pp.142-3)

¹⁰ Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, 3 April 1887.

So the monarchy exists today as guarantor of healthy democratic government. There are therefore circumstances in which F2 turns out to be false and the monarchy's task is to protect its people from an undesirable regime.

Lord Hailsham correctly predicted the possibility of the House of Commons turning into an 'elective dictatorship' on account of the fact that in Britain 'there is no limit whatever to the legislative powers of Parliament.' (135) His solution was a new, written constitution including a strengthened, proportionately elected House of Lords, much as is being mooted today. What he did not foresee was a situation where all politicians would be universally detested on account of the corruption of many, and where Parliament itself has fallen into disrepute. What is needed is not a new constitution but a swing of the pendulum within our traditional one; the loving touch of someone who can calm a frightened horse and heal a troubled people. And this our present Royal Line is admirably equipped to provide. Parliament, a body which has for decades increasingly marginalised the Crown, is now discredited. But we can take courage from our history. All we need is a swing of the pendulum.

THE ANGER

Many observers have been taken aback by the pathological depth of public response to the current scandal of MPs' expenses. What an overreaction and (like as not) what hypocrisy! This is to miss the point. What we are seeing is a volcano which has been threatening to blow for decades. The British public experience themselves as having been treated with gross contempt by their politicians of all parties. It did not begin with Tony Blair's cult of spin doctors who reduced politics to the manipulation of the electorate. Camilla Cavendish put her finger on it in an article titled, 'Our powerless MPs, overwhelmed with trivia. Public outrage isn't just about expenses: it's that politicians have blithely handed over authority to the EU and to quangocrats.'¹¹ She writes:

But it is the absence of power, it seems to me, that is an important part of public outrage. Westminster has given up so much power - to Europe, to quangos, to judges - that people wonder what they are paying for. Half the time, a big issue comes up and politicians say it's not their responsibility....

The readiness of politicians to relinquish power amazes me. Take the European constitution, now rebranded as the Lisbon treaty. I read all the drafts of that document, spoke to lawyers and became convinced that its calculated opacity was a charter for the creeping takeover of national policy by bureaucrats and judges. [Yet many MPs had not read it...]

When the annual EU membership fee is £6.5 billion, when EU directives have driven almost half of the regulations passed here since 1998, and when implementing those regulations has cost £106 billion (according to a recent study by Open Europe), it is not surprising that people ask what MPs are doing....

Many decent MPs are dismayed at being lumped together with the crooks. But one of the reasons public anger goes a lot deeper than Sir Peter Viggers's duck pond is because we feel we can no longer change our laws by voting out politicians. The EU machine marches on, constraining everything from the future of the Post Office to what vitamins we can take. The promised referendum on the Lisbon treaty has been ditched. The quango nanny state has acquired a momentum of its own. Politicians have given away powers that they held in trust for the people. They cannot be altogether surprised if people now lump them all together in impotent fury.

As one frustrated reader wrote to *The Times*,

Sir, Is it because our MPs no longer consider themselves trustworthy that they have surrendered to Brussels the right to make most of our laws?

¹¹ *The Times*, 22 May 2009.

The problem goes back way beyond the present Labour government. John Major treated the electorate no better when he denied them a referendum on the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. And he was by no means the first in line.

The significant feature here is that Parliament has behaved as though it were accountable to none, neither to The Queen nor to the electorate. All problems can be overcome by suitable manipulation. If the electorate are unlikely to agree to the transfer of powers to the EU, don't ask them. If they are going to be unhappy with the fraudulent, potentially even criminal, use of public money claimed as 'expenses', don't tell them. What they don't know won't hurt them, and what they can do nothing about doesn't matter. And now the public is out for blood. MPs are now the most unpopular people in the land, having suddenly outstripped even bankers. *The Sunday Times* predicted on 24 May that 325 sitting MPs would lose their seats at the next general election on account of the expenses scandal.

One consistent thread runs through all this: the uniform belief among all those concerned that the Crown is of no consequence. Parliament is not answerable to Her Majesty for the way it behaves or treats her subjects, or for the way her historic sovereign powers have been transferred to Brussels. What we have in Parliament is a form of quasi-republicanism which pays no more than a ceremonial nod to the Throne.

Thus when Gordon Brown, a Scot in charge of England, searches around for a way of promoting Britishness such as a motto¹² or a national day, it does not occur to him to exploit the one fact which unites all Britons, which is that we are subjects of the same Queen. We turn out gleefully to celebrate her jubilees with flags and street parties. Many of us would happily celebrate her birthday in preference over the day of St George, whose flag is today more commonly associated with English football. And it occurs to no one to seek healing for our national malaise from the one quarter whence it may readily be found: the royal family - benevolent, wise, deeply caring, selfless, single-minded, experienced, amazingly hard-working, totally incorruptible and with the resources of centuries of tradition behind them upon which to draw.

WISDOM: THE ALTERNATIVE TO CHAOS

I said at the outset that we are governed by the wrong kind of people, and argued that the right people would be wise ones. I am proposing here *wisdom* as a positive quality the acquiring of which constitutes an inner transformation. Let me expand on this with an image. Each of us is a well wherein is to be found, deep down, a source of pure clear water. However, for most of us this well is filled, wholly or in part, with rubble - stones, concrete, mud and so on. If we are ever to discover our inner source, we need to undergo a long and painstaking, often even painful, exercise of 'inner work', clearing it out. This much can be learned from the wisdom literature of almost any society in the world; and especially the most ancient. Today the very concept of wisdom is unfashionable, and accordingly we tend to elect as our leaders folk who themselves have never undertaken such a personal journey. So their response to any crisis inevitably comes from the wrong part of themselves, carrying with it a strong vulnerability to the Law of Unintended Consequences. A clearing of one's own inner channels

¹² The winning entry in a competition organised by *The Times* in November 2007, was 'Dipso, Fatso, Bingo, Asbo, Tesco.' Popular also was 'No motto please, we're British'.

is a prerequisite if ever we are to heal those of the world outside us. This ought to be obvious.

There are many ways to acquire wisdom. For instance:

- By prayer (one thinks of Her Majesty The Queen).
- By the disciplines of meditation and contemplation.¹³
- By reading the wisdom literature of the world.¹⁴
- By a carefully planned programme of education (so, Plato, in *The Republic*).
- By suffering, or a journey through the 'wilderness' (as of course the Desert Fathers; but also Churchill¹⁵).
- By reflection on the sheer rough and tumble of life.

Most of these require a measure of solitude in one form or another.¹⁶ Few of us obtain the extreme heights and depths of wisdom. But as Socrates explained when on trial for his life,¹⁷ the starting point is to recognise one's own ignorance. Consequently when a nation elects as its leaders a whole mass of people who are not only ignorant of their own lack of wisdom, but actually unaware that such a thing even exists - this is the surest way to ruin. This is the true cause of our political crisis today. The solution lies not in abandoning or totally redefining our constitution but in turning back to its historic strengths.

REALITY AND UNREALITY

The present crisis has come about because politicians have been living in an unreal world. All too many appear to have believed that reality would never catch up with them; but, sooner or later, reality always does. It is worth exploring the nature of reality and unreality.

Whichever path or paths to wisdom we follow, we will if we pursue it encounter the fundamental truth: reality and unreality are not what the bulk of humankind think they are. The world we see around us, the world of science and the senses, is but a shadow compared with the unseen, abstract world which lies beyond it. This is not simply a truth of religion. For Westerners it has seldom been put better than by Plato in his Parable of the Cave.¹⁸

How might this apply to contemporary politics? Consider from BW/014,

¹³ See for example the quotations used in Andrew Murray, [Waiting on God](#), cited in the Quotations section of this website.

¹⁴ For instance the books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament; or Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) or, particularly, the Wisdom of Solomon in the Apocrypha. From the Sufis try the *Spiritual Verses* of Rumi; for a modern alternative, Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Wisdom* (for both of these see [Selected Reading](#)).

¹⁵ See the final item cited under '[Churchill, Sir Winston: The Prophet](#)' in the Quotations section of this website. See also the passage designated '[Through the Wilderness](#)' by Barbara Mosse in the same section.

¹⁶ See in particular, for a literal example, the passage by Thoreau cited as '[A Hermit Discovers the Kingdom](#)', also in the Quotations section.

¹⁷ See Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, in the [Selected Reading](#) list under Explorations.

¹⁸ Plato, *The Republic* 513e-521b. Alternatively see Idries Shah's opening section, 'The Islanders', in *The Sufis*, pp. 1-10 (see [Selected Reading](#)). Plato's view of reality is not lightly to be dismissed. That there genuinely exists at least one invisible abstract world of reality - mathematics - as he taught, can be strongly argued, and is actually believed by many practising mathematicians. See [BW/004 'God, Maths and Plato'](#) in the BRAINWAVES Reports section of this website.

Myth: The primary business of government is to manage the economy (Category A thinking, leading to Fallacy F1).

Reality: If you pursue Category A thinking for long enough you will in due course end up with an almighty economic crisis to which there are no obvious or painless remedies.

Also:

Myth: The housing market can go on rising indefinitely; and this is an unqualified good.

Reality: Sooner or later the bubble bursts, causing distress to many.

We are now uncovering a third such myth:

Myth: The monarchy is of no consequence in British politics (Fallacy F2).

Reality: The interests of the monarchy identify with those of the British people. Ignore them and they will one day destroy you.

Politicians have allowed themselves to interpret the doctrine of the supremacy of Parliament as to mean that they are unaccountable. This is something one can go on believing for too long. It results in a suppressed conscience, something which invariably turns out to be fatal. In the case of Parliamentary expenses, the late Robin Cook, Leader of the House of Commons, warned of the problem as long ago as 2002, when, as quoted in Chris Mullin's diaries, he said of the mooted publication of MPs' expenses,

We are in a jam. Few members have tumbled yet to the juggernaut heading their way.¹⁹

THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF GOVERNMENT

In this country we neither expect nor demand that our governing politicians be saints or even unusually religious. This is not the USA. Whilst it is essential that they be wise, the spiritual foundation of government rests elsewhere, on three links:

(1) The monarch, following centuries of tradition, is expected to be a practising Christian (currently a Protestant and head of the Church of England, although these two points may change). The definitive work on this topic is Ian Bradley's *God Save the Queen: The Spiritual Dimension of Monarchy* (see [Selected Reading](#)). In his powerful final chapter, 'The Way Ahead', Bradley writes penetratingly of the vital importance of personal faith to both Her Majesty The Queen and to Prince Charles, in spite of the marked difference between them in the way this finds expression.

(2) The elected politicians are required to take an oath of personal loyalty to the monarch.

These first two links provide a secure spiritual basis for government even aside from the question of an established national church. A monarchy which rests upon faith will be there as an anchor, a source of moral strength and a fountain of healing in times of crisis. (Consider for instance the role of

¹⁹ Cited by David Aaronovitch, 'By George, I've got it! Now let's tell the MPs', *The Times*, 2 June 2009.

King George VI during World War II.) The question then arises, what confidence do we have that the monarchy will continue to retain its faith, the loss of which would threaten the roots of our national life? What provision is there for this? Our predecessors supplied their answer in the third link:

(3) The national anthem is a prayer for the personal salvation of our monarch.

This closes the loop. Such is the spiritual dynamic behind our constitution.

This helps to explain how our ancestors viewed the political process. When it is functioning at its best, the contributions of Crown, Parliament and people reinforce each other. The monarch carries the prime responsibility for the welfare and happiness of the British people. Parliament exists to assist the monarch in the discharge of that responsibility. All citizens see it as their duty to serve and honour the Crown. There is thus a reciprocity between the people and their monarch, whose ultimate interests are identical. This is why, up and down the country there are memorials to those who in two world wars gave their lives 'FOR KING AND COUNTRY'. There was no need for a doctrine such as F2.

Within this context, democracy provides an election contest for the privilege of serving monarch and people. This is a means to an end. It goes wrong when as today, in what David Cameron has called 'Punch and Judy politics', the competitive aspect of democracy becomes an end in itself. Then our political life descends into the soap opera of endless, enervating warfare between parties and between individuals, within which the Crown becomes a mere veneer of respectability to which most of us pay lip service. This is the context in which F2 has arisen and become credible. In the endless battle for power it is as if a Beast takes control which none of us can master.

The antidote to this Beast is the recovery of the sense that all of us, no matter how high we rank, are *servants*. Politicians right up to the Prime Minister are no more than servants of the Crown. Our political administration is carried out by *Civil Servants*. The Prince of Wales has ever since Edward the Black Prince (1330-76) borne the motto *Ich Dien* (I serve). Even Her Majesty The Queen, paradoxically, sees herself as the lifelong servant of her people. *Humility is wisdom*. Recognition of this offers a basis for healing and national recovery.

THE MONARCHY AS A SOURCE OF HEALING

One simple consideration should give us pause for thought. The decline of Parliament during the last hundred years has coincided with the diminishing of the powers of the monarchy. Perhaps there is a connection here. By analogy, the lesson of World War II is that a free, vibrant Europe needs a strong, independent Britain outside it as guarantor of its liberties. Could it not be that a strong, healthy democracy needs a strong, healthy monarchy to contain it and supply its context?

At the time of writing - just before the European elections of 4 June 2009 - talk of constitutional change fills the air and the newspapers. There are proposals for changing the method of selecting candidates, or the form of representation, or the composition of the House of Lords, and so forth. If the argument of this paper is right, what has gone most wrong is that politicians have lost touch with our *monarchy* and the humility and ancient wisdom which it embodies.

By way of illustration consider how, if we abandoned Fallacy F2 and *trusted* to the good faith of our monarchy, the Crown could exert a healing influence on the body politic. In 2008 Gordon Brown's refusal to hold a referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon was widely viewed as a breach of his party's election promise, causing considerable public disenchantment. Seen as a contempt of the electorate, this was a major cause of the anger that later burst out over Parliamentary expenses. It brought to the surface the question as to who should have the right to call referendums, to which no satisfactory answer was given.

Now suppose that on such occasions the monarch, sensing the mismatch between government and governed over a major issue, were empowered to call a referendum. The people would have their say, government would be realigned according to the result, tension would be released and democracy would be strengthened. In full accord with history, the less dominant element in the constitution - currently the Crown - would be intervening to protect the populace from the excesses of the more dominant element, Parliament. Politics would become real again instead of a charade. All would benefit.

The monarchy could also provide a solution to the vexed question of the composition of the House of Lords. I have already expressed my preference for an appointed, meritocratic chamber at a time when the kudos accruing to elected politicians purely because they have been elected has somewhat diminished. I suggest that we need a form of selection rather like that of the Birthday or New Year Honours, but made as independent as possible of party political influence. This might be achieved through an appointments committee whose members were themselves appointed by The Queen in Privy Council, and so not answerable to the House of Commons.²⁰

THE HEIR TO THE THRONE

It is frequently suggested that Prince Charles's initiatives represent unprecedented "meddling" which is unconstitutional under F2. Against this, the following letter was printed in *The Times* of 24 February 2006.

Sir, The Prince of Wales's role as a political "dissident" is described by Mark Bolland as one "created by him" (report, Feb 22). This is far from true.

Prince Charles has followed in the footsteps of his many predecessors who have led opposition to the policies of their parents' ministers. From the early Hanoverian period, the position of the Prince of Wales at the centre of successive opposition groupings was a crucial factor in giving such movements authority.

Indeed, the success of Robert Walpole's "Leicester House" opposition (itself named after the Prince's London home) from 1716 to 1720 was a model copied in future reigns, and a central tenet of Henry Bolingbroke's 1738 doctrine on loyal opposition was that the heir to the throne should play a leading role in pursuing "a legal course of opposition to the excesses of regal or ministerial power".

Given the increasing authoritarianism of the current administration, we might well welcome the emergence of a "Clarence House Opposition" to the Court of King Tony.

NIGEL FLETCHER, London SE14.

²⁰ There would of course be a need for *ex officio* peers such as religious leaders, senior judges, heads of the armed services and so forth.

How to Cure Our Politics

His Royal Highness is a man much misunderstood. I recall A. W. Tozer's description of the free men, the prophets so badly needed by the Christian Church:

Such men will be *free*, free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances....

These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial consideration, perform no religious act out of mere custom, nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or desire for reputation.²¹

Prince Charles is a serious creative Thinker. He needs solitude and he needs silence. This is the reason why he periodically takes himself off on retreat on Mount Athos. In this respect - in spite of their wholly different temperaments - he is of the same mould as Barack Obama, who was recorded in a private interview with David Cameron as counselling:

The most important thing you need to do is to have big chunks of time during the day when all you're doing is thinking.²²

In fact Charles's achievements are considerable. Consider just two. Since 1976 his youth charity The Prince's Trust has helped more than 575,000 disadvantaged young people to get a fresh start in life, a claim that can be equalled by few politicians or ministers, past or present. Also, he has for twenty years been calling attention to the problems of global warming and now leads the world in the race to save the rainforests. In May 2009 as part of this he convened under the banner of his Rainforest Project the St James's Palace Climate Change Symposium. His emergency plan for 'rainforest bonds' is currently said to be winning 'important international support'.²³

The historian David Starkey penned a long article in *The Sunday Times* of 16 December 2007 titled, 'King Charles, Mr Fix-it for a broken Britain.' Writing of the declining faith in the welfare state, he says,

Suddenly a wider foreshore appears. And in Charles we have, for the first time since Prince Albert in the 19th century, a royal patron who could occupy it. Charles's good causes used to be greeted with mockery, but suddenly there's a realisation that practically everything he has sponsored has become mainstream....

For most of his life Prince Charles has looked like a man out of his time. But perhaps his time has come. Politicians are discredited and the machinery of state malfunctioning or broken. If the state can't or won't help, charitable giving and self-help are the only resort. But they need someone to inspire, direct and honour their efforts. No politician who attempted to do it would be taken seriously for a second. Maybe King Charles III could. It would be a new kingdom - of the mind, the spirit, culture and values - and would not be unworthy of a 1,000-year-old throne.

Definitely.

²¹ A. W. Tozer, 'Men', *Balance of Truth*, published by the Gospel Literature Service (Bombay: May 1972). [Quoted in full](#) in the Quotations section of this website.

²² *The Sunday Times*, 27 July 2008.

²³ *The Times*, 28 May 2009.

THE DORMANT VOLCANO: EUROPE

We have seen of late the consternation among all parties when the collective Parliamentary guilty conscience begins to be exposed. As noted, a guilty conscience that is suppressed and silenced for a prolonged period of time can prove both exceedingly damaging and painful. People will do almost anything to avoid its becoming manifest. They will behave and argue most irrationally. There is one area in which a very large portion of our political class seems to me to be in deep denial, associates as well as MPs.

It is the thesis of this paper that our political thinking becomes straight when we place the Crown at its centre. Our political identity is that we are subjects of Her Majesty The Queen who through the mediation of Parliament exercises over us full sovereign rights. Or so it was, until successive governments of both major parties took it upon themselves to transfer many of those sovereign rights to a European body which does not see itself as subject to The Queen. Now many of our laws are made by a body which is unelected and owes no allegiance Her Majesty. This has been done by repeated acts of stealth, most recently in connection with the Treaty of Lisbon, without Parliament once seeking permission from the people.²⁴ There is a strong risk that it will be held to account, just as it has been over the abuse of expenses; and the process will be equally painful.

The situation is similar to a household where the parents have been absent for a while, and the teenage children have held a riotous party, which they have financed by selling off their parents' silver candlesticks. In due course the parents will return and will want to know where they have gone, and why.

Politicians now know to their cost just how angry their public can be. The public now know just how effective their anger can be in bringing their politicians to heel. All of us now know just how suddenly these explosions can ignite. Our political classes therefore have good reason to be worried.

David Cameron showed how well he understands the public mood on this in a recent speech:

But the tragic truth today is that no matter how much we strengthen Parliament or hold Government to account there will still be forces at work in our country that are completely unaccountable to the people of Britain - people and organisations that have huge power and control over our daily lives and yet which no citizen can actually get at. Almost half of all the regulations affecting our businesses come from the EU. And since the advent of the Human Rights Act, judges are increasingly making our laws. The EU and the judges - neither of them accountable to British citizens - have taken too much power over issues that are contested aspects of public policy and which should therefore be settled in the realm of democratic politics. It's no wonder people feel so disillusioned with politics and Parliament when they see so many big decisions that affect their lives being made somewhere else. So a progressive reform agenda demands that we redistribute power from the EU to Britain and from the judges to the people.²⁵

What is really significant is the comment of Philip Collins alongside:

It took Harold Wilson years in No 10 to attain this standard of paranoia.

What an extraordinary statement by a former speechwriter for Tony Blair! Harold Wilson? Unable

²⁴ The 1975 referendum concerned our membership of an *economic* community which in no way required a transfer of sovereignty.

²⁵ *The Times*, 27 May 2009.

rationality to dispute Cameron's facts, he damns them with the emotive term 'paranoia'. This is the response of a worried man. Paranoia indeed! What if Cameron keeps his word and opens the dam, and the British people in their present angry mood turn on those who led them into their present subjection to the EU? What if they decided that the transfer of sovereignty from the sovereign to Brussels was a breach of MPs' loyal oath, and began calling individuals to account as they are currently doing over expenses? Though not himself an elected politician, Collins has good cause to be worried on behalf of his likeminded associates.

CONCLUSION: HOW TO CURE OUR POLITICS

I conclude with five pieces of advice for all who aspire to public office or who take an interest in politics at any level.

(1) *Seek wisdom wherever you can find it.* If you are the kind of person who does not believe there is objectively such a thing as wisdom, this advice is precisely for *you!* Without it you risk making the biggest mistakes in whatever office you achieve. The Law of Unintended Consequences will attend even your best efforts.

(2) Give full honour in your thinking and in your practice to Her Majesty The Queen, to whom you as a politician are accountable just as much as you are to the electorate. Humility - servanthood - is your greatest safeguard.

(3) Do nothing unseen which could tarnish your career, or that you would be ashamed of, if it ever came to light.

(4) Read and familiarise yourself with Plato's *Republic*.²⁶ This will provide you with a solid foundation for your thinking as you learn to distinguish reality from unreality. Beyond that, it will give you a shared basis of understanding with colleagues who are likewise engaged, upon which you can thrash out issues and policies.

(5) Become a people-centred, Category B thinker. Learn to handle moral issues instead of shying away from them. There is no more exemplary place to start than *The Politics of Hope* by Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks.²⁷ Read it *now*.

You and your likeminded colleagues are in a position to begin to turn this country round. Go for it!

Martin Mosse,
June 2009.

²⁶ See [Selected Reading](#).

²⁷ See [Selected Reading](#).