

Off The cuff

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The Nasty Party

THERE IS NO SHORTAGE of nasty parties in Britain; in fact if you include the North of Ireland, their numbers are legion. “What exactly is a nasty party?” I can hear you ask. Well, to start with, you have to recognise that their nastiness is not restricted to a particular policy or theme. However, there is a common denominator, and that usually coalesces around two core issues: a sense of injury suffered by a particular element of the population and a solution which involves attacking everybody thought to be involved in inflicting the injury. Nasty parties are defensive alliances organized with the express purpose of defending the good, the right, and the proper, from the bad, the wrong, and the frankly indecent. The wrong’uns are, as you may well imagine, only too numerous, they might be Catholics, Muslims, or homosexuals, or they might be Poles, Gypsies, Europeans, Jews or Blacks, or they might be all of ‘em rolled into one vile coagulation of offensiveness. They might be profligate socialists intent on spending other people’s money or they might be townies and saboteurs intent on spoiling other people’s fox hunting fun. Whatever ‘They’ are, for the nasty party in question, ‘They’ will form the focus of its disapproval and will provide its *raison d’être*. Nasty parties cannot, by and large, abide difference; by and large they would like everybody to be the same in some essential way. Consequently, their mission in life is always to clean up society – to be tough on difference, and tough on the causes of difference.

Now, the more astute members of nasty parties are those skilled in dissimulation and camouflage. They are the people who attempt to present their message with *inclusive* phrases like, “We’re All In This Together”. They use phrases that attempt to give voters the impression that they are not nasty at all;

they are merely sensible people combating evil wherever they find it.

One such is UKIP. The United Kingdom Independence Party is simply opposed to Britain losing the right to govern itself. Consequently, it is opposed to Britain's membership of the European Union. It doesn't hate Europeans or foreigners, it just doesn't want them running Britain; simple enough you might think. But, you'd be wrong. Because, every time one argues with them, you will find that their language is peppered with metaphors and allusions to the Second World War, or even the Napoleonic Wars and the necessity of fighting against unelected 'Führers', 'Gauleiters', and 'Bonapartes'. If you express mildest sympathy or support for the European Union or the wider European project, you will find yourself accused to 'surrender' and 'defeatism' in a veritable torrent of xenophobic abuse dating from the 1940s. Despite the best efforts of Nigel Farage and the other leaders of UKIP to conceal the party's nastiness, the party remains stubbornly hostile to Johnny Foreigner.

Other nasty parties, of course, don't mind being frankly nasty; they make little or no attempt to conceal their desire for homogeneity and their hatred of difference. The English Defence League for example is entirely explicit about its hatred of Muslims. They have latched on to this because they identify Muslims as peculiarly disloyal to the British way of life and as traitors to the British state and the British cause, whatever that may be. Consequently, they do not distinguish between Islamists intent on imposing the rule of the Koran by fire and sword, and everyday Muslims keen on quietly living their religion and raising their kids in a peaceable manner. They hate all Muslims just like the most devout Orangemen hate all Papists and republicans on sight, and tend towards the view that all Catholics have demonic associates and are implicated in every devilish plot against God's God-fearing people.

The Tax Payers Alliance is another of Britain's nasty parties. Strictly speaking, not a party at all, the TPA is

a lobby group and think tank ostensibly committed to defending taxpayers. “What could possibly be nasty about that?” Well, if this were really all they were about, they wouldn’t be nasty at all. However, the truth is that the TPA has particular *bête noir*; it doesn’t like local authorities giving grants to lesbian organizations. It doesn’t want any money spent on any special interest groups at all; it thinks they those who live on benefits and handouts are wasting ‘our’ money and should be stopped immediately. The TPA represents all those decent hard working folk who believe in a small state and that ‘we’ should be allowed to keep more of our own money; it is simply opposed to high taxes and government waste.

Well, all this is true. It is also true that they believe in regressive taxation. They would love a “flat tax” because they believe that the rich should pay a smaller proportion of their income in taxes than the poor. Their nastiness resides in their belief that the well heeled are being put upon by the state and by the poor who spend far too much of ‘their’ money. Keen to represent themselves as friends of the ordinary taxpayer they focus upon bureaucratic bungling and seek to highlight situations in which officials do stupid things with ‘our’ money. Consequently, they are the enemies of ‘political correctness’, particularly of “political correctness gone mad”. This implies, of course, that they have nothing against political correctness, but just oppose it when it is taken to extremes, like ensuring equal treatment for all and making sure that the rich pay the same proportion of their income as the poor.

Consequently, the TPA is very popular with members of the Conservative Party. The Tory Party is, of course, the nasty party *pas excellence*. In recent years, under the stewardship of David Cameron, it has hugged hoodies, walked the walk and talked the talk. Failed, former leader, Ian Duncan Smith, has been appointed as a kind of kindness Tsar, or a Tory version of Labour’s Frank Field. Duncan Smith wants to bring the underclass back into the light of day, make

them work for their benefits and inflict one dose of tough love after another until everybody on Incapacity Benefit can throw away the Zimmer frame of state handouts, and stand on their own two feet.

This, of course, is not necessarily nasty, but taken in the round it probably is. Duncan Smith, who heads the Tory Centre for Social Justice, shares with David Cameron the party's nasty mantra: "Family, Community, Country". This, together with their alliance with the Law and Justice Party in Poland and the Latvian Fatherland and Freedom party has undoubtedly stamped the Tories with the hallmark of nastiness. Although Cameron has apologised for Clause 28 and insisted that he supports the Civil Partnership law (introduced by Labour) their preparedness to ally themselves with *ultramontane* Catholic nasty parties in Europe is ringing alarm bells. Their European pals are not merely anti-gay they are hostile to Jews and all things Jewish.

But, like the UKIP and their allies in the TPA, the Tories are pass masters at attempting to conceal their essential nastiness. While threatening to impose a wage freeze on all and sundry they hurriedly assure us that this will only effect people earning more than around thirteen hundred pounds a month after National Insurance and Income Tax. Of course, nobody in the leadership of the Conservative Party has any conception of what it would be like to live on £1,307,91p per month – but freezing the wages of people earning sums like this is the product of their attempt to seem nice rather than nasty; it's the best they can do!

Undoubtedly all three major political parties in Britain will seek to freeze wages and cut back on public services as they attempt to wrestle down the country's vast debts. However, it is the strategic belief, which the Tories have in a small state and regressive taxation that marks them out as the seriously nasty party of British politics. They will slash and burn, because as the legend on the Tax Payers Alliance carrier bags say, "We Love Low Taxes".