



Students at the University of Life

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE is a wonderful thing. It enables you to grasp the intimate details of your own back yard *and* affairs of state, foreign and domestic too; it places the whole world at your feet. All you need is a clear head to view matters from your own point of view, and the courage to apply your insights to any problem that comes your way.

There is something eternal about truths like these. They help to explain why Senator McCain chose a *hockey mom* as his running mate and a *workingman* – a man who works with his hands – to advise him on tax policy. It stands to reason that personal experience of this calibre should not be allowed to go to waste. It takes Joe and Sarah to help John explain to the *Poor Sap* on Main Street why he should reject the unworldly conceits of the liberal elite.

After all, what does the liberal elite know about anything? All they know about is how to be contemptuous. They know nothing about real life; life as it is lived by Sarah and Joe, working with their hands, down there on Main Street. This seems to be the secret: authenticity, real experience in the school of hard knocks matters more than anything else. Your insights are crystal clear, your opinions, invaluable: the common sense of the common man (& woman) is unbeatable.

All that remains to be asked is how common is the common man? Evidently, the Man on the Clapham Omnibus was a bit posh. Jane Roe and John Doe are unknown. The Polish Plumber was, well, Polish. Jack-of-all-trades was, as we know from bitter experience, Master of None. Welfare Witches are, like Hoodies, Chavs, and White Van Man, not to be emulated. We are definitely not interested in anything they say or think about (if they actually think about anything at all, that is). Joe Six-pack is another matter though. Unfortunately he embraces a number of the mixed messages and ambiguities of which we know he heartily disapproves. Not least of which is his name: are we talking abdominal muscles or cans of beer? He likes to keep things simple, not because he is dumb, but because he distrusts complexity. He suspects that complexity is got up by the liberal elite in an attempt to pull the wool over his eyes.

Why they should want to do this is not ever asked. We just know that it stands to reason that this is the sort of thing *they* do. Like the federal government blowing up the World Trade Center and blaming it on the Arabs, or Senator Barrack Hussein Obama planting a fake birth certificate and baptismal record at his grandmother's flat so that he can pretend to be a *real* Christian and a *real* American. The world is full of people trying to put one over on Joe Six-pack and his pals on Main Street.

Yet, you can betcha bottom dollar that it is highly unusual for a *hockey mom* to double as State Governor or to spend \$7,000 a week on make-up and facials. Governor Sarah "is not and has never been" a member of the working class. She's the daughter of a school secretary and a teacher, she's the wife of a man running a family fisheries business. In this she shares an uncanny resemblance to the *ambitions* of Joe the Plumber, a man who plans to buy a small plumbing business bringing in anything from \$250,000 to \$280,000. The dismal truth is, however, that Samuel Joseph Wurzelbacher is earning between forty and fifty thousand dollars a year – this is pretty much what

jobbing plumbers earn in America. He aspires to be a small businessman, but he's not even close, and he is certainly not in Sarah's league.

So, we've got a strange thing going on here. We've got a solidly middle class woman posing as a streetwise member of the working class – Joe Six-pack in lipstick – if you will. While, Joe the Plumber who is undoubtedly a member of the American working class, on less than four thousand dollars a month, divorced, paying child support, unaware that he's behind with his taxes, probably driving a white van, posing as an aspiring small businessman whose life would be blighted by increased tax rates for those earning more than a quarter of a million dollars.

These bizarre figures are valued for what is known as “their real world perspective”. They are cherished for their Walter Mitty day dreams of being alternately longshoremen, truckers, and lumberjacks, in Joe Six-pack shirts building America with their bare hands, or doughty independent businessmen, the little guy that made America great. Most countries seem to have some version of this. In England, the nation of shopkeepers, we now rely on *cabbies*, publicans, and self-employed long-distance lorry drivers, for our “real world perspective”. Journalists working with a cohort of chaps drawn from all or any of these occupations can be relied upon to provide us with the distillation of their personal experience and their resulting opinions.

Opinions are arrived at through daily contact with the “real world”, a world composed of the experiences of members of the lower middle class, tyrannized by town hall bureaucrats, shackled by regulations and political correctness, sinking under the weight of taxation, immigrants, and unfair competition. This concoction is then pressed into service as the outlook of a personage known as “the working man”.

Although the ordinary working man is a person of no known class, he is of Promethean stature and is, of course, subjected to Promethean torments: the sophistries pecked and clawed by cabals of elitists whose only interest in life is in feathering their own

substantial nests. These harpies are given to literally snatching the common man's hard earned cash so they can live high on the hog, swanning around with billionaires and footballers, giving what's left over of the tax-take to benefit cheats and the undeserving poor.

It turns out that the phrase "real world perspective" really means the personal experience and venal interests of the lower middle class who in their feverish efforts to represent themselves as the whole of society have recast themselves as streetwise members of the working class. This unwitting allusion to Karl Marx's *universal class* is then employed by everybody from Peter Mandelson's "New Labour" to John McCain's Republicans as a way of representing their own elite interests as identical with those of the lower middle class or with as we used to say: the man in the street.