

Chapter 2 How Gordon '*prudence*' Brown helped me write this

I have gradually realised that party politicians are a hopeless bet for leading and administering Britain. Hopefully, my introduction fed seeds of doubt in your mind too?

This book will try to persuade you that a better alternative is open to us. My alternative ideas are at worst, work in progress, and at best a possible solution

Why is it down to me? I ask this because whilst all this has become blitheringly obvious to me and to most of my friends and acquaintances, many of whom started and run their own businesses, or are around my age and have the perspective to see what I see. Yet nobody supposedly *in charge* or in positions of responsibility appears to be able to see or care about this appalling situation.

We were educated at a time when the English language was still somewhat revered, spelling was a worthy intellectual discipline and the art of putting a coherent sentence together was required whatever subjects you studied; and, yes even in “maffs”!

More importantly perhaps, the 1960's was the last time an able council house dweller attending a secondary modern school (me, that is) could do a worthwhile degree completely funded by the state.

It seems it has to be me, or someone like me, because...

Journalists are too busy reporting poli-news⁵¹ (*clever* but introspective gossip) to be interested in a wider philosophical take because that does not sell copy to editors. They spend their time, as do the *clever* politicians, in speculating about who has the power and who are the movers in party politics; in short gossip (OK, *clever* gossip) but still nonetheless a monumental waste of brain power.

Boris is bonkers, Socrates is long dead and Andrew Marr, Robert Peston and John Harumphries are thankfully employed elsewhere, so then, it is down to me.

I have been fortunate; I retired early and, after a few years of panic attacks and disorientation (I have to admit to being a bit of a hypochondriac), calmed down and started reading philosophy, politics, walking dogs regularly and observing the world in a depth for which I had previously not had the time.

It is clear to me now that it is precisely *because* so few people have the *time to stand and stare*⁵² that politicians and other public servants have got way with the crass blunders, incompetence, bare faced skulduggery that litter the all too ephemeral news headlines. Parliament's job is to hold the government to account, but it does not, precisely because of the nature of *party* politics.

I am somewhat bemused by the seemingly calm acceptance of all this debt based calamity which surrounds us. I too, am, and remain 'hopping mad' (to quote Monty Don, when he

51 *poli-news* is my term for the discussion in the media of the politics of the problem rather than the issue itself, where politics is the recently corrupted use of the word (see Chapter 1)

52 from W.H. Davies' poem 'Leisure', such beautiful words from such a troubled man that I have included it in my chapter, Repository of Wisdom.

appeared on QuestionTime in late 2009) when the rest of the panel were so 'sanguine' in their discussion of the MPs expenses issue. Yet another example of the extent to which we have become desensitised in our acceptance of administrative incompetence and condescension from the political class.

The other reason it has to be someone like me, is that it stands almost everything on its head. I will go on to talk about Plato and Socrates (in chapter 8), dis-establishing the church⁵³ (quickly), removing the monarchy (but very, very slowly), using the House of Lords properly and changing the democratic system radically (discussed more fully in chapter 14). I will thus be assumed to be either mad, just plain silly or simply unrealistic.

Above all, *I have no reputation to lose*. If this ever gets published then I might see things differently, ahem, we shall see.

I was prompted to write this book after a seemingly small, but highly instructive political blunder by Gordon Brown. This petty incident is actually quite important in that it clarified for me the reason why MPs just do not, and cannot seem get *it*. Politicians are so removed from the reality in which the rest of us dwell. As a group, they suffer from 'Hubris'⁵⁴ syndrome⁵⁵ and are clinically incapable of being converted back into useful public servants for the benefit of the population.

This one event sparked off this whole train of thought, so, thank you Gordon, (now just bugger off and be thankful that what you did to the country is not yet perceived by most as a criminal offence!).

I refer to the Youtube video on MPs expenses starring Gordon Brown⁵⁶ dated 21st April 2009. Incredibly, this was created by Brown's own people and remained on the Number 10 web-site until the ConDem coalition government moved in. If you have not seen it then ***please, please, please find the time to watch 5 minutes of political history***. It will make you weep, after you have finished laughing that is. Who said 'Never use a preposition to end a sentence with.'?; I gave up looking for a verified source, however I did find sources indicating it to be a cliché, even, in 1920). I wanted it to be Winston Churchill but alas ...

Few dared to point out how truly pathetic this video was⁵⁷, the Emperor's New Clothes again springs to mind. Apart from the acting performance which was sad, lamentably, belly laugh funny and farcical, (the best bit is one minute and 56 seconds into the video)), the video message was Brown's supposed answer and solution to a problem that he clearly had not understood and thus answered inappropriately and ultimately, on the 28th April 2009, had to withdraw.

The important thing I hope to show in this chapter is *why* he failed to understand the problem. Brown is undoubtedly an intelligent man but ... BUT ... in a ***micro intelligent*** way. This is just no good for people whose ideas and decision making are important in a

53 Disestablishing the church means to sever the links between church and state, particularly in relation to the Church of England. The 24 Bishops who sit in the house of Lords would no longer be there as of "right", thereby removing an archaic and unwarranted privilege.

54 Insolent contemptuous disregard – The OED

55 The Hubris Syndrome: Bush, Blair and the Intoxication of Power (Paperback) by David Owen

56 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otqV4Qp4zLY>

57 ...actually, Hazel Blears did, and then she suffered the consequences (OK, she was slimy too)

macro world (that's the place where most real people live).

Let me explain my use of the word micro and the concept of micro-intelligence.

To program a computer in a proper computer language (like C++) you need a reasonably high IQ and an appropriate mathematical intelligence. This enables a programmer to cope with mathematical logic in a disciplined way and makes the computer do what the systems analyst (the more *macro* intelligent person) decided it should do. People like this are usually described as geeky because they are focussed in on a small but highly complicated world that few understand or even want to understand.

That degree of focus means that the time and effort required for wider philosophical thought and quiet contemplation is just not attractive. The *buzz* comes from problem solving, and, for a politician, *being seen* to be saying something clever about doing something important, but, not just yet...

Brown's other problem (both for him, and sadly us too) is that he was, first and foremost, a *party* politician and therefore coming up with the right⁵⁸ answer was almost impossible because his ability to be rational had been compromised by party political considerations. Clarity of thought was simply fogged by dogma.

Brown learned from Blair, who made so many new initiative announcements, but which went nowhere, (remember the *integrated transport policy*? (from the office of the Deputy Prime Minister R.O.F.L), remember *joined up thinking; tough on crime & the causes of crime; Education, education, education?*). I would say Poppycock, poppycock & yet more poppycock! (I would have preferred to use more Anglo Saxon / Chaucerian invective but sadly am not allowed.) Bollocks & bollocks and bollocks is so much more accurate and satisfying!

These sound bites were made simply to keep him in the papers and his words were slavishly printed again and a-bloody-gain by a fawning 24x7 media industry needing the constant drip of new stuff even though it is meaningless drivel; this plethora of verbal noise induces mass amnesia and desensitises us all so even when the important stuff goes wrong, it is unchallenged because it just isn't new any more, the world has moved on to the next drama.

Brown, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was famous for complicated detail in all his budgets from 1997. It took weeks, sometimes longer, for the commentators to fully realise what he had done. He raided our pensions⁵⁹, sold off our gold reserves⁶⁰, at the lowest price possible, and finally completely missed the fact that an economy based on moving money about and overseeing an increase in public & private debt to astronomical levels was actually a bad thing. Truly *incredible*!

This *moving money about* business became a huge part of GDP but the fact is that the perceived real value was based on increasing personal debt and businesses over

58 Best for the public

59 It is well worth your time to read this article (plus the comments) by the BBC's Evan Davis in 2007
http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/thereporters/evandavis/2007/04/that_pensions_raid.html

60 The BBC's Robert Peston has the best explanation of this imbecilic crime
http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/thereporters/robertpeston/2008/03/gold_and_gordon_brown.html

leveraging⁶¹ themselves to the point where the error was just too big for him to see (ENC⁶² syndrome).

A contributing factor to all of this was his (and Blair's) worship of the city and confusing *venture capital* activities with *private equity finance*.

These two terms are confusing by design but understanding the difference is vital to using public money wisely. Please read Robert Peston's book "Who Owns Britain" where he just lays out the facts and his interpretations quite succinctly and completely damningly; yet Blair & Brown survive and we all seem not to care a jot – well *I* bloody well do! 'I'm *hopping mad!*'.

This incompetent misunderstanding by Blair & Brown led to massive tax breaks being given totally inappropriately and ineffectively⁶³, this wasting billions of precious tax receipts.

PFI's (Private Finance Initiatives) were yet another example of micro-intelligence gone horribly wrong.

One of the things that commentators watch at Budget time is the level of public debt and whether or not the government is spending too much. PFI's do not add to current public debt because they are future, but largely unknown costs. For reasons of accounting practice they do not add to public debt and therefore the current balance sheet still looks good and the government have some new shiny hospitals to show off about.

The PFI is ultimately a kind of project finance, a form of private sector delivery of infrastructure that has been used since the Middle Ages. Newly named PFI was first used in Australia in the late 1980s.

PFI was used for the first time in 1992 the UK by the Tory government of John Major. It immediately proved controversial, and was attacked by the Labour party while in opposition!

Labour critics such as the future Cabinet Minister & Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Harriet Harman, considered that PFI was a back-door form of privatisation⁶⁴ (House of Commons, 7 December 1993. The future Chancellor of the Exchequer, Alistair Darling, warned that 'apparent savings now could be countered by the formidable commitment on revenue expenditure in years to come'. For several years the number and value of PFI contracts were small. PFI is defined and revealed, for the criminal misuse of public money it most certainly is, two paragraphs hence.

Hypocrites all, but I think you may begin to see just how shallow party politics is now that is has lost any form of philosophical backbone?

Brown therefore thought 'off balance sheet, therefore not current public sector debt, they will never spot that!'; well your grandmother, and mine, could have spotted that this dotty scheme could never be of benefit to the people, and was nothing but Hire Purchase under a

61 'borrowing' to you and me, overused jargon to hide the simple fact that too much debt is a very bad idea

62 ENC = Emperor's New Clothes

63 See Robert Peston in his book "Who own Britain" - (Peston for Chancellor – hurrah!). Read it & weep!

64 Which of course it is!

clever name.

PFI in a nutshell:

Get your Public Assets now – good poli-*news*.

Get the credit for new schools & hospitals now, good poli-*news*.

Pay the private sector way over the odds for years to come. (on the *never never*).

- Better keep quiet about that bit ...

The real figures published in August 2010 were even worse than I thought in 2009. £11.5 billion in current value actually will cost the tax payer £85 billion over 30 years.⁶⁵

Gordon, you inept dangerous, criminally incompetent failure, retire to your potting shed, write your memoirs, before they (that's you and me!) realise what it's all going to cost.

A CRIMINAL waste of public money, it really is as simple as that; yet who is holding this criminal to account? We should all be weeping in frustration at the incompetence of these egocentric criminals. Instead we give them large non-contributory pensions and let them loose on the private sector lecture circuit.

The *incredible* thing is (to me at least) that Brown was not ridiculed⁶⁶ and then immediately removed from office.

Sadly the answer to this issue is that there *is* a mechanism to remove him but the mechanism is broken and useless; the mechanism I refer to is the Lower House of the British Parliament, yes, the “lower” house, the one that actually has all the power, yup we still live in a strange deferential world.

The *higher* house of parliament has become a retirement home for those who brown nosed the previous government and are given an opportunity to supplement their overstuffed pensions by giving corrupt insider advice (AKA lobbying) to corporations who in turn fund political parties.

In the USA, Congress holds the government (the executive, those who make the law and do the governing) to account and in the UK our Parliament is supposed to do the same thing⁶⁷.

I digress – OK, so why then did Gordon Brown get this and so many other things wrong?

The answer is again *micro-intelligence* in that he thought the solution was to try to change the *detail* of *how* MPs expenses are paid, because *he* thought the problem was this:

'The public thinks MPs expenses are unfair / immoral and the press has highlighted the second homes issue so ... lets get rid of the second homes issue by disallowing mortgage payments but allowing the same value to be claimed in rent'

He then he jets off to Pakistan to fight the Taliban, completely missing the fact that the real problem is that we the British public are fed up with politicians feeding like pigs at the

65 The Independent, page 4, 19th August 2010

66 Well actually he has been (and wonderfully so, in the European parliament), by Daniel Hannan, but hardly anyone saw it and the “media” chose not to cover it.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94lW6Y4tBXs>

67 David Starkey is the man to read here!

trough containing our money and doing so in a blatantly unfair, unregulated and unjustified manner. He attempted to solve the political problem by appearing to be important on YouTube hoping to take the public by storm; actually he solved no problem at all and simply looked ridiculous, desperate and mentally ill.

The real answer to the problem requires careful thought by an independent authority trusted by the public ... *and I am dismayed to say that I cannot find such a body!*

The monarchy is toothless, way past it's *sell by date*, completely ridiculous in its own way and needs to be much smaller (before being removed in its entirety sometime in the medium term or reducing to invisibility IMHO), but, and this is a big BUT, it remains at the centre of the majority of the British people's idea of what Britishness is, and therefore, it seems that it must form a stable pillar, for a short period, while *we* sort ourselves out and grow up into some form of republic (much more on this later).

The only problem here is that turkeys voting for Christmas are few and far between, so I am currently teaching my geraniums and raspberries to talk, which I hope will impress Prince Charles. In short, apart from the Queen, the rest of the Royal Family appears to have the collective judgement and intelligence of one of Charles' talking house plants, although the new PR offensive with the pretty young royals is jolly clever.

Ooh and don't Wills and Kate look lovely ...sigh... ah bless ... Ah bollocks!

I had, when I first pondered how to get from where we are now to where I thought we should be, actually conceived of a plan for Prince Charles to be a necessary part of the constitutional changes required (see chapter 12), that was, until his unbelievably stupid and banal pronouncement on the European Enlightenment⁶⁸ as being 'old fashioned' thereby showing unbelievable ignorance of the advances in thought made by people like Thomas Paine, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke & Voltaire.

The man is just about as useful to the British people as his dad but at least Philip heeds advice to keep a low profile. Blimey, what a waste of education and our money Charles has become! Off with his head! he clearly has no need for it any more.

The late Christopher Hitchens said this so much better than me⁶⁹.

If you are still a monarchist then just consider the concept of hereditary brain surgeons and rest there for a moment ...

Quite.

Whatever happened to the Witan, the body of elders that would approve, or replace, the next-in-line to the throne in Anglo Saxon England? Perhaps Princess Anne or Wills is listening..?

Our MPs are toothless because of the *party* whip system and the fact that most of them cannot *see* what the problem is:

68 February 2010 <http://www.republic.org.uk/blog/?p=1024> – please see the Daily Mail & Daily Telegraph for amusing and different opinions on his “analysis”.

69 “Charles - Prince of piffle” <http://www.slate.com/id/2256915/> and repeated later

I acted within the rules';
The system for expenses must be changed in the future';
I have done nothing wrong'
We all must learn the lessons ...' blah blah blah

... we heard them whine, while we all sit at home wanting them to be sacked, to be forced (by *someone*) to pay all the money back that they cleverly but 'completely within the rules' managed to immorally and sickeningly claim. That *someone* should of course be parliament, but MPs seem to have completely forgotten why they are there; when *they* are the problem, the House of Lords should act, but the *noble lords* are even more gravy trained than the MPs. There were 740 'Lords' in 2008 but at the start of 2015 there were 790 and as of July 2015 Cameron is about to appoint another 100!

Most of the press is toothless for many and varied reasons; most of which are to do with the fact that politics and politicians are mainly what they talk and write about and who do you think leaks all that front page scoops anyway?

I have to add, though, that the press in Britain are the best in the world compared with the fawning story writers in the USA, France and Italy for example who dare not upset the corrupt status quo. The good journalism is read by so few (are your ears burning Ian Hislop, John Harumphries?).

The BBC's legendary (I would now say mythical..) independence was dealt an almost terminal blow by Tony Blair and Alistair Campbell. Even though the whole sexed up Iraq dodgy dossier was later shown to be true, the inept and weak management within the BBC's own Board of Trustees and management failed to defend what is now known to be perfectly true. Shame on you! You had the power and I might say *duty* to stand up and be counted. You failed the British people!

The answer should just conceivably be the House of Lords (the current House of Lobbyists is more apt) but it is so contemptibly out of touch and still filled with Tony's cronies and corrupt Lords changing the law to suit private companies' agendas. A second house of review where convicted criminals⁷⁰ sit enacting and changing our legislation is completely barny but appears to be completely acceptable to The House of Lords⁷¹, so that's all right then!

So there we are; sadly *nobody* is left to stand up for the common man or woman and, even more sadly, the common man seems not to give a fig about it either. Blimey, this is reading like a Greek tragedy or worse, a Swedish murder mystery ...

Private Eye (dear Ian Hislop, thank you, thank you, thank you...) does its best (readership 230,000ish?⁷²) and is our last best hope of salvation ... apart from me that is, and you of course dear reader and the Today program on the BBC Radio 4. It does its best but once John Harumphries retires we will be lost!

OK then, what is to be done and by whom? Before going on to present my solutions, well I have to say they are not really mine, I am using the ruminations of many great minds from

70 Lord (r.o.f.l.) Archer; Lord Watson of Invergowrie; Lord Black of Crossharbour to name but a few ...

71 http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/convicted_criminals_in_the_house

72 In 2012, The Eye's 50th birthday year

the past to come to our aid, and then extending them a little.

Original, wise and *useful* thought is in short supply but it is there, you just need to look for it, cherish and learn from it and then USE it; but do we?

DO WE HELL!