

Inequality of power versus inequality of income

The left's analysis that says inequality is the key to understanding Brexit, Trump and much else needs to make a distinction between inequalities of power and inequalities of income. Many populist voters in the USA and Europe have cast their votes against concentrations of unaccountable or dogmatic political power in the elites that control their societies. That is different from an attack on those who have made lots of money from being good at sport, entertainment or business. Senior executives of large companies owned by other people are often seen in the same category as government politicians and officials, whereas entrepreneurs offering new goods and services are seen differently and usually more favourably.

In the USA the Trump voters rebelled against the political correctness of the Democrat regime, and condemned the big money politics and large salary government they are paying for through their taxes. In The Euro area voters rebel against the austerity politics of much of the zone, as it struggles to meet Germany's demands for lower wages and little borrowing to stay in a currency with competitive Germany. On both sides of the Atlantic populist voters are often critics of the prevailing climate change theory, disliking the way it results in dear energy and ever more regulations affecting how they live their lives. Populist voters also resent the way their thoughts and language are controlled, with many topics now subject to a politically correct mantra not shared in their hearts by these voters.

Brexit was a vote to take back control, with many people fed up with the laws, controls and spending plans of a Brussels government we cannot influence as we wish or throw out of office for failure. Brussels has still not apologised for the Exchange Rate Mechanism crash it caused which hit many families and businesses in the UK.

I welcome laws against racial and religious hate speech, as I do think stopping unpleasant words can create a better climate, making violent acts less likely. In other ways I am on the side of those who think these governing elites have too much power and use it in ways which damages people's freedoms and incomes unnecessarily. High taxes are not usually the poor person's ally, as they hit them as well as the rich. Some regulations designed to improve conditions for all succeed in blocking more jobs and enterprise. Allowing too many migrants in to a country to get jobs can make it more difficult for people already settled there, and does add to the resentments of those on low pay or no pay.

One of the things the elite finds most difficult to understand about the Trump phenomenon is how he can make more and more outrageous statements as the elite see it but not suffer with his core voters. That is to miss the main point. Mr Trump is seen by many of his voters as someone outside the governing elite trying to get it to respond and think more like the people he represents. When he makes a statement no normal politician would make because

it is offensive to us or because we see it is not politically correct so carries political risk, many in his base cheer him on for breaking the conventions. They realise tweets do not in themselves achieve anything, but they also expect Mr Trump to try to find ways of cutting taxes, removing barriers to enterprise, to police the borders better and do all the things that constitute Trumponomics. "Making America great again" was about boosting the growth rate, having more jobs at home, raising living standards.

What we don't yet know is whether Trump supporters will be tolerant if he carries on speaking out without winning more of the battles he needs to win to grow the economy. In Greece where Syriza was elected to bust Euro austerity policies they failed but retained considerable support for trying. Mr Trump will probably do better than them, as he goes about deal making for a more prosperous USA. Carrying a major tax reduction for all later this year will be an important moment for this Presidency. If he does the UK will need to make sure it remains competitive on tax.

[Visit to TIM Befriending service in Burghfield](#)

I visited the Tim fourth anniversary celebration today in Burghfield. Since its foundation it has recruited many volunteers to provide friendship, help and support to those in the community who need it. It now covers Mortimer, Wokefield, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet as well as Burghfield where it started.

I congratulated Bev French and her team, thanked the volunteers and wished them well in helping more people in the community. I had attended one of their early meetings and was pleased to see the expansion and progress of the group.

Anyone wishing to volunteer or needing help can contact them on 07778 911183 or email bev@togetherinmission.org.uk. It is part of registered charity no 1135307.

[Understanding the Trump phenomenon](#)

Listening to the "liberal left" trying to explain the Trump phenomenon is a frustrating experience. Of course I agree with them that all elected politicians should condemn any efforts to whip up racial hatred. What

interests me is they say that the big Trump vote was only possible because of the large inequalities they see today. These must be inequalities thrown up by the last eight years of Democrat rule, as there was no Trump insurgence eight years ago. Presumably they would argue that today's inequalities build on inequalities in earlier decades which were not large enough or obvious enough to produce a Trump. They see the Trump phenomenon as a protest vote against these inequalities.

There is a germ of truth in what they are saying. Many people who were fed up with low wages or no wages voted for Mr Trump. They did not however vote for him to protest against inequality. They voted for him to cut their taxes and fire up America's economy so they can get a bit richer. They voted for him in the full knowledge that he is a very rich man, was going to be surrounded by many other rich men, and favoured cutting the taxes the rich pay as well as the taxes lower paid people pay. They were not jealous of Mr Trump's riches. They want some of them to rub off on them.

The germ of truth comes in these voters attitudes towards Mrs Clinton. There were two types of privilege and wealth on offer in the two contrasting Presidential candidates. Mr Trump offered the version of entrepreneurial riches, acquired by himself or some would say with help from his father's business acumen. This is completely acceptable to most Trump voters. They do not mind if an entrepreneur makes large sums and pays himself fabulous money. Nor do they balk at soccer or baseball stars, singers or actors earning great money either. They willingly pay for their services, and have the choice not to.

The type of privilege they object to is privilege that comes through political office and big budget politics. The lurid rhetoric of Trump supporters, often going beyond the tough language of the campaign proper, concentrated on "the swamp" of Washington, seeing it as a source of corruption. Mrs Clinton herself faced endless disobliging chants and allegations, as she was the perfect representative of those with families that draw big salaries from the state and live in a world of big budgets from party financing. Voters thought big politics had let them down, was syphoning off too much of their money through taxes they had to pay, and was rewarding for those in it, not for those it should seek to serve.

Trump voters worried about easy migration because they think wages have been depressed too much. They worried about trade systems which allow so many foreign imports, because they want to help make those things at home. They worried about just how much they have to pay to Washington in taxes when they need to spend more on their own needs. They will not mind if Mr Trump allows rich people to become richer, as long as they become richer too.

Well done to Wokingham A level students

Wokingham Borough schools report a 99.1% pass rate this year at A level, above the national average. Well done to all involved. I hope it means many of you can go on the courses and futures you have planned.

I also congratulate all in West Berkshire that have done well in the exams.

The value of A levels

Some time ago after giving a talk I was asked by a student at one of our top universities if I thought the A levels I had were of the same value and difficulty as the ones he had most recently obtained. I was both pleased to have a question out of the ordinary, and worried about how to answer it.

I decided to answer it factually. I said that every year A level marking is moderated and assessed by the Examiners, with a view to being fair between the years. In theory if a paper has been more difficult than past papers the required marks are lower, and vice versa. I had no evidence or analysis to question that thesis that standards have been approximated year by year.

Duty done, I then asked him a question. I asked if he was implying that standards had risen and my A level was inferior. He laughed and told me he thought his A level had not been to the same high standard or difficulty as mine. I thought it sad that a clever and probably hard working student felt like that about his recent qualifications. He of course had the luxury of knowing he was going on to get a more prestigious qualification, a degree from a great university. To those leaving education at A level similar thoughts would be more upsetting.

Mr Gove decided that creating advanced qualifications with a high proportion of course work rather than exams might lead to less rigour. Whilst most people would work hard and make an honest account of themselves, and most teachers will lead, teach and mark professionally, there is more danger of abuse in course work. You could cheat by getting others to help you too much with the course work or even dictate it to you. You could benefit from favouritism in marking – or suffer from bad relations with your teacher assessors for reasons unconnected with the standard of your coursework. You could benefit from being asked to do the work again before formally submitting, if it was not good enough the first time. Mr Gove therefore decided to move A levels back to reliance on final exams.

I remember the A levels I took well. They depended entirely on the final exam

performance. It meant you needed to both understand and remember the course material. It was also a flexible exam based system in the subjects I took. If you had reached a higher level than that required you could be awarded a high mark even if you had not answered covering the basics in the way the marking system was designed to capture. There were no single right answers, as the examiners recognised the complexity of the questions and the range of answers that could be interesting.

The two years of the sixth form to pass those exams were the best and most formative of all my years in formal education. I just hope today's A levels are a similar challenge and spur to students. I still use the techniques of economic analysis I first studied then, and still can place what I am currently doing in an historical context from the History course. I remember the material because I needed to learn and understand to pass the exam. A few years ago I took an A level equivalent professional exam. That was reliant on rote learning with the doctrine of the right answer. Where the problem was mathematical requiring you to memorise a formula and apply it to data that made sense. Where it was multiple choice between arguable answers it was more hazardous and less sensible. It was not nearly such a worthwhile educational experience.