

Ending fragment from Alfred

I end, as I began, by a sidelong glance at what is happening in the Labour and Trade Union movement. It is a glance of deep concern. I am not referring primarily to their political and economic ideas and measures, but to the behaviour which goes with them, to behaviour which is a threat to democracy and decency in political life.

At Blackpool, it was not just the press and TV viewers who were shocked by the venom, the organised hatred, the total intolerance, the mass hysteria, the unbounded extremism which reminded many of other countries at other times. Labour members from leading figures to rank-and-file delegates, voiced their horror at the methods used against them by the Left; the abuse; the intimidation; the underlying threat of physical violence at the Conference and at constituency and union meetings leading up to it. I am glad that some are waking up at last. But let me tell them something. It did not start with Blackpool this year. It has been going on for years, increasing in extent and viciousness. Why have they only now begun to react? In the beginning, it was used against Tories, against those who opposed Leftwing domination of student bodies of workers who stood up to agitators and trouble-makers. The moderates looked the other way; they thought their work was being done for them. When colleagues on this platform were shouted down by organised leftwing mobs at universities, when speakers were physically attacked, the moderates were silent. When striking miners blockaded coke-works and power stations and attacked the police, the moderates remained silent, or blamed what they called "police-provocation". They thought their work was being done for them. How many Labour and Union leaders have unequivocally denounced violence by stickers and demonstrators?

/Then the



Then the Left began using the intimidation and actual violence against traditional Labour supporters in their bid to take over constituencies. The moderates in the leadership knew, but held their tongues. Party unity, particularly when it meant government office, came before principle.

Do you remember what Edmund Burke said about the so-called moderates, in his writings on the French Revolution? They are the men, he said, who lack the courage to carry out the foul deeds of the Revolutionaries, but hope to benefit from the results. But political violence spreads, unless it is eradicated at source. Only now, when the fire has spread and is singling them, do they speak out.

Better late than never. But can we trust the Labour moderates to become new people, bold where they were cowardly, strong where they were weak.? To do so, they must earn that trust. First of all by retracing their steps, recognising that their silence in face of intimidation and violence against Conservatives, against employers, against non-unionists, against work people exercising their right to work, was a seed-bed of the evils they now denounce?

Democracy is not just a matter of institutions but a matter of style, of human relations. You cannot maintain a democracy unless you are ready to concede that people who disagree with you may do so honestly and from the best of motives, that they may even have some right of their side. Do to others as you would be done by must apply in politics too. Otherwise you are on the slippery slope to Blackpool and beyond. From our Island sanctuary we have seen it happen so often, and often been drawn into wars to staunch the results.



In our own debates - and if we all agreed with each other, why confer at all? - we try to follow this principle. So some of the media complain that our conference is dull. If this is dull and Blackpool is exciting, then may we ever enjoy dullness. But we extend this principle to others too. Ever since Labour appeared on the scene as a Party we treated them as partners in this great national enterprise of constitutional democracy. Competitors yes. But we favour competition within rules.

Some Labour politicians reciprocated. Others did not. They acted as though they were above the rules and we were beneath consideration. They ignored our history and bought up their followers to regard us as grasping, cruel people. This, too, is incitement, the first steps to Blackpool and beyond.

That is why I say that the Labour moderates, in so far as they fight back, will be fighting a monster of their own creation. But will they fight back, and will they succeed? I sincerely hope so, for the sake of our way of life.

But we must also be prepared for the possibility that they have left it too late, that too many will make the best peace they can with the extremists, hoping that it will be honoured more than such peaces ever are. We may be left alone with the burden of maintaining not just democracy and order but the decencies of public life.

That is why I said that much more than economic success and reelection are at stake. Our whole way of life could be in the balance. We must stand firm, resist the blandishments of the faint-hearts and carry through the economic cure - painful because delayed.

/We must

We must carry out our duty to defend public order, in the streets, in the workplace, against the deliberately increased political violence we have every reason to anticipate.

If we do so, the public will rally to us. And that public will include not only former Labour supporters but Labour members, office holders in the Labour Party and Trade Unions, writers, scientists and academics from the Labour side. Because they will come to see in us the guarantors of their rights, legatees of what was best in Labour tradition. The prize is ours for the asking, if we are bold but also sensitive. We must also redouble our efforts to persuade them that our party in our own low-key way, values idealism as it does realism has a place for divine discontent as well as for caution and conservatism with a small 'c'. They are all essential ingredients in our political pie.