

## CHAPTER 20

### DAVID CAMERON: HEIR TO HARMAN?

Emotion is a rotten base for politics.

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The speedy introduction of the Equality Act 2010 – David Cameron and Harriet Harman – does Cameron have a female-pattern brain, and is he a militant feminist? – the scandalous protection of the NHS budget: a triumph of emotion over reason – all-women prospective parliamentary candidate shortlists – only discrimination against men is acceptable – Cameron tries to hook anglers' votes – Cameron appoints a Labour peer to report into the 'lack' of women in Britain's boardrooms – Business Secretary Vince Cable attacks capitalism, with the support of the Prime Minister

What an irony it is that 90 per cent of the Equality Act 2010 – the brainchild of Harriet Harman – came into force as a result of a Commencement Order made by a *Conservative*-led coalition shortly after it assumed power. What better evidence could we have to suggest that David Cameron is not the 'heir to Blair' – as he once termed himself – but in truth the 'heir to Harman'?

I was struck on a number of occasions by scenes on television of David Cameron and Harriet Harman – acting leader of the Labour Party after the party's defeat in the 2010 general election – conversing in the Houses of Parliament. They always seemed very comfortable in each other's company. One day a question occurred to me. Well, two questions, to be precise. Does Cameron have a female-pattern brain, and is he a militant feminist too? The answers to both questions are clearly in the affirmative. Let's look at the evidence.

Cameron invariably argues for what he wants in emotional terms, not rational ones: a sure sign of a female-pattern brain. An illustration of this. It's long been painfully clear to the British public that the National Health Service is in *dire* need of vigorous reform: its inefficiency is legendary. But Cameron has ring-fenced the NHS budget (around £104 billion p.a.) at a time of a national financial emergency. Did Cameron argue for the protection of this budget in rational terms, as we might have hoped? No. He argued for it because of the support it had provided for his late son Ivan, who suffered from cerebral palsy and a severe form of epilepsy, and died at the age of six. Of course this was a tragedy for the family, but should it be used to justify the protection of the NHS's budget? And are we to infer that if the Camerons *hadn't* had a child who required a high level of support from the NHS, Cameron would have been open to reducing the NHS's budget? What sort of a way is this to determine policy?

Cameron's only work experience, before entering politics, was in 'Corporate Affairs', a variety of public relations, with its focus on relationships. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations informs me that 65% of its members are female, 35% male. Cameron's interest in relationships suggests a female pattern brain, as does his relentless focus on image. He's even more image-conscious than former Prime Minister Tony Blair, and his instincts are invariably feminist. In opposition Cameron decided to use legislation *introduced by Harriet Harman* to force women-only prospective parliamentary candidate shortlists onto constituency parties. From an article in *The Independent* of 21 October 2009:

David Cameron provoked a furious row with Tory backbenchers and grassroots members yesterday after reversing his party's opposition to all-women shortlists in a bid to boost the number of female Conservative MPs.

Only Labour has opted for all-women shortlists at previous elections, with past Conservative leaders opposing them as undemocratic. Mr Cameron's U-turn will see all-women shortlists imposed on some constituencies selecting their candidates in the New Year. Aides to Mr Cameron have said he has done all he can to promote women MPs on to the front bench but privately admits that he is hampered by the fact that the party only has 19 sitting female MPs. That number would rise to 60 should the party win a majority at the next election, still only one fifth of its seats.

To the frustration of Conservative Central Office (CCO), local party associations have resisted rules forcing them to give half of the places on their shortlists to women. The system has failed to deliver more female Tory candidates, with men appearing in the last six major selection contests.

Announcing the change in policy at the Speaker's Committee, Mr Cameron said: 'It's my intention, if we continue as we are, that some of those shortlists will be all-women shortlists to help us boost the number of Conservative women MPs,' he said. 'There are many very, very good women on our priority list of candidates who haven't yet been selected and I want to give them the chance to serve in parliament.'

The announcement immediately saw a backlash from Tory backbenchers and grassroots members of the party. Ann Widdecombe, a staunch critic of all-women shortlists, said that it would make some female MPs feel like second-class citizens. 'Women, no matter what their circumstances, must get to Westminster on their own merits and be able to know that when they're sitting in the House of Commons,' she said.

John Strafford, chairman of the Campaign for Conservative Democracy, said that party members were 'spitting blood' about the decision. 'Many constituencies are just beginning to understand what controls central office is imposing on them,' he said.

Tim Montgomerie and Jonathan Isaby, editors of the influential Tory members' website ConservativeHome, also issued a statement opposing the move. 'We feared this would happen,' they stated. 'All women shortlists are fundamentally

unConservative and they have no place in a party pledged to meritocracy and localism.’

The use of women-only shortlists had nothing to do with women’s merits, and by extension nothing to do with the collective merit of the party’s future MPs, nor the quality of future administrations: it had everything to do with the image of the party, and by extension, Cameron himself. It was, in short, a resounding triumph of spin over substance. I resigned my membership of the party upon learning of the proposed adoption of women-only shortlists.

The magazine of *The Daily Telegraph* on 1 May 2010, five days before the general election, included an article by the journalist Mick Brown. A few days previously Brown had accompanied Cameron for a day on the campaign trail in the West Country. The first visit was to a garage in Exeter, owned and run by a woman. Cameron remarked to Brown about his personal staff:

‘As you can see, we are an all-woman team. I don’t employ a man if I can possibly help it.’

An interesting use of the word ‘we’ there. Unwittingly, Cameron was confirming that he too has a female-pattern brain. Can you imagine a party leader uttering the following about his or her personal staff?

‘As you can see, we are an all-man team. I don’t employ a woman if I can possibly help it.’

Of course not: only discrimination against men is acceptable. Men simply don’t constitute a group worthy of consideration, although sub-groups of men may; during the hours he spent with Cameron, Mick Brown noticed Cameron scanning a

printout of an interview he had recently done with the *Angling Times*. He asked Cameron what the political angle was, to which Cameron replied:

‘Well, four million people go fishing, so that’s a good start...’

Impressive statesmanship there, I think you’ll agree.

Cameron appears to have swallowed the militant feminist agenda hook, line, and sinker. Many people, including myself, voted Conservative in the 2010 general election to ensure the end of the dire influence of Harriet Harman and her kind. But Cameron is happy to promote the militant feminist agenda. From an article titled, ‘Inquiry into lack of women in boardroom’ in *The Daily Telegraph* of August 3, 2010:

A Labour peer and respected former banker is to lead a new enquiry into why so few women make it to the top in business. Lord Davies of Abersoch will produce a report into the lack of female representation in Britain’s boardrooms that will guide the Coalition’s plans for greater equality in the City.

The former chairman of Standard Chartered was one of the few bankers to emerge from the financial crisis with his reputation intact and was made a trade minister by Gordon Brown. David Cameron was similarly impressed and invited Lord Davies, who has been vocal about the lack of women at the top of business, to carry out a study.

The peer believes that Britain would have 750,000 more small firms if women were fully engaged with the business world. ‘We need more female entrepreneurs,’ he said. ‘A quarter of the large FTSE companies don’t have women on their boards. [Author’s note: how *have* they survived with such a crippling disadvantage?] We should change that. It is all about providing role models.’

Mr Cameron said during the election campaign that he wanted to change the way business worked so that women were more fairly represented. He even indicated that a Tory government would force FTSE companies to have women

making up 50 per cent of their 'long list' when directors were appointed. Lord Davies began some of his work while a minister.

Cameron's appointment of Lord Davies was an astonishing move for a Conservative politician. I wrote to Lord Davies seeking a meeting (appendix 7) but didn't receive a reply.

Cameron was elected leader of the Conservative party in 2005, and throughout the years between then and the 2010 general election he said and did little to suggest his sympathies were anything other than left-wing, to the dismay of many supporters of a traditionally right-of-centre party including myself. Prior to the recession that followed the global banking crisis triggered by Lehman Brothers filing for bankruptcy protection in September 2008 I cannot recall Cameron – nor his friend George Osborne, the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer – showing any understanding that the size and influence of the British state should be reduced, something which has long been blindingly obvious to Conservative party supporters. It is clear that the cuts in public spending announced on 20 October 2010 are only to be undertaken because there is no alternative.

On 22 September 2010 the Business Secretary, Vince Cable – a Liberal Democrat – gave a speech at his party's annual conference. Given how left-wing most of the delegates were, it was hardly surprising that he criticised City financiers at some length. But he went much further and attacked capitalism itself. From *The Daily Telegraph* of the following day:

Mr Cable used his speech to attack capitalism, the free market and bankers. He described City financiers as 'spivs and gamblers' and said they posed more of a threat to Britain than

Bob Crow, the militant trade unionist who had led recent transport strikes...

Mr Cable described the corporate world as 'murky' and said that markets were 'often rigged'. He refused to tone down the comments after previews of the speech caused outrage...

He added, 'The Government's agenda is not one of *laissez-faire*. Markets are often irrational or rigged. So I am shining a harsh light into the murky world of corporate behaviour... Capitalism takes no prisoners and kills competition where it can, as Adam Smith explained over 200 ears ago...

Eamonn Butler, director of the Adam Smith Institute, challenged Mr Cable's interpretation of the Scottish economist's thinking. 'Business Secretary Vince Cable is wrong on capitalism and wrong on Adam Smith', Dr Butler said. 'Unfortunately, we have a Business Secretary who doesn't understand business and who misinterprets the founder of modern economics too. It is not capitalism that kills competition. It is regulation, and regulated capitalism. Adam Smith was perfectly clear. Business people would love to rig the market in their favour. But it is only the power of governments that enables them to do this. Where free competition reigns, businesses cannot keep out competitors.'...

David Buik, of the brokers BGC Partners, said, 'We were hoping that Dr Cable was just pandering to the dissenting coalition voices, but I fear that was not the case. This was a speech by an Opposition spokesman – a typical rant from a left-wing, anti-establishment aficionado, who is wholly against the concept of the free enterprise system, thus dismissing the advantages of the capitalist system. I have to say I am shocked at such an irresponsible speech.'

Downing Street sources said that they were 'perfectly relaxed' about the speech, which they had seen in advance.

Could it be any clearer? The Prime Minister is not only a militant feminist, he's appointed an anti-capitalism Business Secretary too, and supports his utterances. I'll leave the last words in this chapter to Simon Heffer, a columnist with *The Daily Telegraph*. From the 25 September 2010 edition, an article titled, 'Vince is the anti-business secretary':

The great political event of this week was the transition of Vince Cable from a figure of fun to one of absurdity. His attack on capitalism showed that he doesn't understand it. He doesn't understand markets. He doesn't understand banking. He doesn't understand the City. He doesn't really understand economics. Apart from that, he's an absolute genius.

Events at the Lib Dems' conference prompted reactions from their Conservative Coalition partners that ranged from mild shock via distaste to absolute rage. Dr Vince's contribution is in the last category. Not only does he give a worrying display of stupidity as the man charged with presiding over the revival of British business; he also gave the impression that his mad little party is dictating Coalition financial policy, and inflicting on Britain measures that do anything but promote growth and prosperity, but much to parade Dr Vince's socialist conscience.

Many phrases in his speech cry out to be branded the most idiotic. It is fearsomely hard to select the one that actually was, but Dr Vince's assertion that capitalism kills competition is so obtuse that it suggests he must need a step-by-step guide to tying his shoelaces. Capitalism creates competition. It is the alternative system of Soviet-style regulation and restrictions on enterprise that kills it. Dr Vince is clearly wedded to this ideology...

Pure capitalism of the sort Dr Vince detests is also a protection against what he calls 'rigging' markets. What markets does he suggest have been rigged, and how? Under capitalism in its proper sense, rigging of markets is impossible, because rigging is only done by monopoly (which we have perfectly good laws against) and by other forms of anti-capitalist regulation that keep providers of goods and services out of the marketplace. If Dr Vince thinks that this is what happened with banking, whose problems started with a Leftist government bloating the money supply, he is deranged...

I know Dave wants to close down the Conservative party, and he seems to have found, in Dr Vince, the perfect man to help him do it. If the Tory Party is going to let the Lib Dem grumbling appendix control the Government's digestive system, why should it expect anyone who believes in enterprise and prosperity to vote for it next time round?