

Letters

Please note the editor reserves the right to edit all correspondence prior to its publication.

Young folk living on our streets scandal

IT OCCURRED to me recently that, were Ralph McTell to compose his famous song *Streets of London* afresh, he would be singing not about lonely old men, and sad bag ladies with dirt in their hair, but the abundance of young people we see, on every occasion we walk through this city of ours, some barely out of school, bedded down in shop doorways with all their worldly goods bundled up alongside them as the world passes by.

There were times in the not-too distant past when such scenes would have caused outrage, a national scandal, questions in the House, ministerial resignations even.

But today we've gradually become accustomed to such sights, almost as if we've been dehumanised by the enormity of this human tragedy of epic proportions.

About 100 years ago the great German sociologist Max Weber gave a lecture in Munich in which he expressed his admiration for the British system of democracy, heaping praise on the manner that our elected politicians had managed to maintain such a degree of prosperity and stability, ensuring that democracy flourished, tolerance, decency and freedom of speech endured.

For, even in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, we were still reputed around the world as the cradle of democracy, decency and freedom.

Would that still be so today?

In the century that has elapsed since the Weber speech, what has become of us as a nation?

Do we really not care anymore, do the issues of homelessness, poverty and deprivation fail to move us in today's rapidly changing, technological age, an age when, given the will, most things are possible?

I'm old enough to remember the time when such scenes could only be witnessed on holidays abroad, even then, being restricted to the poorer regions of mainland Europe and third-world countries. But today, it's we in the United Kingdom who can probably be considered to be amongst Europe's most deprived nations.

Clearly we are now led by a government which really does not care about the plight of our poorer citizens.

Its quest over several decades now has been one of the dismantling and destruction of the institutions of state, of all that has been created since the Second World War, driven by a distorted ideology intent on rolling back the state at every turn, irrespective of the consequences.

Driven by a blind hatred of all public provision, it has handed most of the institutions (on which so many depend for their livelihoods) to their business friends and city slickers, freeing them to make obscene profits from what was once ours.

As a war baby, I'm privileged to have benefitted from a welfare state that was once the envy of the world and never imagined, even in my worst nightmare, that any civilised person, government, or any single Party would have the desire to deliberately plot its destruction.

Geoff Williams,
Sefton Road,
Hoole,
Chester.

Let's campaign for a pensions AGM

AS LOCAL pensioners of the council, we wonder what can be next?

So far we have found that our pension fund has invested in Wonga, tobacco companies, the infamous tax avoiders, companies that carry out fracking, gambling companies, arms manufacturers, outsourcing companies, Carillion and also that we own buildings that are mostly in the South East.

But it can get worse, it seems.

Now we have found that from one of those buildings in London we get rental income – from a strip club.

Given the number of low paid staff here in Cheshire in our councils, many of whom are female, this is an insult.

Cheshire Pension Fund has nearly 100,000 members in Cheshire, Warrington and Halton.

We say the trustees of the fund must take some sort of moral stance and start to build sustainable communities here.

Last year we formed CPF Members Forum to campaign for an AGM to discuss a better set of investments such as social housing, local investing, renewable energy projects, or IT networks for our communities.

If you live here you pay council tax, which funds pension fund investments.

If you work for one of the councils, this is your future.

If you draw a pension, this is how it is earned.

We know our pension is the envy of many, some call it "gold-plated", which is why we say we must also set a lead in sustainable investing for our local communities.

We are asking pensioners and employees to visit our website and complete the contact page for more details and join our campaign for an AGM.

Go to: <https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/A74aC81yyiBVjNvtmToyD>
Cheshire Pension Fund
Members Forum.

Student homes have my backing

ALL of the student accommodation that is going up is fantastic because they are all managed 24/7.

As for the one that is going up near to Storyhouse, some are saying it is too tall – not at all.

It fits in with Storyhouse and the Crowne Plaza hotel which are all the same height.

To the people who are saying the council should be building houses for families, well as a result of student accommodation going up it is freeing houses up in the Garden Quarter for families.

Two things that the council should be doing is to put a tenpin bowling alley in the six screen cinema complex and to go back to the new bus station and enclose it more from the winds and extend the roof at the far end where it is not covering the two stands mainly by the coach station

Alen Over,
address supplied.

Our city needs two fire appliances

I AM sure no self-respecting householder would knowingly leave his house and/or contents uninsured.

It is therefore staggering to think that the Cheshire Fire Authority have removed one of the two fire engines stationed in Chester and moved it to Powey Lane adjacent to Capenhurst.

It now proposes to demolish the existing station in St Anne Street in favour of a so-called state-of-the-art new one. So now the city is left with just one engine to cover all and any emergencies that might arise.

I certainly would not leave my property uninsured but that seems to be what the fire authority is doing with our city. They will tell you, of course, that back-up is available from Ellesmere Port or wherever but the key factor in all this is time.

Murphy's Law works on the principle that things will go wrong at the worst possible moment.

We need back up here in Chester somewhere 10 or 15 minutes drive away.

The final decision will not be taken until after the May local elections after which new council representatives will be elected onto the authority.

These new councillors need to be made fully aware of the dangers of relying on one fire engine if they are not already.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy was made worse because of the delays in reaching the fire from authorities outside the area.

We must make sure the same mistakes are not made here in Chester.

Peter Lowe,
Great Boughton,
Chester

Badger culling no answer to problem

YOUR article about the badger cull in Cheshire (*Standard*, January 17) mentions 1,208 badgers were killed over two years in Cheshire, yet bTB in cattle continues to grow.

Evaluation of the Randomised Badger Culling Trial (1998-2005) date indicated that culling 'can make no meaningful contribution' to control cattle TB in Britain.

The RSPCA wants the badger cull to be scrapped, as do many eminent scientists, as it is widely agreed to be ineffective in eradicating bTB.

In the 21st century, to kill a massive number of a protected species is madness.

We need to look at the real causes of the spread of bTB and not blame the badger.

Cattle transporters who break bTB regulations, even repeatedly, are just fined and do not lose their licences.

The bTB test in cattle needs to be improved for a greater accuracy and bio security on farms and when moving cattle needs to be vastly improved. Badger vaccination needs to be widened.

Until we heed these issues the poor old badger will take the blame and more and more of these voiceless animals will suffer and die in yet another futile cull.

Mr C Owen,
Little Neston, Cheshire.

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Trust in politicians at an all-time low

IS IT any wonder that trust in politicians is at an all-time low given the antics in the Tory party?

Theresa May told us we would be more secure, more prosperous and more influential by staying in the European Union, and then after the Brexit referendum had forced David Cameron to resign and the key to Number Ten was up for grabs, she U-turned into supporting Brexit and denounced people who want to stay in the EU (like herself) as "citizens of nowhere".

An arch Conservative, she now supports the same policy of leaving the EU which Michael Foot and Tony Benn went to the country with in the 1983 election.

She negotiated an agreement with the EU, declared that renegotiating it was impossible, then threw her weight behind a vote in Parliament saying that it wasn't good enough and she would have to renegotiate it.

Unaccountably, this latest defeat was spun by her supporters in the media as a victory for her.

She demanded that Jeremy Corbyn discuss Brexit with her without sticking to his demand that she should rule out a catastrophic, job-destroying 'no deal' departure, but when Parliament voted against 'no deal' and Mr Corbyn duly joined in talks, he was hardly back out of the door when her lieutenants were briefing journalists that she had not listened and would not compromise with anything he had said.

Labour's policy of staying in a customs union is surely the right thing to do, for jobs and the environment, but it will only happen if the Tories stop scheming and start listening.

Old Lacheonian,
Chester.

Stop questioning referendum result

I AM fed up with some pro-Remainers constantly trying to question the validity of the referendum result.

They claim the Leave campaign told a pack of falsehoods and cheated on their spending.

What about the Remain side?

David Cameron, wanting Remain to win, used taxpayers' money to send a pro-Remain booklet to every house in the country.

He claimed it was legal as it was Government policy to advocate staying in the European Union.

It might have been legal but it was hardly making a level playing field.

In this booklet he claimed the EU was now reformed and the UK had gained control of its borders. Both claims were untrue.

In fact he had only got a few paltry concessions and even these would have to be ratified by the European Parliament. I don't know whether they ever were.

To help ensure a Remain victory he allowed citizens of the Irish Republic living in the UK to vote in the Referendum. It was nothing to do with them and, of course, they would be unlikely to vote Leave.

He also included votes of the Gibraltarians. I admit the issue is important to them but Gibraltar is not in the UK. Again they were almost certain to vote Remain.

If Remain had won by a slender majority, the UK might have been kept in the EU by the votes of the Irish and the Gibraltarians.

This would have been quite wrong and Leave protagonists would then, quite rightly, be questioning the validity of the Referendum.

Despite these pro-Remain tactics Leave won by a clear majority.

And if the votes of the Irish and the Gibraltarians had been excluded the percentage in favour of leave would have been even higher.

'Brexit',
Chester.

Name and address supplied.

Austerity to blame for council tax rise

I FIND it highly laughable that Cllr Lynn (ex-Mayor of Frodsham) states she is 'disappointed' that the Labour-led council have to increase our council tax this year (*Standard*, January 31).

She states that Labour has failed to deliver targets yet it is her Tory Government that has decreased money given to Cheshire West and Chester Council by £330 million since the Conservatives came to power in 2010.

The austerity plan that is hitting the poorest has been implemented by her Government, and councils all over the country are struggling to fulfill their duties due to the decrease in funds from central government.

Perhaps Cllr Riley should look to her own party before criticising Labour.

To me, her comments show gross hypocrisy.

Kathy Owen
School Avenue,
Little Neston,
Cheshire.

Help us to help vulnerable children

WE URGE your readers to become part of a team that helps support vulnerable children in your area.

As the UK's leading children's charity we're looking for people to help us to continue our vital work with disadvantaged children, young people and their families, either by fundraising, volunteering in our shops or volunteering directly with children and families.

By giving us a little of your spare time, you will gain invaluable experience that could provide a stepping stone to a new career or an opportunity to add to your personal statement for college or university.

We also offer a chance to make new friends and have fun by joining the team at your local Barnardo's store or service.

Volunteering is a great way to build confidence and an opportunity to try new things as well as being good for emotional health and wellbeing.

Our volunteers – who are all ages and come from all walks of life – are given full training and ongoing support and also have opportunities to gain a level 2 NVQ in a range of excellent courses.

Visit www.barnardos.org.uk/ volunteering.

Diane Pryde,
North West volunteering and
community engagement adviser.