

# Just Voting?

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I've never been to Lincoln before and have never been to the cathedral before. I'm a bit elated so if I get over-excited, please bear with me. I've been in Jerusalem for four days and I arrived at the blessed town of Luton at 2.30am this morning and Lincoln this afternoon. I'm slightly sleep deprived.

It's very intense to think of that connection. Yesterday I was praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem and today I hear choral Evensong in Lincoln and my mind is full of connections. That was very beautiful and thank you for that invitation and for having me here.

The visit to Jerusalem still lingers with me. When I was there I felt the presence of King David and his Queen Bathsheba. That was an interesting reflection: the Babylonian and Roman conquests, of the destruction of the Temple of the Merciless Exile and the strange return that has occurred in these last sixty years.

Part of that story of exile went on here, in Lincoln. St Hugh's Choir is one thing but there was also the little boy, the eight year old, "Little St Hugh" as he was known. We, the Jewish community here were accused of killing him in the form of ritual sacrifice. Henry III got involved in all that and there was a terrible exile and oppression of the Jewish community here that culminated in the expulsion of the Jews ninety years later, in 1290. One of the advantages that the monarch had at that time was that they could seize all the Jewish property.

When I was reading about it while preparing this lecture, I found from a historian called Langmuir a very interesting quote. He said that "*Henry III was a suspicious person who flung charges of treason recklessly, who was credulous and poor in judgement and often appeared like a petulant child*". So nothing really changes when it comes to political leadership.

A few weeks ago I was in Ukraine. I went on an inter-faith delegation. My family were from there. My grandfather was born near Odessa. When I was preparing this I was deeply aware that the only country in Europe where the Jewish community lived and survived through the Second World War was our country - this country.

When you think in terms of faith, these are long stories that we are involved with. In many ways, the whole of my political orientation is a way of saying thank you to the people of this country for saving my life and the life of my community. We have got to live with these ambivalences along the way. I wanted to say that I'm hugely grateful for this invitation and I consider it a very graceful one indeed.

My politics is inspired by Catholic Social Thought and its conception of the Kingdom. I am inspired by the vision that we could articulate that and that the church can play a leading role in articulating it. That has yet to be done. It is in Catholic Social Thought that we have the idea of the dignity of every person, but there is also a special regard for the dignity of labour - for the dignity of the worker - that I think is immaculate, to use the correct phrase. It is tied to vocation which is an extremely important insight.

So the first thing that I took from Catholic Social Thought was the thing that we forgot over these last forty to fifty years. It is a respect for the worker and a respect for work and the idea of vocation.

The second is subsidiarity, which is really the idea that power and community life should be exercised at the lowest possible level, commensurate with its function: that's how I understand it. We live in a country where power has been very centralised in Westminster and in the City of London. A huge amount of the assets of the country are concentrated in a very small place, controlled by very few people.

The third aspect of Catholic Social Thought is the concept of solidarity, which is that we have a responsibility, one to the other, that has to be practised in real action - not just as an abstract sentiment. This is the way our communities should be organised. This is what the common good is about - the reconciliation of estranged interests in genuine community.

The fourth aspect of Catholic Social Thought is that we are to be stewards of nature, of our inherited environment.

To put it very simply I think we have lived through forty to fifty years where creation itself - human beings and nature - have been subject to the market, turned into commodities, and now we are beginning to wake up.

I want to talk about a vision of the Kingdom where those things - human beings and nature - are both held to be sacred. And I want to say that the way that we do that is through building voluntary human community and association in defence of the sacred.

Why do I think we have got to this point? I think we are living in a time of intensifying crisis. This is how it is. Think about what we have lived through. I would just highlight four things over the last twelve to fourteen years.

The first shock - which people don't talk about any more but which is still very vivid in my memory - does anybody remember? The financial crash in 2008: it's gone down the memory hole but it was very traumatic. Does anybody remember building societies when they were mutuals? We used to have the Halifax, Bradford, Norwich - we can list the names. They were associational forms of banks and lending that were rooted in place and controlled by their members - and they were demutualised.

The same with the banking system: do you remember the Midland bank? They also used to be rooted in place and had a relationship with the local businesses and people who lived in those places. Then we got to the stage where their decision-making was centralised. Now there aren't

bank managers in that way: you have to ring a number, they play techno-music from the 1980s for up to 45 minutes before you can even speak to anybody and decisions are done procedurally.

Above all, what the financial crisis indicated to me was the beginning of the end of an era. Pope Francis said a few years ago that we are not living through an era of change but a change of era. It's important to try to understand what that new era looks like. It's quite shocking because we thought that prosperity and globalisation and technology and progressive legal orders and trans-national organisations were going to eliminate politics, eliminate conflict, everybody was going to be fine and we all went with that. So the end of that, I just want to recognise, is traumatic and difficult. But this is where the Christian inheritance and the vision of the church play such an important role.

So I will be referring to the financial crisis as the beginning of the trauma. It was a trauma that none of the political parties, including mine, had any grip on. The response was "Let's just please go back to how it was before. Please just stop all of this". We're still working through the consequences of that politically.

The second trauma, which I think people might remember a little better, was Brexit, and the degree of hate and polarisation generated by that. I consider myself blessed to be in the city that voted for Brexit by 70% to 30%. If you were in London, which I was, you would think that fascism was on the rise, that there was some terrible threat; that rather than a reclamation of democracy, it was a scary and terrible prospect. This is something that has not yet been healed. We are still working through the consequences of that too.

The third trauma, which we are still living in the consequences of, and which we have barely begun to discern, is what we went through with Covid. The lockdowns, the elimination of society. The prospect it opened up for me, which was the most scary, was that the lights in the church went out. You could suddenly imagine a country without a church and I wish to share with you that that was the most traumatic aspect for me. If the church is eliminated from society, who will represent the soul in our society? Where will there be a refuge from the state and the market and those pressures? This is where we have to find inspiration to articulate a vision of the Kingdom - and in this, the church is an essential aspect.

The fourth trauma - and I think we are only gradually beginning to realise it - is the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. I was in Ukraine about three weeks ago. The scale of this violence is something to behold. The willfulness of conquest is something we haven't seen in Europe since 1945. It's not going to go away and it will also generate very significant changes in our politics and the way that we live.

When I'm talking to you about politics and the Kingdom, about the possibilities of grace and place and how we live, it's within this framework of a new order. We are moving towards a new settlement. I think that if we see the financial crash, Brexit, Covid and now this invasion of Ukraine as linked, then we can begin to understand what the features of the new order are.

The first aspect of the new order is that the nation, and the nation state, will play a far more important role than those who told us that we were living in an era of globalisation can comprehend or understand.

What do I mean by globalisation? I mean where finance capital is in control and must be able to move freely, invest where it will, extract what it will. Those opposing globalisation are accused of being nostalgic and reactionary.

We saw it play out with Brexit. We saw that there has been an abandonment of huge parts of our country. Not just an abandonment but a desecration and a contempt. The people of the country spoke and they spoke through democracy and it was shocking. It was just a sheer reality and it was particularly a working class vote that spread from the north of the country to the south. As someone who worked on that campaign, I can say there was no organisation. But it was saying that "if our vote doesn't matter then we don't matter."

This is the key point of this lecture. In other words, that the democratic vote is part of a sacred inheritance. Their inheritance was being taken away. As many people said to me: "if we don't do this" – and forgive me for my language in such a beautiful and sacred place – "you" (meaning me, a Lord) will never listen to a bloody word we say ever again." That was a feeling I heard in Blackburn, in Preston, in Burnley, in Newcastle. It was a consistent message about the redemption of the vote. But the redemption of the vote was also a statement about the primacy of the nation state as a political actor in the world.

So it was the case in globalisation that state intervention in the economy was assumed to be bad. It would lead to inefficiencies, to bureaucracy, to an undermining of prices and of market equilibrium. But what I'm saying is that in the new era there needs to be a rethinking about how the state can be a partner to communities in the production of things and the elevation of the status of people. How we work that is important. The church, and Catholic Social Thought, has a fundamental role in articulating a political economy in which human beings and nature are not merely commodities but a sacred inheritance to be protected and nurtured against the principalities and powers.

In other words, what I think we're dealing with is the renewal of the Kingdom - *our* Kingdom, and how that is articulated in terms of *the* Kingdom - as a place that is genuinely ethical, relational and rooted in the ecclesial organisation of the parish.

Within globalisation, place doesn't matter. You can manage your assets from your laptop in the Bahamas - you don't need to live anywhere in order to participate. But we are seeing a historic shift now - particularly with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For the first time in history, the City of London has been instructed by the nation state, through the sanctions on Russian oligarchs, that there is certain money that the City can't accept or deal with. This is a very important moment.

So the first point about the new era, for good or for bad, is that it is going to involve politics - the assertion of power - and it's going to be within the framework of the nation state. We saw it quite clearly with Brexit but we also saw it with Covid. Do you remember when Covid came in? Suddenly every nation state in Europe acted completely independently in pursuing its policy.

The second aspect of the new era is that the abandoned and the despised - what Hilary Clinton called 'the basket of deplorables' in coining a new collective noun for the working class, the poor, the least of these - are now elevated in importance. We saw that with the Brexit vote and we saw it very clearly, let it not be forgotten, in 2019, with the election of the Conservative government. Areas that had been Labour since time began, places that I would call the very heartlands of the Labour movement, abandoned the Labour party and voted Conservative.

What are the terms we used for the working class for the last thirty to forty years? 'Left behind' was one of the phrases. Within the logic of globalisation they had to be re-educated into a knowledge economy, transformed into different people with different values. It is very soviet, this idea of re-education. Yet now in the new era it's the working class which will decide the elections.

That's just voting: the power of voting is extremely important to understand. A class of people who were considered irrelevant to the future now hold the keys to the future. I think the Christian tradition is more than capable of understanding that the least of these will be the greatest of these; that the last will be first. It shouldn't be something we are afraid of. But I can tell you where I come from they are afraid, very afraid of this.

The third aspect of the new era is the places where those people live. I took a walk from the station today up to the cathedral. If anybody had told me how high it was then I would have taken a cab. I try to go walking through the places I'm invited to. You can see in Lincoln two cities; even from the walk I could clearly apprehend that. I will talk later about Grimsby.

But these places, the far-away towns, the abandoned places - I think they hold the key to the future of the Kingdom. I think that is where we have to engage, that is where democracy will be reborn and that is where the Kingdom will be forged. It won't be done in London, it won't be done in Manchester or Liverpool or Bristol. It will be done here in North Lincolnshire, here in Lincoln and in places in Yorkshire, in Lancashire, in Staffordshire. Those places that have been completely ignored in terms of the investment of capital and that are seen in terms of "managed decline" by the state. I think that those places will hold the key to the Kingdom.

So those are the three features of this new era.

If you look back at the previous era as an era of globalisation, we can see it operated on several assumptions. The first assumption was that the nation state was over as an economic actor. It was seen as an administrative unit within a global system that was there to enforce the laws of capitalism. That's because globalisation was based on the supremacy of finance capital and its ability to invest wherever it wished and to extract in the way that it saw best.

In other words, the allocation of resources was in the hands of capital - that's the second assumption of globalisation. If the rates of return are low in Lincoln, are low in Grimsby, then that was just the way of the world and there was nothing you could do about that. You could do a bit of state redistribution. You could build a technology annexe, a school. Maybe pretend that another institution was a university. But there was no way of investing resources in those places when it didn't make market sense.

The third aspect was that you could do nothing about technology. Technology was, by its nature, borderless. There was nothing you could do to develop any form of political economy that could challenge the primacy of capital.

These three assumptions of globalisation underpinned all government policy from Thatcher through to Blair. They were completely committed to this: if you can't compete, you go to the wall. We were moving towards a knowledge economy in which the idea was that everybody could work from home. However, what we discovered from Covid was that we need people to leave home and go to work and do things for other people, on the whole, with their hands. I'm talking about lorry drivers, nurses, shelf-stackers at supermarkets.

The very people who were considered completely irrelevant to the future suddenly became the very basis of everyday life. That's because globalisation was a fantasy that obscured the reality of human labour, the dignity of labour, the reality of place, the social nature of the human being, the longing for companionship, the desire to have some agency in the world. All of these were stilled in the era of globalisation.

In our hearts we have to be open to the possibilities that emerge, now that this era is ending, and to seize the moment of articulating an alternative - because we haven't got there yet. We are in an interregnum - a period between times. The great Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci said that "in an interregnum there is a fraternisation of opposites and all manner of morbid symptoms pertain". A very nice description of the period that we've lived in during the last five to six years.

But out of this will come a new settlement and part of that is the renewal of the local place, of communities with power in those local places and the ability of politics to actually transform the way we live. The key to all of this is a concept of civic renewal that will not be driven from the top. It must be driven from the local places. The institutions of those places have to be restored and their integrity needs to be renewed.

That links up to what I want to say in this cathedral: that we need to recognise the suffering of the church, to recognise the grief of the church. To recognise that when Covid turned the lights out, that darkness fell. The church must re-conceptualise itself as a partner in that civic renewal: not as host, but as a neighbour, as a partner to the other grieving, emaciated civic institutions that surround it.

Because by building a common good with the people who you live with, and by being vulnerable in recognition of your plight, in recognising that the church is in need of friendship, the redemption of the church in our Kingdom can be found.

Because the church is the bearer of a very, very special gift. That gift is that it is not a market institution, it is not a state institution. It is a civic institution based on the possibilities of redemption and of love. That is simply put, and the best way that I can put it, but there is no other institution, rooted in every parish in our country, where the possibility of redemption can still be found.

We have touched upon the financial crisis as the first trauma that I think triggered the end of the previous era and we are still working through the consequences of that. I've spoken about the new era, and the re-emergence of the nation state, the renewed importance of the working class as a voting block, and the neglected and abandoned places being the central places now that will decide the future of the Kingdom.

The second trauma was the Brexit crisis where there had to be a confrontation between two visions. The globalisation vision held that our future lay in ever-increasing integration into ever more powerful trans-national institutions, that were themselves based upon on all the assumptions of globalisation - in terms of technology and in terms of the subordination of politics to a very different legal system. There was shock when that vision was resisted by people who said that maybe voting should matter and should be able to actually change things.

The third trauma was what was actually going on during lockdown, what was going on during Covid. What was going on when the lights in this blessed cathedral were extinguished and we were all in darkness, where all we had was the internet. It was a shocking vision of a non-social life where, as opposed to other people being part of our life, we could always say: "I've got to leave the Zoom now - bye", and that person went into an ethereal darkness.

The coronavirus actually attacked the underlying conditions of co-morbidities of our bodies. It went straight for the weaknesses in our body, it probed our immune system, it preyed upon our pre-existing weaknesses. This is what the virus did but this was also what it revealed in our body politic. It just went straight for the underlying weaknesses. It targeted the poor, it targeted older people.

It revealed in a shocking way the paucity of our industrial capacity. It turned out that we couldn't make face masks, let alone ventilators, or whatever else was required. We were completely dependent on China for the basic production of the most fundamental necessities. But in China there is no freedom of religion, there is no freedom of trade unions. In China twenty workers are shot every week in unofficial strikes. We don't read of it, we don't see it. China is based on the absolute degradation of labour, the elimination of the common good, the absolute renunciation of democracy. That is the country we were completely dependent on for the fundamental satisfaction of our most basic needs, and that dependence came out of the era of globalisation. We had contracted out the necessities and then we became, for a period of about 18 months, completely dependent on a centralised state. Suddenly furlough, vaccines. This is what happened to us.

When we look back on it, as we are doing now, I hope that it leads to reflection. It also revealed how atrophied our body politic was, how weak were our institutions. Not least the church: I looked it up - it was the first time for 1,000 years that the church closed its doors. It didn't close its doors in times of war, it didn't close its doors in times of previous plague but it did close its doors during this period. I just want to recognise how deeply shocking that was.

Then we realised that both state and capital were both centralised. Our entire country, to use a medical metaphor, was on a kind of debt-based life-support system. So the state could create more money - that could go into the furlough, and that could keep everything going.

Then it was revealed that vulnerability was the fundamental reality of our lives, that we were weak, dependent creatures who absolutely depended on others for our life. But there was no society, there was nobody to turn to, there was none of that support. People acted incredibly, but they left the food outside the door. You couldn't see or speak to the person. In other words, there was no civic immune system that could generate value and initiate action, other than the central state. There was no civic ecology that could support local economies and shorten supply chains. There was simply the NHS and debt. Those were the two fundamental parts of the new order.

So we reached a limit in Covid that I would like to explore here. There was a need for a common industrial strategy. If you remember, and it's important to give credit for these things, the development of the vaccine was an extraordinary achievement. The Astra Zeneca vaccine in this country was the first time since 1964 that the state initiated a successful technological innovation through the generation of a collaboration between universities, capital and local communities. That has not been pursued but it certainly gave a glimmer of light. The experience of Covid generated for me a vision of a decentralised institutional ecology that could bring life to the neglected and abandoned regions, through an integrated national system.

Central to this are economic aspects that interest me - about productivity, supply chains and forms of national self-sufficiency. Do you remember there was a period where nothing moved? We didn't have the things we needed. And certainly now is the time to reflect - now that Russia has invaded Ukraine. We have to think very carefully about these issues and about what is required. This is not about an autarchy - in terms of abandoning trade with the world - but about recognising that in this era there will be times when we have to depend on ourselves.

Look at what's happening to Germany now with its energy. In an act of ecological virtue, Germany had closed its coalmines, closed its nuclear, essentially destroyed its capacity to generate its own energy. But what they didn't tell us was that they were completely dependent on Russia for gas, for oil and for coal: 70% of its energy needs. So when Russia invaded Ukraine, what was Germany's response? "Er, shouldn't have done that." Germany is dependent and that dependence is absolutely affecting its capacity to act in any ethical or moral way.

The vision that I am articulating is rooted in Catholic Social Thought and in the principles of subsidiarity, the dignity of work, solidarity and the stewardship of nature. This is an integrated, Christian way of conceptualising the very practical and real Kingdom that we must see and that we should see.

So there is a need to rethink an enduring system, in the same way as the church actually built our polity. The ecclesial polity, the parish, preceded our political polity. The forms of the political organisation of our country were rooted in these things until a central state superseded. (Anybody remember Thomas a Becket? It was astonishing to hear Evensong earlier and to recognise the continuity of the Catholic tradition so alive in this church. But it was not the case, let's say, in 1538).



So we need to think - using the Christian inheritance as our starting point - how to reform our economy, how to reform our polity, and how to reform our society, so that there can be the possibility of grace. I define grace as the possibility of trusting relationships lived out in place. You know when it's right. We are very far from that place. But that place is the place that I wish to go.

This approach is based on the common good, which is fundamental to many different Christian traditions - not only the Catholic one. The common good is based on the active reconciliation of previously estranged interests - capital and labour, rich and poor, immigrants and locals, men and women, and so on. This has to be actively negotiated in new forms of the common good.

We have to stress that this is to everybody's benefit. Because long-term partnerships rooted in place are the things that survive. Look at the workmanship of this cathedral, what it must have taken to build this place: an astonishing work, involving capital, labour - different orders - all combining and working for the durability of institutions that have survived for nine hundred years.

One of the reasons that Catholic Social Thought, and the Christian tradition generally, has such an advantage, compared to competing intellectual interpretations, is that it has a conception of sin. I include secular thought in its entirety here. If you notice, nobody from any universities is putting forward any explanation of what's going on, other than "bad management" or tweaking of things here and there.

This is particularly true of the progressive condition, which I have to live with in the Labour party: they have no conception of their own sin. They think they are free of sin - "you out there, you are full of sin and you are bad people and so you need to be re-educated." But they, in their ideology, they think they know what to do: they think they are without sin.

Whereas Catholic Social Thought is a fallen theology, where the possibilities and the reality of sin are permanent in our lives. We have to recognise that that is the case. I want you to know that I certainly stand before you wracked completely with sin. Catholic Social Thought is not messianic or utopian - it's trying to deal with the powers of the world and how to redeem a form of grace amid those pressures. This is summed up in John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus*, published in 1992.

On the way to Kyiv recently I had to go through Warsaw and you realise that John Paul II is a living force in Poland. In *Centesimus Annus* he wrote that human beings tend towards good but are capable of evil. That's the best philosophical definition of human nature that I've yet found in forty years of postgraduate study on this topic. Human beings tend towards good but are capable of evil: we have to bear that in mind in the way that we think and the way that we act.

There is no sphere of life in which the reality of vice, selfishness, greed and dishonesty are more apparent than in the economy. In the economy, maximising your returns, getting rich, focusing on yourself, are considered to be good. Opposing those things is considered silly at best and at worst, really unpleasant.

Where I think that the fundamental work has to be done is to view the reality of sin. John Paul II talked about the "structure of sin" within the prevailing economic system. Catholic Social Thought found an alternative to communism: John Paul II was not a communist, yet he understood there had to be a resistance to the power of capital if the human status of the person and the divine sacred nature of creation would be redeemed.

That is why I'm so inspired by Catholic Social Thought. It holds that human beings are not exclusively commodities, that nature is not just an asset to be exploited and that their sacred character has to be upheld in our politics. There is a bit of that in human rights - but then it becomes a legal system. By contrast, I am saying that it is *through the way that we live and associate* that we uphold the integrity of the human being. That's the importance of democracy.

Democracy has always been a way that poor people can exert some accountability, some power over their rulers, who are sometimes rich people. So given that reality, Catholic Social Thought tries to develop incentives to virtue, to reward people. This is bearing in mind that people are sinful by nature. It is good to reward people when they do well. It's based on the idea of self-interest, broadly conceived. It's in all our interests to find common good. It's of mutual benefit to people to find meaning through love, through work, through labour, the fulfilment of their duty to others. These necessary, fundamental things should be recognised in the incentive structure. For example, there should be tax support for capital when investors continue to invest in companies rather than moving out. Incentives need to be given to ensure a better future and to reward honest and creative labour.

Compare that to the financial crash: the scale of the lying, the scale of the deception in the audit reports, where "creative accounting" was the operative concept. But when it was revealed, it was not the banks who paid: it was the poor who paid. On that day in 2008, it was the biggest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich since the Norman Conquest.

I think Catholic Social Thought offers us a way out of the interregnum.

I've only met Pope Francis once. In a very strange turn of events, certainly for a Jewish person, I was invited to the Vatican to give a talk on Catholic Social Thought - that was a tricky one - it was on a Friday. And if you know anything about Italy, you know that on a Friday afternoon all Italians want to do is not go to work; they just want to go to their country houses.

They all had to stay, they had to sit. It was a very interesting experience. I was taken to meet him afterwards and he said to me with genuine wonderment: "Who would have thought England? Who would have thought that this [the common good] would be going on in England?" He looked genuinely amused, and I do think that it is going to be in our Kingdom that we generate this new settlement. Everywhere else is trapped in various ways. But we are free: we have a freedom now to do this.

I will just go through the political economy of Catholic Social Thought.

The first aspect is a genuine recognition of labour and capital - that those things have meaning - that there is such a thing as labour value. That's what Catholic Social Thought upholds. And in relation to what I said about the era of globalisation, capital cannot be the dominant interest. There has to be a balance of interests. We have degraded the dignity of labour and that needs to be restored.

In *Quadragesimo Anno*, it says that "man is born to labour as a bird to fly." Work is natural to human beings, but it is degraded and distorted by the economic system that we have. That is the core paradox as outlined in Catholic Social Thought: that labour is a source of vocation, of the way that we serve others, of a vocation of a truly human calling. But it is also the site of exploitation and of domination, of workers by management and by capital, and that needs to be understood.

The act of work calls upon an inheritance of good practice and tradition that we need to support - the concept of vocation and vocational colleges. There is a priority of labour that involves the recognition of a substantive body of skilled practice, embodied in the individual person, but passed on through vocational institutions. To make what I'm saying real: in the era of globalisation, at the beginning in 1979, there were equal numbers of people in apprenticeships as there were going to university. Now the universities have 90%. Then suddenly we need builders, we need plumbers, we need carpenters, we need nurses, we need social care. But no attention has been paid for the reproduction of that within our own societies - so that's where globalisation moves to immigration, where you bring in people to do those things and that becomes a necessity. The dignity of labour is also a respect for virtue, for good-doing. I define virtue as good-doing rather than do-gooding - to recognise people's expertise and their skill in the things that need to be done - caring for others, maintenance of buildings, those things.

I just want to talk about how Catholic Social Thought understands capital. It wishes to take something that was not produced for sale - the human being, the energy in creation, for example - and turn it into a commodity. That process is based on commodification - that is to turn what was not produced for sale into something that is in the price system. That's what capital does. Whereas Catholic Social Thought is saying that the human being is sacred and that the knowledge that they inherit is a common inheritance. And that should be used to challenge the domination of money.

What happened to the common people of our country? What happened to them in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries? Before that, there was a recognition of "customary practice", whereby people could inherit a home and there were common fields where they could perhaps grow food. In other words, the very necessities of life were not dependent on money. What happened was the Enclosures Act where gradually - it took three or four centuries - freehold title subordinated customary practice and the poor were exiled from their lands.

We know where they went - they went to the industrial cities and we know what happened to them. They were exploited but they didn't take that as their fate and they built institutions, of which the church was the primary refuge for them.

The burial societies were the first of these institutions in our country. They buried Catholics and Protestants - they had to pool their resources, otherwise they had the paupers' rate. The retrieval of the dignity of death was actually the first act, I believe, of the Labour movement - you wouldn't believe it now.

The second institutions were the building societies. In Newcastle in 1840 they set up this beautiful thing - the Northern Counties Permanent Building Society. I love the idea of 'permanent' and I love the idea of conceptualising themselves as 'northern counties'. It became the most trusted local institution, embedded in its place, completely mutual. To give you an idea of how it functioned, in the miners' strike of 1926, let alone the miners' strike of 1973, let alone the miners' strike of 1986, they waived mortgage payments during the strikes so that miners could keep their homes. That was the kind of embedded local institution. In 1964 it merged with the Rock Building Society to become Northern Rock. That was privatised in the cosmic year of 1997. It didn't last the length of the Labour government: this is the decimation of the institution and inheritance. This was a local institution based on leadership, mutual in practice, careful and prudent, completely eviscerated in the name of the assumptions of globalisation.

In conclusion, I want to say something about Grimsby. For me, the most abandoned, the most despised, the most marginal, are the working class in post-industrial small towns. This is where the greatest grief has gone on. We [the Common Good Foundation] have an organiser now in Grimsby, just to see if it's possible to generate these relationships, just to see if there is life left in the old bones. Do you know the story in the Bible with the old bones walking? This is the act of faith involved in the politics to come. Do we believe that the old bones can walk again? Or are we going to be on permanent life-support?

This inheritance of voting, this practice of democracy, at a local level, is a fundamental part of the civic inheritance of our Kingdom. It's to be loved, it's to be nurtured and let's hope it can be resurrected.

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