

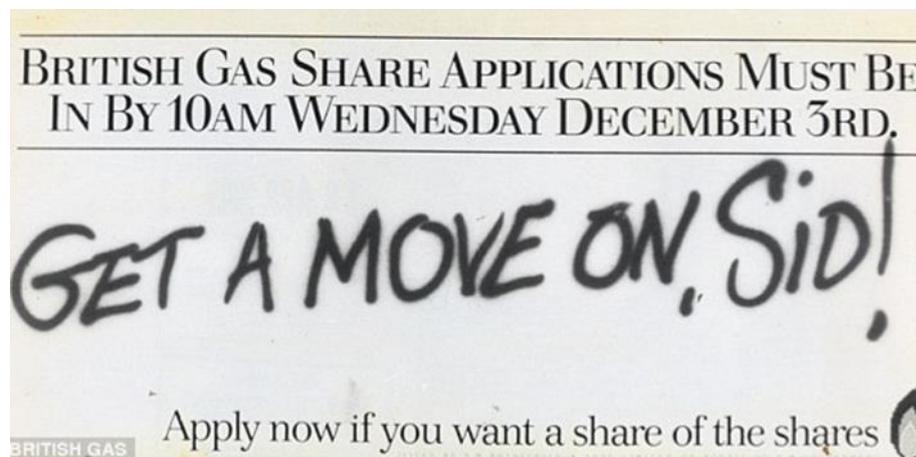
CONNECT	
New Type of Public Ownership	

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This is perhaps the time for significant positive CHANGE in our world

- 1 I remember the days when I was a Young Conservative - despite not being in the least political - as it was just about fun - and then later in the corporate world, being passionate about capitalism. How things can change!

I recall filling in the application forms and enclosing a cheque - remember those things - eager to buy into the public sale of our very infrastructure - BT, British Gas and whatever else was being sold off to the public then. In the late 80s I had become a shareholder in what were public assets and felt a little proud but, in truth, eager to trade shares in the market and try my luck.



- 2 Well, firstly, my luck with shares didn't last long. I had an interesting experience in the divorce courts where the judge in his wisdom made a ruling as regards the matrimonial estate. He divided the assets and liabilities equally between my ex-wife and me. My 'ex' got the shares - and the assets - and I got the liabilities. That hurt in different ways at the time and for some time after. But now I put it down to one of those distasteful life experiences. And I've had a few since - as people generally have of one type or another.
- 3 That's all history now and the episode with the shares is long past. That said, it has left its mark in other ways. I had a strong feeling of injustice and felt for some time that the legal system was wholly unfair. I still feel the same, but for a completely different set of reasons. Due to my make-up, I cannot rest until I have made some worthwhile contribution to correcting the situation - correcting the system that is - such that others are treated more fairly and more appropriately.

- 4 As I mentioned - in my early days I was a strong believer in capitalism and voted in general elections in support of my leanings. But as I said, things change - and probably my one and only divorce in life was the beginning of that change. As regards my political leanings - they evaporated completely.

That is not the same thing as my political interests evaporating - as these remain with me like DNA does. It did mean that I stopped voting in general elections - which has led to a number of interesting [Emmeline Pankhurst](#) type discussions since.

On the point of voting in general elections - and as I write another is haunting the corridors of Westminster - my point of NOT voting, is simply this. If there is nothing in the 'shop' you wish to buy - you have a choice to make. You can take second best - whatever one thinks that is - or you can leave with nothing. I choose to leave with nothing - and by that I make my point.

I know many people who struggle with that philosophy - but consider this. If the shopkeeper was not able to tempt his customers with second best, by offering them offal when they had asked for fillet steak - the butcher in this example would himself have a choice to make.

- Does he close his shop - due to having no customers? Or...
- Does he source what his customers are all asking for?

My trouble - and it is my trouble - the butcher in this example is the political system. What it offers is NOT what I want - and I won't accept second best.

Plainly put - I am waiting for a different choice, which in honesty, will only come with a different political system altogether.

The principle to grasp here - I hope - is this. If there were enough people like me - enough people that walked out of the butcher's shop empty handed - then what is currently on offer would change - and fairly quickly. I think.

It hasn't changed yet - and frankly I'm not expecting it to by this route. I believe it will come - but via another course completely.

And I would never have said that before we arrived in Jan2020.

- 5 Political systems apart though, this short expose - a seed of thought - for a different form of Public Ownership, is the real purpose of this article.

We all of us live in most interesting times. There is of course much to be unhappy about and the list is truly extensive. At the same time - placing a positive spin on things - there is much to be pleased about too. This is not the same as saying that changes - severe and extensive changes - are not required. My goodness - they certainly are! And as you know now - I would nominate putting the political system high on the list - The People's Agenda - for serious and extensive change.

- 6 This list - let's call it then, The People's Agenda - is born from a need to completely reorganise the way we do things. One of the expressions - or

rather, concepts I use in life is this – the Clean, White, Sheet approach. We as a people could start with a blank sheet of white paper and rebuild.

It is all too easy for people to become wedded to a particular way of doing things. With this human feature, comes a reluctance to start anything afresh – preferring to adjust whatever it is we have already. In many cases, this can be fair enough. Sometimes, making an addition here – and a deletion there – will often suffice, at least in the short-term. Such a valuable modification - to a *less than perfect* system - can be practicable and efficient. However, there comes a point when no amount of additions and deletions will cut it. There comes a time when that Victorian hospital building has to go. It has to be replaced by what has been put off being built for far too long.

So, beginning with a blank sheet of white paper, the process begins to rebuild from the bottom up – meaning starting afresh – rather than just tinkering with and modifying what we already have. That is not to say we don't use whatever we accept is GOOD about the systems we have now. Far from it. What we have that's GOOD now, become the very focal points around which we build the new systems required.

Now, The People's Agenda is long and exhausting to compile. But since the purpose is to consider a thought about Public Ownership, we shall consider this in isolation to all else today. So, the ideas around rebuilding the NHS – involving the release of all the Victorian ways of doing things - we will leave for another day.

- 7 In reality, the topic of Public Ownership is major. I will do it no fair justice here by briefly introducing it. My purpose, however, is really to sow a seed in your mind. A seed which I hope you will willingly consider as being helpful in starting a debate – and better still – potentially valuable to us all in time if adopted – in some later developed form. I'd love it if you went a stage further and reached for a Clean, White, Sheet of A4 and penned your own thoughts about this.

So, what is - 'this'?

- 8 Public Ownership sounds great from a socialist's viewpoint – and we've had all that before. The current Labour Party wish to return to that concept and specifically for the railways.

The railways actually provide a good example to examine here.

Many of my generation will have a clear and distinct memory of how our dear old British Railways looked and felt in the last century. People of the UK would look enviously abroad to Europe and beyond where they'd see smart, comfortable, fast trains - working to an efficient time-based system. What British rail travellers had was far removed from those qualities. We Brits had out-dated, slow trains, with a support structure that was running on its knees.

It was only in the late 70s that a glimmer of hope for a brighter future sparked. The new [Inter-City 125](#) hit the rails and we were encouraged by the advertising that was launched with it - to [Let the Train Take The Strain](#).

Some will remember who delivered that message to us all too.
And he is another story for another day!

[Dr Richard Beeching](#), in the early 1960's, was the one who got close to using that *Clean, White, Sheet of A4* concept. Rather than rebuild the railways from the bottom up, he decimated the railways and did so by deleting thousands of miles of track and related services across the whole UK. In truth, it kind of needed to happen, because the railways could not continue with the model that was now over 100yrs old. People had cars and bus services were on the ascendance. Trains could not compete with these developments and were running empty – whilst costing huge amounts of money just to be there.

What Beeching did not do, was lay new track – for new trains running on a new operating system.

Beeching delivered the ultimate hammer blow because the state controlling system had failed and had done so catastrophically. The state control had not delivered what had been delivered in Europe and beyond and had not planned for the future either. The state is notoriously bad at managing things. Some would say all things – and I couldn't immediately argue against that idea.

Then - 30yrs on - another major drama happened.
In the 1990s – and probably the last thing PM Thatcher instigated to bring about significant change – [the railways were set to be privatised](#).

What consumers eventually got was new, smart, comfortable fast trains. In fairness they also got clobbered with higher fares to pay for it all. The state in effect had rolled itself back and were now just managing the franchise fees - that it levied on the franchise networks – in exchange for running things on a hard commercial basis – with profit as a goal.

The truth is, that running things on a hard commercial basis does bring benefits. Costs are driven down – or out altogether – and for those costs which are left, they need to be justified in all respects. The pressure for this hard approach doesn't though come from the management – despite them being highly tuned to a modern commercial world and being highly experienced in running successful commercial businesses.

The pressure for this hard approach comes instead from the shareholders. These are the people the managers have to serve and justify their own position to. If these managers don't perform, they are out too – along with the salary cost of having them there.

So here we re-introduce the idea of the shareholder again.

- 9 I am going to leave you now with a thought – a few words written at the top of that *Clean, White, Sheet of A4*.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP – *Revised*

Before revealing, in the briefest of detail, I have to voice a word of warning. This has not yet been thought through to the *n*th degree.

And it hasn't been thought through on purpose. The reason being that:

- There is a monumental amount to be considered and thought through
- There are plenty of smart people in the world able to contribute
- The involvement of ALL people in this part IS required

The basis for this *Revision* then, is the merging of two concepts, namely:

- Public Ownership – distinct from major corporate investors' ownership
- Commercialism – based on a new revised system of people values

So, instead of the rail franchisees being owned by massive pension fund institutions, hedge funds and corporates like Black Rock – who control through their investments most of the major global businesses – the business in focus...

...perhaps the railways – in this example – or another national asset, such as energy production or water treatment and supply... is owned NOT by the state – as in the past – but by a new entity altogether.

I shall leave out a suggested name as it's unimportant.

But let's say that the railways, in this example, is majority [x%] owned by:

The People's Company

Think of it as an investment company and it applies the commercial pressure on the managers of the railways to perform to a Standard and to an Ethic.

The basis of this concept – the reason for writing about this – is this.

- The People's Company owns the national asset
- The People own The People's Company

The People own The People's Company by holding a share in that company. That share:

- Is ONE share and ONE share only
- Is gifted automatically to EVERY registered citizen of the country
- Is held in TRUST – with income – for citizens below a set age limit
- Can NEVER be traded
- Can NEVER be transferred to another citizen or other entity
- Is ONLY redeemed on emigration or death - whichever first occurs

Income – by way of dividend - is paid to the shareholders.

10 The concept

- places the ownership of these assets exactly where it needs to be
- gives the earnings – fair earnings – to the people owning the asset
- ensures the asset is run on commercial principles – for the People
- retains the ownership and income within the country - of the people

The concept can apply to all significant national infrastructure assets. I have merely identified just a small number in the paragraphs above. In reality the principle could be extended much wider to other assets.

In fact, it could be extended to global assets.
And that extension takes us to a very interesting realm indeed.
We will return to this thought – that realm – another day.
Before doing so, for those who have an interest in – or rather perhaps a deep concern about Big Business and globalisation – the film by David Sorenson will be illuminating in the extreme. [Who Owns The World](#).

For now, do remember – what has been scribed above is merely a thought in brief. There is nothing to be challenged yet – but everything to be added.
And the first person to add something – could be you!

PS1 You will have noticed that there is no involvement of government in the above new ownership equation. And in honesty – there shouldn't be.

But consider this.
In recent months there has been discussion about another national asset' – although some would describe it differently due to its output.

Here I refer to the news media channel Channel4 and the discussions have involved its sale.

Sky News had this:

[Gov't expected to sell Channel 4 as public ownership is 'holding it back'](#)

Minister Nadine Dorries 'had' plans for the proceeds too of course.

Channel4 would fit neatly into the portfolio of The People's Company.
For that matter, so would the BBC – another national *something or other!*
The BBC could be transformed too, with a completely different financial model to operate by at the at same time.
Needless to say, its editorial policy would need transforming also – I'd say.

PS2 Speaking of energy generation there has been this recent announcement.

[Shell beats forecasts as profits more than double](#).

And this is at a time when fuel prices went through the roof.

The effect being that the People got poorer and the shareholders got richer.

The profits are channelled to the investors like Black Rock.

Imagine if those profits were instead shared among the People.

What if a company like Shell were owned by The People's Company?

Think for a moment about that.

Is this perhaps the way we need to steer the global economy?

All kinds of problems could – in theory – be eradicated more than quickly.

That is not to mention that governments might be less influenced by those cash rich businesses – as they clearly have been for some time now.

CONNECT'S Maxim and Oath

Connect is only interested in finding and sharing the TRUTH.
In search of that TRUTH, we only pose questions – we have no answers.

By: David Charles

Contact/Source: CONNECT: [Magazine](#)

- 4 [LINK](#) Wikipedia: Emmeline Pankhurst
- 8 [LINK](#) Wikipedia: InterCity 125
- 8 [LINK](#) Advert: Let The Train Take The Strain
- 8 [LINK](#) Wikipedia: Dr Richard Beeching
- 8 [LINK](#) Wikipedia: Privatisation of British rail
- 10 [LINK](#) SWC: Who Owns the World?
- PS1 [LINK](#) Sky: Gov't expected to sell C4 as public ownership is 'holding it back'
- PS2 [LINK](#) BBC: Shell beats forecasts as profits more than double.

FURTHER READING

[LINK](#) A country railway story: Tetbury Branch Remembered 1889-1964

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