

Nationalism & Classism

How conservatives and the business class show that national identity and nationalism are shallow

A lot of people are turning to nationalism. It's not the answer to their problems but is a big problem for everyone else. Many people fiercely oppose it. This work aims to help, by showing how nationalism is an expression of the commonly-held belief in nation, nationality and country, and to argue for toning that down.

'The Country' Is Just The Government

It starts with the fact that countries and nations are really just pieces of territory where human relations are regulated by certain institutions - the systems of government, the state. They are probably necessary. That just seems to be so - for society to function, in any territory, some people will set up a system of political control and a system of laws. But everyone gives them more meaning than that and that meaning is never examined and evaluated. This work does, and will show that we should discuss national identity and patriotism and, while recognising the practical meaning and authority of government, law and the state, take a good look at how we actually relate in them and challenge the fervent belief in them.

People identify as a meaningful group by just having been born in a certain territory, whose institutions and laws most have a poor knowledge of. Nationalists just take that commonly-held belief to the extreme and, to get their needs met, ignore real relationships and turn on people who are a bit different.

But who is crazy about the political system or the government they live under? Most people resent them. They talk of the government and authorities that define the country as *them*. That makes sense - how much *do* states care about people? State support is a battleground in politics because in most countries there are well-organised groups of people - conservatives - who are determinedly against it. In most countries people do have rights that are worth defending but that's a practical thing. And people are entitled to more protections and rights than they get. Some countries are better in some ways, worse in others. All should be much better. None is worth the intense mass identification you get. It obscures big, practical issues about how people in them view each other and treat each other. People don't do enough together and for each other to justify the ever-present identification with nation and country.

Define Patriotism As 'The People' – ALL The People

The awful behaviour of conservatives to fellow-nationals, over centuries, and them having got ingrained into our minds that the nation means the institutions and laws that enable the awful treatment, has long made the case for challenging the notions of loyalty and patriotism. This work goes on to make

that case, and for not supporting their wars with the abdication of adult responsibility of 'my country, right or wrong'. But the ideas of country, nation and nationality are so strongly established and difficult to challenge, it is maybe better to start re-defining patriotism rather than trying to squash it, and to argue the view that a proper base for a nation than the governing institutions is '*the people*'. So a patriot defends and promotes the well-being not just of themselves but of their fellow-citizens, in the important, practical things. Supporting them with their health by voting for good, free health services; voting for them to have good social insurance, good education services, job security, the right to unionise, and more. A patriot will be a progressive, a social democrat or a socialist. And this view enables civilised people to challenge conservatives by saying 'Look, to say you are a patriot, you need to show more concern for your fellow-citizens'.

Common Culture?

There's little common feeling and supportive action between citizens simply as fellow-nationals. You never hear people say, about a contractual dispute, maybe a work-based one, or others, 'Oh, s/he's a fellow-countryman/woman, so I'll be considerate and fair about it'. When you say to them that nationality is just having been born in a particular political system, they say it's about something else, usually feelings of attachment to the surroundings and culture they grew up in and are familiar with, and about just identifying as part of 'the country'. These feelings have some validity but not enough to justify the intensity of nationalism. They are discussed at length in *How We Relate pages 173-226* but there are real antagonisms, soon to be discussed here.

How Countries Are Formed

But when people say 'the country' is based on a shared culture, ask 'Was that how the country was formed? Did the people, all the ordinary folk, feeling that culture, come together to form the political system that makes up a country? Or did it come from small numbers of powerful people, usually the landowner class and the business class, taking control, often by force?'

Take the country you identify with, and one other. Think about how they grew, as political power structures. In the main book *How We Relate*, this is discussed in relation to Wales, Italy, Spain, the USA, India and Pakistan (*It's The Same All Over, page 167*).

And countries have usually been set up by some people long before the current population were born. And it rarely involved everybody. Take the American War of Independence, fought for freedom from the British landowner class who ruled both Britain and America up to 1783. Many of the colonists were acquiescent or even loyal to British rule and didn't support the war. Many people in Britain *did* support it, because they wanted freedom from the landowner class in Britain too! And today, few in any country play any part in the governing institutions they so identify with. The mass of citizens don't bother to get involved, not in proper, organised relationships, like in political parties, where membership is often quite a small number of citizens.

Where Is The 'We' Of National Identity?

What do the 'we' actually do with and for each other? How much do fellow-nationals *care* about each other? In most countries, real supportive relationships between people *simply as fellow-nationals* are shallow. Most countries are very unequal, very unfair and it is obvious and well-recognised.

Everyone in the USA knows about the excess power and wealth of the corporate business class (though they make the universal mistake of not *calling* business people a class.) But the Democratic National Convention in the USA in August '24, where Kamala Harris was endorsed as their candidate for President, was a stunning and encouraging statement of mutual support, of 'the country' being about fairness, neighbourliness, and decent behaviour to each other. We'll see if that philosophy prevails – seventy million Americans will vote for the fascism that Trump fronts for. And Harris's optimism and belief in all Americans having 'the opportunity to succeed' in small businesses is limited by the blunt reality that industrialism is more efficient than homesteading and small trading and will always dominate. So what most people are going to get is work in the industrial production of goods and services, dominated by business employers, corporate and smaller. Then, the right to unionise to make industrialised work bearable and even fulfilling has to be the main thing a government can do to help the majority to succeed in the life they actually live. Thankfully, the Democrats do get that, more than any other progressive parties.

But most countries are not genuinely supportive of the mass of the population, except for what trade unionists and progressives achieve. Casual assertions such as 'this is the best country in the world' (UK) and 'a great country' (the USA) leave this unexamined.

People's only joint activity as fellow-nationals is voting, every few years. (If they have the vote). It's not a shared, collective, open activity. There's not much real, structured political discussion, debate and decision-making between citizens. You just go to the school room and, privately, make a mark on a scrap of paper.

Conservatives, The National 'We' And 'The Individual'

Conservatives are big on the hugely collective 'we' of 'the country'. They do it to bind people to the system that enables them to dominate everybody else. More on that below. But they contradict themselves nonsensically by also saying the country is all about the individual. About looking out just for yourself. They glorify it as freedom, the freedom to be aspirational, to succeed through your own efforts, be able to keep the benefits, to 'make it'. It's to justify their wealth and, when their fellow-nationals, mostly workers, suffer from the faults and failings of their system, to legitimise neglecting them in their most basic needs like health, homes and basic income. And to obstruct their fellow-nationals from taxing their wealth to support them. And to obstruct them from regulating the business people conservatives are and who they represent.

Conservatives And Reality - Collectivism -

But saying the basis of the country is the individual obscures the fact that almost everybody - business people themselves, and the great mass of people

who are workers – *don't* simply make their living as individuals. A small proportion do - small traders and the genuine self-employed - but the great majority - including themselves - do it collectively. That is because we have industrial economies that run on mass industrial production of goods and services. It is a system of relationships fundamental to most countries. The most important relationship is in business and work, in the process where we produce goods and services, where wealth is made and wages earned. It is basic to everyone's lives. It is defined in laws which help define 'the country'. ***And in them, we relate intensely collectively.*** Not democratically. But collectively all the same.

Conservatives and business people operate *collectively as companies and corporations*. Their 'self-made' success usually comes not just from their individual skill and effort but from them organising as collectives, as businesses; and organising the rest in collective, industrialised work. Yet they deny fellow-citizens the right to do the same and operate collectively as trade unionists, leaving them with just employment contract law that treats *them* as individuals.

Conservatives, The Business System & The Business Class

These basic relationships of business and work, established and maintained by conservatives, enable business people to exploit or discard the majority, their fellow-nationals: to employ them on unfair, unequal terms, to make money from them unfairly. They produce unfair, unequal results. Most countries have these relationships, implemented, sometimes viciously, by conservatives. They embody serious, differing, organised interests, with antagonisms between them.

So in most nations there is this class of person who disagrees with the nation being about all the people. They say it is about the strongest, most able, most enterprising being able to get as much as they can and bugger the rest. ***The class is business people and conservative parties aim to represent their interests.***

Well-established political arguments, and laws, deter and prevent people from challenging the inequality and unfairness of the business system. People allow themselves to be persuaded that it is just there, as if part of nature, and everyone just jostles in it for success or survival equally. But it is a set of relationships that favour business people, the business class, against everybody else. They create a class system, based on the reality of everyday trading relationships, so divisive that it seriously undermines the 'we' of national identity.

Conservatives *talk* with concern for all citizens, because their conservative parties need votes. But that's all it is – just talk, to mask a real lack of concern.

The USA has been the free-est experiment in all this. The common view in America is fiercely in favour of individual economic freedom, of opportunity, of 'making it big on your own', of 'the American Dream'. But industrialism and the reality of everybody's inter-dependence in the collectivism of the economy gets through. The support for Trump is a demand for collective help. They won't get it from him, he is a front man for the business class, who express themselves most nastily as the Republican party, diverting people's anger onto other people than their class.

The False Unity Of Nationalism

The business class, through their conservative parties, really run countries but people don't see it because they don't see them as a class. So the nationalist mindset unconsciously unites working class people with them and conservatives. ***The single most effective way of countering nationalism is Classism – theirs, first of all - to just show people the existence of the business class and to name them.***

Identities & Nationalism

That all describes reality doesn't it? So why *do* most working class people take on national identity, the cover for business-class domination and anti-working class conservatism? It's because, despite the talk of individualism, most people need to feel they belong to things bigger than themselves, to recognised or successful associations or organisations. They need group status and authority. You can see this with how people identify by town or region, by 'where you're from'. These identities don't involve real relationships, they are mainly just tenuous associations with well-known places and a barely-associated aggregation of people. But people adopt them, because of that need to belong to something recognised.

Take people's fervent identification with football teams. Watch the international football championships, with almost everybody, in most countries, even those who don't really follow football, in a state of berserker assertion and aggression, or despair, over the performances of their national football team. (Though the writer is a football man.) Look at the extreme expressions of national identity by the fans, all the wearing the team kit, the face-painting, and the rest of it, broadcast approvingly and enthusiastically from the stadiums to living rooms all over the world. Ask if they express any real, practical collectivism in things that really matter.

Fans identify with national football teams just because they live in or were born in the same political system. But beneath that, few have any real relationship with the teams. They've no cause to be proud of whatever the players achieve and no right to feel let down by them nor abuse them when they fail. In England, the national team that fans fervently support and expect success from is organised by the FA, The Football Association. Yet England fans despise the FA. And within the football fandom, there's no real unity. In Euro24 there was admiration for Scottish fans displays of fervent support, marching to the stadiums in kilts and playing bagpipes and all that. But the one thing most people know about football in Scotland is that supporters of the two big clubs, Celtic and Rangers, hate each other viciously. Same in England, between supporters of Manchester United, Manchester city, Liverpool, and Leeds. Same in Italy, Spain and Argentina.

And there's no real involvement in the actual game. Few of the fans who go wild about the national team's performance in the championships give any time and effort at the grassroots, developing facilities and players, the base for the national team. They don't get youngsters together on weekday evenings to coach them, get them together for matches, organise transport, get the nets and

corner flags up, do any referee-ing. (This writer has done all that, organising and managing adult and youth teams. And he has been a regular in the most fervent section of fans at one of the biggest clubs in the world. So this is no anti-football outsider view.)

Supporting the national teams, and club teams, is baseless. It's associating with and identifying with *other people's* success and achievements, people you have no real links to – the people who actually play the game and the business people who run the teams. Aside from a game of football or whatever sport, it's pretty meaningless.

And take relationships between citizens more generally, of any country where many of them fervidly support the national team together. For example, the relationships between the landowning and business class, and the workers and peasants, of Brazil, and their political parties. Or Columbia. Or many other countries. People say it brings a much-needed degree of unity. It really covers up and enables the reality of deep disunity.

Many, maybe most, of the identities people adopt or are pressed on them are almost completely insubstantial, identities based on real relationships very under-developed. People use the false ones because it's easy. You can loosely associate with people you have little real connection with. Buy a football shirt and wear it. Job done! You can associate and ride on the back of the group's recognition, status and success. It helps you overcome feelings of being isolated, insecure, insignificant.

Sports identities can be just good fun. But national identities mean more, because the nation has real, established political power, the power to make laws and wars. Belief in your country, in nationality and the political system, is the most serious political belief.

The Main Problem With National Identity

It unites working people, unconsciously, with the business class and their conservative parties. National mindsets mask how badly they treat fellow-nationals and don't threaten their influence and power. *And that's the main objection to them.* And they are so strong, people acquiesce to whatever governments do, like make war, with the awful belief 'my country right or wrong.'

But being a fervid follower of a football team or a regional identity is just assumed to be what people do and is overwhelmingly endorsed. It comes from people's own need to identify but the media promote it energetically too. That's partly for newspaper sales and viewing figures but the media is mainly owned by business people and they magnify the fervour so as to push working class people into group mindsets that divert them and divide them from each other and unite them with the business class.

There *are* real relationships between people, of which more later, and there are real groups. But not in mass sporting identities. Enjoy the game. But realise that by taking these affiliations and rivalries as seriously as they do, to the extent of real, deep, lasting hatred between fans of different club teams, working class people divide themselves when they need to unite. Football is just the best

example, people identify with many insubstantial social groupings, *Now if membership of a group involves real relationships, real mutual support, that makes sense. More on that shortly.*

The 'Insider' Identity

Still, again, why do people feel so strongly about 'the country' and nation and nationality, when they themselves will tell you plenty about what's wrong with it? Again, it's because each one person feels safer, stronger, more validated, as part of social groups or organisations that are widely recognised.

None are bigger than 'the nation', 'the country'. It has real authority and power. And even in the least democratic countries, it claims to be the guardian of the people's needs and promises to satisfy them. So when people feel they are owed better treatment they look to the nation for help and support. They feel a sense of entitlement, as they should.

But Conservatives have got people to see their system as just how the world is. So within the national identity, most people don't see the business system and how it unfairly favours business people and enables them to abuse and neglect themselves. And don't see them **as a class**. So they haven't got a sense of entitlement to challenge and claim decent treatment from those of their fellow-nationals who actually run the country, conservatives and the business **class**. And don't see how central to what they need is the right to unionise, to be able to stand up to the business class, at work and in politics. So they don't take on the business class as the main cause of their problems.

The 'Outsider' Identity

But from national identities they do get an 'insider' sense of entitlement over those seen as outsiders, those who 'aren't from here'. And when they think or are told that outsiders cause their problems, that turns some to turn on outsiders to attempt to protect their interests, to nationalism. They see the answer to their own mis-treatment by their fellow-national business class in worse treatment for outsiders. They don't 'punch up' against those who run the country and mistreat them, the business class, but 'punch down' against people they see as less entitled and turn on minority groups, immigrants and immigration, foreigners.

Its Migration, Not Immigration

Immigration is the main issue for nationalists. Colour of skin is the visual thing that gets them going, but, for people like white Eastern European workers, they do raise the same allegations of immigrants taking jobs, using services, eroding native culture and the rest. We need to discuss it more, but only while saying it's a minor issue compared to the power and the deeds of the business class, and their obstruction and destruction of public services. And asylum seekers are even less of an issue, except for them. And pointing out the benefits they bring, like staffing the services they are alleged to be overloading. Here's another - *Don't immigrants actually bring jobs*? Because, once here, they buy the usual goods and services. If you sold them that where they came from, as exports, that would be seen as good. Sell it to them in the host country, with them resident and shipping costs saved, being less costly, you can sell more.

(That idea came to me when the Polish building workers over the road asked me where they could get their dinnertime sandwiches).

And treat immigration as part of an entirely normal thing that happens within countries, without such attention – migration. When this writer worked in industry in Manchester from the 1960's onwards, he always had Scottish workmates. And Welsh. After the Conservatives demolished a lot of industry in Britain in the 1980's, a huge proportion of Liverpool people moved out, mostly to London. Such movement is the same in its effects on jobs, services and housing to migration from outside but people don't generate the same hatred about it and don't make it the central cause of diversionary political movements.

Opposing Racism

Independent conservative political activists, the conservative media, build the base for racism by promoting this image of an insider group and a varying cast of outsiders - Jewish peoples, West Indians, Asians, Mexicans, immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, East European workers, Muslims. Anti-racists usually limit themselves to defending the outsiders.

But Look In The Other Direction – Look At The Insider Group

Looking at the scape-goated outsider groups is looking in the wrong direction. The real issue, the real problem, is the insider identity of white-ism, nativism and nationalism and what little sense it makes. The big problem with it is the business class and how they believe in looking after only themselves, viciously. Getting that widely recognised is the key to opposing nationalism and racism.

More generally, there's nothing about anyone's skin colour that guarantees their behaviour towards others of the same colour. That applies to people of all colours, black, Asian, whatever. The 'outsider' groups are usually talked of as 'them' but are rarely acting as a group. They are just individual humans doing their best for themselves, like we all do. So just like there's no real insider group, there is no real outsider group, in economic or political sense, just on less important cultural habits. So talk of an outsider 'them' is as wrong as the insider 'we'.

There is nothing about any racial group that means they are all on the same side on the real issues of how people relate to get what they need. Take white people as the example. People who see skin colour as important should be asked 'what do you think about how little support, and a lot of hostility, the white business class members of the national insider group give to native working class people? As they do to the working class altogether, of all origins?' And what is there about you and other ordinary people being white that means you are all on the same side? Are you prepared to do something for each other, like on the practical issues of health, jobs, public support, and the rest? If so, good, but that's a class attitude, not a nationalist one.

Ask What If They Got What They Want?

And what benefits do white workers expect from supporting nationalist parties and politicians that promise action against outsiders? They are business-class activists more than nationalists, simply diverting people from attacking

them. They might do things against minorities to get support from nativist workers but they have no serious plans to do anything for their fellow-nationals, nothing really positive for working class people, white or any other colour.

Nationalists have little to say about what, if they got their way with anti-outsider action, they would do about all the other issues. Like jobs being crap, or poor job protection, under the business class and their system. Like support for you when ill or out of work. Like health services. Like education and housing. And transport. And most of all, about the working class's right to unionise, to be able to stand up to the business class. So we shouldn't only oppose nationalism because it's anti-outsider - we should ridicule it because that's all it does.

Some British workers voting to leave the EU, blaming migrant workers, American workers supporting businessman Trump because he attacks 'outsiders', and others supporting populists like him in some European countries, are examples of the mistaken actions that come from nativist, national and white-ist anti-outsider views. It is because they don't see how the problem is the people in the insider group - business people, the business class – who run the country. It is workers taking the limited opportunities available to them to strike out against being mistreated. Blaming 'outsiders' is going for the wrong targets and is futile but it's made easy by the whole widespread mindset of identifying by nationality or colour. You just have to feel you are an insider entitled to decent treatment from the political system (which you are), see 'outsiders' as a threat, and support populist, nationalist business-class politicians.

But it's not just some misguided workers who don't see the centrality of the business class and the business system. Even activists and politicians, and the liberal media, don't get that. We all need to, urgently, and get it across, especially to those who have turned to nationalism. See the full book, How We Relate In Business, Work & Politics. www.howwerelate.global

Nationalism Is Easier Than Real Identities

Nationalism is easier than challenging the powerful insiders - business people, conservatives. To do that, you have to identify by real, relationship-based roles, mainly being a worker, and you have to do more. You have to join together with others on the basis of real commitments *to each other*. With national identity and white-ism you don't have to do any of that. No real input, no real commitment needed. Radical-sounding, populist business politicians will do the organising. Just back them. (Populism is when people, atomised, not seeing and not organised by their real relationships, take the easy route of voting for confident-sounding leaders who don't have much in the way of real policies, just rousing oppressed 'insiders' against innocent 'outsiders'.)

People Like Yourself in Other Nations

There are real relationships *between people in different countries* as well as within countries. And the same identity – decent people who will really do things for you and together with you - felt internationally, makes more sense than 'the nation'. Nationalism divides you from them, people like yourself, just because they live under different political systems, in other countries.

Nationalism & War

And nationalism is the bedrock belief that enables the biggest of horrors, fighting each other in wars that are usually for business class interests in access to and control of markets and materials.

In economic crashes, when 'normal' parties can't manage the economy, the damaging effects of national identity are extreme. Take what happened in Germany under the Nazis. Not only what was done to Jewish people, but to all Germans. Nationalist sometimes say the Nazis were right but the German people were led to disaster, to mass death and destruction. In invading and being beaten by Russia, in being heavily bombed and invaded by Britain and the US. So many lives ruined and lost. It was from the strength of the national idea that enough people voted for the Nazis to let them into government. Note though that in the last free election, in 1933, only 26% of German people did that. But that was enough to let them form a government, with a party of big business people.

The Effects Of Nationalism On Progressive Politics

In most countries, conservative parties encourage everybody to feel they are part of 'the country'. But so do the 'newspaper' and other media owners, who are conservatives, business people, operating outside the party system. They reassure them with the inclusivity of belonging to the country and frighten them by dramatising threats from the various 'outsider' groups. The inclusivity diverts workers from 'punching up' against the big business class; the supposed threats from 'outsiders' divert them into 'punching down' against them. Most people are not taken in by nationalist parties who promise the futile policy of attacking outsiders while leaving big business people alone but Conservatives don't need to divert everybody like this, just enough to split and reduce the opposition to them. It doesn't take many workers to be pulled that way to stop progressive parties from getting into government.

Another Look At Nationalism, Colour & Racism

Let's look a bit more at what people base national identities on. As said, on being born under a particular governing system. Then, a shared culture or 'way of life'. But even amongst nativists, there are too many varieties of culture for there to be a single one worth defining as a national identity. And of course having many cultures is a benefit, it enriches life. Anyone for a curry?

But colour of skin is a big identifier, visually. But what real meaning is there in skin colour? Certainly not enough to base political, group identities on. It's nowhere near as important for grouping people as what they *do*, especially their roles in business and work, on how they relate to other people, including nationalists. We notice it because there's an evolutionary benefit in spotting difference - we notice it more than sameness. – and we need to rise above that involuntary reaction.

'Outsider' groups themselves adopt, in a positive way, the identity seemingly given them by colour. But to identify positively by colour, and sometimes by gender, is as low in meaning as the hostile discrimination. Yes, there is the shared issue of the oppression placed upon you by 'insiders' and it

has to be fought. But to base politics on shallow 'happenstance' identities instead of on real business and work relationships is accepting the discrimination!

In earlier history and still, in some geographical locations, there have been societies where everybody is of the same colour and culture. But there's nothing fixed about it. People don't really function together by race, certainly not in today's industrial and urban societies. There's more to you than your colour or gender. For example, working class women are more oppressed by their class than by their gender. Working class people of colour, the same. So refuse to be discriminated against because of these identifiers *and* don't self-define by it.

Meaningful identities need to come from real relationships. Outsiders as well as insiders need to see the centrality of people's actual behaviour and politics, of business and job relationships, see the business class identity and the working class identity, and see, in the light of that, the superficiality of the commonly accepted identity groups.

Real Groups and Classism To Tackle The 'Insider' Mindset

In all countries, there *are* real relationships, that really mean something, and real groups to feel you belong to, to identify with. There's real (grassroots) football clubs and other sports clubs, parent's associations, neighbourhood associations, motoring clubs, charities, run by many thousands of volunteers; religions. And lots more. Maybe family too. ***But class is the main one. Again, start with identifying, naming and exposing the business class.***

Then, where workers, the working class, organise in unions, there's mutual protection and promotion of each other's interests in their jobs, against business people and state employers, in the essential activity of making a living. Being able to rely on each other by class, at work, against bosses' bossiness, by being unionised. And not just locally but across your employers operation, that can be worldwide. And talking politics to each other as organised workmates. And taking part in progressive political parties.

What *real* groups do *you* belong in? Who can you *really* identify with - people you can define as a group because they share your problems and offer support, who will actually do things for you and with you and for others like you?

Equality For All Workers - How To Disperse The 'Wokism' Attack

All workers are treated unfairly because all politicians (and everybody else, really) support or accept the business system and so don't challenge the business class's unfair power over all workers. But some are badly treated more so because of colour, gender or personal preferences. Liberals and progressives are more civilised than conservatives. Mis-treatment based on people's personal biological or private attributes is so obviously wrong, they tackle it. Oppressed white workers see this, and are encouraged to see it by conservatives, as favouritism while they see neglect and oppression of 'the white working class.' They *are* neglected and oppressed and need to tackle that, but turning on workers who are even worse treated because of minor differences but have got some protection from that by fighting for it and by decent politicians granting it, is out of order. Absurdly, conservatives, who clearly are of and represent the real elite, the business class, point worse-off workers at the liberals, who, being

professionals, business people, or better-off workers, are portrayed a 'liberal metropolitan elite'.

*To counter this diversion, liberals, progressives and organised workers need to challenge not only discrimination on personal attributes but the bigger discrimination against **all** workers in the unfair relationships of the business system and politics.* The key to challenging it and them isn't in legislation from above, though that should be done. It's in supporting the empowerment of workers with the right to unionise, laid out in my book '*The Right To Unionise*' which is mainly the relevant extracts from the work '*How We Relate In Business, Work & Politics*'.

Just Political Systems

The actual existence of a country, with a political system and laws and all that, is significant enough, sure. But we need a pragmatic attitude to it. Live in it and with it as far as daily life requires, but don't feel serious, emotional collective identity with people just because they were born and live under the same political system as you, because it has little to do with whether or not they'll treat you right. Far from it - some of them are your worst enemies. Recognise how shallow national identity is and reject the flag-waving. It's just people grasping personal significance by identifying with something big and successful that, in most cases, they aren't *really* part of. 'My country right or wrong' is an abandonment of mature, adult citizenship in favour of allowing people at the top of the institutions do some awful things. Iraq. Stay emotionally independent of them and those of your fellow-nationals who don't care about you. Particularly conservatives and their class, the business class.

Declare your emotional and group identity independence from what are just institutions of government and law. Don't follow the government blindly on international issues, don't let national identities excuse illegal, mass-murdering wars, made in your name. And in some countries they have excused the most awful genocide. We do need to feel part of big, successful organisations but they should be those we really do get support from and, as much as you can, contribute to. That's all argued very thoroughly in *How We Relate* at www.howwerelate.global

Classism And Nationalism

People do need something to believe in but we have to show them something meaningful and decent. The big division in a country is between the business class and the rest, who are mostly the working class, but the term is a mess of meaning. The real meaning is examined in *How We Relate*. ***But for here, let's just say we need to counter nationalism with Classism. But not, initially, working class classism. The starting point is to get people to see the existence of the business class and their dominance.*** They're not all bastards, but many are. And their system pressures them all to be, unless regulated by strong unionism and progressive government.

Working class classism, class awareness, is much easier to promote once you establish the business class. It flows naturally from it. It's not very strong at present but that's got a lot to do with people not taking a cool look at the system,

at how industrial production organised by the business class makes most people workers. The work *How We Relate In Business Work & Politics*, at www.howwerelate.global is a comprehensive explanation of the essentials of the system.

Working class classism (that has nothing to do with superficial things like culture, accent and origin) has been strong. This writer was involved with union activity in the 1970's, in engineering and had a career as a trade union educator. He also had some connections with the miners in the UK during the strike in the 1980's, and most of them were *solid*.

And when you stand back from sharing national identity with the business class, you realise you have to be internationalist too. That you should identify with 'the people' and workers in other countries too. Because you have real links with them that mean as much as those you have with your fellow-worker fellow-nationals. Conservatives themselves, while they urge you to be nationalist, actually operate their trade, their financial dealings and businesses in many countries. That links you too with their staff there. While smaller businesses may not operate in other countries, their supplies and sales are almost certainly international to a degree. It's an inter-linked world.

So if you want support and help from others, you can't just look inside the country you live in. The business class don't. While pressing nationalism on workers, and using it to promote their business interests, they also act internationally. One of the first things the Conservative party did in the UK after getting into government in 1979 was to remove restrictions on them sending capital to wherever benefited them the most, rather than keeping it in 'the country' where it could benefit their fellow-countryfolk.

Countries are just the political and legal systems. Be against all national identities and nationalisms. (Except where they are authentic resistance to real aggression from other countries.)

How To Persuade People To Tackle Nationalism

People expect the leading political activists (politicians) to do all the work. (Meaning progressive parties, don't expect anything of conservatives.) But they are seeking people's votes so challenging their views can lose them votes. Conservatives do that all the time, by their media posing as being not the conservative *parties*. But we haven't got an activist progressive media.

Progressive parties can still do it, if they took it up thoughtfully as an ongoing process not limited to election periods. But ordinary citizens and workers are the best people to do it. We aren't asking for our fellow-citizens and fellow-workers votes, we can just talk with them as equals. We talk to each other all the time, all we need to do is thoughtfully question the assumptions people make about national identity. Supporting the national football team and other sports activities is one. Just ask 'What, actually, do you or I have to do with these people? Good luck to them, but we just live under the same government, we have nothing else to do with them and their sporting activity.' But raise also the positives – that an awful lot of fellow-citizens do an awful lot of good things together, in various groupings.

People will say social media makes a big difference to how we discuss things and how views get propagated these days, , and maybe it does. But we do talk to each other face to face, as people who know each other, still. In *How We Relate* and loose on the website www.howwerelate.global there's a short paper *How To Talk Politics With Each Other*.

Challenge Nationalism with Classism

Promote the idea that patriotism is about the people, not the institutions of government, and to be a proper patriot, you need to care about your fellow-country-folk, and probably be a socialist, or at least a social democrat or liberal.

But, as said, the most effective thing is to just raise the existence of the business class. Just expose and name them, as a class. And then their role and dominance, and how most of them believe in a self-centred, selfish approach to life and wealth and oppose public services that help the rest to get by despite them cornering vast wealth. Say they are not all bastards but the relationships we have with them are not co-operative enough to justify the level of shared national identity that is usual. When they talk of a national 'we', challenge them and their conservative representatives to behave in a more civilised way towards their fellow-citizens, at work and in provision of public services. And when you name the business class and their place in society, it follows easily that most of the rest are working class and need to adopt the national 'we' with the business class and conservatives less fervently. And to organise as themselves, to create a proper working class identity independent of the business class, and unionise widely.

V. 2024.4 Sept.