

# ***Marginal Gains***

A PolSoc publication

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## **Corbyn confounds his critics!**

# Reflection on the election

By Jamie Francis

So, just to clarify. The Tories have 'won' the 2017 election. Labour have made enormous surges, against the prevailing political tide. Nick Clegg has lost his seat. So has Alex Salmond. And now we face the possibility of a Northern Irish party, which openly opposes homosexuality and Catholics, joining 'weak and wobbly' Theresa May in a hung Parliament with a very small majority.

On the plus side, Lord Buckethead won a few votes in Maidenhead, but unfortunately not enough to be elected ahead of a lady whose pastimes include spending thousands of pounds on leather trousers and running through wheat fields. But, this is an election, so there's always going to be winners and losers.

This is the theme I'd like to explore on the back of an invigorating election day and night on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017. The people turned out in their millions to cast their ballots and the result shocked the nation with no party being elected with a majority. The forecast landslide victory disappeared, and a shaken Theresa May accepted her retention of her Maidenhead seat with a sunken face and a grim expression.



'Grim'

By all accounts Theresa May has lost her personal battle with Jeremy Corbyn and



Jeremy Corbyn's campaigning was remarkably effective

the nation clearly is not enthusiastic about her arguing their side on the negotiating table.

**'now we face the possibility of a Northern Irish party, which openly opposes homosexuality and Catholics, joining 'weak and wobbly' Theresa May in a hung Parliament'**

On the flip side, despite the loss on paper, it was a glorious night for the Labour party. Jeremy Corbyn's inspired campaign left the Conservatives stumped. His charisma and welcoming nature in front of the camera as well as at the rallies in Glasgow, Birmingham and Islington caused millions more than expected to vote red. The youth turned out more than any other age group bar those over 65 and showed their support for a Labour party promising free university education and a strengthened NHS.

Corbyn's Labour party looked like the winning side. With 40% of the nationwide

vote going to Labour, the efforts of Jeremy Corbyn must be credited, whether you believe him to be a principled, charismatic leader or a terrorist sympathiser.

For now we have to wait and see what comes of the DUP and the Tories, with Theresa May going to see Queeny as I write. I'm sure we can all agree that last night's events were about as gripping as an election result can be. In a time of political shock and horror, the 2017 general election certainly didn't disappoint.



Lord Buckethead challenged Theresa May in Maidenhead



# Strong and Stable, or Weak and Wobbly?

By Nick Rice

**Editor's note: This article was written two weeks before election day.**

To miss the broken record that is Theresa May echoing the phrase 'Strong and Stable Leadership' over the course this General Election Campaign you must have been living under a rock. But frankly that would be more invigorating than her totally uninspiring performance thus far.

Like Chelsea going into a second leg with a 5-0 aggregate lead, Mrs May has parked the bus: the bus being the 50 foot long blue monstrosity plastered with her now infamous slogan. With cynics believing that the snap election was called for her own benefit, many believe she assumed her victory before this campaign began. A politician misleading the public? No chance! Theresa May seems to be running down the clock at the end of the game waiting for the inevitable victory.

But how inevitable is her victory? With polls showing her lead shrinking from 24 points to 5 points within a matter of weeks. Could the impossible happen? Is Prime Minister Jeremy Corbyn now a realistic possibility? Stranger things have happened.

The Conservatives' tactical plan has revolved around making this General Election a duel on the credibility of the respective leaders. However this is looking to have backfired with the not so strong and stable Theresa's recent 'U-Turns' embarrassingly coming to the forefront of the election campaign, notably on National Insurance increases,

Refugee Children, Foreign workers, Social Care and even the snap General Election itself.

***'Like Chelsea going into a second leg with a 5-0 aggregate lead, Mrs May has parked the bus: the bus being the 50 foot long blue monstrosity plastered with her now infamous slogan'***

The assumption that Theresa May would win hands down the battle of character has been quickly proven wrong these past weeks, and the 'man of the people' Jeremy Corbyn has proven many doubters wrong, sticking to his core values of equality and opportunity for all. Corbyn has managed to connect with voters like Mrs May hasn't been able to, the scrapping of tuition fees and pledge to re-nationalise the railways being integral to his successful campaign.

Corbyn has targeted a broad range of supporters whilst Theresa May has remained fixed on typical Conservative voters, even alienating older votes, half of whom voted Tory in 2015.

It's not looking good on the Brexit front for Theresa May either, with supporters jumping ship to the resurgent Liberal Democrats who are running their campaign on the anti-Brexit, 'we're going to call a second referendum' platform. Declaring war on the EU the day before the recent local elections may have gained a few UKIP Knucklehead supporters for the Tory party but this ultimately could be Theresa May shooting her self in the foot. Oh how that would be a shame to ruin those shoes.

Although it remains likely that the Conservatives will end up victorious their campaign of late has been stuttering and, like her 50 foot bus, trying to manoeuvre her way through the various U-Turns may become quite the challenge for Conservatives in the election campaign ahead.



# In praise of Tony Blair!



By Jack Naisbitt

When you think of Tony Blair what springs to mind? The man who led the Labour party for 10 years, taking control of the centre ground in UK politics and turning them into a formidable force in Westminster? A man who single handedly made the Tory party impotent for almost a generation? How about the man who brought peace to Northern Ireland with the Good Friday agreement? What about the man who dragged our labour laws in the UK into the 21st century by way of the minimum wage, with circa 1.5 million workers' lives

enhanced by this legislation? I'm probably still not winning you over and I know why - you have Iraq on your mind, am I correct? Thought so....

Put Iraq to one side for the moment (please). Okay let's continue ...

What Blair did have was consistency in his views and policies. His willingness to keep re-stating his original position on Iraq is an astonishing sign of confidence in his own judgment. Contrast that with David Cameron, a man who switched from 'hugging trees' to hating wind farms, not one of the qualities that make a strong leader.

The problem with Iraq is we are using one event to determine an entire premiership. The truth is that Blair fundamentally transformed the country after ineffectual government of 'the Grey Man' himself, John Major. Whatever your political persuasion you should also thank him for bringing the Labour party back from near extinction and making it again an electable political force. For all our sakes the UK needs two, if not more strong, thriving political parties to ensure strong governance at the highest level.

In addition to Northern Ireland and the minimum wage his legacy includes Civil partnerships, Bank of England independence, The Welsh Assembly, The Scottish Parliament, a Mayor of London and a falling crime rate. Even his work abroad (often lambasted due to Iraq) is one he can be greatly satisfied with. Let's view his work in Kosovo, leading a bold intervention in an incredibly brutal war that has resulted in many Kosovan Albanians, naming their children 'Tonibler' in his honour.

Blair, aided somewhat by Alistair Campbell, exerted his expertise in the world of the media but coupled this with good 'people skills' that chimed with the man and woman in street that made him a populist leader. Skills that were not apparent in David Cameron and in the early tenure of Theresa May. The facts are indisputable and record Tony Blair seeing off a succession of Tory leaders with considerable ease, including John Major, William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith and Michael Howard and winning two landslide election victories including, in 1997, the largest majority the country has seen (179) in the modern era.

That's the kind of figure you want representing you on the world stage. He has an understated charisma that is as winning as Bill Clinton's. In EU meetings, he made attendees jaws drop at his ability to negotiate in fluent French. No wonder, at his last Prime Minister's Questions, following his emotional goodbye, the House - Tories included - burst into a standing ovation.

Sometimes it takes time to appreciate a good thing and I have no doubt that history will in time record Tony Blair's premiership as just that!



# Should Jeremy Corbyn resign?

By Lukas Moment

*Editor's note: this article was mostly written before the election, when a major defeat for Labour looked likely.*

Despite the euphoria surrounding Labour's 'not as bad as expected' election result, the fact remains that Labour lost and the Tories won. The standard procedure after a general election loss is that the leader will peacefully step down: Michael Foot, Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband all stood down after their first defeat, and although Neil Kinnock saw out two losses before resigning in 1992, a majority of the party membership has said they want Corbyn to stand down if Labour loses.

## What does Corbyn say?

In Leamington Spa on May 8<sup>th</sup>, Corbyn told BuzzFeed, the well-known reputable source, that he would not be stepping down through the statement 'I was elected leader of this party and I'll stay leader of this party.' This supposed act of strength was also seen by Brown in 2010 who wanted to stay as leader until Cameron formed a government but he was forced to stand down by his own MPs, a result which is looking likely for Corbyn.



In Jeremy Corbyn's case, he seems to have regretted the interview with BuzzFeed. Shortly after the interview, he told the BBC he would carry on if he won the election, and his team stopped inviting BuzzFeed to press events. Corbyn also claimed to BBC News that he had not told BuzzFeed he would stay on as leader even if he lost the election. But a recording of the interview proves otherwise, leaving Corbyn in an interesting position with the media.

## Are there rules in the Labour party about standing down?

There is no formal process for the Labour party to oust its leader, as it discovered in the 2016 leadership challenge. Even after a majority of his MPs had voted no confidence in him, Corbyn stayed on, ultimately winning his second leadership contest after it was decided that the current leader should be automatically included on the ballot.

## Will the membership still support Corbyn as leader?

Most leaders would stand down in the event of losing a general election. But most leaders would stand down after losing a vote of no confidence among their own MPs – and Corbyn resisted that last year. Regardless of the MPs and their views, Corbyn's support in the membership is still strong. Without an equally compelling candidate to put before the party, Corbyn's opponents are unlikely to initiate another leadership battle that they're likely to lose. Despite this, a general election loss could change that. Polling from March suggests that half of Labour members wanted Corbyn to stand down either immediately or before the general election. As this seems very unlikely, will Corbyn listen to his MPs and step down after the election, or stay and push on with his plan to create a Britain for the many, not the few?

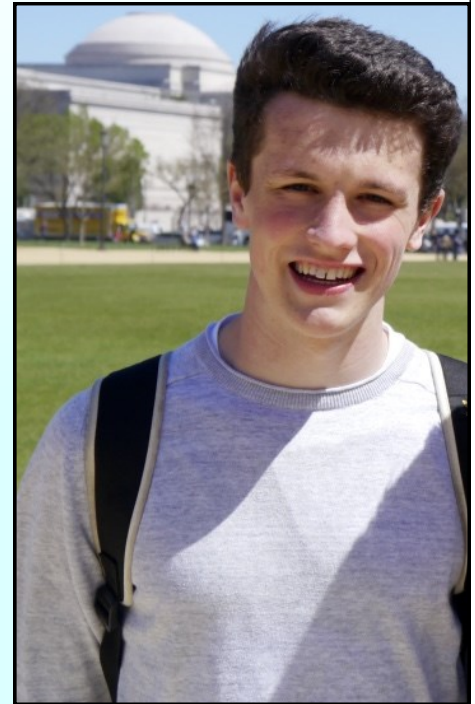




# Politics on Tour:



The White House



A Robinson

'You know you're in Washington when you can see at least 20 American flags from any place in the city.' - Lukas Moment

'Westboro Baptist Church told me I was going to hell.' – Elliott Harris, while holding hands with Joe Treanor



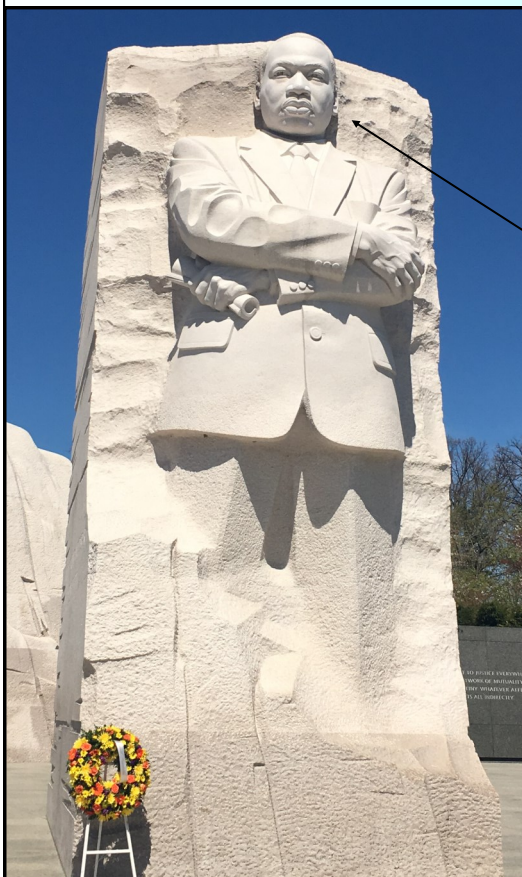
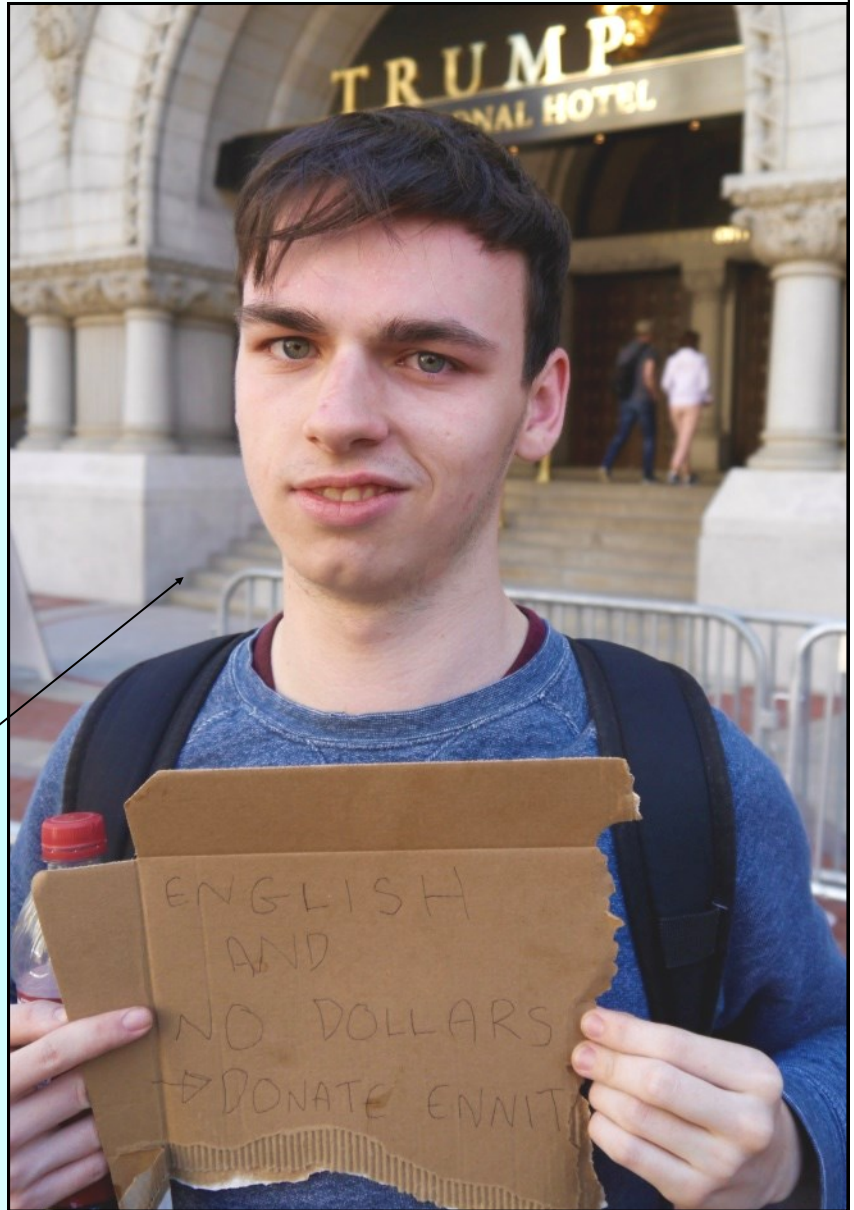


# Washington 2017



Another Robinson

'Private-school student Joe Treanor pretending to be a homeless person in inner-city Washington D.C' - Jim Garbett



Martin Luther King

'Tarran stood on Martin Luther King square and asked, 'So, where is it? Oh!' - Jim Garbett







'Unforgettable'



'Great trip - loved the sights, hated the food and hotels; was unfairly told off for being late back.' Alex Marshall

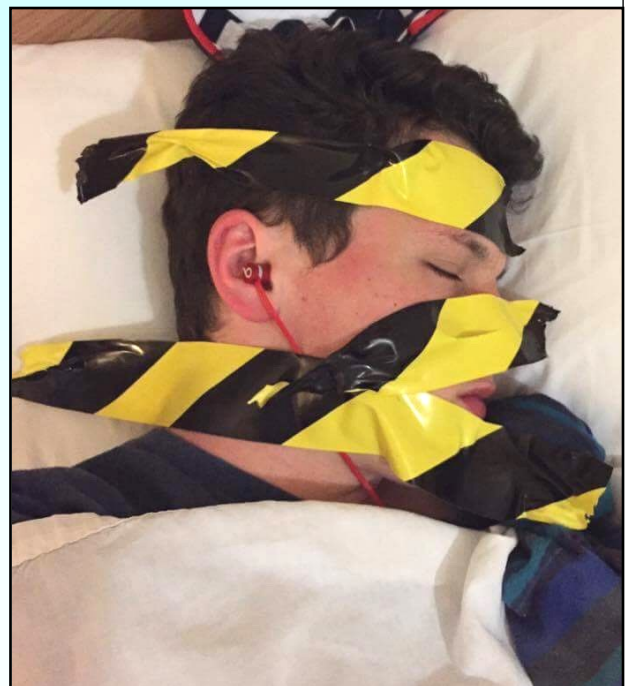




'Cheesy grin'



'Mr Ford sent us on a wild goose chase involving an incompetent taxi driver, typhoon levels of rain and an elusive Congress Visitors Centre. Of course, Mr Ford still rocks up happy as ever with that big cheesy grin - classic Ford.' Jim Garbett



With friends like these ...



# Is the American Dream dead?

By Elliott Harris

The American Dream is imagined by many as consisting of a middle class white family, living in a quaint house somewhere in the suburbs, with a white picket fence, a big front lawn and a dog named Fido.

This picturesque image has been the general illustration of the American Dream for many decades. However, does it still hold true? The answer is both yes and no, as while to many this is still the aim, to others the American Dream represents the opportunity to be able to do whatever you desire with your life, an opportunity that all Americans equally possess. This means that anyone can be what they wish to be, and even if you have the desire to be a history or politics teacher, (as I'm sure many do) then that's your prerogative.

However do all American's possess this privilege? There is no simple answer to this question, but following the election and inauguration of Donald J. Trump, and the establishment of a Republican majority in Congress, the country has become more divided than ever on whether or not the American Dream has been revived or put to rest.

On one hand, many Republicans are claiming now that there is a Republican controlled Congress and White House, Americans will regain the economic freedoms and opportunities taken away from them during the Obama Administration, arguing that policies such as the introduction of Obamacare, and the addition of an estimated 20,000 new regulations, have limited the ability of Americans (and their wallets) to develop and grow. This stems from the core Republican

belief in small government and 'laissez faire' policies. A Republican's idea of the American Dream is for an individual to be free to achieve their goals without being held back by the state in the forms of legislation and regulation.

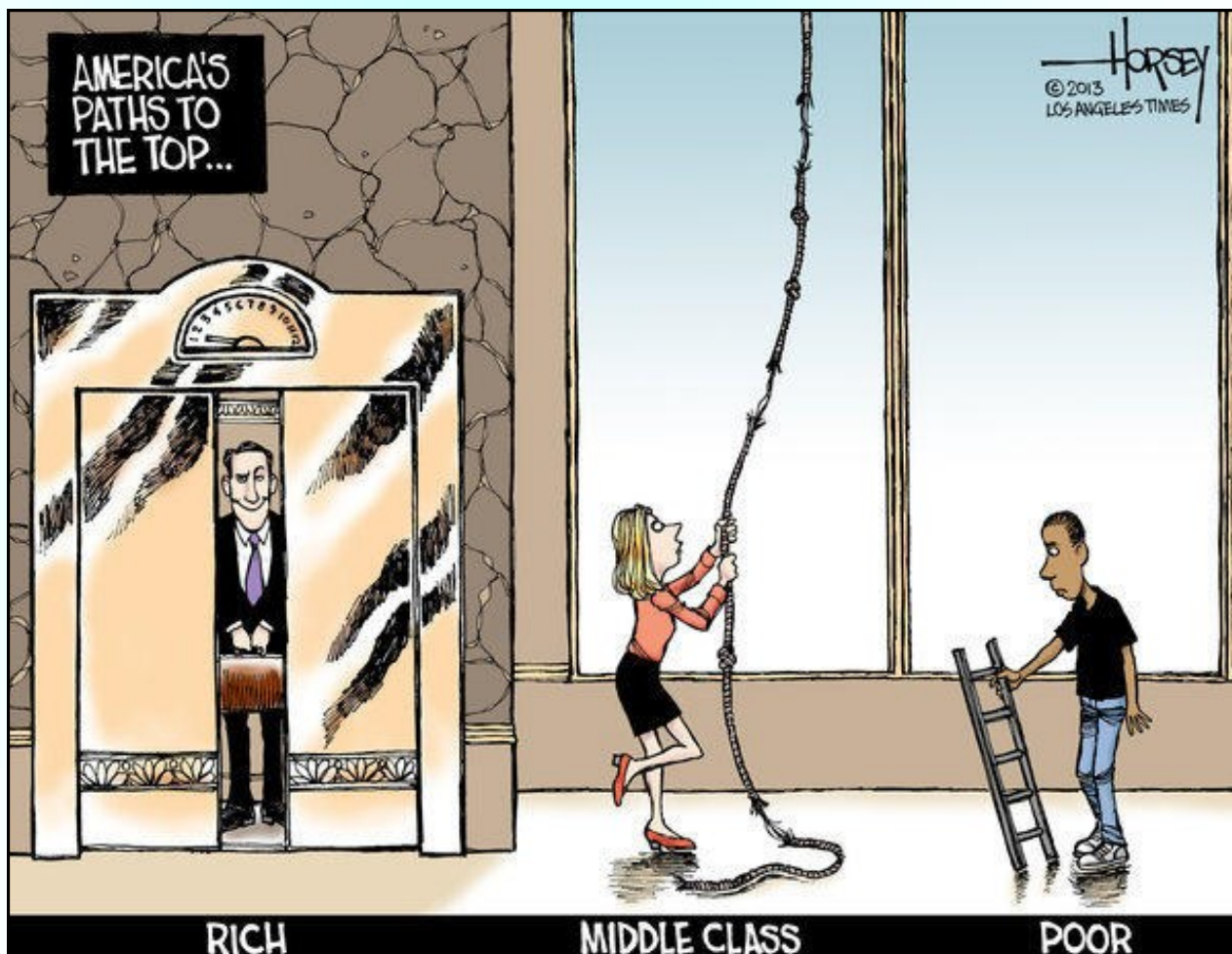
***'Democrats and Leftists believe that the US is a privileged white man's world, and that the American Dream can only truly be reached by such people'***

However, others argue that there is innate and institutional discrimination against certain people in the USA. Many Democrats and Leftists believe that the US is a privileged white man's world, and that the American Dream can only truly be reached by such people. There is of course evidence to support this, with gross inequalities across American society: there are only 27 women CEOs out of 500 in the Fortune 500 companies, and a clear majority of Trump's cabinet are old, white men. There is also a clear divide in the wealth of black and white communities: cities

such as Detroit, in which black people make up 82% of the population, have much higher levels of unemployment, poverty, and crime. Democrats would claim that they do not have the same chances as many other Americans and that they do not have the ability to achieve the American Dream, revealing it as a sham.

It must however, be taken into consideration that Detroit has been under total Democrat control for the last 30 years, and that many Republicans claim that the impoverished state that it is now in is simply due to the failed policy of the Democrats and is not a failure of economic freedom supported by the Republican Party.

To conclude, it is clear that there will never be complete equality of opportunity in America, or likely anywhere else for that matter. However, this does not mean that the American Dream is dead, it simply depends on your political stand point. Republicans believe that economic freedom is what breathes life the American Dream, while Democrats believe it is taking action against institutional inequalities and discriminations that will do so.





# What does Theresa May stand for?

By James Wynne

Like it or not, Theresa May is still the Prime minister. What does her voting record indicate about her beliefs? .

Theresa May has:

- Voted against the repeal of Section 28, legislation that banned the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local government and schools
- 2001 and 2002, voted against gay couples jointly adopting children twice.
- 2004: Did not attend parliament for any of the four votes that led to the Gender Recognition Act.
- 2008: Voted in favour of a defeated bill which said that IVF rights should require a male role model – effectively discriminating against lesbian fertility rights.
- 2010: first act as Home Secretary is to ensure that public bodies no longer have to actively try to reduce inequality.
- 2015: states it is 'impossible to build a cohesive society' where there is any immigration
- 2016: states the UK should withdraw from the European convention on human rights regardless of Brexit result.

This voting record shows that Theresa May is not a liberal. Even though May voted for gay marriage in 2016, she has before consistently voted against LGBT rights.

***'On immigration, May has pandered to the far-right and UKIP voters by sending out inaccurate statements such as 'immigration is forcing thousands out of work''***

For environmental issues, May's record is hardly anything to shout about – she



has consistently voted against stronger regulation for fracking. Furthermore, May has consistently voted for selling off England's forests, and has dissolved the former Department of Energy and Climate change. She appointed Andrea Leadsom as Secretary of State for the Environment who has generally voted against measures to prevent climate change, voted for lower taxes on fuel for motor vehicles, and unbelievably asked officials if climate change really existed!

On immigration, May has pandered to the far-right and UKIP voters by sending out inaccurate statements such as 'immigration is forcing thousands out of work', where in fact employment levels correlate far closer to the economic situation than immigration, and that the number of people who are jobless but want to work has been relatively stable since 1992.

May has also commented that mass migration leads to the wages of some low-paid workers being undercut. This

***'Theresa May's victory represents a step back to weaker individual rights, higher inequality and a weak stance against the most pressing issue that is facing our world ... global warming.'***

comment was followed up on by the London School of Economics, who said that there is 'little evidence of a strong correlation between changes in wages of the UK-born (either all or just the less skilled) and changes in local area immigrant share over this period'.

Theresa May's 'victory' on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June represents a step back to weaker individual rights, higher inequality and a weak stance against the most pressing issue that is facing our world at this moment in time, global warming.



## All things must pass

By Elliott Harris

There are a number of words which people could use to describe Mr Ford, some of which I am sure would be censored in this publication. However first of all it must be said that Mr Ford is, without doubt, a satisfactory teacher.

***'it must be said that Mr Ford is, without doubt, a satisfactory teacher'***

I am sure many people already know that tragically Mr Ford will be leaving us at the end of this academic year. This is especially tragic for myself, and the rest of the AS Politics Class, who feel as if we have been abandoned to face A2 without the support and encouragement of Mr Ford's strangely deep voice rallying us on as we learn about the intricacies of American Politics.

It is worth mentioning that there have been times at Solihull which have stretched Mr Ford's endurance and left him mentally scarred: the sight of Joe Treanor lying on a bed wearing women's lingerie calling him 'Paddy Ford' (a name that stuck for the rest of the Washington trip) with Careless Whisper playing in the background in a cheap Washington Hotel, is one no man should have to see or will ever forget.

There are many things in which Mr Ford will be remembered for; his deep voice, his love of 'speed dating' revision lessons, and above all he actually delivered on the promise of Domino's Pizza at Politics Book Club, which to be completely honest was the only reason a lot of people turned up.

All in all though Mr Ford will be remembered for his great teaching, ability to manage a form of Year 7s all of which are enthralled by fidget spinners, and to my surprise, remaining almost entirely politically impartial for a whole



**Former President Bill Clinton with his good friend Mr Ford**

year of teaching a politics course in which party policy and manifestos are discussed. In my eyes that is beyond impressive, especially considering that most people in politics classes, are, to put it politely, opinionated. Rumour has it he's a Liberal Democrat, but I doubt anyone will ever know the answer to this mystery.

Nonetheless Mr Ford has been an exceptional teacher at his time in

Solihull, and not just in academic teaching, but also his involvement in cricket, which he clearly has a great interest and commitment to. We also wish him the best of luck in the development and progress of his career which he seeks to develop in a school so posh the students even board there. However, all jokes aside, Mr Ford will be greatly missed, and has truly made an impact on the History and Politics department here at Solihull.