

MICK MORAN

Michael Moran

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Michael (Mick) Moran was W. J. M. McKenzie Professor of Government at the University of Manchester from 1990 until his retirement in 2011. At Manchester, he was variously both Head of Department and Faculty Dean. He was a member of the RAE Politics and International Relations panel in 2001 and of the equivalent sub-panel in 2008. He edited two of the major UK academic politics journals – *Political Studies* (1993–9) and *Government and Opposition* (2000–6). Moran was one of Britain's foremost analysts of the modern regulatory state, making particularly important contributions in *The Politics of Banking* (1989) and *The British Regulatory State* (2003).



MICK MORAN

Michael (Mick) Moran was born in Smethwick, Birmingham, the son of immigrant working-class parents who returned to their native Ireland soon after his birth. He spent much of his early life in County Clare, living on his family's smallholding on Scattery Island in the mouth of the Shannon Estuary and in the nearby town of Kilrush. He was educated at the local Christian Brothers' school, an experience that subsequently allowed him to joke with authority about his *Angela's Ashes* upbringing. His family returned to Smethwick in 1959, where he attended the Cardinal Newman secondary modern school.

Mick always drily acknowledged that he had been brought up in considerable poverty. He also stressed that he considered himself fortunate to have lived at a time when educational opportunities were such that, notwithstanding his background, he was able to attend university. Having self-started his own education in Smethwick Public Library, he secured a place at the newly established University of Lancaster where he studied Politics, Economics and Mathematics, graduating in 1967. He went on to take an MA at Essex where he met Anthony King, who encouraged him to stay on for a PhD under his supervision. Mick completed his doctoral thesis, an in-depth study of the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW), in 1973. Even before the completion of his PhD—in 1970—he had secured a Lectureship at the then Manchester Polytechnic, where he was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1974. In 1979, he moved to Manchester University's Department of Government where he remained until his retirement in 2011. He became W. J. M. McKenzie Professor of Government in 1990 and a Fellow of the British Academy in 2004.

Mick spent most of his adult life living in Glossop, Derbyshire, where he was an active member of, and fund-raiser for, Glossop Mountain Rescue. He was a passionate family man who was devoted to, and immensely proud of, his wife and two sons. His colleagues at Manchester, together with generations of his undergraduate and graduate students, benefited enormously from his wisdom, humour and kindness. He was a thoughtful and charming host to the many visitors to the Manchester Department, who were frequently invited back to Mick's home in Glossop to sample the wonderful Derbyshire countryside and local beer.

Mick was a modest man who had very little to be modest about. He was a brilliant teacher, well known both at his own university and through his lectures at the annual North-West A-level Conferences organised by Bill Jones and others. At Manchester, he was variously both Head of Department and Faculty Dean. He was a member of the Research Assessment Exercise Politics panel in 2001 and of the equivalent sub-panel in 2008. He edited two of the major UK academic politics journals—*Political Studies* (1993–9) and *Government and Opposition* (2000–6). As a scholar, he made an enormous contribution to our understanding of the workings of modern British government.

Mick's first book, deceptively entitled *The Union of Post Office Workers: a Study in Sociology* (London, 1974), was based on his doctoral thesis. The book was in fact much more than a modest case study of the workings of a single trade union in the 1960s and 1970s—as might have been suggested by its title. Rather, Moran assembled a huge amount of original source materials, including interviews with local and national officials, surveys of UPW members and a wide range of union documents to test a general theory of organisational effectiveness. The theory, which reflected the prevailing orthodoxy in organisational theory at the time, was tested systematically against the experiences of the UPW in the post-war period. Its core claim was that organisational effectiveness is greatest when there is 'congruence' between members' motivation for involvement and leaders' primary goals and actions. The ideal congruent trades union, for example, would be composed mainly of members who had instrumental, pecuniary motives for joining and would have a leadership focused on remunerative goals.

Moran's counter-intuitive central finding was that the UPW was effective *despite* being 'non-congruent' in the sense that the leadership was far more focused on the promotion of Labour's political creed than the rank-and-file membership, which was concerned primarily with remuneration. Moran identified two reasons for the UPW's effectiveness. The first involved the work of local branch officials—unpaid but committed volunteers—who frequently represented individual workers when they had grievances against management. Members' typical response to these representation efforts was a strong sense of personal loyalty to local officials, which the latter were able to mobilise when members voted on matters of national union policy. The second reason for the UPW's effectiveness was members' general ignorance of and apathy towards the union's national-level policies. This largely translated into indifference towards the union's national goals and activities, as long as sufficient national effort was put into securing suitable remuneration arrangements for members.

In the book's conclusion, Moran was not afraid to acknowledge that his core initial hypothesis had been wrong. The UPW was not 'congruent' as an organisation, yet it was effective both in delivering suitable remuneration for its members and in supporting Labour Party policies nationally, even though many rank-and-file members were indifferent to Labour's fortunes. At a time when British political science was seeking to find its epistemological feet—and when a large part of the UK profession appeared neither to accept nor even understand the importance of the Popperian principle of falsification—Moran's efforts to introduce scientific rigour into what, on the face of it, was a 'simple case study' represented an important innovation. Indeed his analysis of the UPW embodied two features that were to characterise all his later work: the location of detailed case study materials within the context of wider theoretical interpretations and claims; and his insistence on the need to challenge existing

orthodoxies, using the weapons of careful theorising and the systematic application of empirical evidence.

Moran continued his adoption of deceptively modest titles for his books with his second monograph, *The Politics of Industrial Relations: the Origins, Life and Death of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act* (London, 1977). This was no dry description of the Heath government's failed attempt to redesign Britain's industrial relations landscape. Rather, it was a penetrating analysis of trades union legislation since the mid-nineteenth century. It traced the industrial relations policies of successive governments and analysed the changing balance of the three main industrial policy traditions—market liberalism, voluntary collectivism and forced collectivism. Moran showed how the first two dominated, in varying combinations, in the period between 1870 and 1970. The Parliamentary Acts of 1871, 1875 and 1906 effectively reduced the role of law in industrial relations to a minimum—and for decades thereafter business, unions and government were largely content to maintain that position.

By the 1960s, however, there was a widespread sense that the incidence of strikes was increasing significantly, even though the actual figures on strike rates were both difficult to interpret and easily distorted by a single, unusual strike event. Nonetheless, there developed a near universal view among politicians across the political spectrum that the UK had 'a serious strike problem'.

At the heart of Conservative Party concerns about industrial relations policy was the problem of the enforceability of union–business agreements on pay and conditions. In the Tory view, because workers failed to honour agreements—as indicated by the high level of 'unconstitutional' strikes—the country's collective bargaining laws must be reformed; hence the 1971 Act. The Conservatives' policy paper, *Fair Deal at Work*, which they produced while in opposition in 1968, was subsequently used as a blueprint for reform by Robert Carr when he became Secretary of State for Employment in the Heath government in June 1970. As Moran observed, the detailed working out of policy provisions while in opposition was and remains a relatively rare practice in British politics. At the same time, Carr knew that he needed to consult widely on *Fair Deal*, and particularly with the unions and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI). After all, Labour's failure properly to consult in 1969 over Barbara Castle's similar set of proposals for industrial reform, *In Place of Strife*, had been crucial in their collapse.

The consultation on the *Fair Deal* proposals, however, included a list of conditions—all to be overseen by a National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC)—which the government indicated were non-negotiable. These included: the right of an individual to join or (critically) not to join a union (which would end closed shops); the compulsory registration of unions; the introduction of legally binding agreements; the restriction of existing legal immunities enjoyed by trades unions; provision for strike ballots

and cool off periods; rights for union recognition; and machinery to define bargaining units and to establish rights of representation. Within a very short time, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council had rejected all of these conditions and committed itself to doing all it could to destroy the proposed Act. The TUC's withdrawal meant that the consultation was largely limited to government departments and the CBI—and even the CBI were concerned about the proposed ending of the closed shop on the grounds that this could seriously damage union–business relations. However, the government rejected the CBI's arguments in the Bill that was presented to Parliament. Given that the Conservatives enjoyed a majority in both the Commons and the Lords, very few amendments were passed—though the government did compromise on trade union registration, which remained 'recommended but voluntary'. Unsurprisingly, Labour tried to protract the process of the Bill's passage, as the Labour left vigorously tried to expose it as 'class legislation designed to strengthen employers and weaken unions' (p. 99). The formal Labour position, however, was heavily laden with irony. Labour's claim that 'law has no place in industrial relations' rang very hollow given that Labour's *In Place of Strife* had tried to impose legal rules on industrial relations only two years earlier. In spite of a strong extra-parliamentary campaign mounted by the TUC, involving mass demonstrations, strikes and intensive advertising, the Bill was passed and the Act was given Royal Assent in August 1971.

TUC resistance did not stop with the passage of the Bill, however. It switched its focus to union non-registration, which was not required under the terms of the Act. The difficulty with this approach was that unregistered unions were subject to exactly the same restrictions as their registered counterparts—and yet they enjoyed none of the potential benefits of the legislation in terms of obliging employers to stick to agreements. The key drivers behind the failure of the Act, however, were two-fold. First, many individual unions were fully prepared to threaten or indeed to take mass strike action, even in the face of fines and asset sequestrations imposed by the NIRC. The decisive second factor was a Court of Appeal ruling that quashed a test case fine on the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) which had been imposed in March 1972 as a result of dockers in Hull, London and Liverpool refusing to handle containers. The Court of Appeal ruled in the TGWU's favour on the grounds that the union's rule book gave no authority to its shop stewards to initiate unofficial action and so the TGWU could not be held responsible for the dockers' actions; if the NIRC wanted to take action against the dockers, it would have to prosecute individuals rather than the union itself. Even though the Law Lords overturned the Appeal Court decision in July 1972, the legal and political confusion surrounding the dockers' case, together with similar confusions that arose from other related cases, significantly damaged the credibility of both the NIRC and the legislation that had underpinned it. When Labour was re-elected in February 1974 it introduced the Trade Unions and

Labour Relations Act 1974—thereby abolishing most of the institutions and measures connected with the 1971 Act. As Moran notes, however, the 1971 Act did mark the passing of the dominant tradition of voluntary collectivism that had been practiced more or less continuously since 1870. Labour's 1974 legislation confirmed that the law was to play a crucial role in the development of industrial relations in Britain—a principle that was subsequently to be reinforced by Margaret Thatcher and Norman Tebbit in the 1980s.

By the time Moran wrote *The Politics of Banking* in 1984 (London; a second revised edition appeared in 1989), his work was providing an exemplar of how good policy research should be conducted. Moran's intellectual humility, however, could not prevent him from disparaging the very analytic genre that he had embraced. In the introduction to *The Politics of Banking*, Moran observed:

Academic case studies of public policy are in disrepute. Their faults are obvious: they lack the immediacy of journalism, the authority of history or the analytical scope of conventional social science. (pp. 3–4)

Moran's natural modesty was misplaced. His case studies were always much more than the narrow accounts of developments in a particular policy sphere that characterises so much policy analysis. Moran's work invariably used carefully formulated theory to inform his discussion and to disentangle the complexities of the frequently contradictory thinking displayed by different individual and institutional actors. His work also consistently located contemporary policy developments in their correct historical context. In so doing, his work showed precisely how good case study analysis can provide real enlightenment in murky policy debates. Indeed, Moran's case studies, though highly readable, avoided the central weaknesses of the three other approaches that he complimented in the above quotation: unlike much journalism, his work was never over-simplified or lacking in depth; unlike much historical analysis, it avoided an emphasis on 'interpretation' and instead focused on providing causal explanations; and unlike vast swathes of conventional social science, his work never reified (often statistical) technique as a substitute for theoretically informed and systematic empirical analysis.

The Politics of Banking focused on how the relations among the Bank of England, the major banks and bankers, and successive governments produced policies on *Competition and Credit Control*, which became the focus for UK financial reform in the 1970s.

Moran identified three key features of the UK finance sector. The first was that, because industry in the UK developed earlier than the banking sector, banking and industry in the UK were *separated* in ways that contrasted strongly with the position in the USA and Germany. It was only in the mid-1970s that UK bankers 'shed their

dislike of long terms and became entangled in the affairs of their industrial customers' (p. 12). The second feature was the *concentration* of financial ownership and power within the traditional UK elite—until 1980, for example, fully two-thirds of directors appeared in *Burke's Peerage*. The third was the predominance of financial *cartels* centred on the Big Five banks. After 1918 cartel practices were widespread across the UK financial sector, underpinned by the 'club' social unity associated with ownership concentration.

Competition and Credit Control was actually the title of a consultation paper published by the Bank of England in May 1971, which was intended 'for discussion with banks and finance houses'. A revised version of the paper was issued as a set of regulations in September 1971 that would determine the way in which the Bank regulates banks' competition and credit control. Crucially, the new rules removed the previous ceiling on how much banks could lend; instead the price of lending in the form of interest rates would now become the key mechanism of control.

The result of the reforms was a massive increase in bank lending, which significantly increased M3, the then preferred measure of the UK money supply. This in turn fuelled the inflationary pressures that were already growing globally as a result of the US decision to fund the Vietnam War through deficit spending—pressures that were further reinforced by the oil price hike of October 1973. As Moran noted, the immediate practical effect of the credit expansion of 1971–3 was to turn the control of the money supply into a major political issue. This was in part because much of the new lending after the removal of the ceiling went into property: property-based lending increased by 400 per cent compared with only a 50 per cent increase in industrial lending. In addition, too much lending based on questionable security guarantees caused a property price bubble that was transformed into a financial crisis in late 1973 as the government, aiming to control the growth in M3, significantly increased interest rates. In Moran's view, the major failing in all this was the government's disposition to 'place excessive trust in the independent capacity of bankers to act prudently' (p. 85: shades of 2007–8). A secondary problem was the tendency of regulators to have the wool pulled over their eyes by 'the more ingenious of the regulated' (p. 85).

The Bank of England's response to the 1973 crisis, supported by the Heath government, was to rescue ailing banks and finance houses, in order to ensure the survival of confidence in the banking sector more generally. This was merely the continuation of a policy trajectory that had been followed since the late nineteenth century—similar approaches had been adopted with the Overend Gurney crash in 1866, with the Baring crisis of 1890 and with the prolonged recession crisis of 1929–33. As Moran noted,

the Bank of England—and the world at large—had come to regard the taking of prompt and decisive action to prevent loss of confidence as one of the essential roles of a central bank. (p. 98)

Moran's key analytic contribution in *The Politics of Banking* was his examination of the debate over deregulation as a device for dealing with the problems of policy complexity and the propensity of regulated actors to contrive self-interested strategies that enable them to avoid, evade or circumvent the effects of regulation. As Moran observes, all experience shows that the self-interested regulatee—the 'sophisticated opportunist'—will always find ways of subverting any system that regulators can contrive. In these circumstances, how can policy best be developed? Neo-liberals argue that deregulation is the obvious answer. Competition, along with its implication of business failure for some, is the only sensible long-run solution: let the state do less and allow the market to produce optimal equilibrium outcomes. Moran rejected this view. He argued that the state has an important role in regulation, even if perfect regulatory regimes are unachievable: 'If people are to live tolerably with complexity, opportunism must either be tightly controlled, or it must be harnessed, or its influence must be diminished by appealing to more altruistic motives.'

In Moran's view, governments need to balance these three possible solutions and they have three possible strategies for doing so. One option is *more technical rationality*: governments need more effective instruments of surveillance and control. The problem here, of course, is how this can be achieved in specific and frequently rapidly changing circumstances. Having possession of the right information at the right time is clearly difficult to achieve in any sector and is perhaps especially difficult in the complex high-stakes world of banking—as the subsequent financial crisis of 2007–8 demonstrated. A second option is *more competition*. As Moran notes, this may work in the private sector as long as business failure does not result in rescues or bailouts. Sadly, in the public sector more competition can too easily be subverted by opportunism. Here, more competitive self-interest serves largely to encourage the manipulation of public information and (damagingly) 'lessens the restraints exercised by professional values' (p. 157). The final strategy Moran identified was for government to *place more trust in the organisations that it seeks to regulate*. The paradox here, however, is that this would require behaviour to be constrained by moral codes which themselves are typically undercut by increased competition.

The policy implications of Moran's work were fairly clear—even if they failed to be followed through by subsequent governments. In the private sector, more competition was a good thing as long as private failure was not met by government bailout. In the public sector, competition was only worthwhile if it could be maintained at a level commensurate with the maintenance of professional values that would temper the

subverting tendencies of competing self-interested actors. If Moran's implicit policy advice had been followed after the publication of the second edition *The Politics of Banking* in 1989, the history of the UK banking sector—and that of health and education in the public sector—might have been very different. Moran himself, of course, was typically modest about the direct policy implications of his work. Academics, he pointed out, often conclude that policymakers need better-defined objectives and better information about the projected and actual effects of policies. Citing Charles Perrow, he noted that:

Every remedy brings its own disease, every benefit a painful loss ... Decisions are rarely produced by careful thought; they are invented half-consciously in the often desperate effort to cope with immediate dangers ... or in calmer times they come out of the bovine power of custom. Thus do we all try to live with complexity or at least to survive it. (pp. 161–2)

Moran refined and extended his ideas on regulation in his *The British Regulatory State* (Oxford, 2003). From the 1970s onwards, UK policymaking was characterised by liberalisation, privatisation and the reconstruction of the public sector. Moran points out that in this period the UK developed the largest and most complex institutional apparatus for regulating privatisation and privatised industries in Europe. Before the 1970s, Britain had relied primarily on self-regulation in its domestic markets for labour, services and goods. However, the relative stagnation of the British economy during the 1950s and 1960s, combined with the disastrous liberalisation of the financial sector and rapid retrenchment (with the introduction of a command-like prices and incomes policy) in the early 1970s, led to an economic policy crisis that lasted throughout the 1970s.

The response, under Margaret Thatcher, was policy innovation. Moran offers three 'images', prevalent in UK policymaking circles in the early 2000s, of the changes in UK governing arrangements that occurred after 1980. The first was that the state withdrew from grand interventionist projects, such as attempts to effect comprehensive slum clearance. On this account, the emphasis in policy was now on 'steering not rowing': the role of government was to make strategic decisions about the shape and direction of the state rather than to engage directly in delivering services. The second image was that the changes during the 1980s were dominated by the creation of regulatory agencies—for privatised industries; for the impact of human activity on the environment; and for the expansion of regulation inside government. The third image was that the changes were largely a response to the crisis in Keynesian economics of the 1970s—to the failure of an economic strategy based on large-scale public ownership and purposive economic management aimed at maintaining full employment. For this image, the new approach after 1980

created systems of rules that were then implemented elsewhere ... it focused on the task of remedying market failures rather than the more ambitious interventions of the Keynesian era ... the command modes of which it rejects. (p. 6)

Moran argued that these three images told only a part of the story of the changing UK policy world of the 1980s. In his view, the turn towards a more regulatory mode significantly extended the range of UK social and economic life that was subject to direct political power. He also suggested that the hyper-innovation in UK policy-making after 1980 was a response to two crises rather than to one. The first was the crisis in Keynesianism referred to above. The second was the crisis of *club* government that had first been described by David Marquand: ‘the exhaustion of an historically ancient project ... [that had preserved] ... oligarchic government in the face of democratic institutions and a democratic culture’ (p. 7). On this account, the UK ‘club state’ that evolved during the course of the nineteenth century was based on an oligarchic elite who shared a set of common values, experiences, education and even gentlemen’s club memberships. The corollary of the club system was the principle of self-regulation of the professions and of the City, combined with Inspectorates that monitored performance and investigated abuse or failure. By the 1970s, it was clear that these traditional institutions were failing to deliver the sort of economic efficiencies and innovations that were required if UK plc was to thrive in the modern world.

The new regulatory state of the 1980s, in these terms, was a vehicle for coping with the economic policy crisis of the 1970s *and* of reconstructing the institutions of government on the ruins of the club system by adopting a new approach to regulation itself. Under the new system, a large range of policy domains became the target for innovative methods of regulation: central banking; the physical environment; food safety; health and safety at work—new agencies were established that were intended to be free from partisan political control, where policy implementation was guided by technical imperatives.

For Moran, the new UK approach to regulation from the 1980s meant downplaying one of the traditional functions of the modern state: redistribution. In its place, greater emphasis was placed on economic stabilisation and on using regulation to promote efficiency by remedying market failure. This placed the UK somewhat at odds with the developing regulatory state model encouraged by the European Union. In contrast to the subsidiarity model favoured by the EU, where decisions are devolved to lowest possible level of governance, the UK regulatory state increasingly colonised new policy areas (such as the regulation of the professions and of privatised markets) and increasingly used command law as an instrument of that colonisation. In addition, in the UK there was no real retreat from hierarchy in favour of management through dispersed networks. On the contrary, in the UK, institutional formality and

hierarchy were maintained, while too much of the available investment resource, most obviously in health and education, was directed to strengthen the reach and grip of bureaucracies in order to secure front-line service compliance with centrally determined standards and targets. Returning to themes that he had developed in his analysis of banking, Moran showed how this new regulatory ‘command’ approach was subverted by its own contradictions. The regulated used ‘creative compliance’ to circumvent regulatory directives; and rational self-interested actors reshaped and distorted the effects of regulation. All of this meant that by the late 1990s the new regulatory state, which had been intended to involve government steering self-regulated networks, ended up with a plethora of supposedly self-steering systems that were in fact subject to tight, centrally determined hierarchical control.

Moran developed these ideas in *The British Regulatory State* through a series of case studies in the fields of transport, finance, health and education. In his analysis of the regulation of privatisation and of private industries, he accepted that privatisation improved several things that would be expected in a modern liberal democracy—accountability, transparency and plurality of representation—in ways that were superior to what had happened under the post-war system of nationalised industries. As he also noted, however, the new approach did not depoliticise the newly privatised sector. Rather, it entangled it in an increasingly complex system of regulation imposed both by national government and by the EU that far too frequently resulted in policy failure or even disaster. In the remaining areas of the public sector, what had begun as the New Public Management (NPM) approach in the late 1980s had by 2000 seen the creation of over one hundred agencies. These new institutions replaced the direct line-of-command relationships between government and service deliverers with an elaborate system of charters and performance indicators that required a massive increase in the resources allocated for monitoring and for regulation itself. For Moran, the outcome failed comprehensively to deliver the aimed-for flexibility and distancing of service delivery from political control. On the contrary, NPM’s main consequence was the maintenance of hierarchical control combined with the micro-management of service delivery by the metropolitan, central government elite. To complicate the position further, NPM also failed to prevent the capture by traditional elites of the institutions and processes that had been designed to secure tighter central managerial oversight and control. The result was a contradictory mishmash of centrally determined targets and standards, implemented by bureaucrats whose practices were strongly influenced by the circumventory and subversive aims of rational, self-interested front-line service deliverers. It was small wonder in these circumstances that the six ‘policy fiascos’ investigated in some detail by Moran—the Millennium Dome, Rail Privatisation, the Poll Tax, the collapse of Barings Bank,

BSE and the long list of government IT failures—should have occurred in the decade or so after Next Steps.¹

In addition to his wide-ranging research contributions, Moran also found time to write three major textbooks which are familiar to generations of students studying at both undergraduate and graduate levels in British, European and North American universities. In *Politics and Society in Britain* (London, 1985 and 1989) Moran provided a comprehensive political sociology of British political institutions, mass and elite political behaviour, and the character and functioning of the British state. In *Politics and Governance in the UK* (Basingstoke, 2005 and 2011) he provided a wonderfully clear and comprehensive account of British politics in all its facets and manifestations. It was, and remains, widely used as an introductory text for both A-level and undergraduate students across the UK—and deservedly so. His *Business, Politics and Society: an Anglo-American Comparison* (Oxford, 2009), although publicised and presented as a textbook, was rather more than that. Rather, it was a model of how to conduct cross-national comparisons between similar political systems, in order both to evaluate general theoretical claims and to enhance understanding of differences and similarities across and within the different countries analysed. In many respects, it offered a definitive analysis of the (many) failures and (limited) successes of financial and business regulation on both sides of the Atlantic.

In his final book, *The End of British Politics?* (Basingstoke, 2017), intended for both students and the general reader, Moran reflected on the current condition of the UK, particularly in the light of the continuing pressures for Scottish Independence and the divisions in popular opinion deriving from the Brexit referendum result. His analysis, as always, was both theoretically informed and grounded in substantive historical knowledge and understanding. The abandonment of empire after 1945 ushered in a new social democratic project in the 1960s that in turn foundered on the stagflation crisis of the 1970s. The neo-liberal Thatcherite turn towards markets strengthened the service sector (especially the finance sector) whilst at the same time producing a significant centralisation and extension of the regulatory state, a tendency that was reinforced by the Blair governments after 1997. In Moran's view, these marketising and centralising tendencies had played an important role in damaging the UK's social and political fabric. Indeed, the UK's current political difficulties and tensions could probably be addressed effectively only by a radical decentralisation of

¹ The Next Steps initiative was an administrative reform introduced by the Thatcher government in 1988. It involved devolving the operational delivery of various civil service functions to a new set of supposedly lean and efficient public agencies with their own strategies, staff and leadership structures. For review, see <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/case%20study%20next%20steps.pdf> (accessed 24 January 2019).

power. He was pessimistic that such a radical decentralisation could re-establish the social contract that thirty years of marketisation had broken—though he admitted to a ‘glimmer of hope’ that it might.

Michael Moran was always consummately professional in his presentation of arguments and evidence. With most of his writing, across most of his career, it would be difficult to discern his own ‘political position’. In retirement, however, his passionate lifelong objections to inequality, and especially the role of neo-liberalism in increasing it, certainly revealed themselves in all their glory. In his final paper,² prepared for a conference at Essex on the character and origins of contemporary authoritarian populism, Mick was unequivocal in identifying where he thought the responsibility lay for so many of the difficulties we currently face:

The deregulation of financial markets (in New York in 1976, and in London a decade later) was a choice, made because economic and governing elites sensed advantage in the act. That choice set free the forces of Financialization; led to the world of maximised shareholder value; enriched beyond the dreams of avarice those corporate managers who could deliver that maximised value; and thus brought to birth income inequality and the new plutocracy. Choice created deregulated labour markets and often—as in the case of the miners in the UK—led the state to destroy whole working class occupations. Choice fashioned taxation systems to enrich plutocrats. Choice positioned the UK as a post-industrial service economy in the international division of labour, where the most important enterprises were branch subsidiaries of foreign enterprises. Choice sold over one and a half million social housing units, and thus created the conditions for the appearance of ‘generation rent.’ Choice on both sides of the Atlantic opted for the light touch deregulation of financial markets that led to the catastrophe of the Great Financial Crisis and the decade of austerity... different choices across Europe produced very different levels of income inequality from those in the Anglo-American world.

The proverb says: ‘you can turn an aquarium into fish soup, but you cannot turn fish soup back into an aquarium’. In the decades after 1980 elites made fish soup of the post-war settlement. Now they are living with the consequences. They are right to be anxious. They have a lot to lose. In many discussions of populism the ‘problem’ that is posed is assumed to lie in the attitudes and behaviour of ‘ordinary’ (read ‘normal’) citizens rather than in elites. In the most recent anxious despatch from an elite institution (Harvard) the solution offered is to subject the population to civic education. But the betrayal in the broken contract suggests that the problem lies not with ‘ordinary’ people but with abnormal elites. It is elites, not ‘ordinary’ people, who need re-education. But the scale of the problem suggests that re-education alone will not do the job.

²M. Moran, ‘Populism and social citizenship: an Anglo-American comparison’, in I. Crewe and D. Sanders (eds.), *Authoritarian Populism and Liberal Democracy* (Basingstoke, 2019).

Mick never got to deliver his paper. He died two weeks after he sent it to me as conference organiser. I read it for him in his absence. It was the highlight of the conference. UK political science will miss his wisdom and his calm judgements enormously.

Note on the author: David Sanders is Emeritus Professor of Government at the University of Essex. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2005.

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