

Maintaining the Status Quo: Outsourcing Power and the British Whitehall Establishment

By [William Bowles](#)

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For well over a century the British state has relied on its professional civil service (known as the Establishment and for reasons I hope that become apparent) to maintain the status quo and whilst the state has had to make concessions over time (eg, universal suffrage, legalize trade unions and eventually establish the 'welfare state') the Establishment's primary function is to preserve the rule of Capital, regardless of the party in power. Thus continuity is preserved through the role of a permanent and unelected elite run by the 'Whitehall Mandarins'.

The success in selling the illusion of the Establishment as some kind of 'neutral' body cannot be under-estimated. But starting with Thatcher and continued by Blair there has been a concerted effort to demolish an 'interventionist' state. By this I mean that to some degree the state was obliged to take onboard the demands and the needs of working people as well as maintain a well regulated state with which to administer an Empire. This was what the post-WWII 'social compact' was based on in return that is, for preserving our imperial position in the world.

Of course the public service resists its destruction but only through its trade unions and again it fought, understandably, only to defend the rights and gains of its members. The larger role of the state in society is not considered to be a concern of a trade union (hence there is a law that makes 'political' strikes illegal in the UK).

Policy makers at the highest level were of course quite happy to 'outsource', in other words privatize what had formerly been an 'in-house' function, performed by an army of public servants. The highest levels of the civil service supplies the various Cabinet secretaries and under-secretaries who are assigned to all the various portfolios held by elected MPs; health, the police etc, most ably portrayed in the TV series 'Yes Minister'. Little of this elite has been affected by the dismantling of our public services as quite often they are re-employed at outrageous rates as 'consultants'.

It's at this point that we see the true nature of the Establishment and why it's called the Establishment. The higher echelons of the civil service share the same education, belong to the same clubs, they even marry each other and it's been this way for at least the last 150 years. They operate as a network because the civil service elite share the same values and outlook as the elite of the legal profession, the armed forces, education and the police and finally of course, they share it with the elite of the capitalist class.

Until Thatcher's revolution was consummated by Blair/Brown's government, the nefarious actions of the state had always been very well hidden from public view. Civil servants have

always had an intimate relationship with the corporate/state media. Most 'embarrassing' events could be hidden from public view with little more than a phone call or a private meeting between the Establishment and the editors. Failing that there is always the '[D' Notice](#)', in place since 1922. Most often it was self-censorship at work: 'it was 'understood' that you didn't write about specific events or mention names'.

The single most striking aspect of News Corp's corporate disaster-in-the-making is that along with the MPs expenses scandal, for the first time, we are able to see how ruling elite actually rules. And not surprisingly, it's the one aspect that the MSM rarely, if ever explores.

In a sense the corporate press and the state have been hoisted by their own petard: by outsourcing propaganda to the corporate media it has exposed the media as an integral component of state/corporate control but one no longer under the direct control of the Establishment. Ergo, the arrogant bastards who run News Corp.

So the police for example, a state institution that wields immense power in every sense of the word, has been harnessed by News Corp to protect both corporate and state power through the way the police chose or not, to use that power.

A similar process took place between the political class and News Corp, whereby the support of News Corp's propaganda arms were more important than prosecuting a criminal empire, thus gazes were averted. This lack of transparency and accountability explains why, when ex-assistant Police commissioner Yates decided that two villains were sufficient to close the case the MSM averted its gaze as well.

The parallels with Watergate are not coincidental as they both flow from the same belief that the ruling elite and its servants are invincible given the immense and in some instances ultimate power it gives individuals. But it's when they start to actually believe that they are invincible that the trouble begins. Nixon believed himself to be untouchable. 'What me? I'm the f..king president!'

It ain't rocket science: it took ex-assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police Yates exactly eight hours to skim through thousands of emails and texts to conclude that no further investigation of the News of the World shenanigans was necessary. The two patsies who did time for News Corp satisfied the state. It kept the lid on things and gave all the outward appearance, to a blind person that is, as the right thing to do.

And whilst the BBC and the rest were eulogizing over the (long overdue) demise of the NotW, not a single one of them pointed out that the NotW was a vile piece of gutter press.

Whilst the above-mentioned media pundits were holding a wake over the death of the NotW, this was the same paper that had hacked into the phone of the murdered Milly Dowler and then sold these stories in the NotW to the same people who now expressed disgust at what the NotW had done to get them in the first place!

"She [Brooks] came up to me and said, 'Oh, Mr Bryant, it's after dark — shouldn't you be on Clapham Common?'"

"At which point Ross Kemp [the ex-EastEnders actor and her then husband] said, 'Shut up, you homophobic cow'." — '[Quote of the day: "Shut up, you homophobic cow"](#)', News Statesman, 8 July 2011

Rebekah Brooks comment to the *NotW* (by the *NotW*, the paper she edited at the time) gay MP Chris Bryant. And outed at a critical pre-election period by the *NotW* with a pic of Bryant in his undies.

What the *NotW* and others of its ilk reveal is not only how it exploits its largely working class readership but what the capitalist class thinks of them! It obviously has nothing but contempt for its readers and treats their often painful life experiences as vehicles for advertising revenue and to be used as state-sponsored propaganda (eg Murdoch's obscene intervention in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, or its exploitation by supporting 'our boys in Afghanistan' then hacking the phones of dead soldiers for copy).

The irony of Thatcherism is that it signaled the beginning of the demolition of an interventionist state but in so doing it has exposed the way the state works in direct collusion with big capital and how integral our so-called independent media is to the functioning of the state. By outsourcing its functions to the lowest of the low, the slimiest of the ruling elite, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, the state has exposed itself for what it really is and whose interests it really represents.

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