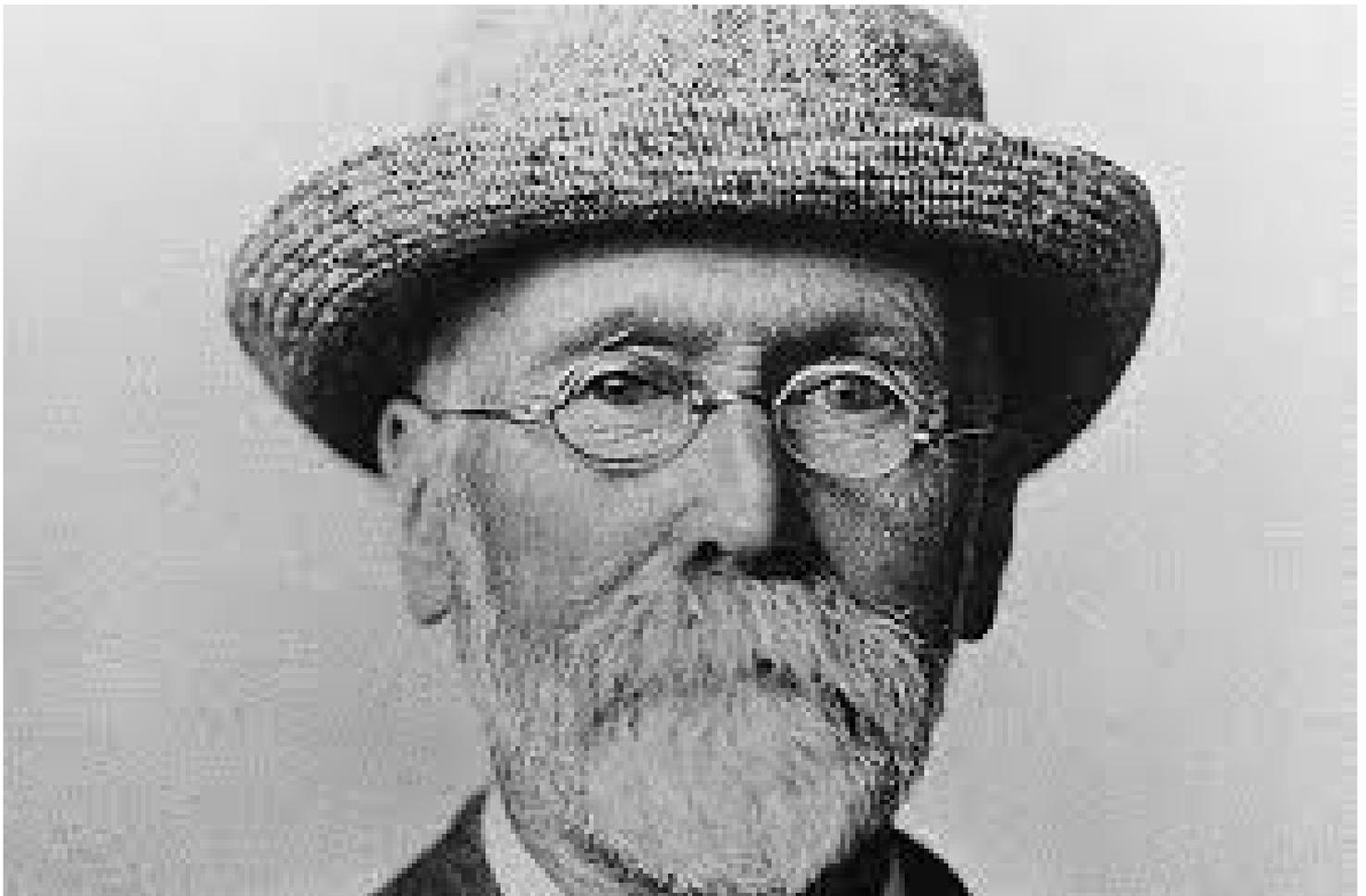


Frenchgate – a Case of Quaker Agency Capture?

by Alastair McIntosh

54 COMMENTS

28TH MARCH 2016



(<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/index-2.jpg>) I was far from the only Scottish Quaker, or “Friend” as we call ourselves, to have been stunned last Wednesday night when [investigative journalism by Jim Waterson of BuzzFeed](http://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/alistair-carmichael-is-still-struggling-to-pay-legal-fees-af#.adnd78KID) (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/alistair-carmichael-is-still-struggling-to-pay-legal-fees-af#.adnd78KID>) revealed that the Quaker-originated Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT) had helped to pay the legal costs of Alistair Carmichael MP in fighting off his own constituents over [the “Frenchgate” scandal](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/22/lib-dem-alistair-carmichael-admits-responsibility-anti-sturgeon-leak-mp-snp-leader-david-cameron). (<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/22/lib-dem-alistair-carmichael-admits-responsibility-anti-sturgeon-leak-mp-snp-leader-david-cameron>)

As I examined the background in response to people asking – “What’s up with the Quakers?” – I have been drawn to the sorry conclusion that the Carmichael scandal is the small i: **BELLA CALEDONIA** iends at least, is that it appears as if what we thought was one of “our” charitable trusts has undergone agency capture – to serve as a honey pot for the Liberal Democrats party. I

stress that what I write here is a private view-in-progress, and while I have consulted with other Friends, it does not express any corporate position. The JRRT and the Liberal Democrats can reply through the comments section of this article if I have inadvertently misrepresented them in any way.

The trigger to the seeming Quaker link with Carmichael had been the publication that day of the House of Commons' register of members' financial interests. [Carmichael disclosed that he had received \(£34,000 from the JRRT in January this year "to help meet my legal costs."](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/160321/carmichael_alistair.htm) Later, it emerged that he received a further £16,000 when the scale of those costs became known, bringing the total now to £50,000.

The background to Frenchgate is that as the May 2015 UK general election approached, the Scotland Office – the UK Government's remaining foothold in Scottish governance – [leaked a memo to the Daily Telegraph designed to undermine electoral support for the Scottish National Party \(SNP\).](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/SNP/11514933/Nicola-Sturgeon-secretly-backs-David-Cameron.html) It was seen by many Scots as a UK government "dirty trick", reminiscent of the independence Referendum less than a year earlier. The memo claimed that Nicola Sturgeon, the SNP leader and Scotland's First Minister in its devolved parliament, had told the French ambassador that she would "rather see David Cameron remain as Prime Minister" than have a progressive alliance elected to govern the UK.

Ever since the days of Thatcher, Cameron's Conservative Party has been a deeply toxic brand in Scotland. The truth unraveled when both Sturgeon and the French Ambassador denied that such a conversation had ever taken place. At the time, Carmichael was Secretary of State for Scotland, running the Scotland Office. Before the election, he denied all knowledge of the leak. However, using mobile phone evidence a Cabinet Office inquiry pointed the finger at one of Carmichael's aides. After the election he admitted that he had authorised the release of the story. He had got through the election on the strength of a lie. He had held on to his seat by a majority reduced from 10,000 to just 817 against the SNP candidate. In this way, he remained as the only elected LibDem MP in a Scotland that is now represented by just 3 MPs from Unionist parties, the other two representing Labour and the Conservatives. The Independent Press Standards Organisation subsequently upheld a complaint against the Daily Telegraph, which published an apology.

Using the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983, a group of Carmichael's constituents crowdfunded over two hundred thousand pounds to call Carmichael to account. The court found for the complainants on two out of three points of law. The judges said that Carmichael had, beyond reasonable doubt, lied "for the purpose of affecting (positively) his own return at the election." However, he escaped being unseated and a fresh election called on point three – namely, that his lie had been political rather than personal. Carmichael, himself a lawyer, had got off on a technicality, but the judges subsequently refused his attempt to have legal costs awarded against the complainants.

Such was wider the lack of sympathy for this line of defence in Scotland that Carmichael's own crowdfunder brought in just some £15,000 towards a [legal bill estimated at ten times that figure.](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/08/alistair-carmichael-scotland-150000-legal-bill-election-court-leaked-memo) Where would he find the balance of his costs? We now know. The JRRT rallied to cover a third of his costs with Joseph Rowntree's Quakerly sweetie money.

[Joseph Rowntree \(1836–1925\)](http://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/biography-of-joseph-rowntree/) was a York businessman and Quaker. This Christian-rooted denomination was founded in the 17th century at a time of religious turmoil in Britain. Its roots were with the prophetic figure of George Fox in northern England, and its greatest systematic theologian – if such a concept is not a misnomer for a Spirit-led movement that shuns creeds and dogmas – was a Scot, Robert Barclay of Gordonstoun.

While most Christian denominations of the time were slugging it out as to who was to be counted amongst the Damned, and who, as God's only Elect, Quakerism taught universal salvation. God was for all who sought God and waited on that inner light (John 1:9), typically in the stillness of silent Quaker worship punctuated with occasional ministry from any – even strangers from off the street – who might feel moved by the Spirit to stand and speak.

Such a liberal approach to faith was duly persecuted for its heretical teachings. Friends urge one another to "Walk cheerfully over the earth, answering that of God in everyone." Our Peace Testimony speaks of forsaking outward weapons. Our refusal to write off any human being, no matter how lowly – or even, how outwardly despicable – resulted in an influential social gospel spanning anti-slavery work, prison reform, mental health, scientific enquiry, interfaith appreciation, tackling the roots of poverty, improving industrial relations and, these days, environmental concerns.

The concept of "fair dealing" or "fair trade" is central to Quaker practice. As such, our spiritual forebears' businesses flourished. These included Rowntree's, Cadbury's and Fry's confectionary companies, Clark's shoes, Barclays and Lloyds banks – but not certain firms that tried to hijack the reputable name and turn it into a brand, such as Quaker Oats. Quaker industrialists became rich, but because (relative) simplicity is a core testimony, many left their money to the poor, and that, embracing a radical vision of social reform. Informed Quakers take very seriously the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come ... on Earth as is in Heaven." Heaven is not just for pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die. It's for us to  **BELLA CALEDONIA**^w.

It is probably the case that Joseph Rowntree was the most prominent of all the great Quaker industrialists. In 1904, he drew up a trust Memorandum, marked 'Exceedingly Private'. This was his manifesto, intended for his executors, for how he wanted to use the wealth (that had mostly come to him late in life) posthumously to change British society in accordance with "the spirit of human brotherhood and alive to the claims of social justice." He wrote:

I feel that much of the current philanthropic effort is directed to remedying the more superficial manifestations of weakness or evil, while little thought or effort is directed to search out their underlying causes.

The funds were to be applied in ways that kept in mind Rowntree's three heads of concern – social, political and religious. He saw that the need was social. The levers of change, political. The moral compass and inner motive force, spiritual.

Of the three trusts that were initially set up, only two need concern us here. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) was to operate within the tax advantages of charitable law. The Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust, Limited, was to be a non-charitable, taxpaying, limited company, so that it could fund political work. Later, this trust was renamed as the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (thus JRRT), but it went on to set up its own charitable arm and this subsidiary trust still retains the Social Service name.

The remit that Joseph envisaged for the JRRT included such activities as buying newspapers. The 1904 Memorandum noted: "Perhaps the greatest danger of our national life arises from the power of selfish and unscrupulous wealth which influences public opinion largely through the press". His second son, Seebohm Rowntree (1871 – 1954), was a pioneer of modern poverty research. He gave us such terms as "the poverty line", and was influential in the idea of the NHS, old age pensions and welfare benefits. Both Joseph and Seebohm had been Liberals, and Seebohm shifted the trust's policy away from trying to control sectors of the press, towards supporting the Liberal Party. This, he felt, was likely to be the most effective instrument for political change in the Britain of his time.

Let there be no question that, from a radical perspective, the JRRT like its sister trusts does wonderful work. I have often thought that if I suddenly became very rich, I would give it to the Rowntree trusts wisely to disburse. The JRRT funds groups such as CorporateWatch, GeneWatch, openDemocracy, work on the detention of terrorist suspects, opposing mass surveillance by governments, sexual and gender issues, and the duty of "speaking truth to power". In writing this missive I am, ironically, walking the path that I have learned, as a Quaker, from its bygone witness.

It is as a legacy of Seebohm's era that the trust gives heavily to today's Liberal Democrats. The accounts for 2014 show total grants disbursed to the value of £1.4 million, of which roughly half went to a multitude of LibDem causes, including £3,750 to LibDems in Inverness East, Nairn & Lochaber, and £18,000 to Willie Rennie MSP.

However, it would be one thing for a body of Quakers to decide, using due discernment, to give half of old man Rowntree's money under their care to the LibDems on a perpetuating basis. It feels – at least to this Quaker – like quite another when a group of Liberal Democrats decides to do the same, there being currently only one of the six directors listed on their website as being a Quaker, and four of the six are politically active Liberal Democrats, including such high profile figures as Sir Nick Harvey (the Chair) and Baroness Brinton.

The issue might not have come to public attention were it not for the astonishing grants to Alistair Carmichael. Many in Scotland were shocked by the trust's extraordinary statement of explanation issued over the weekend to justify the awards to the disgraced MP. Had the explanation been straightforward compassion for a man who had stumbled in life, and admitted so, it would have been easier to defend on Quaker grounds. There is that of God even in church elder, Alistair Carmichael, and probably a lot more than meets the eye at the moment. But that is not what the trustees said. What they said is:

Thanks to the perversities of the UK's electoral system the 50% of Scottish voters who supported unionist parties at the General Election are represented by only three MPs. Had nationalists succeeded in their case against Alistair Carmichael, they would have worsened further the current misrepresentation of Scottish voters' views in Parliament. Worse still, the effect on case law would have been to subject many more legitimately elected Members of Parliament to the risk of personal bankruptcy in defending themselves in court against vexatious and highly political claims.

Let's get that straight. In the aftermath of the independence Referendum, when many of us are still licking our wounds on both sides of the debate, an English based trust is saying that the choice of Scottish voters in May 2015 under the UK's electoral system represented a "misrepresentation" of their views. This, it feels obligated to put right by supporting a mendacious politician who has held on to his seat in the face of ordinary Scottish people, (myself included), contributing to clean up politics in the wake of Frenchgate.

Now, such may be a justifiable policy for non-charitable political trust. No doubt Machiavelli himself took every opportunity to set up trusts to dodge a bit of tax on his political campaigns. However, for a trust founded by our Friend the good Joseph Rowntree, a trust that still claims on its website – "Our values are rooted in liberalism and Quakerism" – it is astonishing. Astonishing, given that Carmichael's case for his own defence rested on his own claim that he had lied politically.

I will turn in a moment to the current “Quaker” status (or otherwise) of the JRRT, but first, let it be said that for many Quakers, especially in Scotland, the JRRT’s statement will feel like a stake driven through the heart. Truth is a central Quaker testimony. We don’t see it just as something that you tell or not tell. We see, or at least, attempt against our own failings to see it as a way of life. “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Most of us probably treasure the Truth Testimony even more than our rightly cherished Peace Testimony. Without Truth – capitalised – there can be no peace. Under “Our Values” on the website of Britain Yearly Meeting – the Quaker governing body for the UK – one finds the statement:

Quakers try to live according to the deepest truth we know, which we believe comes from God. This means speaking the truth to all, including people in positions of power. As we are guided by integrity, so we expect to see it in public life.

Friends have gone to prison, some have even impoverished themselves or died for this principle. Truth is the demanding and costly air that we seek to breathe, and share, and on which the deepest aspects of our reputation and approach to faith stands. Chapter 29 of our governing handbook, Quaker Faith and Practice, opens by asking: “What shall we hand on? Where is the Spirit now leading us?” It answers:

Individually and corporately Friends are seeking new ways of expressing our testimonies to equality and social justice, to the building of peace, to truth and integrity in public affairs, and to simplicity in a lifestyle that reflects our renewed understanding of our relationship with all creation.

That expression, “truth and integrity in public affairs” (my emphasis), is precisely the reason why so many of us in Scotland contributed to the Orkney constituents’ crowdfunder – and not just “nationalists” as the JRRT implies, as if to support the SNP is akin to treason. Far from being “vexatious”, we who gave to the campaign – nationalists and even some of us who have, in the past, voted for the LibDems – wanted fair dealing; and Mr Carmichael had, by his own admission, denied that to his constituents.

His constituents might have expected a body like the JRRT to help them with that concern. Instead, its memo of explanation undermines them. It makes them out to be “vexatious” and undemocratic, when quite the opposite is true. That is what has driven the anger in Scotland this weekend, including coverage in all the newspapers of reference and, unsurprisingly, a full front page on The National. But my concern in writing this is not with the politics. It is with the religious repercussions for Quakers. Social media and newspaper comments show unambiguously that the public perception has been that the Quakers – supposedly respected for integrity – bailed out a political liar in order to swing the wishes of the Orkney and Shetland electorate.

Being highly democratic – in theory any member has the spiritual power to stand in the way of a business decision in the path towards seeking “unity” – our decision making processes are invariably very slow. The Quakers as a corporate body don’t have a Bishop or some such similar figure who can speak up for us all at a moment’s notice. We function from a different mode of ordering and it may take months for Scottish Friends to pass any comment on the JRRT–Frenchgate connection, if we decide to do so at all. In recognition of that reality, and feeling the concern strongly, what I did was to take some soundings from “weighty” Friends as a check and balance, and then proceed to do my own research as is written up here.

In response to my enquiries, the JRRT trust secretary emailed me this morning, saying:

We are not planning to make any further statements on the matter but by way of background I have set out two points below:

Firstly I would comment that our sister organisation, JRF (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), should never have been brought into this matter in the first place. JRRT and JRF share a founder but the decision making and governance are entirely separate. The decision to contribute to Alistair Carmichael’s legal expenses was a decision taken by the Board of JRRT alone.

Secondly, whilst our website makes reference to the Quaker heritage of the organisation, our statements on this particular matter make no reference to Quakers or the Religious Society of Friends. The JRRT does not describe itself as a Quaker organisation nor make any claim that its grants are made in the name of Quakers or the RSoF.

That latter point is what I find both remarkable, and concerning. Not only does the JRRT have only one trustee out of six who is a Quaker, it has removed itself from linkage to the Religious Society of Friends (as Quakers are formally known). As said earlier, it is now a board of prominent Liberal Democrats who control what Joseph Rowntree had intended to be a Quaker resource, and which still leans on that authority when it so suits. In the world of Non Governmental Organisations, this looks prima facie like a case of what is called “agency capture”, where a resource is taken over, and used as a platform or honey pot for those who have – wittingly or unwittingly – colonised it.

Curiously, and reading between the lines, it looks to me as if Joseph Rowntree had harboured concerns that such could come to pass, and tried to take steps to prevent it. His [1904 Memorandum \(http://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/joseph-rowntrees-1904-memorandum/\)](http://www.rowntreesociety.org.uk/joseph-rowntrees-1904-memorandum/) is incredibly prescient. Dear to my own heart, land and land taxation issues were prominent as a means of getting to the roots of problems, and not just fiddling with the symptoms. He said, for example:

Every Social writer knows the supreme importance of questions connected with the holding and taxation of land, but for one person who attempts to master this question there are probably thousands who devote their time and strength to relieving poverty and its accompanying evils. In my view, therefore, it is highly undesirable that money should be given by the Trusts to Hospitals, Almshouses, or similar Institutions.

Clearly, he had hand-picked his own trustees, and while I have not researched the matter, it is most unlikely in that era that these would not have been Quakers, at least, mostly so, and been expected to use standard Quaker business method to guide their decision making with a higher power. The Memorandum suggested that both the JRCC and what became the JRRT (originally the Social Service Trust) should be wound up within 35 years of their origination. During that time, he said, these trusts would be:

... in all human possibility, likely to be mainly administered by the original Trustees, who are closely in sympathy with my general thoughts and aims, and will, I believe, give to the administration of these Trusts the same thought and direction which I should have given them myself.

However, Friends are not control freaks. He also left it so that the trustees were free to act as they might find fit, with “no legal or binding force” from him “in any way or direction”.

My reading is that during the course of time the decency of such a spirit led to attenuation of the Quaker ethos, so that instead of it being Quakers giving money, perhaps, to political parties and mainly the Liberal Democrats, it is Liberal Democrats doing so. Whether intended or unintended, there lies the agency capture, and the ramifications of the lie that was Frenchgate are its exposé.

Our Quaker heritage – used not as a desirable badge of esteem, but as a three hundred year old tried and tested working instrument – matters. In Quaker decision making we use spiritual discernment. The Jesuits even came and studied the Quakers when, in the aftermath of Vatican II in the 1960s, they realised that they had lost their own traditions of discernment, and needed to re-learn them. The current Pope, a Jesuit, often speaks of discernment. It is a powerful technique, because it involves holding an issue “in the light” (of God) in the hope that the decisions made will go beyond inevitable partisan interests and biases. We speak of waiting to be “lead” by, or “moved” by the Spirit, and that is why silence plays – or ought to play – a considerable role in our deliberations. A minute is written up by a clerk or clerks as the “meeting for worship for business” commences, so that all are clear on what is being determined, and there can be NO argument about it later as often happens when minutes are written up by an individual retrospectively.

Without such a methodology and its spiritual grounding, the process of trusteeship such as Joseph Rowntree anticipated being exercised cannot be expected to be honoured. At the deepest level, I think that this is what has gone wrong with the JRRT.

Given that Joseph Rowntree did not want his wishes to have legal teeth, there is probably nothing that Friends can meaningfully do about it. All we can say to the world in the light of Carmichael is, “It wasn’t us” – and yet – in a way, it is us, because we let go of the rudder of trusteeship, and these things happen in ever-so-human situations. Friends today can control the JRRT no more than they can control the ethics of Joseph Rowntree’s original confectionary company, long since taken over by Nestlé.

Can anything, then, be done? Let me be very clear. I have no problem with a Quaker non-charitable trust giving to a political party if such is how it is moved using due Quaker business method, and the decisions taken by a majority of trustees who hold the Quaker ethos in their hearts and heads. The problem is not that the LibDems are given to. Not even that Carmichael was given to. The problem is that it appears, at least *prima facie* that the LibDems are giving unto to their own, using resources intended for Quaker social, political and religious work, in a framework that Joseph Rowntree clearly wanted to see remaining in sound Quaker control.

Where, then, might lie what our tradition would call “an opening of the way”?

One would be that some or all of the existing trustees might exercise what we would call “the ministry of laying down.” That is to say, letting go of things is as spiritually important – perhaps moreso owing to the human tendency to cling on – than starting them up. The trustees (or some of them) might, therefore, want to search their consciences, and consider their positions. They might want to reflect on the question of whether agency capture is, in fact, what has happened, and whether that feels right.

However, such a course of action may not be necessary. Good people when handling power inevitably hit rough patches from time to time. Blind spots arise, and become habituated. In speaking truth to power, we can push with one hand, but must always try to support with the other from behind.

There is a very great deal of wonderful work that the JRRT, like the other Rowntree trusts, carry out. I know. My own on land reform and community empowerment benefited to the tune of £74,000 from the sister JRCT some fifteen to twenty years ago. I believe that the Rowntree family of trusts are amongst the most important in Britain in bringing about change for a better world. There is a freshness and transparency to the JRRT’s website that gives me hope that things can be, as their name implies, reformed.

Recently, the trust has been recruiting for up to three new directors. Their recruitment publicity states that they are keen to appoint “at least one Director who will maintain the Trust’s links with its Quaker heritage.” Their Person Specifications expect new directors to be “appreciative of our Quaker heritage,” and also state: “We are especially keen to hear from Quakers and those who have a background in academia, law or understanding of fin

Such a spirit could provide the impetus for a shift of ground. I can say no more than that. The Carmichael affair set me quaking. Shuddering might be a more honest description. But I can see a potential opening of the way. I do hope that the current trustees might consider giving it thought and taking heart.

Meanwhile, when I see on social media abuse being hurled at Mr Carmichael, could I just say that in the Quaker way, we do our best – difficult though it often is – to seek that of God in all. One of the first grants I ever landed for a good cause was through the Social Democrat MP, Dickson Maybon whose patch was Greenock and Port Glasgow. He taught me how to write an appeal letter and had me direct it to a peculiar House of Commons charity. It was called, he told me with a wry smile, The Saints and Sinners Club.

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by Alastair McIntosh

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54 Comments

Brian MacLeod

1 year ago

A very Friendly way of saying the current trustees have corrupted the purpose of the trust.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181888#respond>)

m.boyd

1 year ago

Lets get the legalisms correct otherwise it besmirches a good article. PURSUER – DEFENDER

PETITIONER – RESPONDENT.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182062#respond>)

Margaret

1 year ago

May be wrong there:

A JRF spokesperson said:

“Some recent media reports have linked the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust’s decision to award a grant to MP Alistair Carmichael. This is inaccurate. The funding was awarded by JRRT, which is a completely separate organisation to JRF.

We are an independent charity with separate board members and leadership to that of JRRT. While we, JRRT and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, were set up by the same founder, there is no such thing as a ‘Rowntree group’.

JRF is a politically independent organisation which funds research, policy and practice on social issues in the UK.”

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182335#respond>)

Luke Devlin

1 year ago

“English based trust is saying that the choice of Scottish voters in May 2015 under the UK’s electoral system represented a “misrepresentation” of their views.”

I understood it to be an attempted critique of the first-past-the-post voting system, which does create a lack of proportional representation, hence their support (which I share) for electoral reform.

However, what they are saying is more erroneous than that: they appear to be saying that by removing Carmichael, there will be one less Lib Dem MP. Actually, what would have happened is that there would be another by-election, in which a Lib Dem candidate (but not Carmichael) would certainly have stood. The Freudian slip they’ve made is that this candidate would indeed be a no-hoper.

Thanks for writing this Alastair– one unintended positive consequence may be that people unfamiliar with the testimony and history of the Friends now have this opportunity to discover it through this post.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181893#respond>)

bjsalba

1 year ago

Not just English based. When I looked (a couple of days ago) they had only an England and Wales charity number. To operate in Scotland they should have an SC Number. It does not prevent them awarding money to a Scot but.....

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182020#respond>)

Robert Graham

1 year ago

thanks for taking the time to enlighten we who have little or no knowledge of Quakers or their philosophy , on reading ,the simple need and original aim to do good shines through , it would appear the original aim has been lost , or subverted as a means of funding for a particular political party , the more they try and defend the morally indefensible action by supporting a proven liar against honest decent people who had the cheek to question that persons right to represent them in Parliament , this shortsighted misuse of charity funds will possibly have unintended consequences , this being to draw attention to the work they do or have done in the past will from now on be linked to the Political party they seem more than happy to be associated with .so sad and self inflicted .

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181896#respond>)

FatCandy

1 year ago

A most excellent article. Thanks for sharing!

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181897#respond>)

Iam Scott

1 year ago

I'd just like to say thanks for a very interesting and informative article.

Carmichael should be ashamed to accept money from such a source and damage it's reputation by association.

But the man is seemingly without shame and there appears to be no depths he will not sink to.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181901#respond>)

Scottish Independence Guy

1 year ago

Thank you, Alastair, for this; very passionate and informative.

How on earth moral, conscientious individuals like yourself have been lumped-together with such a low, selfish blaggard I'll never know – and they don't sink any lower than the public figure who'll seek to damage ordinary members of the electorate.

What that man has done in his attempts to bring poverty and retribution upon the Orkney four is indefensible – what kind of twisted, sick individual is capable of such treachery? Hell is too good for his like.

Unfortunately, should I ever regard the name Joseph Rowntree, in any form, in my everyday dealings, one name will instantly spring to mind – that of Alistair Carmichael. That'll be his ill-earned legacy.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181907#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

Hello SIG – I doubt you'll find any modern Quaker who believes in Hell in any literal sense. Plenty would say we can make our own hells, and I go with the Russian Orthodox thinkers like Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clement (Dostoevsky too), who say that the fire of Hell is only the fire of love that burns off that which is not authentically ourselves. How's that for a trip! As for how could somebody like Carmichael or the JRRT do this, the answer is ever so easily, and most Quakers would say that a little self-examination will find the same potentialities in us all. The great American modern theologian, Walter Wink (who used to go to Quakers meetings quite often before he died, wrote in his book about the spiritual underpinning of social activism ("Engaging the Powers") that power is essentially God-given, like all things, but that in human hands the name of the game is to repeatedly call it back to its higher God-given potential. (Sorry about all the "God" stuff, but when you start thinking and living like this, God just becomes more and more essential to the equation and experience, and the arguments about existence seem less and less relevant). As such, Wink comes up with such magnificent formulae as:

The Powers are good. The Powers are fallen. The powers must be redeemed.

Also, with regard to the spirit or soul of nations, as community writ large:

The Nations are good. The Nations are fallen. The Nations must be redeemed.

Well, I just love all that way of looking at and experiencing things. It allows one to perhaps get angry about the likes of Carmichael, but then to remember that we too might have stumbled had we been walking in his shoes. It allows one to confront apparent injustices in the world but to reduce the chances of becoming twisted by hatred. I think that such is what the new Scotland (and our dear neighbours to the south, where Quakerism mainly comes from) so badly need. That's why I responded to this matter as I did, and see today's National for much more, including 6 academics writing on the matter in the Letters column. (By the way, we are no longer tee-total. It is left to discernment. Slainte!).

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181938#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

Ps. I asked Bella to run this article quickly, as The National phoned me while I was working on it, so I knew they'd be doing something and wanted to also have out there a perspective that would give added depth. However, as a consequence, it didn't get carefully proof read (always a Bella problem, anyway, with such slender resource). There's a couple of areas of jumbled wording that Mike Small will correct during the course of his travelling today, but one item of material significance, just drawn to my attention by a fellow Quaker, is that where talking about our discernment method of minuting I had in the original: "...and there can be argument about it later as often happens when minutes are written up by an individual retrospectively." That should, of course, read "... and there can be NO argument..." Sorry folks, I was running on empty by the time I pressed "send". Mike, you can del this comment if you want, once it is corrected.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181951#respond>)

Scottish Independence Guy

1 year ago

"It allows one to perhaps get angry about the likes of Carmichael, but then to remember that we too might have stumbled had we been walking in his shoes"...

There are a great many who would not have stumbled. We in the independence movement are hardly permitted, by the intense scrutiny of the press, to take simple steps, let-alone stumble. The rigour before breakfast. Angry? A saint would be tested, business people and politicians on a daily basis.



dontcha think? Anyway, we're weary of being angry; dismayed is probably more appropriate.

Incidentally, I simply don't see you, Mr McIntosh, stumbling. You have my utmost respect and represent Friends admirably.

"It allows one to confront apparent injustices in the world but to reduce the chances of becoming twisted by hatred"...

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181969#respond>)

Darby O'Gill

1 year ago

How tragic that such a gentle and spiritually generous group as the Quakers should have their good name sullied by the foolish action of a few thoughtless people.

Given the track record of Alistair Carmichael perhaps there is something false in the application that would allow the Directors of the JRRT to rescind the award.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181911#respond>)

yesindyref2

1 year ago

One of the companies founded or co-founded by a Quaker was IBM, on the unusual basis then of providing Customer Service. It also had the ethos for many years of looking after its employees, and conducting business in an ethical fashion.

I notice the Quakers don't mention it, perhaps this is because of its connections in the USA with the defence industry?

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181912#respond>)

kire

1 year ago

Remember that prison built in Pennsylvania USA, back in the 1800's. Forced solitary confinement for long periods of time. Charles Dickens wrote of this atrocious place in *Journey to America*. Quaker built and conceived, it became the model for the modern prison system in the US.

Please don't lock me up in the Penn!

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182169#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

More than that, Kire, in *Moby Dick* Captain Ahab was Quaker, and whaling an old Nantucket Quaker trade. In some of the states of America the residential schools for Native Americans were originally a Quaker notion, known as the "Quaker Policy" as it was an alternative, though a sorry one, to the push for outright genocide. Quakers have much to be proud of, but no monopoly on goodness, and it's important that we remember that.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182300#respond>)

Ian McIntyre

1 year ago

Thank you for the well explained and interesting background to this affair.

I felt the award to Carmichael was wrong, but I had insufficient knowledge of the donor's organisation on which to base my perception. The issue, for me, appears to be the establishment's belief that any course of action to protect its aims and members can, and should, be justified.

It is a sad hijacking of an ideal set out by Rowntree.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181929#respond>)

yesindyref2

1 year ago

So in 2015, published grants (some aren't published to achieve the grant's purpose or to protect the personal safety of those undertaking the work), out of £1 million a year it seems from their about page, included:

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors – up to £480,000 over 5 years to develop campaign infrastructure in England & Wales

Constitution Reform Group – £60,000 over 1 year to address threats to the constitutional stability of the UK and promote a cross-party campaign for a new Act of Union

Association of Scottish Liberal Democrat Councillors – over 18 months £44,100

Yorkshire & the Humber Liberal Democrats – over 5 years to provide support for local government campaigning £75,000

Scottish Liberal Democrats – £50,000 in the run up to the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections

Welsh Liberal Democrats – £40,000 to campaign in the run up to the 2016 Welsh Assembly Elections

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland – £35,000 to campaign in the lead up to the 2016 Northern Ireland Assembly elections

and one for which they'd need to catch a Tardis back to 2007

English PEN – over 1 year to continue campaigning to ensure the Freedom of Information Act 2013 are fully implemented by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Executive £28,571



Graham Marshall

1 year ago

During my time as a member of the SDP I became aware of the significant influence of Friends in the local Liberal party. All of those I knew, I respected and liked. It would not have surprised me to learn that the JRRT had contributed to Carmichael's legal expenses with the justification that he was the under-dog and his family should not suffer from his ability to fund his legal campaign. It would not be unusual for his defence to be conducted by a legal team friendly to the cause which donated time as if it were a political contribution. Were this the case and I have no knowledge that it was, there is also the question of whether the altruistic contribution made by the JRRT was actually fulfilling its real purpose.

Every charity has objectives and has its performance measured against these objectives by the Charity Commissioners, if the JRRT did misuse charitable funds there is always recourse available through an official complaint. I am no expert in this field but the statement that the trustees were guided by their interpretation of political fairness is, to my way of thinking, is a politically biased statement and may have breached the trust's objectives.

I have not yet read the whole of the article in detail, that needs to wait for a quiet moment. What I have gleaned, however, leads me to believe this matter must not – in the name of equity – be allowed to rest here.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181934#respond>)

Jane Chattell

1 year ago

The Reform Trust is not a charity – that was the original point of it, that it was free to act politically, rather than alleviate poverty directly. The association with one particular political party weakens its capacity to provide robust criticism and dispassionate research and recommendations.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181965#respond>)

Graham A Dragon

1 year ago

If I understand correctly the way in which the different Joseph Rowntree Trusts have been set up, the JRRT is NOT a charitable trust, as its link with political activity would not allow it to be so. It is therefore unfortunately not subject to any control by the Charity Commissioners as its funds are not charitable funds.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181997#respond>)

Hazel

1 year ago

Thank you, that is a most clear and gracious explanation of this matter. My RE teacher in 1960s was a Quaker and a most delightful, gentle lady who taught calmly and smilingly at her teenage girls answering their questions patiently. I can sense your pain at this Trust being 'captured' by people who do not, at least overtly, share the wider vision of Joseph Rowntree and hence syphon the assets into one narrow channel. There is hope in the appointment of new directors and maybe we could pray that some will step forward (and be appointed) who could redress this balance that has been tipped.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181935#respond>)

Grant Buttars

1 year ago

Although I'm an atheist, I have much respect for the Quakers, the openness and sincerity of their approach and their commitment to social justice. I wholeheartedly welcome this article and thank you for it Alistair.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181944#respond>)

Fiona Morag Grahame

1 year ago

Thank you for writing this reasoned article. As one of the Orkney4 I have nothing against Alistair Carmichael getting funding for his legal fees but the reasons the JRRT had for doing so were shocking to anyone who had actually read what the judgment said.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181945#respond>)

Valerie

1 year ago

I can also appreciate that this is a reasoned article, about the values of Quakers and Friends.

However, for a movement that has truth as a central tenet, I kept thinking, how can they fund a self confessed liar?

Carmichael is a disgrace to the world of politics, never mind the Lib Dems.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181957#respond>)

JohnEdgar

1 year ago

Have the other Liberal Democratic MP's and MSP's declared their financial support from that "trust" in the registers?
Did they know that Carmichael would get this financial support in advance and is that why they added their support to him hoping that Carmichael would maybe be "cleared". The LibDem leader at Westminster gave his support. Malcolm Bruce supported him by saying that all MP' lie, it is normal and Tavish Scott MSP claimed the trial was a "show trial". Worst of all was the fact that the party whip was not removed from Carmichael before the court case was heard. He is still being investigated by the commissioner for parliamentary standards. Surely, the party needs to suspend him until it reports. It is taking some time!

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181950#respond>)

Colin Dunn

1 year ago

Thanks Alastair. A very thorough and educational article.

A few typos/errors that you might want to check into . .

- 1) ". . but not certain firms that tired to hijack the reputable name . ." tired?
- 2) "Perhaps the greatest danger of our national life arises from the power of selfish and unscrupulous wealth which influences public opinion largely through the press. His second son, Seebom Rowntree (1871 – 1954), was a pioneer of modern poverty research . .

Needs closing quotation marks after "press"?

- 3) Instead, it its memo of explanation undermines them.

garbled?

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181960#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

Yes Colin, there's a number of typos and bits of garbled text as I've explained in a response above. My fault – was gnacked by the time I'd discerned, researched and written it, and I asked Mike Small to publish quickly due to The National being on the case, so no time for him to copy edit. Furthermore, he's speaking in Sweden today and so may not get a chance to pick up glitches, so we'll have to live with imperfection, probably. The only one that materially affects meaning is where it should read, in writing about Jesuit discernment and Quaker business minuting practice: "... and there can be NO argument..."

I also lacked time to hack the piece down to a more readable length so some commentators here have clearly missed a couple of key points:

1. The JRRT is not a charitable trust, it is a tax-paying limited liability company, able to fund non-charitable political work consistent with Joseph Rowntree's vision. As such, the controls of charitable law do not apply to it.
2. The JRRT although set up with a board who, like Rowntree himself, were apparently liberals, has lost control by Quakers. As such, it is not the Quakers who made this grant.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181979#respond>)

Fiona MacInnes

1 year ago

Excellent article, we who know the truth of our motivations are having to take stoically in Quaker 'style' the attempts to legitimise untruths through nauseous and perverted repetition. Thanks to all who continue to pare back the issue to it's core which is 'truth'.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=181964#respond>)

J.G.Harston

1 year ago

Who appointed the trustees? They don't get to be there without the people with the power to put them there putting them there.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182001#respond>)

Bill Steele

1 year ago

I'm confused. You state, and it is stated in the National, that the JRRT is not a charity, but a taxable trust. You also call it a charity. Which is it?

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182002#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

Bill, correct me if I've missed a glitch, but the only passage where that could be interpreted from what I've said above is: "The bigger issue, for Friends at least, is that it appears as if what we thought was one of "our" charitable trusts has undergone agency capture..."

I can see why that might be confusing. Many of us Quakers think of the JR trusts as "Rowntree charities" in a generic sense, even though JRRT was set up without formal charity status. Such was JR's own view, as is explicit in para 3 of his 1904 Trusts Memorandum:

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/lasting-vision-change> (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/lasting-vision-change>)

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182016#respond>)

BILL A

1 year ago

Thanks for this excellent article. Couldn't help recalling, as I read it, the Labour party's use of the Co-Operative for their own political gain. I wonder if some-one could do such an insightful analysis on how this continues to exist. I know I'm not comparing like-with-like.

Simplistically, my family consciously avoid buying anything in the Co-Op because a % has always gone to Carmichael's "No" pals in the Labour party like Kezia, Jim Murphy, Tony Blair etc etc

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182006#respond>)

Moray Man

1 year ago

Thank you for this article. The National today included a history of the Society of Friends. Integrity in public life is worth defending and I am clearer now about the role of the Truth in Quaker life. It was good to be reminded of the sacrifices that Quakers endured for their principles.

I am still astonished that the Lib Dem Party has rallied to defend the actions of Mr Carmichael.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182007#respond>)

JohnEdgar

1 year ago

Quite so. The LibDem party rose to support Carmichael. There is a strand running through the three "unionist" parties in Scotland. They cannot believe that their "sanctified" place in the scheme of things has been overturned by the people in Scotland. It is this sense of "entitlement" in the body politic that makes them imagine they have a right, come what may, to remain. For too long, the "commentators" on UK politics assume that to have stable government we need the trad. 3 parties and that this is the preordained natural order of things at Westminster. Unlike those across the Channel where there is proportional representation, more coalitions, we in this hallowed island are the norm and all other scenarios are the abnorm. So, when the whole voting pattern changed in Scotland in 2015, they were "dumfooned" and they still are. Hence, cries of "show trial" from Tavish Scott, for example, and other support for Carmichael underpins this attitude. The seismic shift in Scotland is put into great perspective when you reflect that there are more ennobled LibDem, ScotLab and Scottory peers in Westminster than MP's. And not one elected. How absurd! The whole structure of representation in Scotland has tent asunder the ancient set up in Lords and Commons and it is hurting. The unionists cannot see the old assumptions are crumbling. They are hoping that their "normal" politics will return.

Change has gone beyond the shift between Tory and Labour in Scotland.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182015#respond>)

Joe Murray

1 year ago

Excellent and informative article, Alastair, though that is no surprise. You are far kinder to Alistair Carmichael than he deserves.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182014#respond>)

Valerie

1 year ago

Yes, it is very kindly towards Carmichael, if only Carmichael had the same degree of consideration for the electorate.

No one seems to have mentioned that Carmichael brought all of this financial burden on himself. He had ample opportunity to retrieve something of his integrity, and avoid the court case by his resignation.

He also incurred a sizeable waste of public money, via the investigation set in motion by his denial of the leak, knowing he was the source.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182024#respond>)

Rosemary

1 year ago

Exactly. Carmichael could have heeded the immediate calls for his resignation. A by-election would have ensued. His constituents would have had the choice of electing him again or not. Instead he resisted, assuming that the Orkney Four's petition would be thrown out at the first hurdle. The judges decided otherwise — the petition was not vexatious, the matter would proceed, Carmichael would have to give evidence and costs would escalate alarmingly. The Orkney Four risked everything, putting their trust in ordinary people who, generally via modest donations of £5 or £10, raised the enormous sum that such proceedings require. The written judgement on Carmichael was damning but the letter of the law saved him. He then tried to extract punitive costs from his constituents. The notion that he is a worthy recipient of Rowntree money is grotesque.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182322#respond>)

John Mooney

1 year ago

Carmichael has shown there are no depths to which he will plumb nor mendacious comment he will spout but this montebank apart this article exposes the the liedems for the pathetic crew of Janus political hypocrites they have always been, hopefully this article should be a prod to the MSM.to investigate this whole farrago to its furthest extent but I would not hold my breath!

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182017#respond>)

Alf Baird

1 year ago

Regarding agency (or regulatory) capture, I recall research by former World Bank economist Jean C. Grosdidier de Matons, to the effect that the English concept of the 'Trust' as an organisational or administrative model generally ended up with 'Trustees' acting in their own interest; he was referring to UK 'Trust Ports' which the Tories were in the process of privatising at the time, and making millionaires out of numerous former 'trustees' and 'trust' managers (i.e. 'public servants' appointed by Ministers) who were being offered 'trust' port (i.e. public) assets on the cheap. His theory likewise appears to be borne out by this debacle.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182038#respond>)

Catherine short

1 year ago

Poor Joseph Rowntree, he has financed the very issue he was fighting against. LibDems, shame on you all!

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182047#respond>)

Julian

1 year ago

I like many other English people donated to fund the case against Car-taking-the-Michael because I saw it as a UK political issue of corruption – no matter where the MP actually was based. I was pretty disgusted that his election wasn't upturned, and this further revelation just shows how deep corruption and cronyism runs in British politics.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182053#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

1 year ago

Interestingly, Julian, Quakerism is the sole survivor of those wonderful English radical movements of the 17th century, which included the Diggers, Levellers and Ranters. It is a tradition that needs to be treasured, but so few people understand it. I see it not as the past, but the future, and when I hear English folk say they don't have the same radical traditions that we have in Scotland, I just reply that certain forces have been very successful in ensuring that they weren't taught. I note your expression, "... like many other English people ..." and I think that's wonderful.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182061#respond>)

Larry Nugent Connel Meeting Friend

1 year ago

"Anarchy is Order without Power", a fitting tribute to the Levelers, Diggers and Ranters.

I am not in anyway disagreeing with Alastair.

However, we do need to realise that we must avoid or involve ourselves in modern day bad practices of capitalist democracy, such as lobbying without transparency. We dont have any influence on the JRRT board as the only Quaker is a prisoner to the main committee.

In future, If we are seen to be "letting go" to a devil of a political organisation such as the Lib Dems and the past Scottish Secretary Mr Carmichael; we must have a democratic centralist position that responds immediately to inequalities and bad practices when it is within our remit to do so. Lets not bury ourselves in consensus in our need of the hour

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=184645#respond>)

Willie

1 year ago

In many respects the hijacking of the JRRT by the Lib Dems is analogous to the initially well intentioned cooperative movement supporting the Labour Party and funding election candidates. Indeed, the coop has funded some of the now expiring Scottish Labour MSPs. Shame on these political prostitutes for what they show themselves to be.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182064#respond>)

Ian Maxcdonald

1 year ago

The Lib Dems in Scotland should be ashamed to keep Alistair Carmichael as an MP. IF they believe in DEMOCRACY and not party interest they should have called a bi-election at once when it was known he had lied before the election. Joseph Rowntree would turn in his grave if he knew what was going on here. JRRT should ask for a refund as the money was accepted in shameful circumstances.

I speak as a Quaker and not a member of any political party.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182111#respond>)

Clare McKay

1 year ago

Thank you Alastair for all you have written and explained.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182202#respond>)



Margaret

1 year ago

Do you think we are all jumping to doubtful conclusions about Quakers in general?

Also, how many politicians in Scotland, never mind the rest of the UK, have told lies during the past few years.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182285#respond>)

Margaret

1 year ago

It appears everyone is wrong on this.

“Some recent media reports have linked the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust’s decision to award a grant to MP Alistair Carmichael. This is inaccurate. The funding was awarded by JRRT, which is a completely separate organisation to JRF.”

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182325#respond>)

Iain

1 year ago

I remember the old Liberal Party – in Scotland, at any rate – as being well-intentioned and genuinely concerned with the common good, but its Liberal Democrat successor appears to be an organisation held together by a large proportion of unprincipled shysters for the sole purpose of providing them with careers. Anyone who has taken part in an election campaign involving the Lib Dems knows that their campaign material is characterised by an astonishing level of personal attack, scurrility, deceit and dishonesty, and the party seems to be engaged in a continual, unprincipled, hunt to find any policy or local issue which they can champion to raise their profile. If the policy or local issue turns out to be a dead duck, they drop it and look for another – for example, we haven’t heard any more about their condemnation of the speed restriction on the A9 since that was found to have greatly reduced the number of accidents.

This Carmichael business may be the worst, in that it involved the electorate directly, but we should never forget the Lib Dems’ astonishing brass neck and lack of integrity in refusing to give up the £2.4m of stolen money donated to them in 2005 by the now convicted and jailed fraudster Michael Brown.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182459#respond>)

neil allan

1 year ago

I am a bit confused, frothing Nats, what business who the Fund gives money to is of yours?

Neil Allan

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182498#respond>)

douglas clark

1 year ago

Neil,

If you read the article it is a public interest debate.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182676#respond>)

Chris Ballance

1 year ago

Thank you Alastair for a beautifully Quakerly article.

Alis and I came to a similar view about the Trust several years ago when we applied for money to support the political careers of women in the Scottish Green Party and were turned down, even though the Trust had given money to promote women in the Lib/Dem, and even if I recall correctly, Conservative parties the previous year.

I don’t share your optimism that the trust’s new recruitment will result in more than one Friend being on the board – but I would encourage you to apply and find out. As a recipient, you understand the results of receiving a grant, and you do have, I seem to recall, a strong background in academia and law, even if it is Roman and Scottish law rather than English.

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182766#respond>)

Margaret

1 year ago

What Trust are you talking about? The JRRT or the JRF?

Reply (<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/03/28/frenchgate-a-case-of-quaker-agency-capture/?replytocom=182865#respond>)

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