

EU-phemisms

WE HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA OVER SOUTH OSSETIA



They've agreed to ignore us and we've agreed to shut up

INQUISITIVE Lib Dems are wondering why the reputation of their shadow work and pensions minister, Paul Rowen, seems to matter far less to the party than that of his weightier forebear as MP for Rochdale, Sir Cyril Smith.

When the *New Statesman* revealed last month that Smith, 80, had been a shareholder in asbestos manufacturing giant, Turner & Newall – the company whose Rochdale plant was responsible for the deaths of thousands of his constituents – and that he had defended their products in the Commons in 1981 by reading out a speech written for him by the firm, the party leapt to his defence.

Rowen's office issued a statement claiming that Smith, "purchased the minimum amount of shares (in T&N) in order to speak at their AGM", that "people knew of the risks of working at the site" and "Labour and Conservative MPs at the time agreed with the line that Cyril was taking".

These claims are nonsense. When Smith purchased his T&N shares in 1982 he boasted that they were a good investment: "The fall in value of T&N shares was without rhyme or reason – so much so that I have today instructed my bankers to purchase some for me," he said at the time.

And far from workers knowing of the dangers, Dr Tim Goffe, a T&N medical officer, wrote in a memo to director Harry Hardie in 1983: "I thought the bad old days of suppression of reports and secrecy on health and safety matters were over. The overall impression is of cover-up."

As recently as 2 September this year Smith told the BBC's *North-west Tonight* programme: "There is no danger [from] asbestos to the public at large" – despite the fact that every year more than 4,000 people still die from asbestos-related diseases in the UK.

Meanwhile Rowen, whose maiden speech in the Commons concerned T&N's victims, has compromised his creditable reputation for asbestos campaigning. Why? Perhaps some clue can be found in the records of the Electoral Commission which show that half the donations made to Rochdale Liberal Democrats originate from the home address of, er, Sir Cyril Smith.

THE Forestry Commission's main role, according to its "mission statement", is "to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment". It also boasts of its commitment "to take action to reduce deforestation, restore forest cover and manage the world's forests on a sustainable basis". Splendid!

So why has the commission offered to help turn the 121-hectare, aptly-named Bintree forest

in Norfolk into the largest gravel pit and landfill site in Europe? Er, money.

The destruction of Bintree will allow the extraction of 5,333,000 tonnes of minerals and the building of a concrete batching plant, an aggregate processing plant, a secondary aggregate recycling plant, an inert waste recycling plant and an inert waste landfill site – while putting millions in the Forestry Commission's coffers.

Simon Hodgson, commission chief executive, talks the talk about sustainable, climate-saving forestry; but when faced with making a quick buck or combating climate change, what's a guy gonna do?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The hysterical rhetoric of politicians attempting to ride the tiger of public opinion actually contributes to a rising fear of crime and a sense of societal breakdown."

– Consultation paper issued by Commission on English Prisons Today, presided over by Cherie Booth QC, 5 September 2008

"As a mother, I am deeply concerned that guns and knives are becoming a part of everyday life for some young people in Britain... I believe if we don't act – now – then the implications are serious for our future individual safety, community wellbeing and our society."

– Newspaper article plugging Cherie Booth's appearance on Channel 4's Street Weapons Commission programme, 6 July 2008

POLICE 5

WITH the Met in turmoil over race discrimination cases, it's not a good time for the police's national personnel chief to have been slammed by a judge for actively condoning serious racial discrimination in her old job.

As "chief people officer" at the National Policing Improvement Agency, Angela O'Connor is the head of police HR staff in England and Wales, setting national policy on recruitment and promotion. But in her previous job as director of human resources at the crown prosecution service (CPS), she played a key role in a case which this month resulted in a £600,000 pay out to an Asian lawyer who was falsely accused of inciting a race riot.

Halima Aziz was suspended from her job at Bradford crown court in 2001. An investigation in 2002 found that allegations made by a security guard that the lawyer had sparked a fight between white and Asian youths at the court were entirely untrue. Despite tensions running high after a summer of racial violence in the city, Aziz's bosses didn't even pick up a phone to check whether there had been any kind of disturbance at the court (there hadn't) before suspending her pending a formal investigation.

Employment judge Dr I. Watt singled out O'Connor for criticism several times in the judgment, for expressly and actively "condoning acts of serious discrimination". The treatment of Ms Aziz was described as "indefensible".



SALMOND STAKES

HOW much longer will Alex Salmond be able to convince the Scottish press and people that he's not a grubby nationalist who fans sectarian hatreds, but a modern politician leading Scotland to a tolerant future? A scandal is looming north of the border that threatens to tarnish the oily one's gleaming image perhaps irrevocably.

Last month the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations/condemned Salmond's government for giving £400,000 to the Scottish Islamic Foundation. The foundation is headed by one Osama Saeed, who just happens to be the Scottish National Party's parliamentary candidate in Glasgow Central. As Stephen Maxwell, the council's director, said, it was "unusual, to say the least" that public money was handed over to a body which had neither been incorporated as a company nor registered as a charity at the time the grant was given.

As Labour and Liberal Democrat members of the Scottish parliament push for an inquiry, they would do well to listen to the Scottish Muslim groups which Salmond won't fund. They say the Scottish Islamic Foundation does not represent their or any other tolerant version of Islam.

Saeed's membership of the SNP is not his only interesting connection. His Islamic Foundation is in fact a front organisation for the Muslim Brotherhood which wants to create a global Caliphate (motto: "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.") Saeed is an enthusiastic supporter and was furious when Nicky Campbell of BBC Radio 5 accurately reported that Yusuf al-Qaradawi, spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, had ruled that wife beating and female circumcision were fine, and that gays, Israelis and apostates deserved death. "This is truly unacceptable from the BBC," Saeed declared.

The Brotherhood's main aim in Scotland is to establish Muslim faith schools, controlled by Saeed's allies, naturally. At the launch of the Scottish Islamic Foundation, Saeed praised

Muslim schools in England where children are taught the Koran, boys and girls are segregated and the latter wear the hijab. Salmond stood beside him and pledged state funding.

Amanullah de Soudy, a lecturer in Islamic studies at Glasgow University, believes faith schools "will further reinforce isolationist approaches to education and hamper attempts at building bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims", and says: "I have nothing against the Scottish Islamic Foundation... but they are not representative of the Muslim community." But Salmond didn't listen. He seems to want to make the Scottish Islamic Foundation / Muslim Brotherhood the authentic voice of Scottish Islam, in the hope that it will return the favour by helping the SNP take Muslim votes from Labour.

The Kelvinside numpties who control BBC Scotland are equally impressed and have also been flirting with radical Islamic chic. About the only Muslim voices they allow listeners to hear are those of Saeed and Aamer Anwar, a solicitor and former Socialist Workers' Party activist who was nearly done for contempt of court after he claimed that a wannabe-terrorist, convicted of possessing CDs and videos of guerrilla tactics and bomb-making, was just "doing what millions of young people do every day – looking for answers on the internet".

So large has the Muslim Brotherhood influence grown in Scottish politics and broadcasting that the high commissioner for Pakistan, Dr Maleha Lodhi, used a speech at Glasgow University last year to urge Scottish Muslims to speak up for themselves and not allow the men with the loudest voices to be seen as their sole representatives.

Some hope. As Salmond dreams of becoming the first ruler of an independent Scotland in three centuries, the bonds between nationalism and Islamism are growing tighter. He is talking of putting representatives of the Scottish Islamic Foundation on to commissions investigating the future of Trident and sending them as ambassadors to the Middle East. As for those Scots, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, who don't believe in sexual segregation and the theology of al-Qaradawi, Salmond is riding so high in the polls he thinks he can tell them to get stuffed.

'Ratbiter'