

DAILY EXPRESS
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Foreign criminal policy is Blair's worst betrayal

THAT the Government generally puts the interests of foreigners ahead of those of the British people has long been obvious from its immigration and race relations policies.

While all comers are allowed into Britain, very little is expected in return from new immigrants by way of integration or acceptance of basic British values.

Over the past couple of weeks, we have been getting used to the idea that ministers have even been putting the interests of hardened foreign criminals ahead of those of law-abiding British citizens.

But yesterday things got even worse. Amazingly, it now emerges that Labour has actually been rewarding foreign criminals with one of life's great prizes: citizenship of the United Kingdom.

British passports have been given to foreigners who have come here and committed crimes so serious as to attract long jail terms. Far from even contemplating sending them home, Labour has accorded these enemies of the nation full British citizenship. Meanwhile, people such as Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed, who has created jobs and paid tax revenues galore, are turned down.

Tony Blair talks a good game about British values but he has presided over an administration which, in practice, appears to detest this nation and everything it has ever stood for.

A politically correct Establishment, which absurdly still languishes in post-imperial guilt, believes that those from the Third World must be bowed and scraped to, even if they have nothing to offer the British people but thieving and contempt.

Our nation's moral well-being is being dismantled before our eyes by Left-wing lawyers and officials armed with Mr Blair's Human Rights Act, financed by the proceeds of taxation and motivated by a sick hatred for their country. And the Prime Minister does nothing to stop it.

Benefit cheats' free ride

SOcial security frauds and over-payments are costing every British taxpayer an average of £40 a year. Ministers always promise new crackdowns but every year the figures seem to get worse.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this socialist Government views poverty as a valid excuse for any form of misconduct - including stealing from the welfare system - and will therefore never take the measures needed to get to grips with benefit cheats.

Give us the real Rooney

PROUD Scot Alex Ferguson insists he is doing all he can to send Wayne Rooney to the World Cup. We must thank him for that. But if Rooney is spotted on the plane to Germany, perhaps someone should check it is the real thing... and not the waxwork dummy unveiled by Madame Tussauds.



David Robson at large

AND they said variety was dead! Blackpool, Wednesday, 11am. We are greeted by an old-fashioned clown on stilts standing between two brand new wind turbines. That is just the start of it.

On to the open-air stage comes a troupe of disco dancing girls. There's a gale blowing and they are wearing nothing except scraps of red material and a lot of fake tan. But on they go. Captain Scott would have been proud. Arlene Philips only maybe.

Then comes the dark-suited leader of Blackpool Council - a lovely line in patter he has: "TLC. You all know what that means, Think Like a Customer." And the woman from the Regional Development Board, with her own cracking catchphrases: "Public realm projects and visitor perception." Not everybody laughs.

So by now the show is desperately in need of pep, pizzazz and, not to put too fine a point on it, glamour. And here it is. Bounding on to the stage (to cheers, whistles, screams), white linen suit gleaming (black hair and striped shirt cuffs flapping in the wind), comes Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen. Perhaps you don't associate Laurence with Blackpool. If so, you don't know Blackpool and you don't know Laurence. They love each other.

He has already told me that "LL-B" products are big sellers in Blackpool, "they like things fully rounded and fruity - aubergine wallpaper, carpets with slightly confrontational art nouveau swirls".

"I did a floor for the Winter Gardens," Laurence tells me, "in 1985, when I worked for the Harefield Rubber Company - very glamorous. I think my floor's under some rather nasty lino now."

BUT back to the stage: "Absolutely lovely to see you all today," he gushes, "congratulations to the dancers who have struggled in the teeth of a force-10 gale with all those false eyelashes... Blackpool is making design statements that mirror the wonders of the 19th century. I think the 21st century is going to be the century for Blackpool." And so on.

"No silk drapes here," he says, "but happily I shall be wearing some out tonight." He invites us to count down from 10 to zero; tickertape and applause fill the air and there is a firework or two.

This is the opening of a new park, the town's first for 80 years. Grass, trees, a tennis

Lights, action! Blackpool is all set for its comeback as our fun capital

court - lovely actually - and some rather good looking 20-metre towers for athletic climbing. Blackpool, ever keen on superlatives, has laid on Alan Hinkes to show how it is done. He was the first Briton to climb the world's 14 highest peaks but, to be honest with you, he loses us.

The weather is a bit sharp and Laurence, me and a few dozen of the local great and good are off to lunch.

"I did a floor for the Winter Gardens," Laurence tells me, "in 1985, when I worked for the Harefield Rubber Company - very glamorous. I think my floor's under some rather nasty lino now."

We had flown up together by private jet. He had arrived at London City Airport riding pillion on a chauffeur-driven motorbike. He was the perfect flying companion. The plane was tiny. His legs aren't too long and he is very interesting and amusing.

Wednesday, 12 noon: Lunch with the town's great and good. The Government is announcing its shortestlist of locations for the first Supercasino (there will only be one to start with). Blackpool is on the list with seven others. "If you get the casino..." I say to a town councillor. "When we get the casino," he replies.

And they do need it. Visits to the resort have fallen by 40 per cent in 15 years and the days

when families stayed for a week or a fortnight are long gone. The Golden Mile looks the opposite of golden these days. One of the big theatres is closing down.

"It's because they haven't moved with the times," someone tells me, "Who wants to see Cannon and Ball?" There's no answer to that.

Blackpool really should get the casino, and not just because of need. If Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell has any real understanding of culture, she will know this is the place. What would a Supercasino mean in Cardiff or Glasgow, Manchester or Sheffield? It would mean money, that's all. So would a new factory.

PEOPLE'S palaces, fun and being first are in Blackpool's DNA. It has slot machines in its psyche. Where does the Supercasino belong? In an ex-steel or cotton or docks town, or in the resort which has always striven to attract, entertain and amaze (and take people's money off them).

Blackpool was always a place for indoor fun; not a bloody health farm. Who, in 1894, built a tower 519ft high? Who, in 1878, had built the breathtaking Winter Gardens? Who, in 1896, opened the Pleas-

ure Beach, still Britain's most popular attraction? And who, in 1928, installed the Mighty Wurlitzer, the biggest organ in the world outside America?

Wednesday, 3pm: I am with Claire Smith at Number One, her "boutique B&B". Her mother-in-law had a B&B and her grandmother-in-law before her. In 1978, her mother-in-law charged £12.50 bed and breakfast and £17.50 full board. She had 20 rooms, "all en-suite".

Claire and her husband Mark have three rooms, for two people the charge is £120 per night, for one £75. What is going on? We are not just talking three rooms, we are talking three lavishly decorated rooms, with king-size beds, Egyptian cotton sheets and Siberian goose down pillows. We are talking 42-inch plasma screen TVs and a smaller one in the bathroom; we are talking a Rolls-Royce breakfast menu with blonde Claire bubbling round with the coffee.

On one side of this modern elegance is the sea; on the other are the lovely, dowdy, clattering old trams; above the road beyond the trams are very traditional Blackpool illuminations - sea creatures sitting on the Tiffany lamps - and running alongside that, a row of tacky shops and cafes with signs saying: "pies and fries". You can't sanitise Blackpool. It's too big and ingrained. You can only add to it.

Wednesday 7.30pm: They've been having ice shows at the Pleasure Beach for 70 years.



CHANGING PLACES: Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen amid the beauties of the park he has just opened, so much more restful than riding the Big One



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Jane Austen (1775-1817)

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