

Footnote: Family Circumstances: Ruthless Rules

When society's ruthless rules, enforced by bloody-minded stupidity, deprive an individual of his basic needs of life, what should he do? What can he do? What does society expect him to do - appeal, steal, or starve to death quietly, out of sight and out of mind? [PDF]

My elder son was a special needs pupil. From the age of 11 to 16 he attended a special needs school. He made such good progress at his special needs school that he was accepted into the sixth form of one of the country's top performing high schools where he spent 3 years. He left high school in July 1999 with GCSEs in Mathematics and English and an Intermediate GNVQ in Business. The latter is equivalent to NVQ Level 2 and is also equivalent to 4 GCSEs.

Our family was still living on welfare. The component of state benefit for my son's needs was stopped when he became 19 years old in June 1999. He had no choice for survival other than to sign on as unemployed immediately he left school. However, there was a gap of just over a month from his 19th birthday to the end of his school term during which he was provided with absolutely nothing to live on. The 4 of us thus had for that period to live on the welfare payments for 3. That particularly caused a lot of stress at such a critical point of change in his life. We were told that there was no way for us to claim any [welfare](#) for my son during that final month.

From July 1999 he started seeking work. Not having a car severely limited his scope for available jobs. Nevertheless, he diligently set forth to search out a career for himself in retailing - specifically in either clothing or capital goods. He wanted to apply all that he had learned in his GNVQ Business course. He knew what he was looking for. He knew we could not finance him. He was desperate to find a job as quickly as possible. He wanted to get off benefit and into a job suitable for his aptitudes and qualifications. His qualifications may seem lowly compared to most, but from where he started as a stated special needs pupil, it took a lot of hard work to achieve what he did.

His Trials Begin

Many young people, on leaving school or college, are able to be supported by their parents while they seek their first job. Nobody is pushing them. Nobody is threatening them. They simply get on with it. That is how it was for me when I left college. In fact, my first employer recruited me from college. I did not even have to look. However, if circumstances force you to sign on at the Jobcentre to get your means to live while you search for your first job, the situation is very different.

You are addressed with professional politeness. You are referred to as a 'client'. The literature is peppered with phraseology like 'helping you back to work'. But under every breath and between every line, another message - the real message - is relentlessly delivered. First comes the implied disapproval. You are a problem for society. You are a leach sucking the blood of the poor 'hardworking' taxpayer. You have no right to be what you are. Then come the overt threats. If, after 13 weeks, you do not accept the first job offered to you, your means of life will be withdrawn. This is no idle threat, as my son was soon to discover.

While he was diligently seeking the right kind of job for him, the Jobcentre were continually pushing leads at him for lots of wholly inappropriate jobs, many of which he could not even have got to without a car. Jobs like part-time gardening and supermarket shelf stacking. They continually reminded him that if he did not apply for the jobs they passed to him, then they would cut off his benefit. This simply served to stress him and uselessly dissipate the effort he could more fruitfully have applied to seeking the work for which he was qualified and suited.

By the autumn, my son still had not been accepted by an employer. Nevertheless, he had learned a lot about the local job market and had brought what he was seeking into far better focus. But that did not suit the Jobcentre. They decided in their 'great intellectual wisdom' that the reason he had not yet got a job was lack of saleable skills. It would not of course occur to them that the reason was lack of demand within the very limited area he was able to reach on foot or by public transport. They do not really think that deeply.

So what did they decide to do with a young man who had worked hard for 3 years and gained an Intermediate Level GNVQ in Business + GCSE English & Maths? On the strength of a short 'aptitude test' taken on an 'off day', they decided to stop his benefit and put him on a 'Work+' course in basic numeracy and literacy. That is for school truants and dropouts who have never mastered the skills of reading or adding up. It was at a level for which he had already gained certificates while still at his special needs school years before.

An Inappropriate Test

The results of an aptitude test *foisted suddenly* upon a person are unlikely to give an accurate picture of that person's aptitude or ability in the skill or subject concerned. This is especially so if they are not currently up to speed in a skill they have previously gained but not used for a while.

Suppose somebody is currently working on a market stall. He will be very adept at keeping a mental tally of the cost of what the customer has bought so far. Such a person will be razor sharp at mental arithmetic. Suppose he then stops working on a market stall and becomes a labourer for six months, after which he is suddenly subjected to a mental arithmetic test. He may very well fail this test because it is testing a skill which, for him, is currently dormant. Nevertheless, if he were then to go back to working on a market stall, his adeptness would doubtless return in less than a day. The sudden test is out of time, out of place and its results are therefore invalid.

This numeracy and literacy test was foisted upon my son after he had not been using his numeracy and literacy skills for some months. He was also under a lot of stress. That is undoubtedly why he 'failed' the test. Given a day or two to get back up to speed in a job, his skills would be fully restored to the level they were during his GNVQ and GCSE courses. The sudden test was out of time, out of place and therefore invalid.

Subjecting a candidate to a sudden aptitude test is like stopping the average motorist and subjecting him to a random driving theory test. Most experienced drivers know full well that they would have little or no chance of passing. But does that mean they are bad drivers? I hardly think so. Experienced drivers invariably learn new road signs and rules subconsciously from practical context without ever considering them as written answers to written questions. There may be many bad drivers, but their inability to pass an instant random driving theory test cannot possibly separate the good from the bad.

Perhaps we should subject that Jobcentre interviewer to a random driving theory test. Then if she fails - which undoubtedly a woman of her age and driving experience would do - ban her from driving unless or until she takes the full driving test again. Then she wouldn't be able to get to work and would necessarily lose her job, have to sign on, be subjected *out of season* to her own [silly aptitude test](#) and placed on a basic numeracy and literacy course.

Putting my son on this course would have been a complete and utter waste of taxpayer's money. It would have served no purpose other than to discourage, humiliate and depress him. It also rather discredits the qualifications he has, the high-league school at which he obtained them and the university examining boards who assessed him through extensive coursework and 'sat' examinations.

He was so upset by this that [he wrote](#) to the local Member of Parliament about it on 11 November 1999.

My son simply wanted to be free to put his full effort into finding the right job without having his energies continuously dissipated by pointless burdens and the ever-present threat of enforced destitution. He did not lack initiative. He did not lack motivation. He did not lack qualifications. He did not lack job leads. He simply lacked the time and resources to do what he was perfectly capable of doing for himself.

Cruel Success

His first success in finding the kind of job he wanted was with a large nationally known department store in Cambridge. He accepted the job working the hours stated in the job description. However, a couple of days after he started he was told by a person senior to the one who interviewed him that he would have to stay later at night. To stay that late would have meant missing the last train home. He said he could not stay so late for that reason. The senior manager said that if he could not 'be flexible' she would have to 'let him go'. He declined to be so 'flexible' as sleeping out all night in Cambridge and be ready for work the next day. So he had to leave. That is one reason.

The other reason he left was that he was going to be paid monthly. He would have to live on benefit until he got paid. But his rail fare was £9 a day. With only £40.70 a week benefit he could not even pay his rail fares. He ran out of money to get there. That is the other reason he had to leave. When he told the Careers Advisor she simply said "Don't be so negative." It is clearly not he who needed to go on the basic numeracy course. **This nationally known department store never paid him for the days he actually worked there.** So far from earning him money, this job actually consumed his money, namely through what he paid in rail fares for the three days he actually worked there.

Fortunately, he had found this job himself. The Jobcentre knew nothing about it. As evinced later, if they had known, he would even have lost his £40.70 benefit for that week. This would have meant that he would not only have spent £27 in rail fares, but also would have received absolutely nothing from which to pay these fares, or on which to live.

Shortly after that, the Jobcentre sent him to the Local W H Smiths store for a vacancy they were advertising. He went through their few days of training. It was not the type of work he was suited for or interested in. They declined to employ him because of this. However, unlike the other nationally known chain above, **W H Smiths actually paid him** for the time he spent with them, even though in the end he was unsuccessful.

His Ordeal Continues

The manager of the Jobcentre stood firm. My perception of her intentions was clear. Her sole aim, which was obviously motivated by political pressure from above, was to get him off benefit. She did not care in the least what type of job she forced him into, just so long as he became one more statistic whom the Jobcentre had '*helped back into work*'. His qualifications, aspirations, suitability for a particular job, or his long term future were wholly and utterly irrelevant.

Shortly after my son signed on for the first time at the Jobcentre, his client advisor drew up for him a Jobseeker's Agreement. This defined the kinds of job to which he was suited - the kind he would apply for. He specified that he wanted to go into retail management. This was his main area of interest, and was one for which his GNVQ rendered him suitable.

After some time of not having found a job, the client advisor said that he would have to broaden his scope for job search. She asked what other skills or experience he had. In conversation he mentioned

that he had worked part time in a bar at the airport while still at school. The client advisor therefore extended the scope of his search to include bar work. However, this bar work was simply a pocket money job while at school. It was not a career.

As a result, one of the leads the Jobcentre passed on to my son was for a job working in the bar of a rather dubious public house. Desperate to get these insidious people off his back, and in response to the ever-present threat of having his benefit terminated if he did not sign up for the 'Work+' course, my son applied for the pub job.

He went for an interview and was accepted immediately. He had no choice but to start this job or become destitute, even though he suffered from asthma, and had been advised by the doctor that the smoky atmosphere of a pub would not be good for him. The bar at the airport was heavily air conditioned and essentially smoke free.

Nevertheless, he was made to take the job, under threat of having his benefit stopped if he did not. He agreed to work until 11:30pm as the job brief specified. But this never happened. He normally finished at 1:30am. On the last night he worked there he was asked to stay behind for a drink with the management. That went on until 2:50am. This was certainly contrary to the demands of his Jobseeker's Agreement.

A Nasty Incident

On Wednesday, 10 November 1999, my son signed on at the Jobcentre as normal. On Saturday, 13 November 1999, he was interviewed for, and started work as a barman at a certain public house. He worked there also on Sunday, 14 November 1999. He then had the Monday and Tuesday off in accordance with the terms of the job. He then resumed work at this public house on Wednesday 17 November 1999.

On Thursday 18 November my son telephone me at 1:30am to say that he would be home later than usual because the pub manager had invited him to join her and other members of her staff for an after-work drink. It is not a sensible thing for a new employee to refuse.

He arrived home at 3:30am. I heard the front door open. Then silence. I did not hear him come up stairs. Something did not seem right. I went down stairs. There I saw my son in the kitchen slumped over the sink being sick. He then slumped on the floor, still convulsing. He could not get up. I assumed he had drunk too much, but even then something about the scene before me seemed wholly incongruous.

I asked him how much he had drunk. He answered clearly that he had two 250ml glasses of Elm Grove white wine, and that he had had nothing else all day. I knew by the way he said this that he was not drunk. His diction was far too clear and precise. And what only dawned on me much later was that there was no smell of alcohol: only the pungent acidic smell of undiluted stomach bile.

He stopped being sick at 4:30am. Nothing came up only green bile. My wife and I got him to bed. We had to carry him. He was far too weak even to walk. Once in bed his convulsions continued for about 20 minutes. Then he went to sleep.

Early the next morning (still Thursday 18 November, of course) he woke up. My wife and I did not sleep much that night. I asked him about the events of the previous night. Following is a paraphrase of what he told me:

"There were 6 of us at the table: Emma - the pub manager, Amanda - a barmaid, a friend of Emma, Gerry - I did not know what he was, a bald man whom I did not know, Alan - I think he was a chef, and me.

"They gave me a 250ml glass of Elm Grove white wine. Then I had another half 250ml glass of white wine topped up with lemonade. Then I had a further half 250ml glass of the same wine. Within 10 minutes of having the wine I became violently sick. I vomited until there was nothing left in my stomach. Yet still my stomach continued to convulse. When I looked up I noticed that everybody except Alan had left the room. Alan was the only one who appeared surprised when I was first sick.

"I started home at 2:45 am. But I did not get far. I was too weak to walk. My stomach was still convulsing. Alan left to go home in his car. He saw what state I was in and gave me a lift. I know now that if he had not done this I would never have got home. It was a freezing night. When I got out of his car, I could not walk to my front door. Alan helped me there. But I could not lift the key to the lock. He did it for me and laid me down in the hall. Then you and mum came down and saw me being sick."

I rang the doctor in the afternoon of Thursday between 2 and 3 pm. Our usual doctor was away but his partner, said it could have been a virus, but that viruses did not normally act that quickly.

When people have been drinking so heavily that they become sick, the one thing they crave afterwards is water. Alcohol dehydrates the body. The one thing I immediately noticed was that although my son had vomited everything from his stomach, he did not ask for water. Nor did he want to take any when it was offered to him. This is wholly inconsistent with having been drunk. I told the doctor who said that my son should be made to take a desert spoon of water every 15 minutes, and as soon as he could stand it, to increase that to two desert spoons.

My son's condition also seemed to me to be inconsistent with having a stomach bug. I have had vomiting from stomach bugs and food poisoning on occasions during my life. I expect everybody has. On such occasions I have found myself feeling very queasy. I know I am going to vomit sooner or later. I keep wishing it to be sooner. However, when the instant comes, I sit on the toilet and vomit into the bath. When my stomach is empty after a couple or three good barfs, glorious relief surely follows. I go to the kitchen for a glass of water. Later I have a little dry toast. By the time of the next meal I can eat normally.

This was *definitely NOT* the character of my son's sickness on this occasion. My son had nothing but bile left in his stomach. In fact he had eaten nothing since just before he started his shift at the pub. Yet his stomach was still convulsing and he was too weak even to lift his arm, let alone to stand up. The reason he was on the floor was not because he could not balance through alcoholic intoxication: it was because he had been drained of all strength. Something very powerful was driving this convulsing.

The only thing I have ever seen which remotely resembles my son's condition on this occasion is extreme sea sickness. This I have seen while crossing the North Sea in a Force Ten on the Zebrugge to Felixtowe ferry. Yet this never left me - or anybody else that I ever saw - too weak to crawl or lift an arm. No, what my son was suffering from was something quite different, and considerably more powerful.

My son could not actually get out of bed until 8pm that day, and was not fully recovered for several days. His recollection of the whole incident is crystal clear. His mind was not impaired in any way at the time. This is also wholly inconsistent with having been drunk.

His own doctor, came back the next day (Friday 19 November) and my son, went to see him. I have paraphrased what my son told me concerning his visit to the doctor.

"I described to the doctor what happened. He told me that it was too long after the event to gather any tangible evidence by examining me. However, he said that, based on the symptoms I described, it was unlikely to be a virus. He thought that it sounded like the effects of somebody having given me a powerful emetic drug, probably ipecacuanha. He then discussed the various ramifications. He told me, that it is a drug which is not available to anybody outside the medical profession. It is used to empty the stomach instantly in circumstances like when somebody has taken an overdose. The manager of the pub had told me that she is a medical student."

I cannot assert positively that the pub manager put anything in his wine. Nevertheless, whatever happened, cause him to be dangerously ill. And it happened on the pub's premises. She is therefore responsible. The doctor would not put anything in writing on this matter. He was only willing to answer official questions by telephone.

Before this incident, neither myself nor my family had heard of ipecacuanha. My son simply described what happened and the way he felt to the doctor. He did not have the knowledge to fabricate a description of the effects of a drug of which he knew nothing. Furthermore, he had no motive for doing so. He had commented to me the day before that he thought it would be good to remain at the pub for a year while he searched for the kind of job he really wanted without having the Jobcentre pressurising and threatening him all the time. It was also very convenient having Mondays and Tuesdays off so he could make contact with companies and go to interviews during office hours.

My son never returned to the public house. He asked my wife to telephone them to say he was not coming back. In my opinion he left with very good reason. I would not be prepared to work at a place where I was concerned about what may be in my drink, be it a glass of wine or a cup of tea. As with the department store in Cambridge, **my son never got paid for the three very long shifts he worked for that pub.**

My son's doctor told him that in any case bar work was not good for asthmatics like him because of the smoky atmosphere and suggested that he go back to the Jobcentre straight away and tell them. So, on leaving the doctor's surgery on Friday 19th November 1999, my son went straight to the Jobcentre. There he was interviewed by a client advisor. He told her he was not going back to that job, and the reason.

He was accompanied by his mother. At the interview, the client advisor confirmed that my son's benefit would continue as normal over the period he had worked at the pub and that if and when he were paid by the pub it would be deducted from his benefit retrospectively. She then told him not to come in on the following Wednesday (his usual signing day) but to wait until he heard from the Jobcentre by letter.

I personally thought that this was not right since, if one did not sign, no evidence would be entered on the DSS computer and this would be automatically flagged as a 'no show'. Benefit payments would then be stopped automatically.

Providence Intervenes

My wife and my son together had long before set about trying to get my son a job with a local department store. It is a long established store. It is not part of a national chain. It has a very good ethos. Though there was not actually a job vacancy at the time, the manager took on my son anyway. He started provisional employment with this store on Thursday 25 November 1999. This was absolutely nothing to do with the Jobcentre. In fact, the manager said that he did not, and would not, use the Jobcentre.

From the start the manager was immensely supportive towards my son. This was however a very difficult time financially. My son was started off on the National Minimum Wage, he would not be paid until the end of his first full month of employment, and the Jobcentre had terminated his Jobseeker's Allowance two weeks previously. The 4 of us were thus forced to live on 'what the law says' 3 of us 'need to live on' for the next 6 weeks.

My son informed the Jobcentre that he now had a job. He was still waiting to hear from them regarding their 'decision' on the 'ipecacuanha' incident.

The Jobcentre's Response

The local Member of Parliament had written to the manager of the Jobcentre on my son's behalf intimating his complaint about the Work+ course they had planned to put him on. In response to the MP's letter to the manager at the Jobcentre, she wrote to my son on 29 November 1999. In [her letter](#) she accused him of *failing* to agree on a course of action. In reality this meant not accepting the course of action the Jobcentre wanted to impose upon him. She insisted that, unless he attended this pointless and humiliating course, his Jobseeker's Allowance (welfare) would be terminated forthwith.

She also stated in her letter of 29th November 1999 that she was also aware that he had recently started a bar job and consequently left because of the late hours proving unsuitable. This, of course, was not the reason he had left that job, as he had previously made clear at the interview with his client advisor on Friday 19th November. To relieve her ignorance, my son replied to her [by letter](#) dated 2 December 1999. He gave full account of his academic record so that she could see that the 'Work+' course was inappropriate. He also gave a full account of the incident at the pub which caused him to leave.

On Monday 6 December a different client advisor telephoned. I answered the call. My son was at work in his new job. The caller said that, in view of my son's [letter to the local MP](#) of 11 November 1999 and his subsequent [letter to the Jobcentre manager](#) of 2nd December, my son's benefit payments would continue uninterrupted and adjustments would be made if he ever received payment from the pub.

The caller also said that my son must have misunderstood what the first client advisor had said, but that nevertheless he should come to the Jobcentre on Wednesday 8th December when he could sign for both the preceding periods. My wife came with him to see the first client advisor. She heard everything. She was also adamant that the first client advisor had told our son not to sign on as usual the following Wednesday. Consequently, it seems, he was indeed recorded as a 'no show'.

The Jobcentre Reneges

Obediently, on Wednesday 8th December my son went to the Jobcentre to sign off. He told the front-line operative all the circumstances. She seemed unsure what to do and consulted a fair haired woman in a white blouse and suit who was wearing ear rings and had a hearing aid. This woman made a telephone call, supposedly to the DSS, to ask how his case should be treated. She did not mention any of the particular circumstances, so presumably the DSS were aware of the situation. After the call she said that my son would not be paid for the week during which he worked for the pub.

The Jobcentre said that if the pub did not pay him, then he would have to take the matter up with the pub. I hardly think a lone 19 year old is going to fair very well in a legal battle with the large corporate chain which owns the pub. He left without giving any notice, which technically means he

broke contract. They therefore have a strong case for not paying him. My son never received any payment from the pub for the work he did for them.

Furthermore, if he wanted to claim after that week the Jobcentre said he would have to apply all over again for Jobseeker's Allowance just for that week. He would have to fill in all the myriad confusing forms, despite the trauma he had just endured. And then wait weeks and weeks for the application to be processed. All part of the brief they call "helping you back to work".

He has never received money from the Jobcentre for any period after 10 November 1999 when they unilaterally terminated his benefit for leaving his job at the pub "without good reason".

The Confusion Escalates

On Monday 13 December, my son received an ES86LV form with [a covering letter](#) and explanatory documentation from the manager of the Jobcentre. It was a standard letter Type ES48S dated 8 December 1999 - the same day he signed off. It said that, because he had left his job voluntarily, a decision would have to be made about whether he would get benefit and National Insurance credits after 10 November 1999. This implied that a decision had not yet been made as to whether or not he should receive benefit for the week within which he worked for the pub. The letter also specifically said "Payment of Jobseeker's Allowance will not be affected until the decision has been made."

But later on Monday 13 December, he received a P45 from the Inland Revenue saying that his claim ceased on 10 November 1999. Then on Tuesday 14 December he received another letter from the *same* manager of the Jobcentre telling him that his claim had already been terminated on 10 November 1999 giving the final statement of what he had been paid for the year.

It seems that, on the one hand, the validity of my son's reason for leaving the employ of the pub was being considered; while on the other hand, it seems that a decision to reject his 'excuse' had already been made. And by exactly the same person - the manager of the Jobcentre.

A couple of days later still, he received another letter from the Jobcentre. This was a letter written specifically to him personally. It was from the 'Back to Work Team Leader'. It said:

"Thank you for your letter dated 2 December 1999 concerning the reason for leaving your recent job.

"I appreciate your circumstances however the decision regarding your benefit must be decided upon by a Decision Maker. You will need to complete ES86LV and ES461LV attached for this purpose. You may wish to enclose a copy of the letter you sent to me with this. These will need to be returned, even though you have found work.

"I wish you every success and happiness in your new job."

Apparently, this person (or more likely the manager for whom she signed the letter) did not consider my son's reason for leaving the job, as described in his letter of 2nd December 1999, to be immediately and obviously good enough. I have to ask: are these people human, or are they mere personifications of cold mindless machines? Are they flesh or silicon? Whatever kind of mind the manager of the Jobcentre may have, it certainly comes across to me as that of an unfeeling and all-powerful schizophrenic cretin. My son could have died on that freezing pavement had he not been given a lift. I lost one son in 1979. I have no wish to lose another.

The ES86LV Form

The timing is a thing to note. The ES86LV form with covering letter and explanatory documentation was received on Monday 13 December 1999. The envelope it came in was post marked 10 December 1999 (a Friday). On the form it was stated that it had to be completed and returned to the Jobcentre within 7 days of a date specified at the top of the form. This date was given as 8 December 1999. This makes the deadline for the return of the form to the Jobcentre 15 December 1999. This allowed my son only 2 complete days to put his case into writing and get it back to the Jobcentre.

In view of the fact that my son had to request - and wait for - a police report, as well as write his own report, and post them all back to the Jobcentre, this amount of time was unreasonably short, particularly since he was by then working from 10am to 4pm in his new self-found job.

Nevertheless my son was determined to get his case delivered to the Jobcentre on the 15th December 1999. He went over the events and I smoothed out and compacted the words. The ES86LV form and [the report](#) to be attached were finished late on Tuesday 14th December. However, my son was still awaiting a letter from the police to include with his report.

A Police Statement

The day after my son arrived home sick, my wife, being very upset by this incident, mentioned it to a friend. This friend was horrified and said that this was so serious that the police should be told. My wife concurred. She went to the police station and reported it. The community police officer came to see my son on 24 November at 7pm to take a 3 page statement. He then investigated the incident. The [police letter](#) was inconclusive and non-committal.

And it seems that this was the end of the matter. All the pub management had to do was to "fervently" deny it. I never heard anything further from the police.

Guaranteed Delivery

The police letter arrived at about noon on Wednesday, 15th December 1999. I had to get my son's ES86LV, his report and the police letter delivered to the Jobcentre that day to meet the deadline.

I suspected that the reason the Jobcentre posted the form so late was to reduce as far as possible my son's chances of getting it back in time. This would then allow them to find against him, and hence terminate his benefit prematurely. The case would then be simple and straightforward. The employer would be vindicated. The taxpayer would be saved his 'precious hard earned' money.

Consequently I did not post the ES86LV *et al* by mail. I took it personally to the Jobcentre. I handed it to a young woman with a pale round face and short blond hair and pale pink finger nails. The time by the Jobcentre clock was 3:45pm. I told her that the contents of the envelope were urgent and had to be dealt with immediately to meet the Jobcentre's deadline. She opened the envelope and confirmed the contents as a returned form on which I had stated my reason for leaving a job. I corrected her saying that it was not for me but for my son. She said she would deal with it straight away.

Contrary to what I was told on the telephone and what my son was told [by letter](#), the Jobcentre **stopped his benefit from 10 November 1999, the Wednesday of the week in which he started the job at the pub on the Saturday. They refused to reinstate it.** My son was left with nothing to live on. We were back once more to 4 of us living on the benefit of 3. Without us, he would have become immediately homeless and destitute. If he had not found himself a job two weeks later, all 4

of us would to this day still be living on the benefit of 3. It is a frightening thought - at least it is to us who have to live on welfare and know just how little it is.

Furthermore, his absence of benefit or wage for the fortnight from 10 to 24 November 1999 means he is deficient in National Insurance contributions for the year 1999-2000. This will have permanent consequences regarding sickness benefit and ultimately his state pension.

I have, from time to time since, asked the Jobcentre what progress has been made on this matter. They say that it is strictly between them and my son, and they would not discuss it with me anyway. My son would have to enquire himself. Besides, he would have to wait to hear from "them": not from the Jobcentre. They would not elaborate as to who "them" were. I presume they are some 'independent' tribunal body who are purportedly nothing to do with the Jobcentre. So there we are, left in the dark.

It is now, at this point in my writing, mid June 2001 and my son has not heard anything since his ES86LV, report and police letter were delivered to the Jobcentre on 15 December 1999 at 3:45pm. That is over 18 months. No decision appears yet to have been made. I wonder what actually happened to my son's ES86LV, his report and the police letter. I suspect that they all conveniently 'disappeared' before ever reaching "them".

The Left Hand and The Right Hand

My firm impression is that the Jobcentre manager's right hand hasn't a clue what her left hand is doing. In mid-January 2000, my son received a letter from the Jobcentre requiring him to attend an interview with a client advisor. He had been in work since 25 November 1999. He signed off formally on 8 December 1999. He was not being paid any benefit by the Jobcentre. He had not been paid anything by them for any period since 10 November 1999.

On 19 February 2000 a letter arrived for *me*. It was from the manager of the Jobcentre. A reminder letter saying that she had sent me the first letter but had not received a reply also arrived on the same day by the same delivery. Perhaps she wanted to get me on record as being slow to reply to her communications. Or perhaps she was just trying to waste some more taxpayer's money.

However, the letter stated that I was receiving money for *both* my sons as part of my own Jobseeker's Allowance, and requested information as to what they were doing regarding being at school or in work. I was not receiving anything for my son. Neither had I done so since June 1999. The manager of the Jobcentre seemed to have her records truly mixed up.

Mental Illness

The job which my son found for himself went well. He had started at the bottom in the department store. He was well liked there by the manager, the staff and the customers. But the stress he had endured from the Jobcentre and from the trauma of the pub incident started to show. It is strange how the effects of pressure and stress only seem to manifest themselves some time after the events which caused them. But they did in my son's case.

He started to have audio and visual hallucinations. His condition worsened during February 2000. On 28 February 2000 he was admitted to the local mental health unit via Accident & Emergency. He was admitted as a voluntary patient with stress-induced psychosis. He came home from hospital permanently on 28 March 2000 and was discharged from the hospital's mental health unit on 5 April 2000 on to a Care Programme Approach run by an affiliated outpatients' clinic.

All this time, his employer was very supportive. He had been very popular at work. Not only the staff he worked with, but also many of the customers he served asked after him. His employer was very keen for him to return to work, but only when he is ready.

During his stay in hospital, the doctor in charge naturally interviewed him extensively regarding his symptoms. One of the questions asked by the doctor in response to the symptoms as described was, "Have you ever taken LSD?" My son never went any place where such was likely to happen - other than the pub he had worked for. It begs the question as to exactly what was put in his drink that night - or however whatever it was got into his system!

Sting In The Tail

One can always trust the administrative rules of the health and social security systems to put a sting in the tail. My son was bored. He begged the clinic doctor to allow him back to work. The doctor allowed him to return to work on 10 May 2000.

My son had received his medication free of charge while he was in hospital, as everybody does. However, upon discharge from hospital and being placed on the Care Programme Approach on 5 April 2000 until he returned to work on 10 May, he had to pay for his medication.

During his illness, he did not receive his normal wage. He received what is called Statutory Sick Pay. This was £180 a month. That is about £41.53 a week. It is essentially the same as Welfare. Had he been unemployed and receiving this amount, he would have 'qualified' for free medication. But because it was Statutory Sick pay, he did not qualify.

I do not know the intricate details of what 'the law says' in this regard. I would not know where to look. I cannot afford to have a lawyer do it for me. I simply have to accept what the DSS front line clerk tells me. As I have said elsewhere, it matters not what is written in some Act of Parliament buried in some central repository. It is your particular front line clerk's interpretation of that law, in the light of your circumstances, which actually affects your life. And this is what matters. This is all that matters.

His medication comprised two kinds of drug. His prescription therefore cost £12 per week. That is 29% of his gross income - a gross income which government officials have taken care to calculate to be the minimum a normal well person can possibly live on. Yet my son was suffering the distress and reduced abilities resulting from being ill and on medication. Need I say more? I think a society which votes into power those who would fabricate such an overwhelmingly powerful and corrosive system speaks for itself!

Fortunately for my son, he has a home. He lives with us, his family. We simply had to revert to emergency mode again where 4 of us had to live for a time on the benefit level [designed for 3](#) - or perhaps I should be conciliatory on this occasion and say that 4 of us were living on the benefit level meant for 3½. What of those who, in such circumstances, have no family?

There is no end to the bounteous harvest of unwelcome personal experiences to fuel my escalating contempt for this uncaring self-seeking materialistic profiteering capitalist society.

His Second Illness

In August 2000, my wife started to [relapse](#). This subjected my son and me to 2 months of [torture](#) in the form of almost continuous sleep deprivation. This took its [inevitable toll](#) on my son. He was admitted to hospital again on Boxing Day 26 December 2000. It was a long and difficult illness.

Since then, my son has been on a far better orchestrated Care Programme Approach with the local Mental Health Support Unit. He now has a dedicated and capable social worker who heads what is called an Assertive Outreach Team. I accompany him at his request to all progress meetings, including his interviews with duty consultants.

He had an interview with a temporary duty consultant shortly after he had left hospital after this second illness. During this interview I started to suspect that the medical notes from which he was working did not quite reflect my direct observations of what had happened to my son. This suspicion was reinforced by a comment my wife's CPN (community psychiatric nurse) made during a home visit to her. It seemed that the medical notes gave to those who were authorised to read them (I was not), the distinct impression that my son's illness was caused entirely by his own abuse of street drugs. In fact, I heard members of the team admonish my son "not to do it again". I challenged the consultant psychiatrist about his admonition not to use street drugs and lack of focus upon the spiked drink as the prime trigger for my son's illness. He replied that 'there was no evidence for it'.

I was completely deflated. I need some help here. Evidence? I saw my son's condition when he returned from the pub on that fateful night. I observed it. I suffered the fear of seeing my son in such a condition. I was in fear for his life. I have [described it](#) fully. This was a real event. It had a traumatic physiochemical effect on my son. It was so sudden in its manifestation. If it were not triggered by something in the drink given to him at the pub, what else could have caused it?

- a virulent virus breathed in on a spec of dust?
- a covert operative stabbing him with a poisoned umbrella spike?
- an alien from outer space touching him with toxic fingers?
- a freak cosmic ray particle hitting his nervous system?
- a biological agent smeared onto the soap in the toilet?
- a delayed action capsule swallowed inadvertently?
- psychosomatic hypnosis administered by a covert glance in the street?

Dear reader, please help me out here. Can you suggest any other way my son could have suddenly picked up an agent capable of precipitating the effects I observed and have described to you in this article? If so, please [email me](#).

Of course, accepting the facts as I have described them could cause severe problems for the medical authorities. It would effectively cause them to imply that a substantial commercial organization were negligent and responsible for my son's condition. And that could be legally messy. So the medics preferred to assert that there was 'no evidence' for the spiked drink and appear to have officially recorded my son's problem as having been caused by self-inflicted drug abuse. So the blame is conveniently laid to rest on a defenceless mental patient who cannot jeopardise their careers or reputations or present any legal threat to their employers.

It would seem to me, therefore that what gets put into medical notes is limited to what may be called 'facts of expedience'. Inconvenient truths somehow to get left out. Certainly, in the case of my son and what happened to him, the medics appeared to arrogantly absolve themselves completely of any form of obligation or accountability towards his parents or carers. We were simply unqualified bystanders.

I knew well that after the pub incident my son changed and became depressed. At this time he did take one Ecstasy tablet at a party he had been invited to by his brother's school friends and also smoked marijuana twice at somebody's flat in London. This much I know. It is not difficult to tell if a young person is taking street or party drugs. The eyes and a few notable behaviour traits are a ready give-away. My son did not show these.

Furthermore, one particular symptom which led his clinical psychologist to suspect that he may have some elements of Asperger's syndrome is a naïve propensity for what they term 'inappropriate' truth-telling. This causes Asperger's patients extreme problems in job interviews. Interviewers do not expect *complete* detailed truth about both ones positive and negative qualities. It was finally concluded that my son does not have Asperger's syndrome - only this particular trait of naïve truth-telling. The upshot is, however, that if my son said he had two 250ml glasses of Elm Grove white wine, then that is exactly what he had - and it is all that he had. If he said that, as a result of the depression and frightening hallucinations caused by the spiked drink incident, he took, under peer pressure, one Ecstasy tablet and smoked marijuana twice, then that is exactly what he did - and it is all that he did. And that is very unlikely indeed to precipitate a full-blown mental illness.

Sacked

On 6 January 2001 my son's manager from work wrote to me. He asked the name of the consultant who was treating him and for my permission to contact him regarding my son's suitability for continued employment. I replied on 9 January 2001 by letter in which I provided what he asked. My son was discharged from hospital on 13 March 2001. He could not return to work, though. The medics decided that he would be unfit for work for a very long time. I submitted my son's medical certificates to his employer who continued to pay him Statutory Sick Pay.

On 15 May 2001 my son received a letter from his employer saying that they had decided to terminate his employment because they had tried without success to obtain my permission to contact my son's doctor, and because of the length of his illness. Dates given in this letter for my son's absences due to illness were wildly in error. The letter did not specify an actual termination date, so I expected that a formal letter of termination would follow, giving my son the one week's notice required by his contract of employment. No such letter ever came. I immediately wrote back to my son's employer saying I had given permission by return of post and enclosed a copy of the letter.

On 21 May 2001 my son received his P45 from his employer showing that his employment had already been terminated on 14 May 2001. This was the first positive notification of the date his employment had been terminated. So instead of being given a week's notice of termination, my son was told of his termination only one week *after* his employment had been terminated. My son never received a pay slip for May 2001 from his employer. This becomes significant later.

On 22 May 2001 I received a letter of apology dated 17 May from my son's (now former) employer. It said nevertheless that my son's manager denied having ever received my letter of 9 January 2001. I think that if the post between two addresses in the same town be so unreliable then it was presumptuous of my son's manager to assume without follow-up that his letter reached me in the first place.

On 23 May 2001 I went with my son to the Benefits Agency for a form for him to claim Incapacity Benefit to continue on from when his Statutory Sick Pay ended on 14 May 2001. The Benefits Agency told us that since my son was previously employed, he could only claim benefit by filling in and submitting the SSP1 form provided by his former employer upon leaving. My son's former employer had not sent an SSP1 form. I telephoned them asking them to send my son's SSP1 form urgently.

On 29 May 2001 I wrote to the DSS expressing my concern that my son's former employer had not yet sent him the essential SSP1 form to allow him to apply for Incapacity Benefit. I never received a reply to this letter. My wife (who by now had returned from hospital after her relapse) wrote to my son's former employer asking that they send our son's SSP1 form urgently so that he could transfer onto Incapacity Benefit without interruption.

There are 3 kinds of benefit to which my son could possibly be entitled. They are, in order of priority:

1. Incapacity Benefit
2. Income Support
3. Disability Living Allowance.

The Benefits Agency said that Incapacity Benefit should be dealt with first. This was because it would in effect form a continuation of the income that had been provided by Statutory Sick Pay before my son's employment had been terminated. However, since my son's former employer still had not delivered the SSP1 form, I decided to apply at this time for his Income Support and Disability Living Allowance. I obtained an Income Support form from the Benefits Agency and put in a request for a Disability Living Allowance [DLA] application pack which I received on 31 May 2001. I spent all that day filling in the DLA form with my son.

On 1 June 2001 I submitted the Income Support application form, plus supporting documentary evidence, to the Benefits Agency in person by hand. They later claimed it had not been supplied until 27 June 2001 - obviously due to delays within the Benefits Agency itself. Then on 2 June 2001, a Saturday, I received the long awaited SSP1 form from my son's former employer. I made many phone calls to them regarding the date they had put for my son's first absence relating to his current illness. They had failed to document the fact that a 5-day period he took off in November 2000 was pre-booked holiday: not sickness. On 4 June 2001, the following Monday, I photocopied and took the completed SSP1 form in person to the Benefits Agency. I received it on the Friday and returned it completed the following Monday!! But of course this was 3 weeks after the dismissal date put by his employer on his P45 form.

I spent the remainder of that day filling in Section 1 of my son's Disability Living Allowance [DLA] application form. I also prepared a draft text for Section 2. The next day (5 June 2001) I spent all morning completing the first draft of the text for Section 2 of the DLA form. Then in the afternoon, my son's Social Worker read through the text to him and I noted changes he wanted me to make.

The next day (6 June 2001) I received, completed and returned an idiot query form regarding the retirement pensions my 21 year old son may be receiving! I finished editing the DLA Section 2 text. My son's Social Worker came again at noon on 8 June 2001 and read the final text to my son. He signed the form. His Social Worker took the form, copied it, then sent it off to the Benefits Agency. My son received a letter from the Benefits Agency confirming 11 June 2001 as the date they received his application for Disability Living Allowance, which is reasonable.

Also on 11 June, my son's former employer returned a telephone call saying they had no record that my son had booked a holiday in November 2000. He had in fact booked it. His supervisor had told him to take his remaining 5 days before the year-end otherwise he would forfeit them. He booked them, cleared it with his supervisor, then took them as arranged.

On 28 June 2001 my son received a supplementary DLA application form. His Social Worker helped me fill it in, then took a copy and posted it back to the Benefits Agency in the envelope provided.

On 29 June 2001 my son received a 1-page form requesting his May payslip. A reply was posted within an hour of receiving the letter informing them that his former employer had never issued a May payslip for my son, the indication of his final pay being his P45, a copy of which they had already taken. I presumed that no May payslip was supplied because payroll is only run at the end of the month, which is reasonable. I further reasonably presumed that, since time was of the essence by their decree, the DSS would then ask my son's former employer for my son's final pay details.

Refused Income Support

On 10 July 2001 my son received notification from the Benefits Agency that he had been refused Income Support from 15May01 to 26Jun01. The reason they gave was that some of the evidence requested was not supplied within 1 month of the time limit stated on the claim form. I suspect that my son's inability to provide this non-existent payslip is the reason the DSS never reimbursed him with the first 6 weeks Income Support or National Insurance credits, even though they had irrefutable evidence of his complete pay and tax status up to the end of his employ on the P45.

My son was granted £42 a week from 29 June 2001, which was not received by him until 10 July 2001. He had no income whatsoever from 15 May 2001 to 12 July 2001, a period of 58 days. I would like to remind the Benefits Agency that not even Jesus Christ fasted for 58 days. Yet they expect and require a 21 year old young man suffering from a distressing mental illness to live without any income for this length of time. From what I can determine, this is a clear and flagrant violation of [Article 25, Clause 1](#) of his fundamental human rights. And the fact that he is powerless to do anything about it also violates [Article 8](#). Still, that is apparently not of the slightest concern to the ruthless rule-driven robots of the DSS.

Apart from having no income for these 58 days, my son's hardship was compounded by his consequent ineligibility for reimbursement of prescription charges for his considerable cocktail of anti-psychotic medication for this entire period.

Refused Incapacity Benefit

On 13 July 2001 my son received notification that he had been refused Incapacity Benefit purportedly due to his having paid 'insufficient contributions'.

I suspect that the 'missing contributions' concerned are the ones with which the Jobcentre [wrongly failed to credit](#) him in November 1999 when he returned from work at 3:30 am desperately ill and too weak even to crawl and was subsequently too ill to return to the job. The ES86LV appeal/complaint document he submitted in this regard seemed to 'get lost' within the Jobcentre. My son was far too ill to deal with the matter himself, and the Benefits Agency refused to discuss it with me saying that it was a matter between him and them. Nothing was ever seen again of the 20 pages of documentary evidence (including a police report) which accompanied the ES86LV form. The ES86LV form + attachments were delivered to the Agency by me by hand at 3:45pm on 15 December 1999.

Has anybody ever paid sufficient National Insurance contributions to get back anything, when they are ill, of what they have paid into it? I wonder. I never have. Their rules are such that there always seems to be [some insurmountable excuse](#) as to why the clearly incapacitated person has not 'paid sufficient contributions' sometime in the distant past.

On 23 July 2001 my son's Social Worker wrote officially to the DSS requesting an ex-gratia payment in lieu of the 6 weeks lost Income Support. The Manager of the Benefits agency concerned replied to my son on 3 August 2001 saying that she had looked again at the facts and evidence and had decided to uphold her original decision to withhold the income support for the disputed 6 weeks.

My son's social worker immediately requested an official GL24 appeal form from the Benefits Office, which my son received on 18 August 2001. I composed the text for the appeal and ran it past my son's Social Worker on 23 August (the earliest she could give us an appointment due to her emergency duties elsewhere). My son's Social Worker advised different wording, which was entered onto the GL24 form. I then posted the completed GL24 appeal form in the official reply envelope provided.

19 September 2001: Received a letter from the DSS saying they will send the facts and evidence on which they based their decision to the Appeals Service.

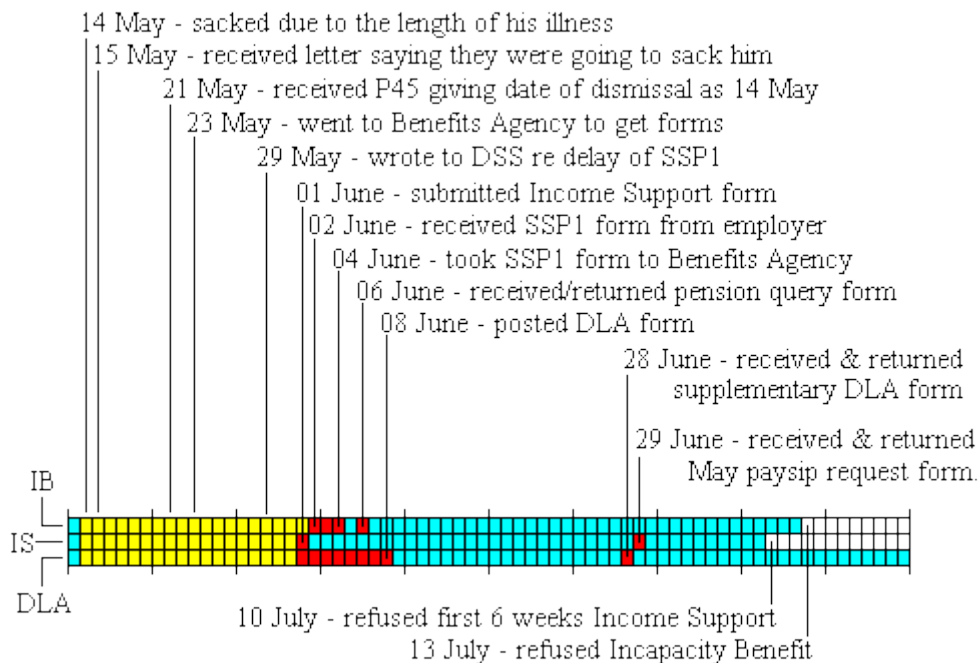
13 November 2001: Received (54 days later) a copy of the above mentioned Appeal Submission documentation from the DSS Appeals Service to be returned within 14 days of the 9 November. That gave us 10 days to get it back, including any delays within the DSS over which we have no control.

08 February 2002: Appeal heard by 'The Appeals Service' Lawyer. Ruled that my son should have received the Income Support for the period 04 to 26 June 2001.

05 September 2002: One year and 3 months after he should have done: my son finally received payment of the £212.26 Income Support he should have received for the period 04 to 26 June 2001!!

Analysis

The following diagram maps out the time from when my son was sacked from his job due to the length of his illness.



Yellow shows the delays caused by his former employer. Red shows the days taken up acquiring, filling in and returning my son's benefit application forms. Blue shows the delays caused by the Benefits Agency. The top row of squares track the application for Incapacity Benefit. The middle row tracks his Income Support application. The bottom row tracks his DLA application.

I was told by the Benefits Agency that the most important application was the Incapacity Benefit as it was the normal source of income at the cessation of Statutory Sick Pay. I was given the distinct impression that it was a simple process of switching from SSP to Incapacity Benefit. That it could be refused was not in question. In this context, the application for Income Support was less urgent. It would simply top up any shortfall in the Incapacity Benefit. I was given the impression that the application for DLA was a major undertaking for which we would need professional help from my son's Social Worker and other experts.

In the event, Incapacity Benefit was refused totally. My son was without income for 58 days after his Statutory Sick Pay ceased. He was after that time paid Income Support back from 26 June 2001. They never reimbursed him for the first 6 weeks after he was sacked. Then he only got £42 a week

to live on. Finally, on 11 August (beyond the end of the diagram) my son received notification that he had been awarded just over £50 a week Disability Living Allowance.

Facing the spectre of a complete loss of income is extremely stressful to anybody. It is much more so to one who is mentally ill without the ready abilities of a well person for acquiring one's essential needs of life from one's socio-economic environment. It is even more so again when it actually happens to such a person. This experience has noticeably damaged my son's recovery and has given him a lasting notion that his means to survive can be cut off unpredictably by some incomprehensible quirk of official bureaucracy, independently of his own reasonable actions and responses.

My son's absence of income for that 58 days hit my family very hard. Over the previous few months I had replaced two major domestic appliances and a gas boiler, all of which had failed way beyond the ends of their serviceable lives. This consumed my entire [forcibly limited savings](#).

My son had savings himself. This is because he had no social life and spent a large proportion of the previous two years in hospital. Because of his learning difficulties in the past, he is entitled to free education up to A-level up to the age of 25 instead of 19. However, since the benefits system cuts him off from support for education at the age of 19 like everybody else, his entitlement to free education for this extra time is pointless unless he can acquire funds to support him during that time. He was saving with this in mind. However, since his savings are effectively capped by the DSS savings limit, this endeavour also appears to have been thwarted by the system. Nevertheless, he was hoping to spend the money he had saved on his future education and any equipment such as a computer he may need for the purpose.

In the event, he not only had to live on his savings, he also had to subsidise the rest of the family. This was because all our savings (over half of which are simply to buffer the transient outgoings from normal domestic bills) had been suddenly consumed in the renewal of our essential domestic systems and appliances.

My younger son had just returned home after finishing his first year at university - completely broke. Consequently, with no savings to draw from, 4 adults now had to fuel their biological existences on 'what the law says' 2 need to live on. That is grinding poverty. Also bear in mind that 2 of those adults are mentally ill people under heavy medication. If you have not experienced such a situation, please do not presume to pretend you can understand the hardship we were under. You cannot.

My son was (and still is) heavily medicated. He could not possibly attend to any of these benefit applications himself. I acquired, completed and returned all forms, and provided necessary and sufficient accompanying evidence of his circumstances, within the minimum time humanly possible. Yet he was penalised. Not through any misdemeanour, negligence or remiss inaction on his own part, but because of the administrative negligence of his employer and the bloody-minded inflexible adherence by the Benefits Agency Manager to the syntax of benefit rules without any application of humanity, judgement, discretion or common sense. The ES86LV fiasco shows the futility of an appeal which dares to suggest that those in authority may be at fault. He is a minnow trapped between two leviathans operating within a legal infrastructure whose prime tenet is that might is right.

Conclusions

To me, the Jobcentre and the Benefits Agency are the administrative equivalents of the Keystone Cops. Yet surprisingly, no matter how crazy and mixed up they become, they seem to make all their mistakes to their own advantage. They are [omnipotent cretins](#); rule-driven robots without humanity, each one of which could easily be replaced by a simple data structure driven by a few hundred lines of computer code - which I should be happy to write. At least then we would not *expect humanity*.

One is told that one can always appeal against a decision made by any government department or operative. But where that decision has withdrawn the means of life, there simply isn't time to allow the lackadaisical due process of law to run its course. Time is of the essence - like how long you can survive without food. And of course, the success of an appeal depends on, among other things, your appeal documentation not 'getting disappeared' by the Government Department against whose misdemeanours you are appealing. The whole ethos of British administration is one of adversarial confrontation, in this case between the omnipotent cretin they call the Benefits Agency and the unfortunate invalid whose sole means to the means of life they have decided to deny.

Every individual starts off with a *passive* respect for the society to which he is born. It's natural. Subsequently, if that society and its laws treat him fairly, they earn his *active* respect. He grows to love and revere them. He may even be willing to lay down his life to protect them. But if that society and its laws oppress him, they not only fail to earn his *active* respect, they also lose the *passive* respect he naturally had for them from birth. He grows to hate them. His society must then use threat and force to make him lay down his life to protect them. I *fear* the law because of the harm it is able to wreak upon my family. Fear is something invoked through instruments of enforcement. But I do not *respect* the law. Respect must be earned. And the law has failed utterly to earn or hold my respect.

When such stupid, bloody-minded rules are used to determine whether one should or should not receive the means to live, why is society so surprised and appalled at the existence of crime? What does society, and the government it elects, expect us to do - lie down and starve quietly, out of sight and out of mind? Perhaps it does. My son does not have the upbringing or adeptness to use crime as a backstop for survival. But nature does not bow to the laws of man. The bio-social imperatives built into the human form demand that an individual preserve his own life and the lives of those for whom he is naturally responsible. No matter what the cost. No matter how short-term the results. In such a callous uncaring society, crime is therefore both inevitable and morally justifiable.

It matters not how many extra police the government provides. It matters not how completely the country is covered by closed-circuit television surveillance. When faced with nothing on which to live, an individual must and will 'steal' his basic needs of life. But please be aware that whatever he may 'steal', it is but a small earnest of the Lost Inheritance which society stole from him at birth.

I did not write this article as a means of obtaining moral justice for my son. Precedent has overwhelmingly demonstrated to me that such endeavours are futile. I wrote it to demonstrate incontrovertibly that the official infrastructures of this present society are catastrophically dysfunctional. At least, they are from the point of view of the poor, mentally ill and all who are in any way disadvantaged.

To the manager of the Benefits Agency, my son is not a *person*. She does not know his suffering. She cannot see his hardship. She is not his neighbour. To her he is simply one of millions of *data objects* identified by National Insurance numbers to which she must apply rules. She never sees the effects upon him of her actions. She will never suffer the ostracism of her community for exacting such undeserved deprivation on one of their less fortunate neighbours. She doubtless exonerates her actions with the stock comment "I am only doing my job. Parliament makes the law. I just carry it out." To her I reply, "Who is the murderer: the assassin or his hirer?" Each is entirely accountable for his or her own actions. In the final judgement, the 'buck' stops with each individual. There will be no corporate bastion behind which to hide.

It is time for the human family to take an upward step from a society based on a system of law which is nothing other than a means to facilitate the ordered and peaceful containment and exploitation of the poor by the rich. The present infrastructure must be swept away and replaced by a new concept in law: a protocol of benevolent reciprocity between each and his neighbour. Mankind needs a [new](#)

[kind of society](#) based on connected [anthropological communities](#) governed by a law that protects the individual from exploitation and harm, irrespective of his wealth and background. I think my son would like that.

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