

HIRED: UNDERCOVER IN LOW-WAGE BRITAIN

(JAMES BLOODWORTH)

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James Bloodworth, an English sometime Trotskyite, has written a book which combines the television series *Undercover Boss* and George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*. He took jobs in a variety of low-wage, low-security occupations to get first-hand knowledge about what it is like today to be a member of the largely invisible British working class. Bloodworth's resulting argument is that a pernicious marriage of portions of the political Left and Right has destroyed the dignity of the British working class, with fatal consequence for that class, and deleterious consequences for all of society. *Hired* is a powerful book that has key implications for possible political realignment.

This is not a typical disposable political book, where the author ends with a list of solutions he knows everyone will ignore. It is more a book of political philosophy, written from a worm's eye view, because its frame is to ask in what manner, and to what ends, we should be governed. Bloodworth focuses on one overarching goal, which is the key theme of the book—how we can restore the lost dignity of the working man. Not “dignity” in the modern Left sense, meaning forced universal obeisance to whatever perversion is the flavor the day, but actual dignity, the dignity of men and women (but especially men) being able to find, and maintain, meaning in their lives, through their work.

In 2016, Bloodworth started his job-hopping in Rugeley, a small town in the English Midlands (very close to Stafford, where I have a cousin, and have spent some time). From a distance, Rugeley appears fortunate—after years of decline following closure of the local coal mines, exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis, in 2011 Amazon opened a giant “fulfillment center” on the edge of town. These are the backbone of Amazon's business—huge warehouses where around a thousand people work, picking items from shelves, assembling them in bins, and shipping them to eager consumers. Such centers are embodiments of Taylorism, with every action monitored and measured, to the end of enriching Jeff Bezos and other shareholders of the company.

Amazon was supposed to be Rugeley's savior, helping the town regain prosperity and, as a result, dignity, but it hasn't worked out

that way. This could have been predicted, given that as always with Amazon, the town had to beg Amazon to locate there, and offer financial incentives that collectively came out of the townspeople's pockets. That bargain might make theoretical sense, perhaps, if the result was good jobs for townspeople. But again, as always with Amazon, for the most part, townspeople don't work there, or don't any longer, after trying it. Most of the Amazon workers are from Rumania and other Eastern European countries, many bussed in by Amazon from cities like Birmingham. The locals, in Bloodworth's telling, feel that these migrants (mostly temporary residents of Britain) take their jobs, but it seems more that locals aren't interested, for the most part, in working under the conditions Amazon offers, unless they are desperate. The standard neoliberal, and free market conservative, response is that if the townspeople won't take the jobs, their poverty and lack of dignity is their fault and their problem. Bloodworth's evisceration of Amazon (for which the book achieved a measure of fame) is meant to show why this is the wrong response.

This universal groveling by those in authority to obtain Amazon warehouses is a complex phenomenon that deserves further analysis. It has come to public attention recently in the shadow play of humiliation that Amazon enacted around the United States, when it made the leaders of scores of American cities sit, stay, and roll in order to have a chance at getting treats, in the form not of biscuits, but of having Amazon's new second headquarters placed in their cities. Surprising nobody who is adequately cynical, it was all a lie, and the fifty thousand promised jobs were instead, as the plan probably was all along, split among America's two major centers of business and political power, New York and Washington. This was ideal for Amazon; it further enmeshed the company with America's real rulers, the lords of finance and the administrative state. Why would they have made any other choice?

However, that widely followed farce was actually different than, and not as offensive as, the events in Rugeley, which are smaller scale and less public, but have been played out thousands of times around the world. In short, poor localities, generally those with a work force with few options, are made to pay Amazon for the privilege of being offered Amazon jobs at warehouses. They do not realize, or refuse to see in their desperation, that Amazon is like Dame Gothel in the story

of Rapunzel, extorting payment from city fathers desperate to help their people, all the while intending to destroy what they love. And what is the not-so-hidden knife? Unlike Amazon's headquarters jobs, these jobs aren't good jobs. They're nothing like the old jobs of the English working class, and they do nothing to restore the social web into which the working class was woven, and on which it relied.

How the new jobs are inferior ranges from the most basic (no training or skills that improve the lot of the worker) to the spiritual (constant petty humiliation) to the complex (total insecurity of the jobs). With a deft writing touch, Bloodworth draws what seems an accurate picture of Amazon, which also has, like most big corporations today, a weird Stepford Wives vibe. "Socialist realism has mutated into rosy corporate uplift. Feel-good slogans were plastered across the interior walls of Amazon's warehouse next to photographs of beaming workers whose radiant countenances proclaimed that everyone at work was having a wonderful time. We love coming to work and miss it when we're not here! declared a life-sized cardboard cut-out of a woman named 'Bez.'"

So, then, to what social end do these men and women slave at Amazon? In order that others in society can get cheap consumer goods quickly, served by an invisible army on the fringes. I'm as guilty as anyone, of course. Multiple times each day a van pulls up our long driveway, slowing for the speed bumps I installed to protect the children (and passing the "No Trespassing" sign showing rifle scope crosshairs and "You Are Here"). Sometimes it's a painted Amazon van; other times a U-Haul rented hourly by the driver. He or she, often an immigrant, Hispanic or African, hustles to the door of my large house and drops a cardboard box with a single book (most often) or some other consumer good, and then hustles back. I'm used to it, but, like the internet, we think it's essential, when the reality is we got along fine without it, and maybe we were all better off.

Bloodworth draws a disheartening, yet sympathetic, picture of Rugeley, focusing on the breakdown in its social fabric, which, to be fair, began long before Amazon. Noting the ubiquity of advertisements for private detectives (probably the British equivalent of the disgusting amount of plaintiff's lawyers' billboards we have in America), he draws a line between commercialized suspicion and atomized consumerism. "Fidelity and faithfulness have been slowly chipped away by more

ephemeral, market-driven principles promising instant gratification. . . For working class communities this adds yet another layer of impermanence to an already insecure existence, especially for those men whose sense of masculine inadequacy is reinforced by the lack of any purposeful employment.”

Before we get back to Amazon, let’s unpack this, because it is important to understanding Bloodworth’s book, and where it fits into today’s political landscape. First, the backdrop, the key assumption that drives Bloodworth, is that what the working man needs most of all is real meaning, the creation of dignity through work, dignity both in himself and in his role and position in society, among his family and his peers. Second, Bloodworth believes that the recent past, a few decades ago, was not some hell of intersectionalist oppression, but a time when the English working class had acquired that dignity, now lost. Speaking of a typical worker fifty years ago, Bloodworth says: “[He] may have hated his dull job as a lathe worker in a Nottingham factory, but he could at least take a day off now and then when he was ill. There was a union rep on hand to listen to his grievances if the boss was in his ear. If he did get the sack he could usually walk into another job without too much fuss. There were local pubs and clubs at which to drink and socialise after work.” In other words, the working man had meaning, and was integrated into society. He had a place, and that place made him feel a man.

The need for meaning, which in practice for most men can only be derived from productive work, is one reason why Universal Basic Income, or trying to achieve a post-scarcity future, or any social policy that removes the need to work, is problematic. Men far prefer a dangerous job with camaraderie to lethargic, pampered anomie, and moreover, it was from such camaraderie, combined with strong families made possible by good jobs, that the tendrils of crucial social networks that built the societies of towns spread. All that is gone now, including, Bloodworth notes more than once, the working men’s social clubs, gone like the bowling leagues Robert Putnam wrote about in *Bowling Alone*, and like all the other intermediary institutions that once made towns strong. The focus here is very much men—women, of course, mostly derive meaning not from jobs, but from children, family, and social relationships, and to deny this is to beclown yourself, since it is

self-evident and self-proving. But meaning for women is also destroyed when the social web of a town is destroyed.

So how did we get here? Bloodworth says the working class was demolished by the one-two punch of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. More precisely, Bloodworth ascribes the beginning of the end of this world as 1984, when Margaret Thatcher broke the coal miners' unions. Now, for years I was told by conservatives, and I believed, that Thatcher was a heroine, but in retrospect that is at most half true. Zombie Thatcherism is no more desirable than zombie Reaganism. Certainly, Thatcher helped Ronald Reagan end the Cold War, and her actions in the Falklands War were also admirable (though her encouragement of the 1990 Gulf War looks less admirable now). But her economic program, efficient as it may have been and in keeping with Chicago School doctrine, may well have been responsible for the current miserable state of the British working class. The stock conservative, or neo-conservative/neoliberal, response, is to say "But the coal miners were dinosaurs, holding the country hostage." And maybe they were, but that does not explain why they, and their entire class, had to be given to the fire, except as a way to remake society, clay ground to build the atomized globalism of Cool Britannia. Of course, they were betrayed by Labour too; as Bloodworth notes, the "hollowed-out response of Blairism was not to tame capitalism but to offer a palliative of consumerism to those who sweated to make the wheels turn." Neoliberals such as Blair and Theresa May would never actually champion the working class; they worship their globalist European masters, and rely on Chinese debt to keep the wolf from the door.

Thus, when the working class no longer had either economic or political power, and had no chance of getting it back, unemployment (or underemployment) rose as the good jobs disappeared. For those who still had jobs security disappeared and wages dropped. This destroyed the dignity of the working men directly affected, with resulting effects far beyond, to their families, to the tradesmen, and to entire towns and regions. Snap one thread and the whole web breaks.

The Tony Blair "solution" of consumerism is the very heart of the matter. Consumerism, not religion, is today the opiate of all the people, dulling them at the same time they are bombarded with propaganda about how free, how very free, they now are. Bloodworth astutely ties

overt consumerism to other manifestations of the same belief system, such as the omnipresent “thought-terminating cocktail of uplift” found in tat with slogans like “Keep Calm and Drink Prosecco” or “Dream It, Live It, Love It,” identifying it “at root a call to stop thinking.” Another manifestation is, as Bloodworth talks about when driving for Uber in London, continual selling of, and celebration of, “freedom and autonomy” that is really neither, but enslavement to vice and dopamine hits derived from clicking “Buy.” This claim that we are all now free dovetails so tightly with the Zeitgeist that none think, or perhaps none dare to think, whether the philosophy being sold to them is a scam. And on those rare occasions they are criticized for offering consumerism to those without dignity, oily men like Blair offer bromides about increased “social mobility,” which means enabling those with talent to leave their towns and people behind, to become global citizens resident in Cool Britannia, riding metaphorical airships above the teeming masses. What is certain in all of this is that no restoration of working class dignity is on offer.

From the perspective of the identity politics harpies who dominate the American Left (I am not sure about the British Left), cawing about intersectionality and inclusion, Bloodworth must seem a great sinner for believing that dignity for everyone is important, that dignity does not derive from emancipation from supposed oppression, and for recognizing the differences between men and women. He repeatedly flies his sinner flag high, too, for example favorably quoting a Welshman’s complaint that a man cannot support his family on thirty pounds a day, and complaining that the “new masters were no longer wicked men in top hats,” but men “more likely to unbutton their shirt collars, roll up their sleeves, and wax lyrical about diversity.” Enough of this and it’s pretty clear Bloodworth has no use for the diversity and inclusion crowd.

This is not really surprising. One sees this inadvertent buttressing of reality, particularly of sex differences, quite frequently in books that focus on the working class, because the problems discussed are rooted in reality, and if you live in a pretend reality, as the identify politics people do, you can’t actually understand, much less improve, the lot of the working class. Bloodworth, however, struggles with the working class attitude to migrants, whether Eastern European or Asian. Being a realist, he recognizes that British culture is being, or has been, destroyed, and in part it is the result of migrants. (No doubt if he were being honest he

would mean the Asians, since they stay, and have a lust for domination, while the Eastern Europeans leave, for the most part.) “[I]t is untrue to say that a distinct English culture does not exist. Those who engage in this kind of self-flagellating talk would be in your face if you ever suggested that, say, Jamaica or India did not have their own distinct cultures and ways of life.” But he accurately identifies that capitalism, in the form of neoliberalism, is equally to blame. He frequently criticizes the destruction of the high street (what we would call Main Street) in every English city and town, with local shops replaced by McDonald’s and ticky-tack discount stores, such as B&M (which seems to be the rough equivalent of Dollar General, or perhaps a hybrid of that and Walmart). Good jobs are now replaced by working for places like B&M, which has the same defects as working for Amazon. Compounding his sin, Bloodworth attacks the Arora brothers, Indian owners of B&M, as “one of the contemporary success stories of liberal politics,” by which he means their success allows liberals to feel good about multiculturalism, and ignore the destruction wrought, and that the new boss is, whatever his ethnicity, the same as the old boss. According to Bloodworth, the workers at B&M (at least in Blackpool) did improve their lot, through unionization (which apparently in England only requires getting a vote of ten percent of the workforce), after which conditions, anecdotally, improved. (Whether conservatives should support unions, other than of government workers, which should never be allowed, is an important question, but this review is long enough already.)

Back to Amazon. If one has to pick the most pernicious element of Amazon, it is that the company offers no job security to the vast majority of workers. You have what they in England call a “zero-hours contract,” meaning you may not be paid at all, since you are only paid for the hours the company chooses to employ you. Even if you are given work, the algorithm penalizes you for not picking enough items per hour, for being late, for being sick, for taking too long a bathroom break, even when the bathroom is hundreds of meters away. If you get six points, you are fired (what they call “released”). Implicit in the “zero-hours” contract, but distinct as a concept, is a job characteristic that is true of most American jobs, but much rarer in the rest of the developed world—“at-will” employment, meaning the employee can be fired at any time for any reason or no reason, with no recourse against

the employer (and he can quit at any time, without any recourse against the employee).

Bloodworth paints zero-hours contracts as the tool of the devil. On the other hand, I employ hundreds of people, all on what amount to zero-hours contracts, and I have extremely low turnover, therefore presumably a happy work force. The difference is I offer work that is functionally guaranteed, forty hours, where new unskilled employees start at nearly double minimum wage, with much voluntary overtime available, paid at time-and-a-half. For me as an employer, the key benefit of zero-hours contracts is not the ability to shrink hours, but the “at-will” employment. Without that, I would risk the inefficiency and disruption that a contractual dispute, or some government or union functionary demanding payments, would cause, if I fired an employee, which has to be done not infrequently. The safety net for my fired employees is unemployment payments I make (as is not well known, unemployment is paid by the employer, though checks are written by the government, making it appear like a government benefit). Thus, at-will employment is not an inherently awful system.

In the British context, and even more in other European countries, it is nearly impossible to fire a worker. Presumably, when unions were strong, much the same thing was true. “At-will” employment has the legitimate purpose of reducing the risk to a company of making new hires. True, when workers become viewed as commodities, it can have malign effects. For example, according to Bloodworth, Amazon holds out the possibility of a permanent job, a “blue badge,” as a manipulative carrot, but rarely or never delivers. I’d like to say that much of the responsibility is on employers to behave decently, but that can’t be relied on, and especially not now, because social degradation affects all levels of society, and the old ideal, of a social compact among employers and the employed, doesn’t get much traction anymore. Perhaps the answer is some type of probationary status, “at-will” for a time before the worker receives some additional security—maybe not guaranteed employment, but a guaranteed severance payment, perhaps. Still, such solutions are band-aids on the real problem, that the social compact has broken down.

So that’s Amazon. Bloodworth also took a job in Blackpool, a resort town on the Irish Sea, in the northwest of England. As with all such

resort towns, it has declined far from its glory days, as British tourists now choose cheap flights to Ibiza, just as New Yorkers no longer spend their weekends on the Jersey Shore. Poverty is ubiquitous, even if a thin layer of glitz remains near the beach. But the job that Bloodworth took was not tied to tourism; it's one that's needed everywhere now, in these days of atomized families. Namely, caregiver to the homebound elderly, working for a company called Carewatch. Unlike Amazon, Bloodworth found the company, and the permanent management, to be sympathetic to both workers and the cared-for. Structurally, though, such companies compete to earn contracts from municipalities; lowest bidder wins. Therefore, it's a race to the bottom, where workers are paid minimum wage and speed of throughput, of the care itself, is critical to the business model. Incentives have consequences, and the result is at best hurried and mechanical, and at worst deficient, care. In an echo of the dignity that the working class has lost, elderly people are degraded by this system, even if their basic needs are met.

Still, there is something wrong with this picture. Bloodworth gives as the weekly minimum to be spent on residential care of older people by the government as £554, or nearly \$40,000 a year, per person. Yet in his telling, the average old person gets a few fifteen- or twenty-minute visits a week. Where is the rest of the money going? Probably not to the profits of Carewatch. Administrative costs? Government bureaucrats? Required group self-hate sessions to explore the evils of Islamophobia? I don't know, but somebody does, and I'd like to know.

Bloodworth also doesn't examine why this industry is even necessary, except to mention that for "a harried and stressed-out working age population," "a pressure to make ends meet by toiling away for longer and longer hours makes it increasingly difficult to take the time to look after parents and grandparents." This strikes me as simplistic, and the actual problem much more complex in its causes. There is no evidence I know of that people are working longer hours overall. In fact, in the UK, as in America, the percentage of people in the workforce has been declining, so more people are working no hours at all. Some of that is due to retirement, but much is due to people permanently leaving the workforce and living off government support. But those people aren't real interested in tending their elderly parents and grandparents. When emancipation and personal freedom have been preached at you your

whole life, and the need, indeed the absolute right, to be free from any unchosen obligations, why would you? Plus, isn't doing so the job of the government, as we know from Obama's infamous "Life of Julia" campaign commercial? Another part of the problem is indeed tied to the amount of work, though not to increasing hours. When living decently requires two incomes, it is no longer possible to maintain an extended family, and only an extended family can easily care for the elderly. Thus, a key element of this problem is the two-income family, where the wife is told she must work, but falsely told she can still have it all.

Here Bloodworth faced another burden that the working class deals with—becoming enmeshed in a *Brazil*-type bureaucracy. His job required a criminal background check, done through the government, which often takes many months. Employers don't keep the jobs open waiting for slow results to get back, so those unlucky enough to be caught up in the gears often never start jobs they are hired for. Bloodworth, in fact, never got his results, so he was only allowed to work as an assistant to an accredited care worker, and was never paid. (This is closely tied to "poverty is the thief of time," that the poor spend a great deal of time waiting on everything from buses to government functionaries, and lack the tools that make the better-off more efficient, from their own car to their own printer.) He ascribes the problem to budget cuts in government services; far more likely is that this is just the typical workings of an unaccountable, all-powerful bureaucracy taught to regard those it supposedly serves as its slaves.

The focus here is less on the job, though it's grueling and spiritually draining, most of all in the inability to really help, and more on the people of Blackpool. Bloodworth sleeps outside in the company of a homeless man, noting that, again, the loss of dignity is among the worst aspects of being homeless. Not only is begging degrading, but passers-by deliberately degrade the homeless, sometimes by attacking them physically, or by lecturing them on their moral failings as a condition of granting them money. While I agree with much of this, the story is a little too pat. Not one word is mentioned of mental illness, the most common cause of homelessness in the United States, and presumably a major cause in the UK. Nor is drug addiction, the cause of nearly all the remainder of homelessness, mentioned. Instead, Bloodworth's companion is a cancer patient who lost his ability to work and his job

as a painter when he tried to commit suicide by jumping, survived, and spent a year in the hospital. And the reason he's homeless is because he has to wait eight weeks after applying to start getting government payments. So while homelessness is a problem, neither lack of work, nor lack of government benefits, is its cause, and its solution is totally other, making its insertion here somewhat beside the point.

The book does have a few quirks, especially for Americans. There are lots of Britishisms. I had to look up that "giro" was slang for government welfare payment, and terms like "Jobseekers' Allowance." And I still don't know what the "man selling rock" was selling, especially because there is mention of "rockshops," though I don't think it's what Americans call rock. Moreover, Bloodworth does have blind spots resulting from his position as a man of the Left. For example, he falsely claims that in Britain, "Should you misspeak you will not receive a knock at the door in the middle of the night." That's true if you're Left. But tell that to the thousands arrested every year, some jailed for years, for blasphemy: for saying anything negative about Islam, or for pointing out men can't actually choose to be women, or suggesting the homosexual agenda might not be ideal for society. Sure, the technical description is "hate crimes," but it's simply blasphemy; the British make these arrests for mere speech (something Americans find hard to grasp). In 2016, UK police arrested 3,300 people for online "hate crimes" alone, a fifty percent increase from two years before, and you can be certain one hundred percent of those arrests were tied to one of those three categories. Nobody gets arrested for insulting Christians. And last year, the Yorkshire police publicly campaigned that "non-crime hate incidents" be "reported" so that "they can be stopped." This is why Americans want to keep their guns, so they can deal directly with evil people similar to the Yorkshire police if they arise in America.

Bloodworth ends up in London, driving for Uber. Here he shows what is already pretty well known: Uber, "platform capitalism" run on Randian principles, offers little to its drivers, pretending to offer them freedom while rigidly controlling them, "a peculiar sort of freedom," atomizing like all the rest of the jobs Bloodworth works. He contrasts this with bicycle couriers, who really do work for themselves, and while their job is risky and not particularly well paid, have a camaraderie and social network more akin to the working class of old (though the

app-based “gig economy” is making inroads here too). (When I was a big firm lawyer in Chicago, I always used to say, with all seriousness, that if I ever decided to take a dramatic turn in life, my next job would be as a bicycle courier. I would have been good at it, since of the triathlon sports, bicycling was always my strong suit, and I have extremely good reflexes and high risk tolerance. But I’m probably too old now.) And London, shiny on the outside, is a hellhole of gross inequality.

The author does not offer any pat solutions, although he clearly thinks stronger unions would help—but as with his job-mates in a call center in South Wales, there is little interest in such labor solidarity among workers. The biggest problem with any possible solutions, methods to help restore working class dignity, is that loss of such dignity may be, and in fact probably is, a one-way ratchet. Once you have stripped a people of their dignity, you cannot simply flip a switch to turn it back on again. They have since sunk into various vice, some overt, like drink and drugs, and others hidden, but even more debilitating, such as a complete change in mental attitude. Most of the degraded working class would struggle with fitting into the old jobs, with their limitations and demands; a binding web binds all parties, and the degraded have been preached autonomy as their Prime Directive. Bloodworth notes that when work gives you no meaning, and you cannot otherwise derive meaning, cigarettes, drugs, and alcohol become more attractive, merely for “the promise of any kind of emotional kick.” These things become necessities, in a way incomprehensible to those with more money and stability, yet ones which reinforce the lack of dignity of the user. As Bloodworth also notes, poor people are fat for similar reasons. It’s false that McDonald’s is cheaper than healthy food, or that healthy food takes too long to prepare. It’s that food which is bad for you is a comfort. How all this could be reversed is utterly opaque.

Bloodworth is at pains to push back against the common view, or what he says is the common view, that “poor people are the way they are because of their moral laxity or their irresponsible life choices.” But sometimes that is true; hence the old, and necessary, distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. I’ve always bought into that, since it’s reality-based, but upon reflection, perhaps it suggests black-and-white distinctions are always possible when they are sometimes not. Is a drug addict who fell into drugs because his dignity was shattered,

and his father's dignity was similarly broken, and neither could get any support other than a government check, truly undeserving? And what of the tattooed slattern who works fifteen hours a week, supplementing the dole, in order to have enough extra money to pay for alcohol and the bill for her mobile phone? Is she deserving poor just because she manages to get out of bed a few days a week?

I think the problem is that the source of aid dictates how accurately the poor can be classified. We mostly view assistance as government financial aid, and debate who is deserving of that aid. When the impersonal and sclerotic government is in charge of deciding who gets aid, that is, who is deserving, it has no subtle means of determining who is deserving. Perhaps we need to restore judgment, and condemnation, the type that was used to make needed subtle distinctions when aid was privately administered, through churches, mutual aid organizations, workingmen's clubs, and unions. Only such organizations, close (sometimes too close for comfort) to those asking for aid, can make the judgments as to who is deserving, and if necessary set conditions and enforce reform on those who are undeserving, in a way it will always be impossible for government functionaries to do (even if they were not ideologically opposed to making judgments). I think that under my political program, Foundationalism, all charitable aid will be taken out of the hands of governments, and given, on the principle of subsidiarity, to private organizations, who will be tasked with rewarding virtue and punishing vice. (There will still be government action focused on the poor, however; this is simply for charity.) Yes, this will result in severe restrictions on autonomy for the recipients. That's a feature, not a bug. But it will also result in the ability for most of the poor to get their dignity back, especially if coupled with other political changes.

More broadly, what can be done depends on who rules. Not Tory or Labour; or Republican or Democrat. All those parties are the problem; none represents the working class in any way. The Left's primary divide today is between neoliberals and worshippers of identity politics, neither of which has any use for the working class. (Bloodworth, in his Epilogue, basically comes out in favor of the "traditional left" in opposition to "so-called 'progressive' thought." The latter, he says, are more likely to demonstrate at the Israeli embassy than be seen on a picket line. But the traditional left has no real power, at least not at this moment.) The

Right, at a minimum the American Right, has a growing percentage of those interested in the working class—Bloodworth’s story is mostly indistinguishable from those told by conservatives like Tucker Carlson and Oren Cass, after all, and Trumpism intermittently brings working class needs to the front. But nothing has been done by the Right for the working class, either, although a new willingness to threaten tariffs, and to halt illegal immigration, is a start, and Oren Cass has recently offered some excellent specific ideas.

What we have now is the opposite of human flourishing. There is something here to help us turn the other way—a potential alliance between realist leftists focused on improving the lot of the working class, via class consciousness, and conservatives similarly focused, even if class solidarity is not the frame. I’m not sure how far this could be taken. Pretty far, I think, if the working class can be made to see that the identity politics Left, and the Mitt Romney Right, are equally its enemies. Incremental steps, and empowering localities, while smashing the power of companies like Amazon, are probably the best way to get started, and to see what can be done.