The Baily Star

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Physics is Not the Enemy

If our academics cannot settle academic issues across the table, we have no right to demand negotiated resolution of social, economic and political conflicts. BUET is considered to be one of our better universities, perhaps the best on many counts. And its architecture faculty, a late addition in the early sixties, has in a short span of time made its mark, what with its excellence of teaching and impressive performance by its graduates, nationally and internationally, and what with the wonderful academic ambience that is there in the faculty buildings and its surroundings. It is more a tragedy than an outrage that things have so disastrously developed there that teachers and students of architecture went on a strike for days on end - adversely affecting the good name of the faculty.

The soul of architecture is in its aesthetics, in the supreme art it is. Very close to music. Architecture has one scoring point above all other arts. It is wholly hewn out of practical things and for absolutely practical purposes — and still it is in essence as abstract as physics, mathematics or music. But an architect doesn't build his or her castles in the air. He or she has also to be a keen student of materials science and physics, those that go into making structures usable and enduring.

The Academic Council, by a big vote, last yearend introduced physics as a subject in the admission test of the Architecture faculty. The teachers of the faculty responded with a non-approval of the new element but very very delayedly. And students stepped into the fray even later. But none of them ever had anything to fear from elementary physics physics of the intermediate level.

The architecture faculty in BUET is in mortal fear of losing its distinctiveness that has taken so much of advanced thinking and unremitting care to fashion. Our appeal to the BUET authorities, please don't cut this beautifully growing tree. Creativity, which is at the heart of the discipline of architecture, must be treated and judged differently, from the rest of BUET. We also appeal to the champions of architecture not to harm their good work from a fear psychosis. Physics is not your enemy. You cannot and must not defy the Academic Council, and should not also involve the students in a conflict which is essentially between the Council and Architecture Faculty.

We strongly suggest that this admission test be allowed to be held peacefully. Then all teachers concerned should resolve the differences across the table. This we expect of academics, and of BUET.

Overland Corridor

We are pleased over the fact that India has agreed again to enable landlocked Nepal to trade with the outside world via Bangladesh. It is not only a question of the Himalayan Kingdom's right to transit but there is also an extended concern for giving a proper start to the concept of subregional-

But this is an overland facility that on a sixmonth 'probation' earlier on had dismally failed to work, except for only three truckloads passing through Banglabandha in Bangladesh. It then floundered on the rocks of - as reported in a prominent national daily here - India's insistence that the goods had better be carried by their trucks, under supervision of security personnel and only on Saturday and Sunday. Holidays respectively in Bangladesh and Nepal. The arrangement so envisaged could neither be regarded as gracious nor as cost-effective by any stretch of imagination.

Officials of both countries are going to meet in New Delhi towards the end of the current month. Since it involves the crucial agenda of operationalisation of an overland facility as distinguished from mere 'transit on paper' it is essential that Bangladesh's inputs be sought for evolving a wellrounded modus operandi.

In a related development, a parliamentarians' delegation from Nepal is scheduled to visit Mongla Port today with a view to ascertaining the facilities available to them for their transit through Bangladesh. From a chicken-neck entry up in the north Fhulbari, Bangladesh, their ideal maritime outlet would be through Mongla Port. For this, the Rupsha bridge ought to be on the ground.

They are thinking of using Mongla as a less expensive alternative to Calcutta port. Mongla port has to be upgraded on a crash basis.

Street-prone College

Dhaka College students have once again resorted to lawlessness to register their protest. On Monday evening students reportedly angered by the frequent disruption of power and water supplies damaged some vehicles on the nearby road. When the law enforcing agency intervened the whole place turned into a battleground with both the parties brick batting each other.

Now, frequent power failure and shortage in water supply are no doubt a potent source of annoyance for students for whom time is of the essence. And these are only the basics that every citizen is well within his or her rights to demand. But then why take it out on vehicles, disrupt traffic and inconvenience the public who had no hand in the

shortages and were equally affected by these? Actually this another outburst of Dhaka College students has more to do with the college's long history of relentless exposure to unscrupulous politics than outrage from aggrieved citizen's point of view. Exposure to the politics of muscle and convenience has taken away the last vestige of sensibility and idealism from almost all our educational institutions and perhaps most from this one.

Every now and then college boys enter into clashes with shopowners of the neighbourhood. From book shop owners to the grocers at the New Market a Dhaka College student is synonymous with terror and extortion.

Dhaka College has been an important factor in the deterioration of law and order in the area. As a premier educational institution of the country can Dhaka College afford such a bad name?

Neither the Dream of Ram Raj nor the Fear of Roma Raj...

Many may accept the thesis that the BJP be given a chance since it has never been tried at the Centre before and since it is more coherent than the combination of Congress and the United Front. But democracy is such a system of governance where only the majority rules the polity. It has no place for sentiments or sympathy. She visited as many as 134 conof the Sikhs who, after having ence. The combination has se-

ESULTS have only confirmed the general im-Pression held long before the polls. It is a hung Parliament, this time more precariously poised than before, and the Bhartiya Janata Party, as expected, is the largest single bloc. Even the tally of both the BJP and its allies and Congress and the United Front has not strayed from the expected figure. The two are within a whispering distance, the difference of 12-odd members. This, too, was guessed earlier. The first is teetering at the mark of 250 and the second at 264. The estimate in some states may have gone awry. But the overall picture remains the same. In one way, the entire exercise has turned out to be futile.

What it boils down to is that there was no wave in favour of any party or any leader. The voters, increasingly disillusioned, have gone mostly by the performance of the government at the Centre or in their states. And they have expressed in no equivocal terms that neither the BJP nor Congress deserved their confidence. The BJP is 177 on its own symbol as against the 166 in 1996. This is an increase of 11. Congress has won 141, retaining more or less the strength it had in the last Lok

Sabha. To say that Sonia Gandhi made the difference is a delusion in which the Congress leaders are indulging without any proof. She may have galvanised the party but she has not garnered votes. Once again it proves that crowds do not suggest the electorate's trend.

stituencies. Congress has won in 49 in those constituencies as against 50 in the 1996 election. In Andhra Pradesh, where her charisma is said to have worked. Congress bagged six, two less than before in the 12

constituencies she toured. Orissa and Tamil Nadu, the state from where she began her campaign, are the two examples where Congress drew a blank. She made no difference in Karnataka, where the non-performance of the Janata Dal government was the party's undoing. Rae Barely, where she made the victory of her husband's pilot-colleague, Satish Sharma, a prestige issue, crashed by thousands of votes.

Charismatic Atal Behari Vajpayee's histrionic talent too have made little difference. He opened the campaign with a meeting in the constituency of Kamal Nath, a non-sitting Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh. The latter has won by the largest margin in the country. Vajpayee toured Rajasthan extensively. The BJP is down to five from 12. There was a similar dismal story in Maharashtra. The BJP-Shiv Sena combination has been reduced to 10 from 33. Even a small state like Haryana, where Vajpayee's oratory should have helped the BJP and the Harvana Vikas Party. shows that he made no differcured only two out of a total of

Neither dream of the Ram Raj peddled across the country was taken seriously nor the fear of the Roma Raj, aroused on the basis of Sonia Gandhi's entry. The slogan of solidarity raised both by the BJP and Congress. too, has not worked; an empty tummy wants bread, not the peace of graveyard. If some test

stayed in the wilderness for many years, have not yet written off the Akali Dal. The Telugu Desam withstood the pressure because its performance

was not so unsatisfactory. Really speaking, people have lost faith in the one-party rule. The emergency (1975-77) was probably the watershed. Since then the electorate has been adopting an equivocal attitude.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

can be applied to assess the voters' mind, it has been the performance in terms of their amelioration. Accordingly, the United Front ruling at the Centre has been decimated. It is now reduced to 93, almost half of its strength in the last Lok Sabha. The Janata Dal in Karnataka has also been badly mauled and so has been the BJP in Rajasthan and with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. The DMK in Tamil Nadu, Congress in Orissa and the AGP in Assam have been, too, defeated roundly. The Akalis have survived in Punjab, not because of

their performance but because

The Janata Party, which came to power in 1977, was not a single party but a combination of several parties, including the Jana Sangh, predecessor of the BJP. True, the electorate returned Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1980 and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, decisively, in 1984. But she won because the Janata Party was seen squabbling all the time. Rajiv Gandhi came on the crest of sympathy following his mother's assassination. Otherwise, no single party has had a majority in the last two decades. P V Narasimha Rao headed a minority government. And the other set-ups were like a patched quilt, which came apart within a few months.

In the face of this, the voters have not given a clear mandate to anyone. Nonetheless, I see some weight in the argument by the BJP and its allies that they have been given wider and firmer support in the country since they joined hands before going to the polls. In other words, they saw them as one combination. On the other hand, Congress and the United Front fought each other to the hilt. In fact, the United Front's constituents behaved even worse. Their present unity or the claim of standing on one platform in the name of secularism is comical, if not tragic.

But neither the BJP and its allies nor Congress and the United Front have spared any method or tactics to defeat each other. None of the two sides can occupy the high ground of morality. Both have done their worst. Therefore, even if one side forms the government, the second will not be far behind in catching up the other. The Telugu Desam, with 12 members, can tilt the balance. Even if decides to neutral, the next government cannot be stable. Both combinations will continue to exert pressure on the 'weaker link' so as to increase its strength. It is going to be an unseemly scenario. And, as predicted, there will be another

general election in the next two

Samata Party leader George Fermandes, a seasoned polițician as he is, sounds naive when he says that the United Front should allow the BJP and its allies to form the government. The issue is not the formation of the government but the number it can muster. No administration can function, much less effectively, if it is dependent on the 'help' or the good sense' of those who enjoy a majority. Numbers matter ultimately'. Were the BJP and its allies fail to get a vote of confidence on the floor of the house, the weight of their argument, however moral, would not help. The other side, even though divided, would have proved its majority by the numbers.

Now suppose the game of numbers is abandoned, then what is the criterion? In the case of the BJP, it will be more difficult to justify. It represents a philosophy which is hotly opposed in the country. Just as the BJP will never agree to give up its Hindutva, the United Front will not compromise on secularism. Many may accept the thesis that the BJP be given a chance since it has never been tried at the Centre before and since it is more coherent than the combination of Congress and the United Front. But democracy is such a system of governance where only the majority rules the polity. It has no place for sentiments or sympathy. It is sad but true that the BJP has never been so close and still so far from power as it is

How Onions Got Too Pungent and Salt Tasted Too Bitter?

by Md Asadullah Khan

The economic strains in any country exacerbate strains in the rank and file of the population and pose a threat to the flowering of democracy and good governance.

RICE of onion and salt had suddenly shot up beyond anybody's imagination. While the salt price-hike, believably a manipulation either with political motives or for profit mongering, lasted for one day, onion price hike continues to torment people. In the city markets, a week ago the varieties of onions presumed to be good sold at Taka 40 to 45, the highest ever seen in anybody's life-time experience in this country. And the trend is still continuing. Just two years ago about this time, onions were rotting in godowns and farmers almost sold their products at just throw-away prices.

The price escalation, however, was not altogether a surprise. Last year because of heavy rain in Aswin-Kartik (coinciding October), when onions are cultivated, even slightly low lying areas got submerged and muddy. This unseasonal rains dissuaded farmers from growing onions on a large scale. Onion production is extraordinarily sensitive to climatic and weather conditions at the time of sowing as well as harvesting. Expectedly, farmers exercise other crop options if they even see a slight adverse weather condition at the time of making the onion nurseries. Despite the unfavourable weather condition, the little acreage that farmers did again suffered heavily due to drought-like condition followed by cold wave in December. Most of the onion saplings bled dry. Low acreage and drought reduced production to just one third the previous year's output. Commerce min-

against a demand of 4 lakh 15 thousand tons of onion in the country, actual production rose only to 1 lakh 42 thousand tones. Not altogether an unfamiliar situation, the country has been experiencing a shortfall in onion production over the last few years and this shortfall has always been augmented by allowing import of onions through private agencies from neighbouring coun-This year Faridpur and some

places of Pabna and Kushtia and Ishurdi that supply the bulk of the country's needs are almost dry. To make matters worse, the fall in the production of onions in India has compounded the present problem. It is knowledgeably learnt that in India this year an estimated area for rabi cultivation of onions that came down to 1,91,000 hectares from 2,10,000 hectares in the previous year has reduced production to 3.4 million tonnes from the previous year's 4.1 million tonnes causing a price hike upto Rs 20-Rs 25 (Indian currency)/kg from Rs 9-Rs12 in the preceding years. Government machinery in India is also contemplating to import onions to arrest further price escalation.

Onions being a perishable commodity, storage or other means of maintaining a buffer stock can help very little to play any critical role to augment the supply position in the market. Ordinarily the fires of price escalation are doused through government intervention

while, to intervene, you need a buffer stock. Only the light red rabi variety that is transplanted in January and harvested in May lasts in stores for nearly six months. So maintaining a buffer stock for onion is almost impossible. Both the government and public have to contend with the fact in the event of a shortfall of production of an agricultural commodity that is linked to people's bare necessities. Panic or rumour mongering takes priority over the law of demand and supply. With the fall in production and shrinkage of area. there is chance of speculation dominating the scene that brings about a high price rippling from the production field and continuously driving up the price through all the hands it passes. That's not an unfamiliar situation which a careful government must guard.

Pathetically true, the agencies concerned in the country were not fully alive to the situation that had its root much earlier and when the situation went somewhat out of control bringing public criticism, the respective ministry rose to the occasion allaying public fear and resentment by making a disclosure that government would import onions and the import tariff that remained at 37 per cent in the previous years would be reduced to 30 per cent to help the market being stabilized. The price hike of principal food items like rice, salt and pulses causes a shock wave in

the stability of any government in any country and rival factions make no delay to downplay the image and working standard of the ruling party through grabbing such sensitive issues that directly affect the living of ordinary people. Reports have it that in the weeks before the 1980 electoral victory of the Congress in India under Mrs Gandhi, the price of vegetables had spurted by a rupee, helping the party to reap huge electoral gains against its rival, the Janata Party, Governments in all countries have to heed these lessons.

It is certainly true that world economy and market trends today are extremely complex. But notwithstanding all such unpredictable and capricious market forces there at play, there is undernably a large amount of analysis and statistical information available on many intricate issues. To ignore such information or to remain oblivious of people's sufferings and resentments and to live by slogans and rhetoric is to court disaster. Ideology, politics and power must not dull our common sense and must not rob us of pragmatism.

While the government effort to arrest an artificial salt crisis attempted by some manipulators has been most welcome, some such measures on other fronts are also needed. Reports have it that in Cox's Bazar salt mill owners are having a stock of about one lakh ton salt that can meet the demand of the whole country for at least another three months. Rather the paradox is that salt mill owners do not find enough buyers for salt. Reports further indicate that in Bashkhali and Cox's Bazar, the country's main salt producing areas, daily production of salt comes to about 7 to 10 thousand maunds. Other than this the country has

the reports further indicate. And the sudden price hike of salt to about Taka 30 t-Taka 40 per kg from its ruling price of Taka eight per kg was ill-motivated, and overtly done by a group of greedy businessmen. Reports have it that on March 2 last, general public in the Mirpur area had seized three truckloads of salt when these were being pulled away from the market in a bid to create panic and crisis situation. Government measure to mobilise patrol police and also plain clothes police personnel in the

enough salt in stock to meet any

crisis or shortfall at anytime,

Tongi area where salt panic created a tense situation brought huge stocks of salt in the front of the market premises from hiding and the price stabilized.

The economic strains in any country exacerbate strains in the rank and file of the population and pose a threat to the flowering of democracy and good governance. Rival factions and contenders for power are always busy in taking advantage of such situations and sabotage government policies and reform measures, if any, on any pretext. Precisely true, the economic crisis in the country is the legacy of decades of stagnation caused by authoritarian rule right from 1975. But prices of essentials now are certainly outrageous: a kilo of beef costs Tk. 80.00, a kilo of mutton Tk. 150.00 and one medium size unskinned chicken weighing just 500 gm, Tk. 100.00, besides high prices of pulses and vegetables as well as rice.

The production mechanism *seems to have been affected also by Trequent power disruption that shows no sign of improvement in the immediate future. Even though the government introduces new pay scales every year for its employees, including those in the "essential" sectors, it means little pay-off when the supply position of goods and services remain erratic and prices keep on jumping continuously.

Effigy burning, is it an offense or not?

istry sources reveal that as

Sir, In the March 4, 1998 issue of The Daily Star there was a news item on the front page, Effigy making materials recovered from DU hall'. It was stated that Detective Police on March 3, recovered a saree, a blouse and some other materials along with a portrait of PM Sheikh Hasina from a hall of Dhaka University and claimed that those were accumulated there to make an effigy of Sheikh Hasina and burn it in public.

From the activities of the police and the importance given to it by the press we can assume that making effigy and burning it is a punishable offense.

But I don't understand how the same action, instead of being offensive become a source of merry-making in other circumstances? In the last page of March 1, '98 issue of The Daily Star there was a large photograph showing members of Muktijoddha Sishu-Kishore Command burning an effigy of Begum Khaleda Zia. Where were the policemen then, why did they not take any steps to stop

Nur Jahan East Nasirabad, Chittagong

Gathering the youths

Sir. Many thanks to The Daily Star for organising this seminar. It is comforting to find out the young entrepreneurs are not on their own any more. They have the support and promised cooperation of the most popular daily in the country. We are happy to know the red tapes are also being worked upon. However, I believe the seminar failed to focus on its most vaunted promise the actual investment opportunities in Bangladesh for young people. You see, we, young people have the bright ideas, energy and enthusiasm to do new things. What we lack most is the capital, the connections and experience. We also need publicity — to tell the world outside:

"Hey, here we are, this what we

are doing. Come and buy our

Had the speakers dwelled on such subjects it would indeed have been a very fruitful discussion. Today we hear so much about investments in oil, gas and power and the golden opportunities being offered by the government. Other than awaiting the uninterrupted distribution of gas and electricity to our homes and offices there is little else young people can do in these sectors because of the high volume of capital investment.

We have heard of backward linkage industries in garments and footwear. I would like to know about the existence of backward linkage industries or service industries related to oil. gas and power exploration projects which are not capital-intensive and yet harness the ingenuity of creative young minds. Come on we can't allow those foreign multinationals take away all the profit from drilling our resources! We too want a fair share.

Tanim Laila Business student IBA. Dhaka

"Gherao"

Sir, I read a lot of the articles in The Daily Star say "Gherao" to mean surround any place. Has "Gherao" been adopted in the English language?

Arif Joarder Wichita State University Wichita, Kansas, USA

"A Land of Rapists?"

Sir. The editorial A Land of Rapists? on the 14th February, 1998 was very comprehensive in assessing the attitude problems of young people towards social norms in Bangladesh and other parts of the world. Since the dawn of human civilisation and culture all kinds of sexual perversions including rape have been playing a role in changing the minds of man and woman on earth. With the

change of time and place, ethics are being changed.

Because of the revolution in print and photo media and the Internet, perversion of the highest order is found even in the smallest unit of family life - father, mother, daughter, son all are enjoying the essence of life by reading pornography books and by watching films privately.

Such a state of the condition is the result of the scientific inventions in our times which are changing rapidly the very concept of professional ethics in every aspect of human living on earth.

Abul Ashro! Noor House#9, Roaa#+ Sector#5, Uttara, Dhaka.

US vs Iraq?

Sir, If any UN resolution has been broken, then how come only Clinton and Tony Blair are doing all the talking? What is the Security Council doing about the alleged violations? What has the Secretary-General of the UN has to say about it all? Certainly Clinton and Tony Blair are not representing themselves on behalf! Nor has the Security Council given them the go-ahead in terms of using arms to enforce the inspection resolutions. Russia and China have already warned they will veto any use of force. Then on what basis are US and UK, now backed by Canada and Australia talking so threateningly. We do not see such resolute action with the other problems that plague the world! What is the interest of the US - the motives considered above....

How come these countries believe they can get away with their threats? What has happened to their much-vaunted democratic principles? There is no discernible reason for their behaving like dictators. Or have they in practice being doing just that in the name of democracy...?

Sultan Wares Dhaka.

OPINION

Politics Gone Mad!

Congratulations for your timely commentary under the above caption.

Indeed, politics here now is smothered by hail and high water of irrationality and expediency. If this is not politics of madness what is? If a nation that was born out of sweat, tears and blood of innumerable souls, a country that is supposed to manifest the great ideals that our predecessors lived and died for, this is indeed tragic.

Of course this is not the first time that The Daily Star has come out in to the open with another timely and thoughtprovoking rejoinder on the fool-hardiness of our politicians. The DS has, on most occasions, been judicious, proper and objective. All this so that sanity prevails in all spheres of our national life.

This time on, I am afraid. your objectivity has been tinged with a tilt towards a little more accommodation towards one party to strike a cautious balance. This, despite the fact that in the existing political pandemonium perhaps not all

parties are equally villainous. Before venturing into my arguments please permit me to vouch that I have always been a pluralist. I believe that my support or sympathy for a political party, if there is one, is my inherent democratic right just as it is the inherent right of another person to support a party that I don't agree with. As the saying goes, "I may not agree with what you say but I shall fight to the last to uphold your right to say so".

But, when you venture to sum up; in the column under reference; I dare say you would calling a spade a spade.

Would I be wrong if I said that for the political impasse the opposition BNP and its allies' intransigencies and stubbornness is more responsible than anything else? There is an argument in circulation that Awami League today is the victim of negative politics that they took recourse to when they were in the opposition. And the epitome of negativism is manifest in the boycott of the Parliament. They say, Awami League boycotted the Parliament while in opposition and they are being paid back with

Aly Zaker

the same coin while in power. "....le hastening to advance this argument its advocates seem to become oblivious of the issues behind the two acts of boycott. The opposition then had taken recourse to boycott as a last resort on the demand of elections to be held under a caretaker government. The judiciousness of this demand is now a foregone conclusion.

By comparison the demands of the opposition now, would seem almost infantile if closely scrutinised. Since your column appeared, there has been considerable development in the political arena of the country. The government has signed an agreement with the opposition on their demands and the opposition has kindly consented to go back to the Parliament.

I hope it would not be out of

place to register my dissension at agreeing to accommodate one of BNP's demands, namely venue for public meetings. think under no circumstances anybody should be allowed to hold the citizens of this country hostage to their irrational demands. Nobody but the die-hard cohorts of the opposition want any public meetings on the city streets. Perhaps BNP should have endeavoured to gauge public opinion on this issue before being stubborn about their demand. If they did, I don't think they would have included this issue in their list of demands.

Now let me focus on the issue of desecration of Shaheed Minar on the 21st February. This was despicable to say the least. I have met at least half a dozen non-partisan observers of the do the nation a great service by unfortunate incidents that forenoon. The consensus of the observers was that the racket was started by the young volunteers surrounding the leader of the opposition. It started with gentle jostling and pushing of people back and forth; and soon took the form of a frenzy. And all this happened right after the arrival of the opposition leader

at the citadel of sanctity. A spokesperson of the BNP wrote in the DS that the leader herself was perplexed by what followed soon after her arrival. She hastened to leave the Shaheed Minar. There was a clear suggestion that some one other

than BNP had indulged in the orgy that morning. What a logic! The fact is that it is very seldom that the leader of the opposition has to confront what her party goons do down

there on the streets. Verily she would be taken aback, embarrassed and worried. If I ever had the privilege I would venture to ask her if she was oblivious of the consequences when, from a public platform where she was herself present, her chosen lawmakers had ordered their party followers to beat up anybody walking in a "Mujib coat" on the city streets of Dhaka. Consequently, a gentleman was manhandled near the Press Club. It later transpired that the person was a BNP supporter. He was sporting a "Mujib Coat" merely because he liked to wear such a coat. Only recently, when two BNP lawmakers defied that party dictate and decided to join the Parliament, a very important lawmaker of the party declared them persona non-grata in the city of Dhaka. Considering the clout of the honourable lawmaker with his party cadres, one should not be surprised if the dissidents are physically assaulted as and when opportunity emerges.

The Shaheed Dibash predicament was, perhaps, the opposition leader's first encounter with what follows when leaders choose to opt for irresponsible hyperbole.

To add to what happened at the Shaheed Minar. I would like to bring to your attention the disgraceful attack on one of our leading cultural personalities Mr Ramendu Majumdar. If a person as benign and decent as Mr Majumdar could have been singled out for such roughing up. I shudder to think what fate awaits me after this opinion of mine saw the light of the day in print. My only solace is that, that would only prove my point. I feel that we should not let gross misdeeds pass without dissent if we believe in the freedom of thought and welfare of our beloved nation. It would auger well for the country if both the main parties of the country refrain from perpetrating a politics of confrontation; perhaps a wee bit more, the BNP, looking at their performances in the past.