



## ***Vote for Terry Park! The Common Sense Man***

**John Adcock**

This is the chicken or egg conundrum. Which should the 40-year-old disillusioned schoolteacher, Terry Park, try to reform first: the whole of British society or its antiquated education system? With his new girlfriend, Susan Mansfield – a radical, strong-willed university lecturer – he tries to do both by forming his own political party and standing for Parliament. But Terry soon has more problems on his plate than he'd bargained for!

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### **Pub Talk**

*Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, prior to a general election, colleagues from a school in need of a new head teacher are drinking in a nearby pub. They are Terry Park, a 40-year-old head of humanities who is to apply for the headship, Dafydd Hughes, a 28-year-old left-wing music teacher, and Sheila Tipping, a middle-aged and outspoken languages teacher. To discuss the school's many problems Eddie 'Bloody' Collins, a militant union's coarse local representative, has joined them. The talk soon moves from the school's struggling head teacher to Britain's struggling government for they know Terry has started to write a novel about an ultra-modern, down-to-earth, nation-saving Common Sense Party.*

'Sounds as if you're making up policy as you go along,' objected Dafydd. 'And I thought it was to be the Ordinary People's Party?'

'It was, but I think Common Sense Party's better. It brings home the need for common sense.'

'It does,' said Sheila.

'I was going to omit 'party' to show my idea owes nothing to the old system. It was to be: "The Common Sense *Group*" but that was limiting, and, despite the thesaurus, I found nothing better than "party"'

Their table was now the only fairly quiet one. They looked round wondering what to say next. Had Terry hit on something big? Would his idea have popular appeal – were his proposals worth following up?

They pondered until Dafydd, with a smile, leaned forward and touched Terry's sleeve. 'Terry, old boy,' he murmured seductively, 'try

your idea by standing as an independent candidate at the general election and then sit back and see what happens.'

Terry was astounded, but Sheila leapt to her feet.

'Yes, of course!' she urged excitedly. 'That's it! Of course it is! Why didn't I think of that? Go on, Terry, lots of people would support you! They would! They really would! Lots and lots and lots!' And she clutched his sleeve as she spoke. 'Lots and ...'

'Vote for Terry Park!' shouted Dafydd. 'I can see it on the hoardings all over the town: *Vote for Terry Park! The Common Sense Man!*' Wonderful! Marvellous! Just what the country needs!'

They gazed, eagerly awaiting a response, but Terry was aghast.

'Go on man, have a go: put yourself forward.'

‘We’ll back you,’ urged Sheila, ‘we’ll call you *The Common Sense Man with a Common Sense Party... Vote for Terry Park!*’

‘And all the big parties have got problems locally,’ Dafydd pressed relentlessly. ‘Real problems with prospective candidates toadying to ministers, French floosies and messy divorces, American armament shares, rent-free holidays in hunt-masters’ lodges and stupid statements that have upset thousands.’

Now Sheila’s face was close to Terry’s. ‘You’d be in with a chance! You’d be a better M.P. than the one we’ve got now.’

‘A candidate? A real live candidate? You’re all mad! This is *fiction*, for God’s sake,’ rapped Terry. ‘I’m writing *fiction*! I’m writing a novel! There’s no such party as the Common Sense Party – haven’t you grasped that yet?’ He saw another pint placed before him and downed half in one long gulp. ‘Thanks,’ he said and went on: ‘there is *no party*! Don’t you know the difference between fact and fiction? The Common Sense Party is in my head!’ He tapped his brow. ‘Here. Right here. Here in my head!’

‘That’s where all parties start, in someone’s head,’ murmured Sheila.

‘Too bloody true!’ agreed Collins, now favourably impressed by Sheila Tipping. ‘Bring the idea out of your head into the open. Do what they say and stand as a CPS candidate. You don’t need a whole party – just a few signatures, a cheap printer, a loud voice, a thick skin, a sickening smile, and five hundred quid!’

‘Thank you, Mr Collins,’ said Sheila. ‘We know the conditions and that anyone can stand even in our “bloody” awful democracy.’

‘That’s what I was getting at,’ said Dafydd moodily.

‘It’s not on,’ Terry said in an undertone.

‘Why?’

‘It takes money. And not just for a dead-cert lost deposit. It would be pointless. I’d get nowhere and look a fool. It’s make-believe! I’m

writing a story, a novel, and haven’t even got *that* started properly.’

‘Damn the bloody novel! Get out there and *do* something! Don’t talk about politics, *do* something about politics - be an activist!’

‘But think for a minute,’ said Dafydd, recovering, ‘this is a marginal constituency, only two hundred votes in it – the sort where you’d make a mark, and here on your doorstep – no expensive, time-consuming travelling, no monkey suits, no hotel flunkies in the gear with hands out for a tip! People round here know you and you know them. Lots don’t like the present MP – especially the women. Apart from her gaffes they think she’s a well-off bitch trying to be Modern Labour.’

‘Not *trying* to be Modern Labour, she *is* Modern Labour,’ scoffed Collins, ‘and that, my friend, is the whole bloody trouble...’

‘Think about it,’ insisted Sheila excitedly, ‘Mr Terrence Park, MP!’

‘No big deal these days,’ said Collins scornfully.

‘But think of the money, Boyo!’ enthused Hughes. ‘Self-awarded pay rises after every election, boosted pensions while they clobber other people’s pittances, expenses that make your mouth water, two or three homes, directorships, consultancies, articles, TV interviews – all cash-making add-ons. Go on, man: you’d mint it! Stick *your* nose in the trough! “All aboard the gravy train,” he chortled, “calling at The Bank, The Stock Exchange, The Ritz, Oxford Street, Heathrow and first-class to The Bahamas!” Who knows, you could even slip the odd fifty smackers to your poor pals in the pub before you piss off!’

‘Forget all that!’ said Collins. ‘You’d have to put an end to their outside jobs. The bastards should be content with their full-time salaries for part-time work; d’you know, the House is in session for only 128 days a year! Just like the Oxford colleges so many of them come from.’

Hell, you'd think 60,000 constituents would provide enough work ...'

'Don't be so negative,' snapped Sheila. 'We're trying to get Terry to stand – not put him off.'

'Exactly,' said Dafydd, beginning to side with her.

Terry gazed at the drink-splashed tabletop.

'Terry,' Sheila continued slowly, 'we don't say you'd get in – but you would give the others something to think about. I bet you'd get five hundred votes – maybe many more – and that could tip the balance in this marginal constituency and you'd have got your party off to a headline-grabbing start!'

'But I haven't got a party! Can't you grasp that? How many more times have I got to say it? There is no Common Sense Party!'

'Then make one,' ordered Dafydd. 'Someone's got to start something new and different and soon. Why not you?'

We hope you enjoyed this extract from  
*Vote for Terry Park!*

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