

ANDY BRIERLEY'S BLOG



Hello Shipmates,

Should you be a raging optimist, there may be a glimmer of hope for the Royal Navy's resurrection.

The Ministry of Defence has asked Sir Peter Parker, chairman of the huge Anglo- American mining operation, for an outline of a National Shipbuilding Strategy to achieve that aforementioned aim.

Firstly he stated that 'major reforms' are needed in the M.O.D.. I bet that hit a nerve! He further stated (in brief), failings in structure, strategy, management, financing and accounting and accountability are 'all obvious', even to a casual observer.

Ruthless restructuring of the whole M.O.D. is a must, he says; 'their failings, NOT lack of funds is the root cause of the R.N's problems'. The 'Single Builder Dependency' is madness of the first order, B.A.E. is a scandal Sir John stated - he advocates tenders going out to several well-known U.K. shipbuilders who are free of the childish union culture and demarcation practices with managements that asphyxiated that industry 50 years ago. Productivity in any 'Baltic yard' being up to 60% higher - that boggles the mind! The U.K. has a core of bright kids who would give their all for a shipbuilding apprenticeship in those resurrected yards, a percentage would have the 'entrepreneurial streak' to set up their own engineering shops in due time, the knock-on is exciting to contemplate.

Steady on though, and get back to reality of the Civil Service culture, mind-set, plus that other set of youth who aspire to their ranks, thinking 'Offa's Dyke' is the muscular chick with a hint of a moustache that drives the school bus, and their girlfriends in the 'social sciences' class who win an 'A' by getting a 'bun in the oven' to qualify for an immediate council flat.

OOOPS, I flew off at a tangent then!

That the M.O.D. who hold the 'purse strings' and 'wield the power', need to ask a consultant to put their own house in order, has them rolling in the aisles holding their sides in 'Guatemala'. A few months ago I mentioned 'mega vessels' being built on the continent - 43, if memory serves. Royal Caribbean built four of the monster '*Quantum of the Seas*' class from concept to putting to sea in 'five years'. Prime Minister Blair announcing our 'Super Carriers' in 1990, waited ten years for the beaurocrats at M.O.D. & B.A.E. to sign the contract in 2008, they are forecast to be operational in 2026, with 6 aircraft of strike ability - and, hold your breath! the U.K. has just signed an agreement with the U.S. and Japan for those carriers to be available for 'Freedom of Navigation Patrols' in the South China Sea - who thinks these things up?

Can we afford the diesel to get them that far? Our current M/P's waffle answer to a Common's question about removal of 'Harpoon missiles' from '*Dukes* and '*Darings*' - without a replacement -

indicates how little 'cosseted politicians' know about their military. 'Harpoon' is their main armament - it's like sailing a battle ship without its turrets.

Remember your childhood story of 'The King's New Clothes'? - that's us, strutting on what M. P.s refer to as 'the world stage', NAKED, thinking no one can see our 'bits'.

I suspect we are to become a 'centre of excellence' at picking up refugees mid channel, with hot soup provided by lottery funds, and an envelope of new fivers - cheques and Euros not accepted!



Mention of China, U.S. information tells us the Chinese have two carriers under construction. One assumes info. comes from satellites, so must be in an advanced state of build to be recognised. Their current carrier *Liaoning* was bought semi-complete from Ukraine Yard, when the soviet Union' collapsed, - called *Varig* at the time.

Just like her sister the Russian *Kuznetsov*, that last week returned up the channel from the Eastern Med., she has a ski jump bow of splendid blended design, quite unlike our 'Corps of Constructors' effort which, to me, looks like a boded-up add-on. I don't know if the 'Corps' still has their H.Q. in Bath, if so they should be shunted to the Cliffs of Dover to see what passing vessels look like these days. I feel if they were asked to design a can of beans, it would be triangular.



The Chinese carrier group currently doing extensive, intensive drills in the South China Sea seems to be pulling out all the stops to perfect that art, leaving Russian efforts in their wake. Do not be surprised when "Ha So" pulls their dragon out of the hat.

So, that's the naval scene, as I see it,

What's your view?

Hope it give some relief from the media frenzy over Coronation of a cook for creation of a common consommé, whilst copulating with her cooking co-star.

It's nearly Burn's night, so I shall 'och away the noo'. to have a wee dram

Tatty bye Shipmates

