

Back to school

Cian O' Neill speculates on the potential impact of Miliband of the Remove in the new term at Westminster

► **U**p tools – school is back in and the *dramatis personae* once again swarm very un-Greekly about Westminster. While recent graduate David Miliband went on a gap-week in Georgia, El Gordo is just back from a relaxing retreat in his cement bunker under the seaswell of disfavour that engulfed him this time last year. Your 'mate' Dave OnCamera has also set aside the summery polo shirt for another Parliamentary session in which he will assiduously criticise known failures in the slander velodrome that is UK politics. As for Beijing, well, common decency took a few pills to bring it off but we got there in the end. Now for the fun bit – a slackening of house arrest in China and the winter of the Broom's discontent, in which the smiling Mr Miliband [David, not Ed] shall have more than a cameo.

With his now-infamous 29 July Guardian newspaper jeremiad on the state of the Labour Party, Miliband attacked the reputation of the PM through not with *dispraise* but rather *nil* praise. So was torn another chunk from the PM's haunches, as helped the Tory leader in his continued efforts to bleed Brown dry. Not being a member of the Shadow Eton Cabinet, Miliband hadn't taken ruck with Mr OnCamera before this and it's worth noting that he doesn't have anything else in common with him but cut-throat ambition and youthful presentability. In fact, Miliband is a different creature and for all that he lacks loyalty to his boss he lacks little to his party.

Son of the Marxist Ralph Miliband [a prominent socio-political greybeard borne of the Polish Jewish diaspora], Master David went to a comprehensive school and despite quite charmingly bad 'A' Level results got into Corpus Christi, Oxford under some let's-encourage-the-non-nabob clause. After taking a first in PPE he went on to be a Kennedy Scholar at M.I.T. and when he came back to England he worked in very goodly-doing organisations such as the NCVO until he got to the Institute for Public Policy Research in 1989 and wrote lots of very strongly old-left tracts about social justice and redistribution before going on to become Blair's Head of Policy in 1994; thence into politics.

So he can chew the cud of policy, this boy, and last year it looked like a dream pairing,

having himself and Gordon in government as they were both 'wonks' yet one of them [guess] might actually be able to actually communicate his / their ideas to human beings. As was seen throughout year one of the Broom's reign, El Gordo is an inept communicator and being in the Foreign Office, Miliband has had insufficient home-presence to help Labour with its troubles. The threat from Miliband's talent and youth being clear, perhaps this minimal-national impact role was given in order to 'dampen the squib' and if it was one cannot perhaps fault the logic, as tainted by hubris as it may be. Was the PM that carried away with honeymoon popularity that he thought that he didn't actually need another star in the near-firmament but he? Either way, had Miliband made such plain overtures for power a year ago he would have been dismissed and now things are so bad that the PM *cannot* dismiss him. It bears noting that though Miliband has revealed himself to be a recusant he is not a Blairite and is, rather, as ideologically 'Old Labour' as the Broom. Ergo the deeper impact of Miliband's pitch for power is that it suggests that the fatal problem is not the policy but the personality. In other words: Broom must go.

It didn't achieve immediate results, but this abortive / slowbleed coup has added spice to the prospect of the new Session in the House, Miliband is no stalking horse; no mouse that roars. He is a fairly substantial talent and despite a recent Guardian poll about the prospect of a Miliband leadership [which suggested that nobody in the Labour Cabinet could beat Cameron] he might be a fresh hope for his damaged party, despite his weakening it further by seeding intestine war. So, matins are done and the school bell has rung – expect the fur to fly and the Tories to sneer with delight this autumn. If you are a political junkie, well, as John McCain is fond of saying [if not to his crack team of prostate experts]: 'My friends, I believe that our best days are ahead of us'. ■

Cian O'Neill is our regular London correspondent

