

PLATFORM

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# I will not vote Socialist

In an 1887 letter to Archbishop Creighton, Lord Acton wrote one of the most cited and least understood phrases in history: "Power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely." Despite the fact that Acton was referring to the Catholic church and that it was describing the absolutist kings, the idea that an excess of power goes hand-in-hand with abuse remains current.

In Catalonia, the majority of people live in cities and provinces governed by Socialists. The President of the Generalitat is Socialist and, despite the fact that it is a tripartite government, the majority of its members are Socialists. President Zapatero is a Socialist, all the members of his cabinet are Socialists and the majority of the Parliament is Socialist. This great concentration of power means that some 95% of the public monies that affect Catalan citizens are in the hands of one party: the Socialists.

## Different standards

If the Socialist Party were a business, its market share would be so large as to require regulators to divide or transfer a part of its enormous power. The state op-

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Barcelona Mayor Jordi Hereu and Generalitat President José Montilla kick off municipal campaign

erates from the correct supposition that a business with a market monopoly tends to abuse its privileged situation. Curiously, the anti-monopoly laws that protect consumers from corporate abuses are not applied to political parties to protect voters and allow the existence of monopolies of power such as the one we are experiencing in Catalonia.

The philosophers of the French Revolution, in particular Montesquieu, tried to solve the problem through a system that separated legislative, executive and judicial powers. The problem is that in Cata-

lonia the legislative (Parliament) elects the executive (Govern) with the result that both end up dominated by the same party. The same thing happens in Spain. As far as judicial power, it's true that a majority are independent, but the fact that the decisions by judges in the highest courts tend to coincide exactly with the parties that nominated them raises doubts about their real autonomy.

And what about the fourth power? Is the press not independent?

In principle, yes. But you don't have to look far to notice that the political parties

do everything possible to avoid it, especially when they are in government and direct the public media, controlling the subsidies that disappear if the media publish reports that irritate the mandarins.

When the different branches of power, which theoretically should balance and check each other, end up in the same hands our liberties are threatened by those who at times act with impunity.

## Generalitat press flap

Witness what happened to the Generalitat's press director, Antoni Bolaño, a Socialist, when he seriously threatened the journalist Jordi Barbeta. What happened you ask? Nothing. And that's the problem.

Which brings us to another important, though less known, phrase of Lord Acton's: "The real danger to a democracy is the tyranny of the majority that wins election by way of deception." During the current election, one has the sensation that many mayors are deceiving us. Or at least if you look at list of new projects begun these days. The candidates wouldn't be using public money for propaganda purposes, would they?

What's the answer? Let's think: Hmm. If mayors indulge in these sorts of schemes, it is because they know they work and people will end up voting. What do we do then in order to abandon these inelegant practices? Make it so they stop working, that's what: if you believe that your mayor has kicked off a new project for partisan ends in the last four months, or if the outgoing mayor dismissed half the legislature and nominated a replacement, punish them both and vote for the opponents.

## LOST FOR WORDS

# Hate thy neighbour

Whatever you do, don't tell me the score. At the time of writing, AC Milan and Liverpool football clubs are limbering up for their Champions League showdown. By the time this is published, there will be a new European champion; I just pray that it isn't Liverpool. I've taken a lot of stick for this attitude over the last few weeks: But you're from Liverpool? Don't you want an English team to win? AC Milan are Italians! Funny how people feel justified in condemning my hostility towards Liverpool FC as irrational and then in the same breath are content to look down on an entire European nation for equally irrational reasons.

Questioning the instinctive animosity of football fans for 'the other club' has been a recent theme in the press. The

media noted that the majority of Barça supporters were behind Espanyol last week in their quest for Uefa glory. At the same

time, the majority of Espanyol fans rejected that support and would be unlikely to return the favour if the roles were reversed. The conclusion to draw from this is not that culés are a nobler breed, or that pericos are mean-spirited creatures consumed by a crushing sense of inferiority – though they very well might be. The conclusion to draw is that this hostility is a sign that there is plenty of life in the old dog yet, despite the increasing commercial pressures threatening to stifle football under an avalanche of money. Sport thrives on



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competition. Remove that element and it no longer has a point.

All clubs that share a city benefit from the rivalry between

them because it maintains interest and provides motivation. Nor should we be swayed by the argument that this type of rivalry fuels football violence. It is quite possible to hate another club without the thought of throwing a punch ever entering your head. Football hooligans are usually a minority of immature hooligans looking for an escape valve for their rage that is brought about by such things as social exclusion, poverty and a lack of education. One half of my family is as passionate about Liverpool as I am about Everton but I am unlikely to lamp

my auntie Marge next time I see her, or at least not for that reason.

I'm not talking about a belittling, petty prejudice born out of spite and envy (well, only a bit) but rather a far more distinguished hatred distilled by generations of support and representing an intimate struggle for superiority. Passionately identifying with a club, and therefore hating the neighbours, is about maintaining links with the past and sharing in a sense of community as inclusive as that of a world religion.

So, Espanyol fans are quite right to reject the patronising 'support' of culés, and I feel completely justified in hoping that Liverpool got stuffed on Wednesday night. If the roles were reversed (who's that laughing at the back?) I would expect no less from fans of the Reds.