



**£1MILLION**  
summer giveaway  
SEE PAGE 42 FOR DETAILS



## Memo to Meghan: Brits prefer true royalty to fashion royalty

by SARAH VINE SEE PAGES 12-13

# 'NICK' POLICE SEARCHES BROKE LAW



Lies: Carl Beech's claims led to witch-hunt

**POLICE broke the law in the bungled probe into VIP child abuse fantasist Nick, a former High Court judge says today.**

Sir Richard Henriques said offic-

By **Stephen Wright**  
Associate News Editor

ers used false evidence to obtain search warrants to raid the homes of retired Armed Forces chief Lord

■ **Bombshell as judge behind inquiry reveals 'perversion of justice'**

■ **He tells Mail: Officers got search warrants using false evidence...**

■ **...but says his damning findings were ignored by police watchdog**

Bramall, the widow of ex-Home Secretary Lord Brittan and ex-Tory MP Harvey Proctor and should now face a criminal investigation.

In an astonishing intervention, he tells the Daily Mail that Scotland



Intervention: Sir Richard Henriques

Yard detectives did not have the right to search the properties because their description of Nick - real name Carl Beech - as a 'consistent' witness was false, effectively fooling a judge into granting the warrants.

He also alleges the 'course of justice

Turn to Page 4

# EXCLUSIVE

# 'JUSTICE WAS PERVERTED - WITH SHOCKING CONSEQUENCES'

Continued from Page One

was perverted with shocking consequences' and says he finds it astonishing that no officer has been brought to book over the fiasco. He says a 'criminal investigation should surely follow'.

Last week it was confirmed that not one officer would face misconduct proceedings over the case, following a watchdog investigation branded a 'whitewash' by critics.

In 2016 Sir Richard wrote a scathing report for Scotland Yard about its £2.5million investigation into Beech's allegations. His report, which identified 43 blunders, was heavily redacted and has never been fully made public.

But his 1,200-word statement in today's Mail will pile pressure on ex-Metropolitan Police chief Sir Bernard, now Lord Hogan-Howe, and the officer who led Operation Midland, ex-deputy assistant commissioner Steve Rodhouse, who has been promoted to one of the top jobs in British policing.

In other bombshell claims, Sir Richard:

■ Says the Metropolitan Police has 'sought to protect itself from effective outside scrutiny' over Operation Midland;

■ Alleges that during his hard-hitting 2016 investigation, the Met did not give him 'all relevant documentation'; and

■ Attacks police watchdogs for clearing two senior officers of misconduct without interviewing them.

Sir Richard's broadside at the Met and police watchdogs comes days after vicar's son Beech, 51, was jailed for 18 years for telling a string of lies about alleged VIP child sex abuse and serial murder.

At his ten-week trial, jurors heard the fantasist told officers that he was used as a human dartboard by the former heads of MI5 and MI6, that his dog was kidnapped by a spy chief, and that the paedophile ring shot dead his horse.

The court also heard Beech is now a convicted paedophile after child porn offences came to light when an independent police force, at Sir Richard's behest, started investigating him on suspicion of making false claims about a murderous Establishment paedophile ring.

In the wake of his convictions last week, Scotland Yard chiefs faced intense criticism over its staggering incompetence and 16-month investigation launched on the word of a pathological liar.

But shortly after he was found guilty last Monday, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) announced three officers accused of misconduct over search warrant applications had been cleared.

The IOPC said the officers, led by senior investigating officer detective chief inspector Diane Tudway, acted 'with due diligence and in good faith at the time'.

But Sir Richard tells the Mail the finding is 'in conflict' with his review of Operation Midland in 2016 and he maintains 'the opinion that the three search warrants authorising the searches of the homes of Lord Bramall, Lady Brittan and Harvey Proctor were obtained unlawfully' from a district judge. This is



Lies: Carl Beech, pictured during a police interview

## Warrants: How they work

**IF police want to search a suspect's home, they have to apply to the local magistrates' court for a search warrant.**

**The court will only grant it if satisfied there are reasonable grounds to suspect an offence has been committed - and that material of substantial value to an investigation is likely to be recovered. Once a warrant has**

**been granted, police have three months to carry out the search - or one month if issued under the Misuse of Drugs Act.**

**When a police officer attends a search, they must provide a copy of the search warrant. If the homeowner is present, they must ask permission to search the property - unless the search would be hindered by doing so.**

because, he says, Beech's allegations had changed since he first contacted police in 2012 and were not 'consistent'.

He continued: 'I remain unable to conclude that every officer acted with due diligence and in good faith. When the applications were made officers leading the investigation were fully aware of six matters in particular which undermined Beech's credibility.'

In another damning revelation, Sir Richard said that during his

### 'Met sought to protect itself'

review for the Met, he was not - as promised at the outset - given 'all relevant documentation'.

He said Mrs Tudway - who was promoted to superintendent while under investigation for alleged misconduct and retired just before Beech's trial - was aware of several matters which undermined Beech's credibility and 'knew full well that they had not been brought to the attention of the district judge'. He added: 'Knowingly misleading a

district judge is far more serious than mere misconduct. The IOPC should in my judgment have investigated whether a criminal act had been committed.'

He also lambasted the watchdog for offering no explanation as to why two senior Operation Midland officers - Rodhouse and ex-detective superintendent Kenny McDonald, who called Beech 'credible and true' at the start of the inquiry in 2014 - were exonerated without being interviewed by watchdogs.

'Through the device of deploying an officer with an incomplete knowledge of the investigation to sign the applications and to make the applications, the Metropolitan Police has sought to protect itself from effective outside scrutiny,' he concluded.

Last week Met Deputy Commissioner Sir Stephen House said he believed all five officers probed by police watchdogs over Operation Midland 'worked in good faith'.

'They cooperated fully with both the Henriques' Review and the Independent Office for Police Conduct investigations, he added.

Comment - Page 18



Sir Richard Henriques: Officers knew of inconsistent evidence

**O**N MONDAY, July 22, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) published its findings into how the Metropolitan Police handled the investigation into allegations made by Carl Beech, namely that the Operation Midland officers involved in applying for search warrants acted 'with due diligence and in good faith at the time'.

That finding is in conflict with my own finding set out in my review handed to Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, as he was then, on October 31, 2016.

That section of my review has not as yet been disclosed to the public or to those named and falsely accused by Beech, previously known by the pseudonym 'Nick'.

I concluded in my review - and maintain the opinion - that the three search warrants authorising the searches of the homes of Lord Bramall, Lady Brittan and Harvey Proctor were obtained unlawfully.

All three applications stated that Beech had remained consistent with his allegations.

Beech had not been consistent. His allegations made to the Wiltshire Police in 2012 were fundamentally inconsistent with those he made to the Metropolitan Police in 2014 and with blogs published by Beech in 2014.

Beech told Wiltshire Police that he was first raped by an unnamed lieutenant colonel. He told the Metropolitan Police that he was first raped by his stepfather.

The identities of subsequent named alleged rapists were inconsistent. The alleged locations present were inconsistent, persons allegedly accompanying acts of violence were inconsistent and Wiltshire Police were never informed of three alleged child murders.

These numerous inconsistencies were within the knowledge of those officers leading the investigation. A document highlighting Beech's 'inconsistencies' was in existence prior to the application for search warrants. The Wiltshire interviews had been handed to the Metropolitan Police in May 2013.

The description of Beech as having been consistent was false and misleading and persuaded the district judge to grant the applications, as did the fact 'that this has been considered at deputy assistant commissioner level'.

I remain unable to conclude that every officer acted with due diligence and in good faith. When the applications were made officers leading the investigation were fully aware of six matters in particular which undermined Beech's credibility.

They are set out in my review at some length and should have been brought to the attention of the district judge in the event of any application being made.

In particular there was compelling evidence that Beech had never been injured in the manner he had asserted, that he had never been absent from home as alleged, nor removed from school as alleged, there was no evidence that any one of the three children allegedly murdered had in fact been murdered, and no corroboration of any single allegation not withstanding a public request for information made on December 18, 2014.

**N**ONE of these matters were disclosed to the district judge as they should have been.

Every search warrant application contains the words 'this application discloses all the information that is material to what the court must decide including anything that might reasonably be considered capable of undermining any of the grounds of the application'.

In order to obtain a search warrant, an applicant must establish that he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that an indictable offence has been committed.

I concluded in 2016 - and I remain of the view - that the officers responsible for the three applications did not in fact fully believe that there were reasonable grounds to believe Beech's allegations.

If such reasonable grounds had existed, and had officers believed

in their existence, I have no doubt Harvey Proctor would have been arrested on suspicion of having committed three child murders.

When I was asked by Sir Bernard to conduct my review, I was assured that I would receive all relevant documentation. I was not in fact supplied with the three applications for search warrants.

Nor were the applications listed on a list of relevant documents supplied to me. It was necessary to approach Westminster Magistrates' Court direct in order to obtain the written applications.

It is significant a comparatively junior officer - a detective sergeant with limited knowledge of the investigation and with no knowledge of the content of the Wiltshire interviews (having chosen not to read a summary provided to him) - was detailed or required to sign the three applications and to apply in person to the district judge.

Indeed, the detective sergeant told the IOPC that he was un-

aware of the inconsistencies in Beech's accounts and had not read the Wiltshire interviews.

The senior investigating officer, however, attended before the district judge and had herself reviewed the written applications.

She had access to the Wiltshire interviews and to the document highlighting Beech's several inconsistencies.

She was present at the application when the more junior and less well informed officer gave evidence on oath in support of the applications. The senior investigating officer was aware of the several matters referred to earlier which undermined Beech's credibility and knew full well that they had not been brought to the attention of the district judge.

The consequence of obtaining and executing these three search warrants and then informing Beech thereof must not be underestimated. Beech immediately informed Exaro, the online news

agency, which resulted in the avalanche of dreadful publicity which has blighted the lives of Lord Bramall, Lady Brittan, Harvey Proctor, nine other named individuals and their families and friends.

If any police officer drafted, reviewed, promoted or signed an application for a search warrant stating that Beech had remained consistent whilst knowing he had not been consistent, such an officer would be guilty not only of misconduct, but also of intending to pervert the course of justice.

I was surprised to learn that the criticism made by me in my review had been assessed to amount to misconduct only by the IOPC. Knowingly misleading a district judge is far more serious than mere misconduct.

The IOPC should in my judgment have investigated whether a criminal act had been committed, and if so by whom.

I was also surprised by the length of time taken to complete the IOPC investigation.

I was informed by Sir Bernard that the matter would be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (as the IOPC was previously known) in November 2016 and the investigation was

# The court was given false and misleading evidence... a criminal inquiry must now follow

## Shattering verdict of top judge who ran VIP abuse case review

### by SIR RICHARD HENRIQUES

RETIRED HIGH COURT JUDGE

not completed until July 2019. Whilst the IOPC apologised for the time taken to conclude the matter, such delay undoubtedly resulted in 'officers being unable to specify which documents each had sight of and knowledge of at what time'.

Finally, there was no explanation from the IOPC as to why the two most senior officers were exonerated without interview, not least since the district judge relied on the fact the search warrant applications had been considered at deputy assistant commissioner level.

Through the device of deploying an officer with an incomplete knowledge of the investigation to sign the applications and to make the applications, the Metropolitan Police has sought to protect itself from effective outside scrutiny.

The fact remains, however, that Beech had not remained consistent and 'he is felt to be a credible witness who is telling the truth'.

Thus the course of justice was perverted with shocking consequences. A criminal investigation should surely follow.

■ Sir Richard did not request or receive a fee for this article.

**LIVES LEFT IN RUINS** PAGES 6-7

# LIVES TRASHED, HOMES INVADED

## Laid bare in their own haunting words, torment of innocent VIPs and families who faced shock of police raids

By Glen Keogh

THE devastating toll of the Operation Midland investigation was starkly laid bare by those who had their homes raided over false allegations of murder, child rape and torture.

The trial of fantasist Carl Beech heard how officers searched the home of Britain's most distinguished living war hero while his wife suffered with dementia.

One detective allegedly leaked news of the search of an ex-MP's home to his accuser, who handed the information to discredited news website Exaro. And the grieving widow of a former home secretary was 'traumatised' as their two properties were searched only six weeks after his death.

As retired judge Sir Richard Henriques calls for a criminal investigation into how the search warrants were obtained, the Mail outlines the impact of the raids in March 2015.

### PROCTOR: IT WAS KAFKAESQUE

ON March 4, 2015 officers from the Metropolitan Police's murder squad raided former Tory MP Harvey Proctor's home on the Duke of Rutland's private estate.

They spent 15 hours searching his grace-and-favour home in the grounds of Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire.

Mr Proctor told Newcastle Crown Court during Beech's trial that police would initially not give him details of what he was accused of other than saying it was to do with allegations of historic child abuse.

In fact, police were probing at least two murders said to have been committed by Mr Proctor.

The details they had been fed - described at one stage as 'credible and true' - included an allegation that Mr Proctor had attempted to castrate Beech with a pen knife and was only stopped from doing so when 1970s prime minister Sir Edward Heath intervened.

Mr Proctor was assured during the search his name would not find its way into the media. He had to be talked out of taking his own life in the late 1980s when he admitted gross indecency for having sex with underage men after being exposed by newspapers.

The following morning after the raid he awoke to coverage on TV news. He told Beech's trial: 'When

I awoke at 7am on the dot I looked up at the TV screen to see my face looking back at me and a story running at the head of the BBC news that my house had been searched in connection with historic child sexual abuse including child murders.

'It was a Kafkaesque situation - a horrendous, irrational nightmare.' A detective taking part in the raid on Mr Proctor's home is then said to have phoned Beech to update him. Beech passed details of the raid to reporters at Exaro, who ran the piece and caused Mr Proctor's name to become public knowledge.

As a result of the raid and the following publicity, Mr Proctor lost his job and the home that went with it. After receiving death threats, he moved with his partner to Spain 'away from the country I love' before quietly returning to Britain to live in a converted shed provided by a friend which had no running water.

He is now back living in a property owned by the Rutland estate. He added: 'I suffer severe depression and sometimes weep when reminded of what I have lost as a result of the police action.'

Mr Proctor is pursuing a civil claim against the Metropolitan Police and Beech. In an interview with the Mail in 2016, Mr Proctor said: 'When the police raided my home in March they arrived at 8am. I was given no prior warning. There were at least 15 of them. They searched my home for 15 hours.'

'They assured me my identity would not come out. But even before they left, the Press were telephoning my office.'

### BRAMALL: CHILD SLUR SO INSULTING

AS Field Marshal Lord Bramall sat down to have breakfast with his wife of 66 years, 20 police descended on their home in a village on the Hampshire-Surrey border.

The former head of the Armed Forces and war hero, 95 and wheelchair-bound, said the visit was so unexpected that he immediately invited the police inside when they knocked on the door.

In an interview with the Sunday Times, he described how he was told 'accusations had been made'.

When Lord Bramall replied 'Against who?' he was informed 'Against you.' His wife Avril was in the advanced stages of dementia



Searched as widow grieved: London home of ex-home secretary Lord Brittan and wife Diana, above



'Horrendous, irrational nightmare': Former MP Harvey Proctor

and did not understand what was taking place. She died before he could be exonerated.

Lord Bramall described how the officers arrived in overalls and spent ten hours searching 'absolutely everything' in the house.

His daughter Sara arrived and she was asked whether he had any grandchildren before one officer added: 'Are you afraid of leaving them alone with him?'

He told the newspaper: 'Can you think of anything more insulting?'

The officers left with an old visitors' book and copies of two speeches Lord Bramall had made.

In an interview with the Mail last week, his son Nicholas said: 'They went behind every picture in the house. They ripped the place apart.

There was a bus-load of police in white suits. My parents live right in the middle of the village. They weren't being subtle.

'Most of the officers went down the pub for lunch and it wasn't long before the local paper got onto Dad. The trouble with all allegations, particularly paedophilia, is it sticks, doesn't it? It's just such an overwhelmingly awful thing.'

Lord Bramall received £100,000 compensation from the police for their handling of the raid.

Nicholas said: 'They over-reacted and got it spectacularly wrong and Dad and other people had to pay the price.' His wife Pip added: 'He [Lord Bramall] said the police had raided his house and were there now. They were going through eve-

rything and he wasn't allowed to move. He said he'd been accused of something involving a minor 40 years ago but they wouldn't say what it was.

'Mum was very confused. It was so unpleasant for her. She was sort of shunted from one room to another. She knew something was wrong, but wasn't quite sure what it was. It affected her quite badly. She used to say, "What have I done, what have I done?"'

### LADY BRITTAN: MY SEARCH TRAUMA

HOMES in Yorkshire and London belonging to the former home secretary were raided by police six weeks after his death from cancer.



Humiliated: Lord Bramall outside the home raided by police

The key figure in Margaret Thatcher's cabinet was alone in hospital, terminally ill, when the allegations concocted by 'Nick' became global news. The politician died in January 2015 and his grieving widow Diana had to contend with huge media interest in the allegations made by Beech.

A short time later, police raided Lord Brittan's homes in Pimlico, central London and Leyburn, North Yorkshire.

In a victim impact statement read at the sentencing of Beech last week, Lady Brittan said their London home was searched for 12 hours and the Yorkshire residence, which was being let, for two days.

She said: 'The experience of having my house in London searched

by a dozen police officers for 12 hours was traumatising.' Describing the Yorkshire raid, she added: 'The whole house was turned upside down, and questions were asked about "newly-turned earth".'

'Van-loads of personal effects were removed. The elderly couple resident in the house were shell-shocked by the nature and extent of the search. They were also subjected to very intrusive questioning about my husband and my family. I feared the two searches would be made public. And a few

days later they were. The impact of these allegations and their consequences on my wider family were significant. My younger daughter, who lives in Australia, advised me shortly after my husband's death not to go on the internet and in particular the website Exaro because she said, 'You will find it very upsetting.'

She added: 'My husband's name has now been cleared, but he will never know this.'

Lady Brittan was paid £100,000 compensation by police.

## HOW TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE UNFOLDED

2012 OCT 5 Operation Yewtree investigation into Jimmy Saville and other celebrities launched.

OCT 24 Tom Watson makes statement in Commons about VIP paedophile ring.

OCT 30 Beech contacts Met to say he was abused by late stepfather and Saville. Case referred to Wiltshire police.

2013 MAY 3 Wiltshire police close probe into original Beech claims because of no evidence.

SEP 21 Beech asks for a crime number to begin a Criminal Injuries Compensation claim.

2014 JUL 12 Exaro news website runs claims of sex abuse parties at Dolphin Square, Westminster.

OCT 6 Beech, now known as 'Nick', emails the Yard, about alleged VIP child sex abuse.

OCT 22 First taped police interview with Beech.

NOV 14 Operation Midland formally launched.

DEC 18 Det Supt Kenny McDonald describes Beech's claims as 'credible and true'.

2015 JAN 21 Lord Brittan dies.

MAR 4 Police search homes of Field Marshal Lord Bramall, Harvey Proctor and Lord Brittan.

APR 30 Lord Bramall first interviewed under caution.

JUN 18 Mr Proctor questioned under caution by police.

JUL 31 Lord Bramall re-interviewed days after wife dies.

AUG 24 Mr Proctor questioned again; the next day he publicly denounces Operation Midland.

SEPT 5 Daily Mail reveals Beech is a suspected serial liar and fantasist, but police too scared to close down inquiry.

2016 JAN 15 Lord Bramall cleared.

FEB Sir Richard Henriques ordered by Met Commissioner and Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe to start independent inquiry into Operation Midland fiasco.

MAR 21 Mr Proctor cleared. Operation Midland scrapped.

SEP 28 Lord Hogan-Howe tenders resignation.

OCT 31 Report into Operation Midland makes 43 criticisms but 85% is redacted.

VIP abuse police raid home of shamed Tory

From the Mail, March 6, 2015

NOW PUT VIP ABUSE 'FANTASIST' IN DOCK

From the Mail, Nov 9, 2016

NOV Northumbria Police begin investigation into Beech for perverting the course of justice and raid his home.

2017 MAR 8 Police watchdog clears two senior Met officers of wrongdoing.

SEP Lord Bramall and widow of Lord Brittan receive £100,000 compensation each.

2018 FEB 7 Beech revealed as having been charged with child porn and voyeurism offences.

JUL 2 Charged with perverting course of justice and fraud.

JUL 31 Falls to appear for trial at Worcester Crown court over paedophile allegations after fleeing to Sweden - extradited.

2019 JAN 21 Jury sworn in at Hereford Crown Court to hear Beech trial on child porn charges.

JAN 22 Beech changes plea to guilty.

MAY Beech's trial for perverting the course of justice and fraud begins in Newcastle.

JULY 22 Beech found guilty. Three former officers on Operation Midland cleared of alleged misconduct by watchdog.

JULY 26 Beech jailed for 18 years.

JULY 30 Sir Richard calls for criminal probe into how search warrants were obtained.

STEPHEN GLOVER PAGE NINE

# Daily Mail

## COMMENT

### Criminal probe must lay bare Met failings

DISHONEST police officers conspiring to lie deliberately to a court in order to obtain authorisation for raids on the homes of innocent citizens using the full, blunt force of the State?

One might be forgiven for thinking this chilling scenario could only occur in some failed banana republic or Third World dictatorship.

In fact, eminent retired High Court judge Sir Richard Henriques tells the Daily Mail today it may, shamefully, have happened in 21st Century Britain.

In an unprecedented intervention, he accuses Scotland Yard of unlawfully securing search warrants while investigating malign claims of a VIP paedophile ring which raped and murdered children in the 1970s and 1980s. Desperate to believe deranged allegations by a man known as 'Nick', he fears detectives may have acted illegally.

Disturbingly, he says police ignored glaring inconsistencies in the fantasist's assertions (including that three close friends were killed by the child-sex gang).

Then by submitting 'false and misleading' statements to court, he says, they persuaded a judge to grant warrants against three prominent figures.

This empowered the Metropolitan Police to ransack the homes of former Home Secretary Lord Brittan, war hero Field Marshal Lord Bramall and ex-Tory MP Harvey Proctor. Their lives were ruined, their reputations trashed.

Sir Richard doesn't mince his words: These officers 'perverted the course of justice with shocking consequences'.

He is similarly unequivocal about the next step: A rigorous criminal investigation.

Why are Sir Richard's words so explosive? First, he is an Establishment mainstay. He has put his neck on the line to lift the lid on wrong-doing at the heart of the police.

Next, he wrote the (heavily-censored) 2016 report which laid bare Operation Midland's appalling failings, and how police dragged the blameless through the mud.

Even a cursory investigation would have discovered the smears were the inventions of a twisted imagination.

Last, Sir Richard is livid officers have got off scot-free. Mere hours after 'Nick' - real name Carl Beech - was convicted of lying to police, a watchdog sneaked out that three officers had been cleared of misconduct.

Not a soul has been punished for the outrage. Met police chief Bernard Hogan-Howe, ultimately in charge of the massive botch-up, was rewarded with a place in the House of Lords.

Detective Superintendent Kenny McDonald, who declared on TV the grotesque claims were 'credible and true', retired on a gold-plated pension.

And what of the real victims? D-Day veteran Lord Bramall, 95, saw his wife die with the sickening allegations still hanging over his head. Lord Brittan went to his grave without his name being cleared. And Harvey Proctor lost his home and job.

Truly, this has been one of the blackest episodes in Scotland Yard's history. Serious questions need answering about how the shamed force got it so profoundly wrong.

Today, the Mail demands action. Sir Richard's report must be published immediately - unredacted. MPs should launch an urgent inquiry into why the Met was so pathetically gullible - and gung-ho.

And it is vital an independent police force investigates if the Yard perverted the course of justice during the costly witch-hunt.

It is instructive that the distinguished judge has spoken out in the Mail as a means to expose the horrendous injustice - highlighting the importance of a free Press in holding the powerful to account.

For it is crucial to maintaining public trust that we get to the bottom of this scandal.

If people of the monumental standing of Lord Bramall can be fitted up by a rogue police force acting as the arm of the State, surely it could happen to any one of us.

**O**N A whirlwind charm offensive to leading City power-brokers, Boris Johnson has been cajoling them with the glorious word 'Boosterism' to describe the principles behind his Government's economic policies.

How typical of Johnson to use a word that vividly encapsulates his vision for a 'turbo-charged' Britain and which also is redolent of P.G. Wodehouse's classic creation, Bertie Wooster. For Johnson has often been compared to Wooster, the raffish gadabout with a public school accent and who uses flamboyant language.

But make no mistake, a canny Johnson is trying to give rocket fuel to his own administration and quickly brand it in the public's mind as an on-the-road-to-success story.

For the moment, Boris's Boosterism refers to the list of spending commitments he has been showering on the electorate like confetti in the five days since he became prime minister.

He is desperate to boost the financial security of Britain in case of a No Deal EU exit by pumping billions into a host of projects and sectors.

The cost of all this is mind-boggling. Indeed, just one of numerous proposals under consideration, for example, is to spend £100 billion to help bridge the North/South divide.

#### Honed

As a student of history - ancient and modern - Johnson knows that all great governments have been identified with their own economic philosophy.

We have had Thatcherism - when Margaret Thatcher brilliantly honed the principles of 'Monetarism' to fit her own ideals. Thatcherism treated money supply as the main factor influencing the economy, and monetary policy as the key instrument of government decision-making.

Then there was the equally successful Reaganomics - named after U.S. President Ronald Reagan's obsession with cutting taxes and public spending, and reducing government control of business and industry.

Their opposite is Keynesian economics, based on the ideas of British thinker John Maynard Keynes, who believed that, in a recession, an economy can be made to grow and unemployment reduced by increasing government spending and reducing interest rates.

Thankfully, so far, we have been spared Corbynomics - the policy of bankrupting a country, Venezuela-style.

The big question is whether Boris's Boosterism will go down in history as one of these successful creeds that will be studied by future generations of economics students, or will be seen as a reflection of the PM's lack of attention to detail and amounts to little more than wishful thinking.

Inevitably, his critics see it as closer to Woosterism. Johnson, like Bertie Wooster, is long on cheer but short on pragmatism.

At the risk of sounding more Jeeves than Wooster, the fundamental problem facing the Government is that the current risks to Britain's prosperity are grave. Of course, Johnson would argue that spending and a mood of optimism are tools to help create confidence and success.

Slogans aside, it will be far harder for Johnson to extricate our economy from the damage of a No Deal Brexit

# Is Boris's economic plan more Bertie Wooster than rocket booster?

by Ruth Sunderland



than for Bertie Wooster to escape the clutches of a malign aunt or an engagement to Madeline Bassett.

In fact, Boosterism is not a new word. It was coined in 19th-century America. To encourage the building of railroads in dusty, lawless outposts in the Wild West, town representatives made all sorts of exaggerated claims about how they would boost the local economy beyond residents' rosiest dreams.

#### Mistake

Often the hyperbole crashed, leaving investors broke and livelihoods devastated.

It's worth remembering that Johnson's hero and role model, Winston Churchill, was a great wartime leader but utterly wrong-headed when it came to the economy.

His personal finances were rickety and, as Chancellor in the 1920s, he put Britain back on to the gold standard - a fateful decision that had deeply damaging repercussions for the UK economy and which he later acknowledged was his biggest mistake.

Of course, we are not facing economic perils as great as then, but the stakes with Brexit are terribly high. The Tory Party has a hard-won reputation for economic competence. The risk is that Johnson, with his relentlessly upbeat promises, might squander it.

Yes, Boosterism sounds far

cheerier than austerity. But over the past nine years, Chancellors Osborne and Hammond made great strides to get the nation's books in better order.

With Johnson's oft-repeated mantra of wanting a 'turbo-charged' government, his strategy marks a dramatic reversal of direction. Can it succeed?

If, and I accept it is a big 'if' considering the way he often changes his mind, Johnson is serious about fulfilling all his Boosterism promises, he will need to raise taxes or cut public spending, both of which will be difficult for a government with a gossamer-thin Commons majority.

The only other option is to borrow more. And if Johnson proceeds to upset the nation's balance sheet, the Tories would not be able to moralise about Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell being economic illiterates.

The fact is that the British economy has performed remarkably well since the financial crisis and the European Union referendum. If the Government achieves an orderly Brexit, this process could continue.

But warnings over No Deal are coming thick and fast. The independent Office for Budget Responsibility says it would plunge the country into recession and cause borrowing to mushroom by £30 billion a year. The National Institute

for Social and Economic Research says that, already, the risk of a No Deal departure may have pushed us into recession.

And if you think these are just the gloomy prognostications of discredited experts, then look at the real world.

Sterling has fallen sharply against the dollar and the euro - an indication that the foreign exchange markets are sceptical about Britain. The owners of Vauxhall have said they will pull out of the UK, with the loss of 1,000 jobs, if Brexit hits their profits.

#### Infectious

Having said all of that, it would be foolish entirely to discount Boris the Booster's big idea.

Negativity certainly *does* act as a dead hand, quelling dynamism in the economy.

Johnson is right in his instinct that positive thinking, optimism - call it what you will - can be a hugely powerful force. Confidence is attractive and infectious. Optimism fuels the entrepreneurial spirit.

Boosterism can certainly work, providing there are sound economic underpinnings. As any businessman or woman will tell you, though, optimism must be underpinned with capital, know-how and a sound business plan.

There is a fine line between Boosterism and Woosterish - or Johnsonian - delusion.

Or to quote Wodehouse himself, in *Jeeves In The Morning*: 'It was one of those cases where you approve the broad, general principle of an idea but can't help being in a bit of a twitter at the prospect of putting it into practical effect.'