

Jeremy Corbyn: The courage of his scruffiness?

Mr Corbyn is scruffy in a social worker kind of way, but whether this is natural to him or a matter of calculation I do not know. I suspect that it comes to him naturally, or at least is now second nature to him (no one, after all, is born to be scruffy, or can do nothing about it), and that in effect he has the courage of his scruffiness, it being part of his curious and in a way endearing integrity – endearing at least by comparison with the ersatz quality of most prominent politicians.

The other day, for example, I saw a photograph of him on the Guardian newspaper's website, with his shirt collar all awry, to a degree that I should hardly have thought possible for a shirt collar to be. The question again arose as to whether this was a pose – had he looked in the glass and deliberately disarranged his collar to fit his image – or do collars and Mr Corbyn simply never agree, like two cats trapped in a sack? Again, the question arose in my mind whether the newspaper was deliberately choosing photographs of him either to ridicule him or possibly to increase his appeal to the general public. After all, if you walk down an average British street (if there be such a thing), you will seldom meet someone better dressed than he but quite often someone worse dressed than he.

Does it matter? I confess that (quite apart from any policies Mr Corbyn might propound, other than his welcome opposition to the high-speed train, so patently an extravagantly expensive, destructive, unnecessary and corrupt project) the prospect of a man dressed as he is representing my country fills me with

anticipatory shame, I almost blush for it already.

Of course, if he turned up scruffy at international meetings it would make him representative of his country in one sense: namely that he was more like most of his compatriots than if he turned out elegantly or even smartly dressed. But in that same sense he would be more representative if he had a much lower IQ than he has, if he wanted to talk only of football and television rather than of international affairs, etc. Representatives of countries, surely, are not just meant to be statistical averages or medians of those countries' populations.

Our political choice seems to be between spivs and bores. I prefer spivs, but very marginally: moreover they often transmute.