

***God Save the Queen!***

***By Mel Lavine***

*Special to the Times*

These are anxious times about jobs, pensions, budget cuts, and moves on the Republican right to abort the New Deal and the Great Society, so why the fascination for the Royal Wedding over here?

A few weeks ago the Lady Friend was an innocent. She had to ask what all the talk of Kate and Williams was about? She first thought it might be a new TV show. As she soon learned, she was not wrong.

Come Friday, April 29, Prince William Arthur Philip Louis of Wales, second in line to the British throne, and his girlfriend, Catherine Elizabeth Middleton, will be married in Westminster Abbey with all the royal trappings. And the whole world will be watching, not to mention many Brits who have just been notified of the loss of their jobs, or lower welfare payments, or social services.

April in Britain is the start of the financial year, a particularly painful passage for the working class and the poor this time around. As Jonathan Freedland, a noted British journalist, pointed out in the *New York Review of Books*, this is the period when “many of the Conservative-led government’s most stringent deficit-cutting measures begin to bite.”

No tumbrels — carts like the ones used during the French Revolution — in sight, he said, but look again “at the buttons by those British leftists who are refusing to celebrate the upcoming marriage. Its slogan, tucked below an image of a small crown: ‘Stuff the wedding, fight the cuts!’”

Most Brits may accept Thomas Paine’s judgment that the notion of an hereditary ruler makes as much sense as an “hereditary mathematician, or an hereditary wise man.” Factor in the English public’s long disillusionment with Prince Charles, next in line to the throne, and dismay over the scandalous behavior of his and the Queen’s son, Prince Andrew. As Freedland puts it, Andrew “has been in the newspapers for all of the wrong reasons.” The churlish Charles was his churlish self on the day the engagement of his son was announced. When asked for his reaction by a TV reporter, he murmured before turning away, “Well, they’ve been practicing long enough.”

And yet, according to Freedland, “the royal family’s appeal remains resilient.” He finds that, in spite of everything, the present-day good will enjoyed by the royal family is in part due to the great success of “The King’s Speech,” a movie masterpiece about George VI, the Queen’s father, in the days leading to World War II. Another is that the wedding is happening a year before the country celebrates the diamond jubilee of Elizabeth’s sixty-year reign, a period exceeded only by Queen Victoria.

Perhaps another reason, which the Lady Friend propounded, is that people are raised on fairy tales which may help explain our own fascination with royalty.

Elizabeth, who was 85 on April 21, was around when Britain led by Churchill stood alone in the island’s “finest hour” against the Hitler Blitz. You can’t dismiss history like that. God Save the Queen!

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