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Holding Out for Heroes

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"I'm holding out for hero" warbled Bonnie Tyler back in 1984, and twenty years on, it would seem that many of us are still waiting. How else can one explain the fact that last Thursday there were never more than five people standing outside my central London polling station while on the other side of the Atlantic, over 30,000 were queuing for a final audience with a dead President.

The irony of the situation was not lost on those presiding over the local elections. Quips about *"the only good politician being a dead politician,"* raised a few wry smiles on a day which saw over half of the adult population of this country reject democracy in favour of a long lie in, or pint in the pub after work.

By way of contrast, official figures from Washington state that by the time of the funeral, over 200,000 Americans will have viewed the late Ronald Reagan over a mind boggling 34 hour period. That is nearly 100 people filing past every minute.

Of course it is easy to discredit any comparison. After all a state funeral is hardly equivalent to selecting who may, or may not sit on the London Assembly. Nevertheless, it is the motivations of the individual citizen in both instances which are worthy of note.

Comments in the books of condolence as well as interviews with those still waiting in line provided a fascinating insight into the mindset of what is, for the most part, small town America. When asked why they had made the journey the vast majority focused on Reagan's *"heroic"* stature in their eyes. Unfortunately the same could not be said for our choice of Mayoral candidates.

It therefore came as no surprise when post election analysis focused on the views of David Blunkett, only to hear him acknowledge public disengagement not only from the Labour Party but more importantly from politics in general.



For a Government so keen on “*big conversations*” and citizenship classes it must come as a double kick in the teeth when not only is turn out disappointingly low, but those that do bother to vote don’t actually even vote for you. Putting the debate about postal ballots to one side, it is about time we focused on the product not the process. Heroes do not come cheap. While footballers’ salaries may not be an option, an average annual allowance of £8,500 for your democratically elected representative just ain’t going to get you what you want. At the end of the day, the Home Secretary, like Ms Tyler may well be “*holding out*” for something that may never arrive.