

*The Return of the Public*

Dan Hind

London and New York: Verso, £14.99

*Death of the Liberal Class*

Chris Hedges

New York: Nation Books, £14.99

**Tom Easton**

*Lobster* contributor Dan Hind has produced a mind-stretching plea to no longer leave politics to the experts – the practitioners and the gatekeepers who control access to what is going on in our name and with our money and leave most of us persuaded or confused into passivity. As a former gatekeeper in commercial publishing himself, Hind knows of what he speaks.

He sees technological change as being a lever for fundamental reform of the media – that, in turn, then being part a process of radically changing politics into something for doing rather than watching. Literate, drawing on wide sources historically as well in philosophically, this is a bracing warm-up class for the overdue heavy lifting this country's politics badly needs.

Like *The Return of the Public*, the latest book from Chris Hedges is well footnoted and indexed. Hedges has covered

wars around the world, is a columnist for Truthdig.com and a widely published writer of power, passion and refinement. He marks the decline of 'the liberal class' in the United States – the press, the labour movement, universities, the Democratic party and liberal religious institutions – from the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. He says there are now no counterweights to the corporate state, with profound consequences for those seeking to live and survive in that new dispensation.

His *Death of the Liberal Class* is not a book for faint hearts. It has much of the challenging force of those German anti-Nazis – Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Fritz Reck-Malleczewen are two names who come readily to mind – who steadfastly marked out the ground in earlier battles for rights, decency and integrity in a disordered world.

*Tom Easton is a freelance writer.*