

A YEAR BOTH OF POLITICAL AND OF POWER FAILURE

For me politics is the inclusive discussion of and consensual arrival at public values. There are two problematic words in that sentence. They are 'inclusive' and 'consensual'. Who is included? How are they chosen? Surely the inclusion of some means the exclusion of others. And consent? At what point might we say that enough people have consented to a course of action? Thirty seven percent of the electorate voted to leave the EU. Enough? And on what basis did they give their consent? Might they have been misinformed? If they were does it matter? Or how much might it matter?

In other words, politics and the decisions of government that emerge from the political process can be very untidy. In order to make things tidy governments can be tempted to bypass the political process. The electorate might be given only information that government, or those seeking to become the government, wants them to have. Parliament, a place of argument, can have the volume of its voice turned down. We dare not use the word 'dictatorship' because that is what nasty foreigners do but there is no doubt that for some time our governments have regarded politics as a constraint upon the exercise of power.

It is my belief that in Boris Johnson we have a prime minister who is uncomfortable when required to engage in a political process. Politics involves losing arguments; it means having to spend time formulating arguments backed up by painstakingly gathered evidence; and it means that rhetoric is challenged. Little of this comes naturally to our prime minister. If rhetoric was all it took things would be fine for him but not when 'facts' are shown to be lies. The political process exposes lies.

I said that politics can be very untidy, implying that tidiness requires a degree of dictatorship. But, though by my definition we have an unpolitical government, have we got a tidy government? Covid 19 was the opportunity for our government to demonstrate how a degree of dictatorship can ensure that well-constructed and well-directed policy can deal with an emergency. It did, however, no such thing. Power, instead, was concentrated in the hands of the incapable. All of this was made worse by an insensible belief that private would always beat public. Taking a public route would exclude all those wonderful swashbuckling Tory supporting capitalists. Due process? A constraint! Out it goes!

Meanwhile, we were to be kept happy by lots of lovely promises. At times it seemed that we were back in August 1914 telling each other that 'It will all be over by Christmas'. As I write it is Christmas and, guess what, its getting worse.

But we do have an Official Opposition. What about them? I have criticisms of Corbyn based mostly on my belief that in the playground he reasoned with bullies rather than punching them. He did, however, make it possible, for the first time in ages, for us to discuss and argue about the concepts underpinning socialism. He is a values person. His successor has, I think, two characteristics. They influence all that he does. He is an Establishment figure. Expect no barricades, no tumbrels and no guillotine from him. Louis the XVI would have had nothing to fear from Sir Keir. His second characteristic I find puzzling. He declares himself a supporter of Jews but wants us, not only to think of followers of a religion as, consequently, members of a race, but also to define them by means of a language hardly any of them use. Ancient Hebrew is one of very many Semitic languages (like Arabic and Aramaic, the language used by Jesus) but what, unless you think the Nazis were correct, has that got to do with race? Ask questions about any of this and he throws you out. For me he inflicts racism upon people that have already suffered big-time from prejudice multiplied by ignorance. He is, I suggest, a dangerous fool totally misusing the power of his position. I am

sure that he is attracted to power but inside today's Labour Party politics is to be made to serve the boss. Do not disagree!

Twenty Twenty has taught us that we should, we must, grow up. All over the world there are young people writing essays, conducting research and even taking action that, all of it, is essential if the Vogons are not to destroy the Earth. Right now I see little chance that Twenty Twenty One will be better. We might be vaccinated against Covid 19 but we need a cure for the prejudices and the chosen ignorance of the powerful.

Cliff Jones, 31st. December 2020

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