

Marginal Gains

A PolSoc publication

marginalgains@solsch.org.uk

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Right to protest?



Should the right to protest be limited?

By Hana Ali

Under Article 11 of the European Convention of Human Rights, there is a right to freedom of assembly, meaning every individual, regardless of cause, has the right to protest, march or demonstrate in a public space. During the first weeks of September a group named 'Insulate Britain', an offshoot of the Extinction Rebellion, lobbied the government to insulate homes in the UK to help cut carbon emissions by sitting on the M25 with banners and signs and in some extreme cases supergluing themselves onto major slip roads. However during this protest, a woman began having a stroke and her son, Chris, drove her to the hospital because of a backlog of ambulances. Due to protests, they were delayed for 6 hours and she now has complete paralysis on the left side.

This raises the question, were the Insulate Britain protests too extreme? Many of the members argue that their cause of protecting the planet is an immediate fight which cannot afford to be ignored by



the government. They argue that the ends justify the means and did offer

sympathy to the family. However they have carried on multiple different protests on motorways, slip roads and at the Port of Dover. On the other hand, others see their actions as selfish and inconsiderate as they pointlessly block major roads and provide no tangible outcome. Many politicians have condemned the behaviour of the pressure group, making the likelihood of political change slim.

This protest is at the extreme end of the spectrum and their actions have sparked a discussion around whether or not the right to protest should be limited? If people can protest wherever and whenever they choose on any topic, will the disruption to people's lives be worse than the problem being protested?



Should private schools be taxed?

By Jennifer Storey

After the Labour Party conference in Brighton this weekend, the leader of the party Keir Starmer made a shocking announcement that he would tax private schools £1.7 billion a year. He stated that 'Labour wants every parent to be able to send their child to a great state school. But improving them to benefit everyone costs money That's why we can't justify continued charitable status for private schools'.

This is supposedly to fund a learning revolution for those children who attend a state school, but will this do more harm than good? This concept would take charitable status from private schools, the same status that allows the schools to take on students from a lower income background through a bursary scheme. His thought process behind this is to level out the playing field for all students, so that no student should have an advantage; but if the child has the opportunity to better the quality of their education why should they not be allowed to? The state school system is over-populated and underfunded, yet by removing this charitable status it will add extra numbers to an already failing system, something even the £1.7 billion tax cannot fix.



LABOUR LEADER'S PLEDGE

KEIR: I WILL TAX PRIVATE SCHOOLS TO HELP POORER KIDS

» £1.7bn a year towards Children's Recovery Plan : » Starmer hails a return of party for working people

EXCLUSIVE
BY GEMMA ALDRIDGE
LABOUR leader Sir Keir Starmer today makes an election pledge that will change the lives of millions of Britain's poorer children.
As the party conference gets under way, he reveals plans to scrap the 'charity status' of private schools and plough the £1.7bn tax they'll pay into state education.
FULL STORY PAGES 4-5



Since the pandemic hit us nearly 2 years ago, the divide between public and state education has widened. In previous years 60.4% of A-level grades in private schools were As and A*s, yet in state schools this number was only 32.7%. This is an appalling difference and makes apparent the disadvantage students at state schools face; overcrowding, lack of

resources and not enough permanent staff are only a few issues they have to contend with. This tax would help to level out this gap and give those students who may be from working class backgrounds the education every child deserves. However the money that he claims he wants to put into the education sector would also have to support the influx of students now unable to afford the luxury of attending their previous schools. Posing the question would the money suggested be significant enough to actually make the change they desire?

Tory cuts hit poorest families hardest



By Ciara Savage

The £20 increase in Universal Credit during the pandemic allowed some families living on the breadline (or below it) to survive. The scheme officially ends on the 6 October, and the government suggests that the end of the pandemic has signalled economic growth and therefore people should go back to work. However, when this potentially crucial cut is enacted, more than 500,000 people are predicted to fall into poverty (200,000 of those being children).

When confronted by MPs in the House of Commons, Boris Johnson was unable to explain how affected families would be able to

compensate the £20 loss, perhaps due to his ignorance of the importance of such an amount of money. The taper rate – the amount that people working whilst receiving Universal Credit have to pay back – is set to be reduced from 63p from every £1 to 60p. Whilst Rishi Sunak has claimed that this will cost the government £1bn, he claims that this would be more beneficial than keeping the £20 increase. The taper, for some, is only smoke and mirrors to hide the impact.

The Universal Credit cut has raised the issue of whether there should, instead of a minimum working wage, be a minimum *living* wage. It also

calls into question the priorities of the government, who after increasing the National Insurance tax that is said to disproportionately affect young people and those who are on lower salaries, have once again angered working-class people. These changes seem to contradict the party's so-called 'levelling up' agenda, and may cost it support in the 'red wall' seats at the next election.

The patriarchy still rules in Parliament

By Lauren Jones-Brown

In the past women have frequently been under-represented, and in the biggest way this extends to the representation of women's rights. In recent years this problem has seemed somehow less prominent or part of the status quo, but is this really the case? In 1918 the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act meant that women could stand and be elected as MPs. In the same year as this law the first woman ever to be voted into the House of Commons during the general election was Constance Markievicz, though as an Irish Nationalist she did not take her seat. Consequently in December 1919 Nancy Astor was the first woman ever to take a seat in the House of Commons. This was a huge step for feminists and since then 550 other women have been elected to the House of Commons.

However, in the modern twenty first century you would expect equal political representation from the UK government, but women in the House of Commons are at an all-time high with an underwhelming 34% representation. It should be shocking to all who read that percentage that it has taken so long to reach this disappointing all-time high. Many commentators sees this as a victory for feminists, but it is not nearly enough yet! If we continue at the same rate of increase of female representatives it will take another 30 years to reach gender equality in the House of Commons. Surely this is unacceptable and there should be a real push to elect more female politicians? Would men be happy with only 34% representation?



A scene from Parliament in 2015: count the women!

PATRIARCHY



PATRIARCHY IS A CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT BASED ON THE PRACTICES OF SUBORDINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN BY MEN THROUGH SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION WHICH AFFECT ALL INSTITUTIONS AND STRUCTURES IN OUR SOCIETY.

Dominic Raab - promotion or demotion?

By Rory Davies

In the cabinet reshuffle that took place on Wednesday 15 September, the biggest adjustment was the changing of roles of Dominic Raab, with commentators unsure whether Raab had effectively been promoted or demoted by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Prior to the reshuffle, Raab held the position of Foreign Secretary, but he came under significant backlash after his handling over the crisis in Afghanistan.

When the Taliban took control over Kabul, Raab was abroad on holiday and delegated a phone call regarding bringing Afghan interpreters who worked for the UK back to the country to a junior minister. In fact Raab never contacted the Afghan Foreign Minister and the newspapers suggested that his holiday interfered with the evacuation of Afghans, British citizens and interpreters.

This incompetence from Raab led to calls for him to resign or be sacked, and in the recent reshuffle that took place he lost his role of Foreign Secretary to Liz Truss, but took up the roles of Deputy Prime Minister (which has been left vacant since 2015), Secretary of State for Justice, and Lord Chancellor.

The question has arisen whether these changes of roles have been a positive for Raab? Overall, the consensus is that Johnson has given Raab a demotion rather than a promotion. His new role as Justice Secretary is far more junior than the role of Foreign Secretary and whilst Raab was named as Deputy Prime



Daily Mail

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Daily newspaper of the year 80p

Harry, Meghan and new storm over Queen's 'recollections may vary'

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As Kabul airport descends into hellish anarchy, damning admission over Foreign Secretary's missed call



EXCLUSIVE

By John Stevens
Deputy Political Editor

DOMINIC Raab failed to make a crucial phone call while he was on holiday to seek urgent help airlifting translators out of Afghanistan, the Mail can reveal.

Senior officials in the Foreign Secretary's department advised last Friday that he should make immediate contact with Afghan foreign minis-

BETRAYAL OF THE BRAVE

ter Hanif Atmar as the Taliban advanced on Kabul.

The officials said Mr Raab, who was on a luxury break with his family in Crete, needed to urgently request assistance in rescuing interpreters who had worked for the British military. They said it was important the call was made by him rather than a junior minister.

But Mr Raab did not make the call. Officials were told he was unavailable and that Lord Goldsmith, the Foreign Office minister on duty, should speak to Mr Atmar instead.

The Foreign Office said last night: 'The Foreign Secretary was engaged on a range of other calls and this one was delegated to another minister.' However, the

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RAAB WAS 'TOO BUSY' ON HOLIDAY TO HELP BRAVE TRANSLATORS

Minister, this title has been very rarely used and does not translate to any real political power.

This cabinet demotion has resulted in Raab being labelled as the 'biggest loser' of the September reshuffle,

despite other ministers completely losing their jobs, such as former Education Secretary Gavin Williamson who was sacked, which can conclude that he is now lower in rank after his change of roles.

Fix it or ditch it

By Tom Burnett

The prime minister spoke this week about the 'pointlessly interrupted' border checks in the Irish Sea, and the post Brexit problems with trade, using the phrase 'fix it or ditch it' as a way of handling the problem.

The UK and the EU agreed to put the protocol in place after Brexit to avoid the introduction of a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland: it states that Northern Ireland will remain part of the EU's customs territory.

Before this week's talks the prime minister said the protocol, which sees checks on goods between the Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, 'could in principle work'.

However, in his speech he refused to rule out invoking Article 16, which would enable the UK to take action due to negative consequence caused by the system.

Since Brexit the system has been bombarded with issues regarding trade and border security between Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK.

With this new trade check, the population of Northern Ireland feel



as if they are being locked out of the UK, and there have been many protests addressing this issue.

In speaking in an interview with the BBC on Friday, the prime minister said, 'the fundamental problem for us is that it is very difficult to operate in an environment where the EU system can decide where and how many checks can be carried out across the sea'.

Johnson also quoted in saying that, regarding the protocol, it will be a case of 'fixing it or ditching it'.

He told the press he signed up to the protocol because he has 'an optimistic view of human nature and thought that the EU would want to respect the Belfast Good Friday Agreement'.

The prime minister believed that it was crazy and pointless to interrupt items like cancer drugs which would not be able to move from one part of the UK to another.

In the past week there have been many different speeches from Boris Johnson about this situation on checks in the Irish Sea. On the one hand he says it's a bad idea and should leave it, and on the other he thinks it may work. He added the protocol was framed to operate 'free trade east to west just as much as north to south and that was very, very clear but unfortunately that is not the way it is being operated'. The Prime Minister needs to decide whether to 'fix it or ditch it'.



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Newsom vs Elder



By Olivia Whitworth

The petition to recall Governor Gavin Newsom began following his attendance at a birthday party with more than three households after his administration advised against socialising following a rapidly growing rate in COVID-19 cases within California. The closure of businesses and schools due to lockdowns also contributed to the petition's growth in support. In total, it gained 1.6 million valid signatures,

approximately 20% of votes cast in favour of Newsom in the 2018 California Governor election.

\$276 million later, the recall election concluded that 62.2% of the state disagreed with recalling Newsom. Those who voted in favour of the recall mainly voted for Republican Larry Elder, a talk radio host, notoriously known for his anti-mask views.

Only 20 states allow citizens to recall governors, however in a study conducted by Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies found that 75% of participants valued their right to recall governors. This suggests that political disengagement in the US at state-level elections may not be concerning as the electorate have also vocalized attempts to improve the recall process, suggesting democracy is alive and well in the US states.

Next issue of Marginal Gains: COP 26 climate change special!