

There is no Olympic dream for a million young unemploye...

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I did a number of tweets yesterday that weren't universally popular. I began with:

Later I said:

And in the evening I asked:

In retrospect I could have made clearer in the second that I was not in any way diminishing the athletes achievement: I am not in the slightest. In the context of the first I would have thought that obvious, but not everyone reads whole timelines. And I'm now assured that the Commonwealth Games velodrome in Manchester is well used, so perhaps I should have chosen another venue for the last, but this is to skirt round the real issue I was seeking to raise.

First, I, like so many, thought the achievement of the UK's athletes was brilliant yesterday. Take nothing from them - and I watched a fair bit of what they did. But, can you already name the rowers, or the long jumper? I can't. Already I'm down to Mo and Jess.

So, given that by mid next week even Mo will be hard for many to recall, let's be realistic: fantastic as yesterday was it was a giant adrenalin rush in which most of us participated pretty passively. Now maybe I am not that good at externally administered adrenalin rushes; I admit that. I tend to create enough such rushes of my own (because despite Twitter's belief that I must be a miserable git there are very good reasons to think otherwise). And what worries me about externally administered adrenalin rushes is that they are short term, pretty artificial, hard to replicate or are addictive, when they become harmful. However viewed they are ultimately therefore either pretty cheap or harmful thrills.

Except that in this case the last thing that the Olympic has been is a cheap thrill. This has been a very expensive thrill indeed. The cost has been, if I recall correctly, about

£9 billion to stage these games. Now, of course it can be argued that this has been a Keynesian economic stimulus, but I'd argue of the very worst sort. In their wildest dreams no one can argue that there is a long term yield from this investment to match the spend. Wise stimulus provides just that - hence my commitment to a Green New Deal. This spend is, instead, the equivalent of digging holes and filling most of them in again.

More than that, as Dame Mary Peters pointed out, even the cost of training the athletes has been born by the National Lottery fund, which is, as research has shown, one of the most regressive forms of funding available since those on lower incomes spend disproportionately on Lottery tickets. They are, after all, addictive adrenalin rushes for those denied almost any other form.

The result is that this has Olympics been publicly and regressively funded sport at cost to the UK that has made some people feel very good.

So who are those people who feel good? The athletes and those supporting them are, of course, in that number - but they have that right. After them? They are mostly those with ability to buy into the Olympic dream, and to do that requires resources and, more importantly, a capacity to buy hope.

And that is when my Olympic dream begins to fall apart. Go back to my first tweet because it set the tone for what followed. For far too many in the UK Britain is not a country of great joy today. It is a country of despair. Almost 3 million are unemployed, most wholly involuntarily, although many on the right of politics refuse to accept that. One quarter of those are young people. Add in the many more doing courses being pursued for the sake of it or who have already involuntarily left the work force and you get a picture of despair.

Many (but I accept, not all) of people in this situation can't access the Olympic dream. They can't because they could not afford to in a very literal way. But they can't, more importantly, because they've been told no one believes in them. No employer wants them. And the government is taking the positive, proactive, decision, to both make them and leave them unemployed. Worse it then chastises them for being jobless and uses its best efforts to increase their poverty, both relative and absolute. And staggeringly one quarter of all young people are in this situation - the very people who the Olympic dream should most impact.

Now just note the contrast. Olympic gold medals have not happened by chance. Billions have been poured into the Olympic dream. That was a political choice. It was, I know, a New Labour choice. It is one continued by Blair's heir - Cameron. It is a neoliberal choice to create a myth; a myth of a great nation powering over all and the myth of the elite who have the right to exercise that power. The politicians involved wanted the reflected glory of the myth that they wished to create.

In the process they haven't just spent vast sums on the Olympic venues, although they have with very little real idea as to what the legacy will be. But they also spent vast sums on the athletes, sums that have been taken away from communities and their unsung but vital projects that would benefit the many in this country to instead deliver investment in a few in the hope they might deliver gold to support the politician's myth.

Now, I don't decry the athletes and their efforts: they have been stupendous. And they have been generous in their thanks.

But they have not said - because no one is saying it - thanks to the taxpayer for this. Thanks to the state for not funding all those community halls, small charities, disabled groups, and so on who did not get funding because Lottery money was directed into the Olympics. And none at all are saying thanks for spending on this rather than investing in the millions or so young unemployed people in this country who politicians have chosen to abandon since 2010.

But they should be, because that is what this myth has cost.

Now myths and narratives are valuable. I don't deny it. But I'm entitled to question whether this myth is that valuable.

And I am entitled to ask why the government has chosen to abandon so many to pick on so few.

And I am entitled to ask why we won't invest in all who need to develop their skills with essential support if they too are to achieve their goals in this country. Not Olympic goals, but the reasonable goals of having a job, a home and the ability to support a family for whom there will also be hope.

Because what this Olympics shows is that state spending, which is what has delivered gold medal success (because the Lottery is a wholly state regulated activity and the decision to divert its money to Olympic funding was made by the state) works, and works very well.

But in that case I want it to be available for all. And it isn't. And that's where my Olympic dream ends. Because for most this Olympics is all about the difference between being a favoured one, and someone who is not. It's about being invested in, or being left by the wayside. And in 2012 the difference between the two camps and the decision the state makes on how to divide them and the resources they are allocated could not be starker.

A tiny number have been propelled to greatness in this Olympics by state funding by politicians seeking to capture their success for political gain. And the rest are being told, almost literally, to go to hell. And that makes me very angry.