

Politically destructive limbo

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I joined a trend this weekend. Demotivated by heat, I did not spend a great deal of time following the news. Apparently this is a growing trend, fuelled by Brexit. People cannot bring themselves to hear the latest politically created fiasco, and turn off instead. It's hard to blame them. When politicians behave as they are the idea that the news is about reality is hard to comprehend.

Detailed analysis of anything Jeremy Hunt or Boris Johnson say is pretty much pointless: it is apparent both say anything expedient with little consideration as to consequence. So Boris Johnson is apparently a convert to borrowing to pay for investment because he appreciates his earlier comments on tax do not stack up (something I pretty much predicted last week). The weight we should attach to such comments should, however, be apparent from his ability to gaffe, continually. Over the weekend he said England already had a national parliament. Apparently it is Westminster. As a result it does not need another one. His ability to alienate voters in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland continues, unabated.

Jeremy Hunt is no better. He is now taking his turn at alienating business, saying that those that will go bust because of No Deal Brexit will pay a price worth paying. Tell that to their employees, owners and those who have invested decades of effort to see it all go to waste for, well what exactly? No one can still say what it is worth paying for. It's certainly not economic gain. And nor is it democratic progress. And there will be nothing happening on migration we cannot already do. So what are these people to be sacrificed by Hunt for? Who knows?

And yet this is not unreal. The possibility of No Deal, long deferred, remains not just on the table, but highly likely. The air of collective denial about the possibility - possibly precisely because Hunt and Johnson are talking about it so people feel it has to be untrue, like everything else that they talk about - is palpable but inappropriate. No deal can and will happen unless action is taken to stop it and I see no sign of that as yet.

Instead we live in the most politically destructive limbo I have ever known. I was at a social gathering yesterday. A simple rule was agreed: it was suggested no one discuss

politics because there was no point in doing so, because nothing was known and no one knew how to solve anything. I think that a little extreme, and yet for most people it is a tenable suggestion. When blatant lies have become the daily offering of leading politicians there is little point in debate. And so it ceases.

And there is a point in mentioning this. That closing down of discussion may be exactly what all this is about. And if so, it's succeeding.