

Funding the Future

Article URL

Published: January 12, 2026, 5:31 pm

I wrote quite a lot of tweets yesterday. This one was, in my opinion, the most important:

<https://twitter.com/richardjmurphy/status/1303312724039028739?s=12>

I have little to add to the analysis I offered, but I do have some thoughts on the consequences.

If, as I suggest, the state exists to make and uphold national and international law (with the obvious implication being that it has a purpose for doing both) then a public statement that it is not going to do so has massive potential implications.

A minister can, of course, say that any such breach is small, and specifically purposeful in a current circumstance, but as we should all know, the law does not work that way. Anyone with the slightest familiarity with our laws can think of any number of laws that they might wish do not apply to them, or which they might wish could be ignored, but that is not how the law works. The law is not selective, even if the decision to use it to impose punishment can be. The rule of law requires that it be upheld, most especially by those with responsibility for creating and enforcing it.

Now ministers are acting in open defiance of that requirement. They might say that the matter is insignificant or inconsequential. Their senior civil servants clearly did not agree. They resigned. But the ramifications are bigger than that.

The best parallel I can think of is the MP's expense scandal. The sums involved in that scandal were small in real terms. It could even be said that they were inconsequential. But that was not how the issue was interpreted. People were rightly disgusted that lawmakers were willing to fiddle the rules. The backlash was real. The public opinion of politicians fell even further. And this had spillover consequences: many felt that if MPs need not comply with rules, why should they?

The same will happen now. Nationally people will think the rule of law optional. That the Conservative Party has created that situation is staggering.

Internationally we will simply not be trusted.

The Union will be ever more in peril, and rightfully so.

And the credibility of the government's policy will be left in tatters.

All of which matters.

Effective government is most needed at a time of crisis. We have that crisis. At the same time we have a government determined to undermine its own credibility . It would be impossible to make up a situation more serious than that. For a government to make itself illegitimate at this moment is staggering. But that is what this government has done. It is very hard to know what happens next, but no option looks good.