

## The government's incompetence was all the result...

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In June this year an epidemiologist told me that unless the government was very incompetent there should be no second wave of coronavirus. It is now very apparent that the second wave of coronavirus is happening. There are two options for me to choose between. One is that the epidemiologist was wrong. The other is that we really do have an incompetent government.

I am not an epidemiologist. What I do know is that the work of the person I spoke to is, in general, highly regarded. So, whilst I always thought he was a bit of an optimist, not least with regard to his hope that we might have a competent government, I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and presume that he was right.

That does, then, lead to the inevitable conclusion that we have an incompetent government. All the evidence suggests this to be the case.

Leaving aside observation of those involved in government decision-making processes, and ignoring the cronyism that is all too apparent in the awarding of contracts meant to assist the management of this crisis, whilst also dismissing the very obviously unqualified nature of some of those appointed to assist that process, there is ample evidence to support the suggestion of incompetence.

I am not arguing the lock down should have persisted beyond June. It is obvious that we cannot run an economy forever with large numbers of people locked out of work. That cannot be done. But there were substantial errors made.

Does it really need to be said that track and trace was essential if, given the fear in the population, coronavirus was to be managed? And yet, from March onwards the government has got almost everything about its approach to coronavirus testing wrong, and still is.

As a result the policy for reopening business was undermined.

As it was by the simple failure to demand masks earlier, and the inappropriate emphasis on hand washing instead.

So too was the government's policy for education completely misdirected. Without a policy for rapid testing nothing was going to work in this sector, where close proximity was always going to be inevitable. And yet, that investment in testing was simply not made. And even now, testing is not being funded, crippling the sector.

Simultaneously, the desire to reopen leisure activities and to permit holidays whilst the core activities of work, education and health care were treated as peripheral, at least with regard to testing, was profoundly mistaken.

And behind all this it is apparent that these mistakes really did not arise by chance: they were the consequence of policy decisions. We have a government that remains obsessed with what it calls 'sound government finance', But which everyone else calls 'balancing the books'. And as is now clear, this idea drove everything.

The decision to lock down too late in March was the result of a desire to protect the economy.

So called 'herd immunity' was thought to be cheaper than testing, and so what if some people died?

Reopening business was given priority over schools.

Measures to protect people from the virus were delayed to encourage that return to work.

And the message that you had to get back to work on commuter trains or buses, which are inherently high risk areas, was given more focus than the need to maintain social distancing - which has had far too little attention since May, and seems to have been very largely forgotten.

All of this - and the refusal to continue support for those impacted by the coronavirus - and to support essential public services to stay open by providing more funding and proper test facilities - has all been motivated by money, and a paranoia with debt.

And yet, there is money. QE has paid for all the measures that have happened. The roof has not fallen in. There is no chance that there will be a tax recovery to clear that QE debt. And nor will the books balance for years to come, of ever again, come to that. But still the priorities are nit-picking, small minded, incompetent, corrupt and never focussed on keeping essential activities - that is healthcare, public services and education, plus essential service supplies, including food - going.

I'm not for one moment denying that I have appreciated going out again. I have. But, I know all too well that all the track and trace data I give is meaningless because there is no test at the end of it. And so we have a second wave.

It's incompetent that this is happening.

It is absurd that the government got so much wrong when it was so apparent what their priority should have been this summer.

And their economics is literally going to kill some people, wholly unnecessarily.

Surely, this time they will not be forgiven?