

On blogging

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By and large I enjoy blogging. I rather strongly suspect I would not have done it for the last 14 years if I did not. Nor would I have written an average of 3.4 blogs a day, 365 days a year, over that period otherwise.

But let me also be honest; I clearly do not only write for fun. I have always written with the hope that at least some change might occur as a result. And, as I have noted over the years, some very definitely has. Blogging has been worthwhile, whether in creating tax haven reform, pushing country-by-country reporting, helping promote and then even keep the Green New Deal alive when no one else was much interested in it, by encouraging interest in MMT, and by discussing many other issues; there have been results. I would not have kept going otherwise.

That success has attracted attention. And like any writer, I do of course like people reading what I have to say. That said, not everyone has agreed with me. It would be exceptionally odd if they did. Since I have changed my own mind on some issues over the years it's even true to say that I do not agree with myself on occasion.

I actually welcome disagreement. One reason I have invested considerable effort in the comments section of the blog is that I always wanted to make this blog a safe space for discussion for those who wished to debate differing views on issues of real concern without being trolled by the usual, predictable, and often rather nasty, right wingers from the neoliberal echo-chamber. That has, by and large, worked, even if it has required that many who persist in trolling (often using multiple identities and emails, which I have to then identify) have been consigned to the banned list over the years.

The support of those who are now donating helps this process: with the blog seeing record readership exceeding 3.1 million views last year, I want to continue to commit time to it.

But might I also make a plea for a little understanding? First, please don't expect party loyalty from me. I don't do party politics. I do real world politics, and that does not split on party lines.

Second, for the same reason, please do not make this a party discussion board, because it isn't.

Third, please accept I can be wrong. If I am I will apologise: I did to one person yesterday. But I frequently have to read 20 or more comments in a few minutes to decide if they are acceptable for publication or not. And I at least scan them all, because mistakes can happen. In amongst most batches there will be a troll. Some trolls are immediately obvious. Some take time to show their true colours. Forgive me if I am sceptical of all new commentators, but long experience has taught me that I have to be. Most trolls start by appearing superficially reasonable. If I appear sceptical of a new commentator, it's because I am suspicious that the abuse will start soon. It takes a tough skin, or one that has been toughened by fourteen years of being abused, to blog.

Fourth, please accept that being tough is sometimes necessary. If you think the opponents of the society I would like are nice, just accept that I think that those who want to deny social, economic and personal justice to most in society do not fit the description of 'nice', and I will call them out for not being so. They are profoundly anti-social at best, and frequently are dangerous because of the causes they espouse.

Fifth, please don't also tell me what I can and cannot do. To take a recent example, I was told I should not comment on Covid vaccines. But the decisions made on double dosing these are, as Prof Devi Sridhar has explained, ethical and political and not scientific, where on the latter the informed opinion is pretty clear and is do what the manufacturers recommend. Ethics and politics are well within the remit of this blog. That we have a coronavirus crisis of the scale that we do is because of neoliberal driven choices. I can definitely discuss vaccines.

Sixth, presume that if you tell me I am off limits I will doubt your motives. You might think you're being helpful, but over many years I have been told that if only I would pipe down on a few issues and just be a little more reasonable, or clubbable even, I would get along so much better. By the measures of convention that might be true. I may have had a more comfortable time. I can also say for sure that the change I wanted would not have happened. And I am not here for the sake of comfort. The creation of disruption as the precursor of change is what I am seeking to do here. If you tell me I am off limits I will presume that you have a comfortable status quo that you want to maintain, because experience shows that to inevitably be the case, whether you are even aware of it, or not.

Finally, I am human. So I will make mistakes. I will try to correct them. But if you think a mistake is actually me exercising editorial judgement we may have to agree to differ.

Managing a blog is not easy. That's why blogs like this are, I suspect, so rare. I hope understanding where I am coming from helps.