

Sunak's NIC rise is not just a disaster for most people...

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Unless the government briefing machine has gone very wrong we are going to see the announcement of 1.25% increases in both employer's and employee's national insurance contributions across the whole of the UK today. The funds are to be used to pay for increased spending by Westminster on the NHS, with the plan being focussed entirely on need in England. As yet no indication has been given as to how the devolved governments will get their fair share of these funds. I presume something will be done.

However, what I suggest is that whatever that 'something that will be done' might be it will not be enough to overcome the failings in this aspect of the decision being made. It is simply unacceptable that a decision made by England to address a crisis in a service that is managed and funded differently in each of the countries of the UK be imposed on the devolved countries.

Either those countries have devolved health care and associated budget responsibility, or they do not. If they do, that requires that they have tax autonomy. If they actually don't now have that responsibility, as this decision implies, despite the legal representation that they do then the time for this type of devolved government has come to an end because it is no longer working.

Sunak's wish to undertake class warfare against those on low pay when there is literally no need at this moment to fund an increase in NHS spending, let alone do so in just about the worst possible way, only very slightly disguises the naked aggression towards Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland that is also an integral part of the modern Tory psyche.

Unfortunately for Sunak, his time has come at a moment when decades of deceit as to the intent of Tory politics has come to an end. Tory politics has not changed since the 80s. It has always been about English elite exceptionalism, contempt for most people and a desire to shift wealth ever upwards within society. However, from 1990 until the Cameron era there was an attempt to disguise that. But then the gloves came off, and now the bare-knuckles are apparent.

What is now happening is that the reality of Tory contempt is becoming apparent. It's not that they do not care. It's what they care about comes at considerable cost to most people in this country. And the consequences of that are clear. People will literally pay an unnecessary price in terms of additional tax just as they are being punished in so many other ways by the government and its failed policies. And in politics the compromises that have made the cooperation that underpins devolved government are being exposed, with the result that those systems will begin to fail.

For people in England one has to hope the ballot box will provide a chance to remove this government.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the choice is going to be even more significant. Why they should wish to be treated as the last English colonies for any longer is hard to understand. The reasons for independence are growing.

I am aware that the only reason that we are getting an increase in national insurance is that this tax increase was the one that worked with focus groups. Let's not pretend that at some levels there was any more analysis behind this decision than that. But the fact that having got this result the alarm bells did not go off in the supposedly politically astute minds of the ministers responsible is what is really telling. Their DNA is now so indifferent to the lot of those on normal earnings, and so contemptuous of devolved government and the nations that they represent, that nothing told those ministers they were about to make a major mistake that could be profoundly politically costly. Just as they no longer want Covid testing data because it might indicate a problem, so they seemingly disconnected their political alarm bells on this one to satisfy the expediency of the moment. Their indifference has been exposed.

I have no idea if what is planned today will be the tipping point that reveals Tory thinking as the facade for abuse that it really is, but it might be. And that is the only silver lining I can find in all this. Because what is happening is disastrous at every possible level.