

Johnson has created carnage within the credibility of t...

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I did, as usual, spend some time reading all my usual news sources this morning, after which none of them, and none of their interpretations of events, struck me as capturing the mood of this moment.

Irritatingly, and for the second day running, I have to turn to Ant and Dec to achieve that:

<https://twitter.com/imacelebrity/status/1468693995798863876?s=21>

For those not aware, the comment from them that I posted yesterday featured in Keir Starmer's comments in Prime Ministers Questions (PMQs) yesterday.

What this piece of actually quite good satirical comedy captures is the mood of the moment. There are three points to note.

The first is that the prime minister has lost all his credibility. That he can be lampooned in this way is evidence of that.

Second, this issue has broken out of the Westminster bubble. It has achieved what is called in political parlance, 'cut through'.

Third, Ant & Dec would not be doing this if they thought that there was any risk in doing so: they are too professional to throw their own reputations on the line for the sake of making a gag about the prime minister. What they know, and what everybody else knows, is that no one now believes the Prime Minister. Whatever his excuses, and however often he now presents them, his authority has been shattered.

The difficulty with Ant and Dec's gloating is, however, what it represents. They can only comment as they did because we are currently in a political void.

At the onset of another wave of this pandemic, which has the potential to be at least as bad as any previous cycle, the Prime Minister has no authority. I spent some time yesterday afternoon talking to people about this. None was politically engaged. All were

younger than me. They had all, without exception, seen the video of the mock Downing Street press conference. All were angry about it. Universally they thought that this would make the chance of imposing any further effective lockdown much harder. I am sure that they are right.

In that case, whilst I might be pleased that there is now near universal agreement on the fact that Boris Johnson's days are numbered, the manner in which this has come to pass is not without consequence.

Johnson has, with the active and willing connivance of the Conservative Party, undermined the role of Prime Minister, the significance of politics, the authority of government and the rule of law. Whether that was deliberate or not is a matter to debate on another day: for now this is a statement of fact.

The fact that politics has been belittled would be serious enough. Do remember that the whole fabric of our society does depend upon it being taken seriously. The consequences, however, are much more serious than that. People will die as a result of Johnson's indifference. The chance that the NHS will be overwhelmed in January is high. Yet more people will die as a result of that too, not least because so many NHS staff will give up in the face of the pressure that this creates, and quite reasonably so given the lack of support that they are being provided with. Worse, when law enforcement is considered to be optional by those who create laws then corruption is encouraged. That then spreads throughout society, with unknown consequences.

I can, and did, laugh at Ant and Dec's gags. Like many, I look forward to seeing Johnson's departure, whenever it comes, but the sooner the better. However, there is literally nothing about this whole sorry episode that is a cause for cheering. Johnson has created carnage within the credibility of the political system, quite knowingly, willingly, and with the support of his party. That is unforgivable.