

What we need in 2022 is a government that actually care...

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It would have been so good to end 2021 on a high note. Collectively it has been tough. It would have been good to go into 2022 in hope.

We won't be doing that. We will instead be starting that new year with new lockdown restrictions that will have been imposed too late to have any impact on the omicron case load that is going to hit hospitals in January. It's as if the lessons of last Christmas were not learned at all.

What could we do to prevent this happening again seems to be the only reasonable question? I provided one list very recently, so I will not repeat the items included there. Instead I will address the perhaps more important question that relates to the foundations for change. That seem at least as important.

What worries me most about the situation we are in is that the focus on the individual remains paramount. Don't get me wrong. I think each and every person is intensely valuable. I want everyone to be appreciated for who and what they are. I have no desire to curtail anyone's liberty. Doing so is always an issue of concern.

But at the same time no one lives outside society. In some way we are all communal. That means that we are all dependent, and need to acknowledge it, especially as most of us also have others in some way dependent on us, although the roles will vary.

If the focus on the individual is important, it's my suggestion that an awareness of these dependencies is as important. We are not isolated people. We are all members of mutually integrated societies. Much of the time how integrated we are is invisible to us. When things work we are all too often unaware of the importance of our support networks, but that does not diminish them. It just means that we do not appreciate them enough.

There is a price to pay for that support. Of course, some of that is literally priced within what we pay for goods and services, but much else is not. However, there is something more to all this than price, even when these relationships of dependency are reduced to

contractual form.

We are all capable of appreciating care. We also sense its absence. It is for precisely that second reason that I get so angry with our current government. I have little doubt it simply does not care. To me, that is unforgivable when care is a necessary part of life.

This obligation to care is most especially true of government. Saying that I am not making a demand of civil servants and other public employees, although I happen to think that most of them do care, enormously. The obligation to care is, I think inherent within politics itself. If that is not what it is about, then what is its purpose?

The answer is one we can all too readily see right now. What we are suffering is a politics of self-interest. When the job of government is to protect those to whom it has a duty to care - in exchange for which commitment people subject themselves to its authority and pay their taxes - what we have instead is a quite literally indifferent government.

All we can tell for sure is that this government exists to promote the interests of those close to it. That is evidenced through inappropriate advancement and financial reward for a few. To further that the government is denying us a great many freedoms. And that attitude is indicated by the government's very obvious indifference to our well-being.

When the job of government is to undertake the difficult task of balancing the rights of the individual against the needs of us collectively in society then this government has failed. It does not do so because it tried and failed. It does so because it never tried. It simply does not believe that most people matter. Nor does it believe itself bound by any obligation to society, as its continual Covid regulation breaches prove.

I have been critical of previous governments because they failed. I am not sure that any government failed to try in the way this one has done. That is unique in my experience. That is because they as a government do not accept the obligation to govern. This is what makes them different.

So what is the change that we need? It is that we do, above all else, need to recreate a body politic where public duty comes before all else. Mark Drakeford appears to embody that principle in Wales. Some in the SNP and elsewhere in Scottish politics do. I have no doubt that Caroline Lucas does. Indeed it seems common in the smaller progressive parties. There are those who completely get this in Labour, although tribalism too often gets in the way for many there, and is incompatible with the required way of thinking.

The political quest we need to see can be found amongst those politicians asking the question 'what can we do for the collective best here whilst respecting the individual?' and who then strive to answer that question.

Our government does not do that. That is what I found most depressing in 2021. I see little chance of change with the Tories in power in 2022. Any in that party who embraced this thinking have been expelled.

We can have a better politics than we have. But that requires us to have politicians who care, who ask the right questions, and who have the ability to make the hard decisions on the compromises to be made for the collective good which it is their job to uphold. We have a government devoid of such people now. Creating the possibility of such a government is the basis for hope in 2022.