

We have a duty to oppose this government because it is ...

Published: January 13, 2026, 3:23 pm

We live in a country where logic has departed from political debate.

On Monday evening the government had legislation make progress in the House of Commons when it is very clear that its Bill to reform the Northern Ireland Protocol is illegal under international law. Nothing about the current situation in Northern Ireland, or the government's own knowing part in creating it, can justify the unilateral response made by the government to a situation it merely dislikes, but which does not represent an imminent threat necessitating unilateral action in breach of prior agreements. Those claiming otherwise are, to be blunt, simply lying. But the Bill passed anyway.

Yesterday the Scottish government, with a majority in the Scottish parliament and in terms of Westminster seats representing Scotland, and as a result probably the most representative elected authority in the UK, announced its intention to bring legal action that might empower it to hold a consultative referendum on the future constitutional status of Scotland. The UK government is opposing it, suggesting the rule of law must come first. Democracy must not prevail, in its opinion.

But Johnson, out on tour, is touting his own credentials as a defender of democracy and as an upholder of international law that prevents rule by an oppressor, when his own government flouts democracy, breaches the law and seeks to impose English rule on Scotland, maybe against its will. It may be doing so in Northern Ireland as well.

As I noted on Twitter yesterday, the fact that Scotland cannot be sure it has a legal route out of a supposed union of nations is reason enough for it to want to leave. When the union has become an occupation it ceases to represent a United Kingdom. There is instead a colonial power anxious to maintain the colonial status of the few locations still under its control.

The Johnson world view is in tatters, because he has shredded it. And if further evidence is required, the sight of 20 police turning up to arrest persistent Whitehall demonstrator Steve Bray, and to seize his equipment, on the very first day that new laws that permit a crackdown on noisy protest is sure sign that Johnson's government

has really lost the plot. Democracy is dependent on the right to dissent. There must be opposition for democracy to function. Steve Bray might be annoying, but the right to be annoying is at the absolute heart of the freedom that identifies a democracy. This government has passed law to remove that right, and is clearly intent on using it. I chipped in to Steve's defence fund yesterday as a result. Democracy requires our support.

As too do fundamental human rights. Tory MP Danny Kruger (the son of TV personality Prue Leith) said in parliament yesterday that he does not think women have autonomy over their bodies. The comment was very obviously made in the context of US abortion debates, but was chilling. Where the Republicans go the Tories follow, and the Republicans are intent on unwinding a great many more freedoms as yet.

Why note all this? Simply to record that in a mature democracy, where we could be confident that the government was being run accountably in the interests of people and with all appropriate checks and balances in place we would not face situations like these where it is apparent that the only interest being pursued is that of the ruling party and its desire to maintain its power, come what may, and at whatever cost in terms of democracy foregone.

And at the same time we are learning of many interventions by the royal family in the legislative process to protect its interests.

I keep getting adverse reaction to my suggestion that we are now living in a fascist state, but the evidence is overwhelming that we are. Even the military are now demanding greatest significance and resource, with the obvious desire that they might be able to react unilaterally.

The situation we are in is very dangerous. Freedoms, the rule of law, checks and balances, respect for the will of people and the necessary acceptance of obligations once willingly accepted are all disappearing. In their place is pragmatic elected government turned apparent dictatorship in raw pursuit of perpetuating power. One day the question will be asked 'why did people let it happen?', unless of course we try to stop it. That is our duty, however we can do it.