

Useless jobs

Published: January 14, 2026, 12:07 am

Peter May wrote this [on Progressive Pulse](#), which is the other blog I direct. I thought it worth sharing:

This is a [quote from Richard Murphy's blog on Sunday](#), which I've been mulling over:

That, in a nutshell, is why we're a relatively poor country. We refuse to employ people to do desperately needed value-added work in the state sector to guarantee a supply of labour to those doing shit jobs with zero social value in the private sector.

I'm beginning to conclude that this must be in fact why the UK, is so 'unproductive'.

It is not because the workers are so lazy as our ['Britannia Unchained'](#) if not actually decidedly 'Unhinged' government would tell us, but it suggests to me that it is simply because we do not properly invest in the state.

All major European countries have a bigger state sector than the UK (something which is quite unaccountably disapproved of in the UK and the US), but in fact a properly functioning state sector gets things done.

I suggest that actually the 'Productivity Question' is in fact a 'Neoliberal Question'.

Almost everywhere in the UK the private sector is involved in what is the 'state' provision. But of course there are necessary inefficiencies in their involvement. Things have to be quoted for and contracted. Contracts are for a specific period and then change. There have to be administrators to organise and regulators to ensure fair play.

All these requirements need people. But they are people doing useless jobs.

Useless in the sense that, when we now know that government creates money as it spends, there is actually no possible point in requiring people to do useless jobs – such

as refereeing a panoply of providers to do a job you could do yourself.

All the more important when post Brexit Britain is so short of labour.

The system simply puts money into private hands – not a bad thing in and of itself. But the private hands are not actually our people, they are private corporations – and ever so frequently they are structured to funnel money upwards and outwards in those corporations – and to pay as little as possible to our people – or their ‘labour’.

I find it difficult to conclude other than productivity would actually be much improved by the state ridding itself of its private contracting...

And that’s why I suggest Neoliberalism is at the core of the UK’s productivity problem...