

We need to be rid of the toxic Tories who threaten our ...

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I can remember when Conservatives were serious people, with experience of real life that they brought to the task of government. I am not saying that meant I liked them. But forty years ago they had opinions that had to be noticed.

This is no longer true. It could, of course, be said that Labour is in the same boat, except that is not quite true when its leader previously headed a major public body as a qualified professional person.

So what is it that had led to the most particular degradation of the Tories, and their decline into their current mess?

I suggest three things. One is the rise of the professional politician. We are all familiar with the person who left university, joined a think tank soon afterwards, then ended up in parliament, and not long after that became a minister.

The second is the increase in the influence of dark money think tanks that funded so many of these career trajectories towards parliament. We cannot be sure who funds the Tufton Street crowd, but if bums on seats both in parliament and now in the cabinet was their aim then they spent well, albeit at cost to us all.

Third, there is the rise of ideology. If Conservatives were about pragmatic perpetuation of a traditional approach to living that was ill-defined but commonly understood, then modern Tories are all about the promotion of Hayek, Rand and Friedman. Thatcher is undoubtedly to blame for that.

Where does that get us? To the point where people with little or no real world experience try to govern. They do so without consideration for rules, conventions, regulations or requirements because they believe that all of these restrict freedom, and are to be rejected.

They believe that the consequence of this rejection is benign because they have been schooled in a form of economics that says people have perfect knowledge of all that is happening in the world. What is more, they believe that people can instantly react

using this perfect knowledge that they have by interpreting the price signals that the market sends.

So, Kwarteng believed he could deliver a mini-budget without the necessary appendages detailing how he might finance it because he thought the world could fill in that detail for themselves. They, he thought, should have realised that it necessarily meant growth and that this meant it was self funding by creating a new equilibrium within the economy where the expectation of that growth should have allayed all fears. His economics made him think that.

But his economics was wrong. People with real world experience know that everyone works with decidedly incomplete information. What is more, their powers of interpretation are decidedly limited. As a result they need data, interpretation, reassurance and indications of risk. Even then they might simply not agree.

Kwarteng did not have this most basic knowledge about his fellow human beings. Believing himself so clever that he fits the utterly false stereotype of the all knowing human that his economics has taught him exists, he thought others to be the same. That was not kind or generous of him. It was deeply delusional, dangerous and plain stupid.

Market reactions should have told him he was wrong. There is little or no evidence that he has heard. No wonder that even the Bank of England sought to place distance between itself and Kwarteng this week, seeking to make clear that they were the grown ups in the room.

Worryingly, and relatively speaking, Kwarteng might be the grown up in the cabinet. Look at the rest, from Truss onwards, for evidence of that. The naïveté, bordering on cruelty in the case of Braverman and others, is staggering, and is matched only by their incompetence and unsuitability for any public office, let alone the positions that they have.

What to do about this? Shapps had given them ten days, which runs to next weekend. Gove is clearly on manoeuvres. Labour has to attack when parliament sits again. But most of all, the exposure of all of this by the media is essential. The fourth estate has to hold these people to account and find them dangerously wanting if this disaster is to come to an end. There are thankful signs that some, at least, are willing to do that.

We need to be rid of the toxic Tories who threaten our well-being and seek to deliver fascism. Combined effort is required. But none will work in the short term without some Tories rediscovering that they need to bring some experience into their party and rid it of those with none of any value to society. I worry that our future is dependent on the chance that the likes of Gove and Shapps might do this. But we have to hope. There are not many short term alternatives.