

# The Tories and Labour are united in seeking to promote ...

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I took a week off from looking for things to write about here and during that time it seems that the strangest thing happened: politics got boring.

I am, of course, aware that most in this country think that this is always the case. I have friends (well, maybe acquaintances) who struggled to name most ministers when there wasn't the turmoil we have witnessed this year. But this time it seems to be different: being boring is now government policy, by default. It's as if Sunak became prime minister with the intention of disappearing from view.

I am not sure that this policy is intentional. I am even more uncertain about it being a good thing. Instead this is the consequence of having a prime minister who has no mandate, seeking to govern with the support of a party where young MPs are announcing their intention to quit politics by the day. Older members, meanwhile, are determinedly trying to find employment prospects outside parliament by appeasing whatever bizarre interest groups that they can knowing that the career prospects of ousted backbenchers in their 50s are pretty poor.

The result is not just that politics is dull because there is no imminent Tory leadership election, as yet. Instead it is dull because Sunak knows he cannot command his party to do almost anything and as such will very largely be choosing to do nothing.

Whether the issue is online wind farms, new house building or online safety it would seem that more than enough Tory MPs are willing to oppose the Tory line in parliament for the government to fail if the Opposition choose to abstain, and so he is ducking issues. Relying on the increasingly Tory-lite Labour vote in Westminster really does not look good for him.

In the Lords he is already losing. This week the government was defeated on transparency rules in NHS procurement in that place. Few seemed to notice, but this could become an increasingly significant issue as this government heads towards the end of its torrid existence. The Salisbury Convention, which requires that the Lords do not oppose on an issue in a party manifesto becomes increasingly irrelevant when the

government in question is on its third prime minister and the 2019 manifesto is long forgotten.

This does matter, of course. That's because there is much that needs to be done by the government of this country. From simple but urgent things, like changing the rules on energy standing charges and prepaid meter tariffs, to reforming universal credit, to requiring green investment on unprecedented scale, and improving the funding for almost all public services, action is essential. But it is also very unlikely.

That is because the Tories are now a party in name only. The factional breakdown that has long threatened to overwhelm that party is now very clearly doing so. Sunak won because no faction hated him sufficiently. They do, however, hate each other, and he lacks any apparent authority to stop that.

The result is non-government. In effect, we might live the next two years with little more than a token gesture administration in office, pretending to deal with issues but actually powerless to do anything within the constraints of the two party system that has forced Tory MPs to pretend that they are a united force when nothing could be further from the truth.

What does all this mean for Labour? It would seem that it is learning three lessons from the Tories.

First, anyone opposing the leadership is being purged now. Factions are being eliminated before there is a chance of power.

Secondly, policy choices are completely anodyne so that opposition cannot arise.

Third, being united in managerialism is the aim.

Together it is presumed that these provide a platform for both electoral success and government. They won't, of course. The status quo is dead. But Labour is no better at wanting to move on from it than the Tories.

What both parties fail to notice is that political oppression of this sort (I use the word oppression advisedly) will not be tolerated for long. Whether on Twitter, Mastodon, or wherever the void will beg to be filled. We watch protest in China and elsewhere and think that the anger people feel, and the bravery they show is understandable, and to be praised. Before long we will realise that anger is required here. It already exists in Scotland. It will, I think, develop across the UK.

Government in absentia will not be tolerated for long when so much is wrong. All our political parties should take note.