

We need a reformed apolitical civil service, not a poli...

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The Tories have reacted to the sacking of Dominic Raab by suggesting that we should have a politicised civil service in the UK. That would break a supposed tradition lasting well over 100 years.

As usual, the Tories have got this wrong, but as ever with enough in their back story to make it appear that they might have a point.

Firstly, of course the civil service is political. Everything about life is. That is most especially true when power is involved, and the civil service is all about power.

Second, the civil service is political because it is not representative of society. It has a bias to Oxbridge. Since Oxbridge in turn is biased, the bias is doubly inbuilt.

Third, the civil service favours those good at exams when that proves very little about the abilities required in most jobs.

Fourth, the civil service survives on tradition. Hence the persistence of the century plus old view that the government must balance its books for which there is no evidence at all, but to which all in that place must subscribe to get on.

Fifth, I rather suspect there are other prejudices in the civil service.

But, and I stress the point, that suggests the need for civil service reform, and not the politicisation of the civil service.

In the UK we have a two party system of government where, once elected a government tends to ignore its MPs, parliament and the electorate. There is no effective opposition, as Questions to the Prime Ministers proves every week.

In that case the civil service is the only mechanism that we can rely on to challenge ministers.

We should of course improve the electoral system and accountability.

We should also properly resource parliament so it can do a better job.

But until then we must rely on the civil service. Make that political and just about the last check and balance in British democracy will have gone.

Maybe the Tories want that. I do not.

The civil service needs to remain apolitical, and get rid of its biases.