

Funding the Future

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Dan Poulter MP has resigned from the Tories, crossed the floor of the Commons, and joined Labour.

Once upon a time this might have taken courage. It might have also delivered a particular political message. I do not think either of these is true in the case of the little known Poulter, who is not seeking a return to the Commons when he leaves Parliament at his own choice at the forthcoming general election.

Poulter, who is MP for North Ipswich and Central Suffolk, is also a hospital consultant. He says he is quitting because only Labour now believes in the NHS. If I might be polite, I think he is quitting so that he has at least some credibility with colleagues when he returns to full time work in the NHS later this year. To have been a Tory MP and find anyone to talk to would, I suspect, have been nigh on impossible if he had not quit the Tories now. By quitting now he might just find someone willing to have coffee with, if he's lucky, on his return. I think the politics involved in this are no more complicated than that.

Please forgive my cynicism, but being a former Tory MP is not going to look good on the CVs of a lot of redundant former members fairly soon. At least Poulter might have a job to go to. But he also wants people to talk to.

Let me add another, necessary, cynical note. Moving from being a Tory MP for the last 14 years - who has held office and who has no doubt voted many times to impose untold harm on the very people whom he will no doubt soon be seeing as patients - to Labour is really not so very hard these days. Labour is almost certainly to the political right now of where Poulter might have thought himself to be when he was first elected to parliament in 2010. I should think he feels quite at home with Wes Streeting. A job as a junior Labour health minister in the Lords might well be on offer, I would have thought.

So is this a move of any political significance? No, not really. This is about self preservation, cynical manoeuvring and keeping some doors just a little bit open as far as I can see. Might we be spared a by further analysis?