

Neoliberal politicians are lacking a political antenna

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There is something called a political antenna.

Don't ask me to define it. It makes no sense trying to do so. In fact, doing so would be a contradictory exercise. Somebody either has it, and uses it without knowing how, or they haven't got it and can never be taught it. That's precisely why definition could not help.

Rishi Sunak has not got a political antenna. There's no point beating bush about that.

If it's any comfort to him, that's largely true of most UK politicians.

There are exceptions. Stephen Flynn clearly is possessed of a political antenna. Caroline Lucas is, too.

There must also be a few others possessed of what is now rare, but which seemed, when I was much younger, to be a lot more commonplace.

Importantly, this issue is not to be confused with having charisma. Indisputably, Boris Johnson was possessed of that. His political antenna was, however, only tuned to his own wavelength.

Why say this? Obviously, I am referring to the massive error of judgement that Rishi Sunak made when leaving the D-Day celebrations to return for an interview with ITN, which will not be broadcast until Wednesday next week. If he had been possessed of a political antenna he would have been aware of what impression this would create. But he clearly was not.

It must also be concluded that the Conservative Party, which let him do this, also now lacks such an antenna. It, apparently, offered this interview slot to ITN knowing it would conflict with the D-Day events, and did nothing to rearrange the interview which must have been possible given that almost any news channel would have worked around a prime minister's arrangements.

The consequence is that we have to conclude that both our Prime Minister and his party have none of the innate political sense required to succeed in the political arena. The basic requirement of political success, which is that they innately understand the rules of the game without ever needing them to be explained, is absent in both cases.

That said, Keir Starmer only succeeds by comparison, and the limit to his antenna and abilities will be cruelly exposed once he is prime minister.

The question in that case is how did we reach this point where those seeking political office seem to be automatons about all else, without the innate understanding of human characteristics and needs which any truly successful politician must possess, but which can never be trained into them?

Could it be that the answer is staring us in the face? It is precisely because neoliberalism has demanded that politics be reduced to this mundane, monochromatic level so that no widescale criticism of the assumptions underpinning it can take place. Unthinking compliance is what is required by this system of thinking, precisely because it will break if over-analysed by those tasked with delivering it.

The result is that the policies of most of our major political parties must be presented by politicians who are recruited precisely because they are both devoid of ideas of their own and are without the political antenna that alerts them to the risk of what they are doing. The consequence is that they do not have the talent to actually be the politicians we need because the very essence of awareness that being a proper politician demands of these people cannot be in their DNA if they are to survive in the neoliberal political world.

Politics is about conviction. When both Labour and the Tories, at least, are now conviction free zones intended solely to serve the interests of wealth of course we end up with politicians like Starmer and Sunak.

The more important question is how do we get rid of this rotten form of politics.