

What is an envoy to the nations and regions?

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Keir Starmer has appointed Sue Gray as envoy to the nations and regions after her resignation as his chief of staff. What does that mean? And what is he thinking?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HMSOZ8kwR4&si=oI6XLgSM2O-jK0RV>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=aye76-16fb458-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=c73a3a&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=ff6d00

The transcript is:

What is an envoy to the nations and regions? I genuinely don't know, but Keir Starmer has appointed Sue Gray to this position.

Sue Gray is, of course, the former civil servant who Labour fought desperately to be appointed as its chief executive officer before the election and who Keir Starmer has now got rid of 100 days after the election because she and Labour's staff in the Number 10 Downing Street policy units clearly couldn't get on with each other.

The sop that she's been given is the status as Keir Starmer's 'Envoy to the Nations and Regions'. As far as I can work out, this means that she's going to trot around Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland speaking on behalf of Keir Starmer. And she'll also do the

same in the north of England and presumably in the southwest, and she might pop over here to East Anglia, where I'm recording as well. The only place where she doesn't seem to have a mission might be in the southeast of England.

Is that what Keir Starmer really thinks of the UK, is my question? Is he so London-centric and so determined to keep himself in London that he actually thinks he needs an emissary to go out and spread the word about the great and wondrous works that he is doing to the rest of the UK on his behalf as if, well, they wouldn't hear otherwise?

Maybe it is. But if that is what he thinks, there are serious issues to consider.

The first is, what does he think the role of MPs is? After all, everywhere to which he has now appointed an envoy has got an MP in Parliament. And that MP is perfectly capable, I would hope, of speaking up for the interests of their constituents, whether they are a Labour MP, and he appears to ignore them, or an MP from another party, who apparently he's not interested in at all.

Let's also be honest, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have governments. The devolved governments of these countries - because countries they are - do exist. They have been elected. They are perfectly capable of making their own representations to Parliament.

And they also have ministers responsible for each of these places. And there is therefore the basis of dialogue already in existence.

So, what is Sue Gray going to do? Is she just going to sit over and above these processes, ignore them, or take part in them? I genuinely don't know.

And also, around the country, in places as far apart as Bristol and Newcastle, there are mayors. And those mayors have the job of representing the people in the regions where they operate. Now, they aren't universal, and some of those mayors seem to me to be a bit irrelevant. The mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough seems to me to be pretty daft, because Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have literally almost nothing to do with each other.

But whatever we look at, and whichever institution we look at, and whichever part of the UK we look at, there are perfectly effective mechanisms in place for representation and for sending messages to and from Westminster.

So, what is this all about, Keir Starmer? Is it just some sort of token gesture of an appointment to give to Sue Gray until such time as you can elevate her to the peers and get her off your hands altogether?

Or is this part of her termination package that she gets another job that makes it sound as if she's really important? Although I don't think anyone is going to be confused by

that.

Or is it just that he really doesn't know that there is a world beyond the M25?

Of all those options, I suspect the last is the most likely to be true. This is a man who is Prime Minister of a United Kingdom, who very clearly does not understand that there are separate countries within it, and thinks he can send envoys to them to tell them to be good and to keep sending the taxes and who doesn't understand that he has also got people who live in areas very distinctly different from London inside England itself and who thinks that he can do much the same with them, telling them what he's doing and expecting them to listen, which is what, by and large, envoys do.

In that case, we have a Prime Minister who is even more out of touch with reality than I ever thought. And that's really worrying.