

Funding the Future

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Everyone says the doctor's strike is about pay. And yes, doctors in the UK are being grossly underpaid. But this strike is about something deeper. It's about a collapsing economy, systemic exploitation, broken housing, and a government - including the current Labour one - that just doesn't get it. This isn't just about the NHS. It's about whether our society is even working anymore.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXOG65PXTuM&si=znpd9jfKFHSuQt_0

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=faefb-191acb9-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Why are doctors on strike in the UK, and I mean, why are they really on strike?

We do know, of course, that superficially, this whole dispute is about pay, and I'm not disputing that. Very obviously, it is about pay, and it's about the fact that doctors have not had a proper pay rise, which now leaves them in a position where they are much worse off than they were in 2010. So clearly there's a pay dispute going on.

But it's my suggestion to you that there's also something much more important happening in this pay dispute, and the one that looks likely to follow, which is the nurses going on strike as well.

This is not just about pay.

What we're seeing are people who are well qualified, well experienced, more than capable of forming sound judgements, judgements that we have to rely upon if we're sick, who are saying they've had enough of austerity, they've had enough of the broken housing market, they've had enough of being exploited, they can't face this economy anymore because it's one which is hostile to their well-being, and they've had enough of Wes Streeting who doesn't understand how stressed these people are.

Let's just start with that question of austerity.

Doctors are worse off now than they were in 2010. The pay data shows that. Their pay has, in real terms, lagged inflation and its lagged housing costs, which have soared. And yet, Labour is saying it can't afford to give them any more.

I know they did an adjustment when they first came into office, but that was only a partial settlement, and the doctors made that clear at the time and said, "We'll accept it so long as you follow up with better offers in future years." And now Labour is refusing to do that. And there's one very simple reason why Labour is refusing to do that, and that's because it still embraces austerity.

We Streeting has got a private sector mindset. Worse than that, he's internalised the anti-public sector dogma of those with a private sector mindset, and the fact is the NHS is not, and never can be a market, if it is to meet the needs of the public in the UK and become a public good. That is something which is supplied free of charge for the benefit of everybody at public cost. It just cannot be a market.

But he is forcing people in the NHS to work in a system which is a pretend market, and he's treating the price that he's willing to pay them as if it is determined by a market, and as a consequence, those people who work in the NHS, who are valuable and whose skills can be bought by other countries overseas, can no longer survive in the environment that he's created.

A doctor on £70,000 now might, if they're lucky, or perhaps if they're exceptionally burdened, be able to borrow £350,000 to buy a house. That barely buys an average home in much of England, and the doctor will not reach that point in their career progression until they're well into their thirties, and I don't believe that doctors should need a partner to be able to afford a reasonable house for themselves to live in.

We are living in a situation where doctors are now trapped by landlords, by banks, and by interest rates, whilst monopolies exploit them for energy, for telecoms and transport. The state is enabling this, just of course, as it is also enabling the exploitation of nurses and all the other people who realise that ends just cannot be met anymore in our country.

And the doctors are in an unusual position. They know they're privileged compared to a lot of people, but they also know that they are living in a system that no longer works even for them, despite their privilege.

And to me, that is a tipping point. If those with privilege, and I stress it, the doctors have an advantage over many people in our society, cannot make this system work, it is most definitely broken.

The promise made to young people from professional life has collapsed. There is no chance of well-being anymore.

If you became a doctor in the 1970s, you were going to live comfortably, or better than that, and now you're going to live in debt, in stress, and without a good standard of living because you're going to be exploited every which way you turn.

But Wes Streeting still tells them they're being unreasonable, but why and how can he do that, because that is just not true, and he's delivering his message to the doctors in the worst way possible.

For example, he wrote an article telling the doctors they shouldn't be striking in the Daily Telegraph, the paper, which every single person who works for the NHS in the UK knows hates the NHS and everything it stands for with regard to meeting the needs of everyone, whoever they are in society. He could not have been more successful in going out of his way to show contempt for workers if he had tried.

But let's be clear, doctors don't want strikes. Nor do I. The fact is, they're being given no choice but to strike in a system that is failing all around them. This strike is therefore not just about pay, although pay is obviously a part of it. My suggestion is that this strike is a symptom of something which is much deeper, and that is systemic failure within our economy.

People are totally alienated by a system that is now making their lives impossible. This battle is therefore about something more than pay. It's about values.

It's about doctors are under attack, and who do not accept the position of a Labour government that is putting them in a wholly unwarranted position.

It's dangerous that we've reached this point, and this dispute is not just about doctors because it's about something much bigger than that. It's about how we meet our needs and what the economy is for.

That's the question that is being asked. The risk is that when people can't afford to work, and they can't afford to pay the rent, and they can't afford to feed their children, and all of those situations are coming to pass, then that economy might actually fail in its entirety.

That is what I mean by systemic failure.

That is the point that we are reaching.

We are on the cliff edge waiting for all those things to happen, not just amongst 20% or so of the population as they do now, but on a widespread basis.

Henry Ford, who set up the Ford car company, knew all about this. 📍 He knew in the 1920s that if he did not pay his people enough so that they could afford to buy his cars, he could never be successful.

We are now in a situation where Wes Streeting has to understand if he does not pay the people who work for the NHS enough that they can afford to work for it, we can't have a programme of care in this country, and everything else falls apart as a consequence.

That's the crisis we face. It is a lack of understanding. It is a lack of understanding that, because of the level of exploitation by the financial services industry and monopoly industry in this country, that is extracting rent and interest, and monopoly profits from people, the whole thing is on the precipice of collapse.

Labour needs to get its head about this very soon.

The doctors are just the start.

Meltdown is on its way, and what then? Who knows? The anger is rising, and it can't be contained forever. And when even the doctors are feeling this anger, are feeling alienated from the world in which they live because the government has chosen to do nothing about meeting their needs, then we are in deep trouble.

My question to you is. Do you think that's really the case?

There's a poll down below this video. You can vote there, and please leave your comments.

I want to know what you think about the future and whether this doctor's strike is really the point where we recognise that the crisis facing our society is so big that it encompasses most people within it.

Like and subscribe, of course, to this video and to this whole channel, but do something else as well.

Why not write to your MP about this?

There is a link to a transcript of this video down below, and on that, you will also find that there is a way to turn the transcript into a letter to your MP using ChatGPT.

Democracy, as I often say, is not a spectator sport.

It's a participatory sport.

You are the participant. Please take part. Please tell your MP what you think and demand change because, without that change, we are, I believe, in very deep trouble.

Poll

[poll id="161"]

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [here](#).

One word of warning, though: please ensure you have the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.