

Your opinion, please

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I am aware that I [posted yesterday](#) in a way that some might think was a little intemperate, or even inappropriate, because what I expressed was frustration with those who posted here, all of them acting in good faith, which I entirely accept. The post did, then, reflect my frustration, and not blame, and I apologise for that.

Saying so, what I might ask is that you put yourself in my situation. Most people know what it is like to face an email inbox that feels as if it is overflowing, where the volume of incoming mail always appears to be greater than that which can be dealt with, and every single email does require consideration at the very least, and, on many occasions, a reply.

That is how I felt yesterday morning. Having gone out for coffee to take time to think, I was distracted by the need to clear comments on the blog, most of which demanded some action from me, or at least a reply.

I have previously flagged the problem with comments on the blog. It is not unknown for me to spend up to 4 hours a day dealing with them, which, without exception, people have described as an unacceptable burden.

The issue arose because three weeks ago, when I admitted to being fatigued. It turned out I almost certainly had Covid at that time. My health has undoubtedly improved since, and the immediate symptoms are gone, but I do admit that the fatigue persists despite having had most of the last week off.

Before taking that break, I had hoped to put in place the new comment system we have been working on, part of which is being seen in the new comment editor interface, which is available to everyone now.

However, problems arose with doing that. Partly, that was because of the IT issues I encountered the week before I went away.

In addition, I did not have time to write the necessary instructions for using the new system. That meant I could not invite anyone who had volunteered to become a

moderator.

But, most of all, the delay was because I tried the new system using my wife, Jacqueline, as a potential alternative moderator, and as experience quickly proved, that task was almost impossible for her to undertake. Despite the fact that she is very familiar with the content of this blog and the way in which I think, so many of the comments were directed at me, or sought my opinion, that the number she was able to deal with was very low, and the number she had to refer to me was very high, meaning that no greater advantage was obtained by trying to have her moderate the comments made, and we ended up thinking that this would be true within the current system, whoever took on this role on a voluntary basis.

Because I did not have time to address these issues, I came away with the existing moderation system in place, and yesterday morning, I felt as though I reached a breaking point with it. My frustration is simply explained. Because of the time that I'm spending on blog comments, I do not have time to create the new content that I want to work on, and the ideas that will deliver a politics of care. There is, then, a direct conflict between the comments on this blog and the political narrative I always hoped it might create.

As a result, I now appreciate two things. The first is that the comments that should be permitted on here must be of the type often made by commentators like PSR, Andrew, Clive Parry, RobertJ, Andrew Broadbent, Mark Meldon and Andrew Dickie. There are a few others I suspect I could add to the list. Their comments always share a number of characteristics.:

- * They are intended to add to the debate, and they do so.
- * As a consequence, they develop the ideas being discussed in the way that a good comment letter to a newspaper might also do.
- * They take remarkably little moderation because, although they are valuable, I rarely feel a need to comment upon them because they are complete within themselves.
- * They make little demand on me.

I also happen to think that these are the most valuable comments received. It would be relatively straightforward for these comments to continue to be moderated, and not necessarily by me.

In contrast, those comments that seek a response, ask a question (the answer to which could usually be easily found elsewhere, including in this blog's glossary), or which tell me what I should do, are very much more difficult to manage. I would like to think that, in all cases, those commenting are genuine, but they leave me with a genuine dilemma: I have to decide whether to spend time dealing with the questions a particular commentator raises or get on with my core work.

For the sake of my own well-being, I think I now have to decide that my own work comes first and that these other comments be deleted or dealt with elsewhere. This will require that the comment rules be rewritten here, which could be done quite quickly, and is something that I propose to do next week, at the latest.

This then leaves the question of where those seeking to discuss issues or ask questions might go. This was discussed here, two or three weeks ago. The desire seemed to be to create a bulletin board system, as some people objected to the glaringly obvious solution, which is a private Facebook group, which is something I have seen work well in many organisations.

Thomas and I did, as a result, look at bulletin boards and forum software. The best we came up with was this, called [Create Forum](#), but to be candid, it looks like hard work, would require a lot of moderation (at least initially) and may not be that easy to use. We think Facebook would be better, for all its faults (and we live in an imperfect world) and would be easier for people to use, not least because most people are familiar with it. We also feel that we have no time to run either option if we are to progress core work, and I know no one else who now tries to offer what I have done, but no longer feel able to do.

There is one other point to make. On an average day, there are well over 10,000 users on the blog, and maybe 100 commentators. I do, of course, know that some visitors come to read the comments. Equally, many do not. I want to keep the blog going for the many who read it, but never comment, and feel it would be inappropriate for the comments to bring my desire to continue doing that to an end.

As a result, I am seeking your opinion. So, two polls:

[poll id="350"]

[poll id="351"]

Thank you, as I need to resolve this, or this blog ceases to be viable.

Feel free to comment. I may not respond.