

The tedium of our politics

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I wrote [yesterday about the incoherence of neoliberal politics](#). Waking rather too early this morning, as the sun was rising, another thought occurred to me. After a day of watching the news media and watching the antics of supposedly leading politicians, the sheer tedium of their behaviour is the overwhelming impression that I am left with.

Donald Trump has to take the top slot again. At various points yesterday, he suggested that he did not want an extension of a ceasefire with Iran because, he claimed, the US would get a good deal and outcome from this war, whatever happened. He went on to suggest that the recommencement of bombing was likely and that US armed forces were keen to get going again. Then he announced that the US would participate in new talks with Iran in Islamabad, after prevarication and delay over whether this would be the case.

As someone who would always prefer peace to conflict and bombs, I welcome the fact that the US is willing to negotiate, but that opportunity was available before now, and it was the tedious posturing of Donald Trump that prevented it from happening. I strongly suspect it will be the same tedious posturing that will now prevent a successful outcome to the talks.

As happened last time, JD Vance will soon announce that the US has put its latest, best, and final offer on the table, when absolutely no one, including the Iranians, will believe that to be true. The whole process of negotiation, when properly undertaken, always involves compromise and, eventually, a willingness to see the world from another person's perspective, leading to outcomes of mutual advantage. It is tedious to pretend otherwise, but Trump does so nonetheless, clearly identifying himself as a potential loser whenever he does so. The American public is tired of this; the world is bored with this; I am bored with this; and I suspect you are, too. What we are all looking for is a degree of honesty. We are not getting it.

The same could be said of the other political fiasco of the day, which does, of course, revolve around the Mandelson fiasco. I deliberately use the words "revolve around the Mandelson fiasco" because the tedious discussions that have taken place since The

Guardian mysteriously obtained the documentation around Mandelson's supposed security vetting, or its absence, last week have not, in any real sense, related to the true Mandelson fiasco.

Addressing the true Mandelson fiasco would require an explanation as to why Keir Starmer, or rather Morgan McSweeney, was so desperate to appoint Peter Mandelson as ambassador to Washington DC. This would, in turn, require transparency about who influenced their actions and what was expected of them in return. Such transparency would expose who is truly influencing power in this country at present, with what expectation of return, and that issue is not being addressed in the current discussions. As a consequence, the answers we need about the inner workings of power in the UK remain unaddressed, and the same influences might still be in play.

In that case, the saga of who said what to whom about whether vetting, by whom, to what standard, requiring what level of judgement to be exercised about the past conduct and ethics of Peter Mandelson, must be the most glorious distraction for those who do not wish the truth to be told about how and why, and for whose benefit, Keir Starmer became Prime Minister of the UK, meaning he was given the opportunity, as a consequence, to make a series of hideously inappropriate decisions, frequently disabling the processes of government at cost to the people of this country.

Sir Olly Robbins, whose smooth style makes clear why he will have a successful return to the lobbying industry via the ever-revolving door between Whitehall and that insidious activity once this matter is resolved, delivered sufficient distractions during the course of his evidence provided to a House of Commons committee yesterday to ensure that he will appear the innocent victim in all this, whilst the blame will land on the shenanigans of Downing Street. That apportionment of blame may well be appropriate. The Downing Street operation under Morgan McSweeney appears no more benign than it was when Boris Johnson was notionally Prime Minister and Dominic Cummings called the shots. But my whole point is that the tedious exchanges of claims and counterclaims mean that the real Mandelson fiasco is not being properly addressed, leaving it in the background, which must be very pleasing to those who do not want questions asked about it.

No wonder people are alienated from politics. The overwhelming message being delivered by Trump, Starmer, and, let's be clear, Johnson and Cummings in their day, is that these people are more than happy to play silly, stupid and even dangerous games whilst they deceive themselves that they have power in their grasp, when the true purpose of politics is to use the temporary power entrusted to anyone in office for the greater good of those who have put them there. That, however, is only possible if people of principle are elected to office, and as is all too apparent in the two-party systems that have for far too long dominated politics in both the UK and the USA, such an outcome is now almost unknown.

Let me, in that case, take this note to another tedious experience I suffered yesterday,

which was watching the Channel 4 broadcast in which the leaders of all the main political parties seeking support in the forthcoming Welsh elections for the Senedd were interviewed by Krishnan Guru-Murthy.

Two of the parties whose leaders were present have no realistic prospects of any meaningful representation in that parliament, so why the Lib Dems and Tories were there is, in itself, open to question, and their Welsh leader certainly provided no explanation in what they had to say, let alone reasons for anyone to vote for them.

Anthony Slaughter, for the Greens, underwhelmed.

Current First Minister Eluned Morgan pretended that Labour has a chance in this election, when everybody knows that Labour support in Wales is disappearing almost as fast as air from a burst balloon.

Darren Thomas for Reform UK, which is a name that fits uncomfortably in this context, appeared able to produce rage at a moment's notice without any indication of good reason to justify it.

In amongst all these people, Rhun ap Iorwerth of Plaid Cymru was able to stand out because he was the only person present who was able to say that he was standing on the basis of conviction. He had a clear mission when all the others appeared intent on discussing 20 mph speed limits, the benefits of which are proven beyond question. His solitary voice was not, however, enough to break the tedium.

We need more politicians of the rare type that he and Zack Polanski might be in the UK at present, with most of the rest being a very long way behind.

I can remember when it was not like this. I can remember when we had intellectuals as political leaders. I can remember when people seeking political office talked about the greater narratives that they represented. I can remember when a political speech could incite passion. I can remember when politicians were for things, rather than against things. I can remember when we dreamed that a better world was possible. Now, most of politics is about sweating the small stuff and arguing about who said what, and when, on issues which are totally tedious for most people.

We need, once more, a politics for people. We need politicians who care. We need politicians of conviction. Only then might we get hope. Right now, that is a scarce commodity.