

APATHY AND THE

STATE OF BRITAIN

Britain is in turmoil: nothing seems to work as it should and old values are falling to the wayside. How did we fall so fast?

We find ourselves in an era of political turbulence in Britain. Nothing works as it should. Old principles from figures like Nolan and Reith are discarded in the cavalier pursuit of personal gain and aggrandisement. Meanwhile, the general population, as citizens, are left to navigate a sea of general misinformation and appeasement by the BBC, our state broadcaster. How did we arrive at this point so rapidly?

A Long 14 Years

I won't go over the well-known timelines of Austerity, the Brexit campaign, the vote and its unseemly passage through a Parliament incapable of facing down the stupidity of the question posed in what was originally conceived of as an advisory referendum.

Cowed by the highest turnout in many years (72.21%), politicians of all parties capitulated to the 'Make Brexit work' mantra. We are here, but what's concerning is the lack of public response to the subsequent erosion of our rights, the trashing of our country's international reputation, and the rancid behaviour of successive Tory governments whose austerity policies penalise those on benefits and whose below inflation pay settlements have impoverished millions. This is a call for us to wake up and take action.

Respect and trust

Why aren't the British more like the French, who happily riot if they don't like what their government is doing? Where is our own sense of entitlement to be treated with respect and dignity? That is a complex question and one not readily answered by simply focusing on the political sphere. It is very much down to the lack of trust and the ending of mutual respect inherent in all aspects of British life. Let me tell you what I mean by that.

Let us say I am a teacher and teach primary school children.



That should imply that I am a respected and valued member of society; however, centrally commanded curriculum rules prescribe my actions almost to the minute. I don't have any agency. I don't feel respected and valued. My time is not my own, and I am on a treadmill to satisfy my superiors and Ofsted. That attitude may be transmitted to my class of children; however much I tell them, they are valued, too



The same children who need permission to visit the bathroom can't wear masks even if they want to and face compliance pressures whatever life throws at them at home. A quarter of children live in relative poverty; some don't get enough to eat or even have a bed to sleep in, and some live in temporary housing, but we don't try fixing that. Instead, we fix targets for National Curriculum reading standards achievement and ask families that don't even have books to meet them.

Having targets imposed that you can't alter without resources or the ability to alter how you work is not 'taking back control. Those weasel words resonated because so many of us have so little control over our lives. In work, the majority are micro-managed. Apps are even being used to track movements, count stops, or record how a worker spends their time online. Like the van driver who got a call to enquire why he had stopped on the road. "It's a level-crossing, mate, and it is down." Does that sound like a trusting environment to you? No, me neither.



Do we have choices?

Of course, we have choices. Like those in the supermarket, we can choose different brands of politicians - red, blue, orange or green and choose to spend our time on different social media platforms. But many of us feel we can't choose change.

Change is never offered to us. From honest responses to climate change to sharing power and resources in our communities, those choices are rarely available. But interestingly, if they were, would we choose them?

Have we learned to be hopeful and have agency? Unfortunately, many have learnt that apathy is the best response to life. It is why repeated attempts to change things often end in failure. Like diets, if we keep failing, we stop trying to lose weight.

Politically, the equivalent is that we stop engaging if nothing ever changes. How did we as a nation learn to be so apathetic?

Apathy is Learned Behaviour?

It all goes back to losing control in almost every aspect of our lives. From being in jobs where compliance is mandatory with the threat of discipline and loss of earnings, to the endless petitions that achieve absolutely no change. From the consultations where the answer is already known before you make your genuine contribution.

To the public meeting or letter to the local paper that has yet to receive a response from your elected representative. Every failure to show a positive result from an action hardens the heart against optimism and enables apathy.

Trust has gone

Over the last 14 years, we have seen a rapid increase in apathy, disquiet and mistrust of politicians. Canvas at election time and on the doorsteps, many will say there is no point in voting because nothing changes. Well, on a rational level, that is true. Very little structurally has changed in the last ten years to benefit most of the population. A ruthless 1%, intent on running down the remaining 99%, has increased its wealth, influence and power over our lives.

From benefits sanctions for being five minutes late to the public humiliation of TV presenters for daring to have an opinion, there has been an enormous rise in shaming and controlling those not sharing this administration's political values. That has a cumulative effect.

So, for every consultation ignored, every petition sent to the House of Commons

for a graveyard slot with two MPs present, and every strike or protest march not shown on the BBC, trust in personal agency bleeds away. The old levers of political theatre don't work anymore because the Tory party is not playing by the same rules of engagement.

Like Trump in the States, nothing is off the table, and nothing will deflect them from introducing changes that most people find abhorrent when consulted. Take the Rwanda policy and the threat to level the European Court of Human Rights.

Add a press baron cartel working to support the sovereign-individual-low-tax-small-government agenda, and things become critical. Finish off with a whipping system in Parliament that removes the agency from even our elected representatives, and you have a system unfit for purpose.

Effective government is lost.

Careful placement of political appointees has neutralised many of the checks and balances of the British system. Where they remain, sackings and leaking remove other obstacles.

Where institutions remain intact, they are ignored, such as the Office of Budget Responsibility and the established process for vetting Budget figures. They were flung to the wall for the neo-con Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng's Mini Budget, As well as removing the necessary budget for regulation bodies to do their work, such as the Environment Agency for monitoring rivers and sewage outages, Or corrupting many of our Ombudsmen, into forgetting they are there to protect the public.

Good governance matters and the days of the 'good chaps' system of government have sadly passed. The nation needs change.



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