

Lying, Law Breaking, and Brutality

I HAVE NEVER BELIEVED that the rich and powerful, the princes of the earth, obey the same rules as the rest of us. And, I have to admit that I'm dismayed by the moral outrage aimed at Boris Johnson being promoted by our journalists; a cast of characters not notable for their commitment to fair-shares for all. Historically, of course, everyone knew that Winston Churchill's cigars and brandy were not on ration during the Second World War. Nobody believed that the King, bravely withstanding the Blitz every night at Windsor Castle, was eking out his butter ration.

But times have changed. Touching the forelock has gone right out of fashion; people do not accept the caste-like social divisions that obtained eighty-odd-years ago. The overwhelming mass of the population believe, fundamentally, in equal rights. Consequently, most people think that in a democracy the rulers should live by the same standards, rules, and laws, as

the rest of us.

These goings-on do reveal something significant about the mismatch between our elite and the mass of the population. Evidently, several hundred people working in the Downing Street and Cabinet Office complex did not understand that the lockdown rules applied to them. It had not entered their heads that they were expected to live by the same rules and restrictions as the population at large. This dismay and confusion, is akin to that which existed between the Royal Family's aloof disdain, and the general public's histrionic grief, at the time of Princess Diana's death. On that occasion it concerned a small group of royals routinely shielded from contact with 'ordinary folk', whereas a similar explanation will not work for today's government advisors and officials.

Their contempt for the rest of us was brazen. As a result, there can be no good reason for Boris Johnson or Richie Sunak staying in office. Both of them should resign immediately.

However, at present it is being argued that because we are facing big problems, we cannot turf out Boris Johnson or his government. Our difficulties are so numerous: the Russian war on Ukraine, and rapid inflation – the crisis caused by price rises outstripping wages by some considerable degree – it's not the time to sack the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is flagrant nonsense.

When Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, lost the confidence of the House of Commons and the country in 1940 he had to resign, even though the country was at war, and facing imminent invasion.

The problem that today's Tories have is that there is not a plausible candidate waiting in the wings to replace Boris Johnson. In 1940 the Labour Party made clear that they would only tolerate Winston Churchill. Indeed, he was the only leading Conservative politician not tarnished by attempting to appease Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Whereas the current crop of Tory politicians available to replace

the liars and lawbreakers in Downing Street are somewhat lacklustre: Jeremy Hunt perhaps? Ben Wallace? Certainly not Richie Sunak.

The Conservative members of Parliament have a huge problem. It must be clear to all and sundry that we cannot allow people who have broken the law, and lied about it, to remain in office. The attempt to argue that when Boris Johnson was misleading Parliament, he didn't know he was endlessly mouthing untruths, is both absurd, and absurdly irrelevant.

The other argument that the misdemeanour of holding parties in Downing Street during lockdown is trivial (akin maybe to getting a parking ticket), will not wash with the public either. The general electorate will not tolerate such an excuse. Yet the only electorate that matters at the moment is that composed of Conservative members of Parliament. They will be making fine calculations based upon local election results, constituency postbags, and opinion polls. Their hesitancy reveals the bankruptcy of our political class which is becoming clearer with every day that passes.

Outrage is piled upon outrage. The latest piece of vile and brutal nonsense is the proposal to deport childless men and women, those who have survived the Channel crossing in small boats, permanently to Rwanda in Central Africa. These young women and men, fleeing from war, and disaster – natural and economic – are to be dumped unceremoniously in a small, badly governed country thousands of miles away, without much hope of ever returning to the UK. Rwanda is poor, densely populated, and its people largely dependent on subsistence agriculture. It's dodgy government, police and soldiers, cannot guarantee the security of their own citizens, let alone “the wretched refuse of our teeming shores”.

No doubt Home Secretary, Priti Patel, will receive most of the opprobrium, but this proposal is fully the responsibility of Johnson's government and of the Tory majority in Parliament.

The government's claim that the deportation of

survivors of hazardous small-boat crossings of the Channel is the most effective way to ‘crack down’ on ‘people smugglers’ is a new one on me . . . attacking the racketeers’ victims . . . in order to put a stop to their criminal enterprise. The weasel words don’t stop there, because this programme for dumping unwanted people in Rwanda is being promoted as part of an “Economic Development Partnership”.

Only those with a very loose relationship with the truth and with logic, like Boris, could possibly be expected to believe this.

At various times in our past British governments have deported unwanted people, most notably criminals and the Irish, orphans, and simply the miserably poor, first to Caribbean and American colonies, then to New South Wales, and Tasmania. It wasn’t quite a tradition, but it proved a tried and tested method of relieving the ‘Mother Country’ or her unwanted offspring, with orphans and children-in-care being deported to Australia as late as the nineteen-seventies.

It may be that the courts prevent this latest plan to dump the unwanted in Rwanda, but whether or not they do, this infamous arrangement will indelibly scar this government and its principal members, along with their lies and lawbreaking.

I have no doubt that Johnson and Patel hope to appeal to those alarmed by the government’s failure to control the borders. They will fail, and their failure will reveal, once again, the political bankruptcy of the modern Tory Party, equalled only by that of Labour’s miserable showing. The inability of either party to face down reactionary sentiment on immigration, by planning and implementing safe legal routes into the country for those fleeing wars and endemic poverty, reveals the crisis of our democracy rather more sharply than festive lies and lawbreaking.