

Britain : Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson and the erosion of democracy

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Simon Hannah offers his view on Dominic Cummings appearance in front of the Health and Social Care Committee and Science and Technology Committee.

Many people lapped up the testimony of Dominic Cummings in parliament on 26 May. He gave a hell of a performance, skewering his ex-boss Boris Johnson and carrying on vendettas with other cabinet ministers like Health Secretary Matt Hancock in front of TV cameras. He portrayed Johnson as callous, cruel, oafish, inhuman. A walking joke. Hancock was called a liar, accused of 'misleading parliament' (lying to parliament) and Cummings claimed to have proof.

His statements to the MPs exposed what we already knew, that the Johnson government is a hollow machine of cruelty, staffed by idiots playing their part in a shambolic disaster. But it also exposes the essential problems of a society grinding towards a post-democratic era – who cares ?

Today the prevailing mood is that all politicians are liars, they are cheats, they are drones in suits. That is why large numbers of people like Johnson, or men like Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, and before him Silvio Berlusconi. They have 'charisma', they 'tell it like it is'. Of course they are all monstrous pro-business psychopaths with egos that would crush an elephant but that doesn't seem to bother some voters. In an age when politicians are expected to have no integrity, it is not a shock when politicians are exposed as having no integrity.

This is why the 'honourable' politicians or business leaders who falls on the sword when they have broken a key moral principle are so rare. There is less accountability because people don't expect much of them in the first place. This diffuses any response, makes the necessary sense of anger and injustice harder to come by.

It points to the hollowing out of capitalist democracy, the decline of the institutions and the principles of state that the bourgeois politicians used to be so proud of, even if they have always been hypocrites about it.

But what Cummings concluded with is something even more dangerous. After railing against the inadequacies and foibles of Johnson around the COVID response he concluded with a chilling proposal, that a better way would have been to have a "kind of dictator" with "kingly powers". This is the second danger, that as the political class eats itself and appears to be incompetent it only lays the ground for a more decisive shift to the authoritarian right. More people will come to see a 'strong man' figure as the only way forward, away from the squabbling and useless politicians.

Cummings has played his own role in the hollowing out of capitalist democracy, the mass disinformation campaign around Brexit, the conscious and bare faced lies, the cavalier disregard for the law. This is all dangerous fuel to the fire.

Of course what Cummings is saying about the Conservative government is true, but his intentions

are malignant. The consequences of Johnson's policies has been the needless deaths of many thousands. Johnson needs to go, Hancock needs to resign. We need to bring this government down through mass action, to bring Johnson to justice. But we need more democratic accountability and representation, not less. Johnson is only the personification of the twisted needs of the capitalist economy after all, with its drive for profit over people and the market over public health. If Johnson and Cummings are signs of the disease we need a socialist vaccine – and in double quick time.

Simon Hannah

P.-S.

- Anti*capitalistresistance. 27 May 2021 :
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/dominic-cummings-boris-johnson-and-the-erosion-of-democracy/>
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