

Article for Conservative Home on NHS management

There are 36,000 managers in the NHS. They should be asking themselves why the patients are unhappy, struggling to get a GP appointment, and why so many of their staff are unhappy, with thousands on strike. The well paid Chief Executives and senior managers have been largely invisible to the public over the strikes. They have in their rare interviews told us the disputes are between Ministers and Unions. They claim to be neutral.

It is difficult to see how managers can be neutral. They hire and fire the staff. They promote some and not others. They grade the jobs, they award increments and decide how many people to employ. They have big powers over huge budgets. They can make an employee's life better if they handle staff well.

I and others have been urging the NHS to publish a manpower plan. The Opposition has taken up the cry. The NHS needs to reassure patients there will be enough staff to look after them, and reassure staff there will be enough colleagues for the workload. I find it bizarre that they do not have a public plan already and that it has taken so long to prepare one. The main NHS cost is staff.

The NHS top managers also need to tell taxpayers they want to look after them as well. Productivity has been falling in the last three years when record extra sums have been put into NHS budgets. Managers spent a lot of money on Nightingale hospitals which were then little used and closed down whilst non covid waiting lists soared. They spent a lot on taking over private health capacity during the pandemic yet underused the facilities there. Test and trace costs went very high, with limited positive results. Now the pandemic has subsided clearing the backlogs has been impeded by poor labour relations.

If the senior managers thought the pay review bodies decisions on pay were wrong they should have pressed for an early additional cost of living supplement or override. If they thought the system was still correct they could have given more support to Ministers in making the case, and helped more staff with increments, gradings and promotions. Doctors say a lot of their unease is about work patterns, shifts and availability of support staff. These are matters managers can manage better. They have of course kept the Pay Review body system implying their support for it.

It is not just senior management in the NHS that can help more. There has been a very poor productivity performance in many parts of the public sector at a time of big rises in budgets. There are many examples of public services making choices that annoy many members of the public. In highways Councils have plenty of money to narrow roads, complicate junctions, reduce access for vans and cars, paint more lines and erect more signs. Meanwhile potholes go unattended and bypasses are delayed. In Housing illegal migrants get hotel places as a priority whilst legal residents are on waiting lists for homes

for years. The state struggles to carry out Ministerial wishes to end the small boats trade across the Channel.

The public sector performs many administrative tasks. Computing power can assist, streamline and improve much of this. The public sector spends a lot on new computers, so where are the savings from automation? Where are the civil service proposals to simplify, reduce cost and raise quality that the digital revolution allows? What is the future for applying artificial intelligence in everything from health to education, where it could assist valued professionals with diagnosis, prescribing and tutoring?

Ministers have allocated lots of extra money to key services, especially health. They have set out what the public would like to see, including easier access to a GP, shorter waiting times and more hospital beds. It is time we heard from managers about how these services can deliver more and serve the public better. Getting on well with the staff would be a good starting point.

Sent from my iPad

[My Intervention on the Sudan Ministerial Statement](#)

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):

What actions are the UN and neighbouring states taking to make provision for the refugees? Is there an up-to-date statement on how big a problem we think that is, given the current state?

Mr Mitchell, Minister of State for Development and Africa:

If there is no ceasefire, the problem will be enormous. I can tell my right hon. Friend that the head of the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, is in the region and is looking at precisely those issues. I will keep my right hon. Friend and the House informed of the answer to that question as it develops.

[The UK has to earn its living](#)

The Opposition parties in Parliament think the UK needs to spend more in the public sector. They think better off people and businesses should pay more in tax. They think business should be made to use less fossil fuel, import many more things that need high energy inputs, charge lower prices and be

more controlled by the state.

They support the steps the present government has taken to make it more difficult to be self employed, to impose windfall taxes on sectors enjoying a temporary period of high profits, to impose EU regulations on Northern Ireland, to make our Corporation Tax rate less competitive, to introduce price controls on energy. Their complaint is these measures do not go far enough. They want to do more of the same. Taxes must all be higher for longer.

They do not ask themselves why people and companies with money should come to the UK to invest and to create jobs if they are to face higher taxes on success, with price controls and nationalisation threats whether you succeed or not. They never side with the self employed though they often individually rely on them to provide the services they need at home for their own lives. They do not offer anything by way of encouragement or support for small businesses, struggling with a low EU designed VAT threshold. They do not see how rent controls, higher costs imposed on landlords and higher taxes will cut the number of homes for private rentals just when we are already short of properties.

Opposition parties running Councils are particularly keen to stop people going to work, taking children to school or going to the shops by car. Extra taxes for congestion and emission zones, bans on certain types of vehicle, reduction of road space, high parking charges and the rest whittle away at the number of self employed and small businesses that remain to serve the public and keep town centres alive. Self employment has fallen 700,000 this decade before all these measures have been put in place .

The UK needs to be much friendlier to business and to those who will venture and work hard to serve others. The last thing we need is more interference from politicians claiming to help consumers but ending up with too little capacity and a general decline in the UK's capacity to earn a living.

[How many people should we invite into the Uk each year?](#)

Thec ONS says "In the year ending June 2022 long term immigration into the UK was estimated at around 1.1 million . This is an estimated increase of 435,000 compared to the year end June 2021. (628,000)."

The net figure after allowing for people who left the UK was 504,000. This included 89,000 from Ukraine, 21,000 from Afghanistan, 35,000 illegally via small boats and 224,000 from the EU.

You would have thought given these huge numbers the Remain supporters would

be thrilled that so many were still coming from the EU and Ukraine, and business would be delighted that so many came legally on work visas. Instead both these groups complain that 1.1 million is not enough and we should be making it even easier for people to come here to work.

They need to tell us how we are going to offer all these new arrivals decent housing, and set out how much all this costs established taxpayers resident here. Certainly the net increase of 504,000 needs a large number of additional homes to be added to the housing stock. Arguably the 1.1 million need extra homes as the homes vacated by those leaving may not be in the right places or at the right price for the incomers. The incomers tend to want cheaper housing in the hot jobs areas in London and the southeast where property is dear.

I favour more realistic controls on numbers as we used to have. We are well behind on providing sufficient homes. Now the Bank of England has driven long interest rates up so much to bring the housing market down there will be a bigger shortfall in housing provision.

[article at request of Daily Telegraph re North Sea oil and gas production](#)

I find it bizarre that people oppose the UK producing more of our own oil and gas. By doing so, far from cutting world carbon dioxide output they would increase it. I read of opposition to the development of the Rosebank field, which would make us more dependent on CO₂ rich imports. This field has been at the heart of the controversy over new energy investment in the UK for sometime, with green enthusiasts claiming we should not go ahead with a good project. This makes no sense. If we fail to produce oil and gas from Rosebank we will simply import it from somewhere else. If we import liquified natural gas it will generate more than twice as much CO₂ in the process of compressing it, shipping it and converting it back to gas than simply piping some more home gas down the West Shetland pipe system. These pipelines are already in place with a shortage of gas to use them. If we import more oil that too will require more energy to carry it further by ship from faraway places.

All those who are impatient to see carbon dioxide reduced should look at it globally. The absurdities of carbon accounting mean if the UK stops producing its own fossil fuels, and closes down much of its energy intensive industries it will claim to have reduced CO₂, yet total worldwide CO₂ will go up to cover all our imports and the transport they require. The way to decarbonise is to get more consumers to buy electric vehicles and heat pumps to

cut their need for gas and oil. When that happens the oil and gas producers will adjust to the reality of the market place. All the forecasts however show a relatively slow take up of the crucial products of the electrical revolution. The global estimates point to the world needing at least as much oil and gas in 2030 as today whatever the UK does. We should not be arguing that the UK must import everything whilst still being indirectly very dependent on fossil fuels.

The net zero policies being urged on government are damaging to UK jobs, incomes, balance of payments and growth. The Rosebank field itself offers 300 million barrels of oil and 39 million cubic feet a day of gas over the lifetime of the field. It will take an £8.1 bn investment to bring it about with four fifths of that investment spent in the UK, boosting other jobs and incomes. The production of oil and gas will be through a subsea completion tied into a refurbished floating production and storage offloading vessel. Re use of a physical asset already fashioned is a further way of keeping CO₂ down. This has been converted to run off electricity when supplies of renewable power are available. Why should we turn down this investment designed to keep a bit more oil and gas production and the skilled well paid jobs that go with it here at home? Why would we want to farm this kind of opportunity out to a foreign land and import from them instead? Turning down such an investment also means foregoing large sums in tax revenues, made all the bigger now there are higher rates of corporation tax and windfall taxes for energy companies to pay. Keep these taxes too high for too long and we will lose the opportunity of oil and gas investment at home, which is presumably the aim of some lobbying on this topic.

The damage of high energy prices, bans on production and penal taxes goes wider into the energy using industries. The UK Emissions Trading Scheme is a tougher version of the EU one, giving the UK the highest carbon taxes of any major country. This again does not cut world carbon dioxide output, but shifts where industrial activity can take place. All the time we want to buy steel, glass, ceramics, cement, bricks, petrochemicals and other products that need a lot of energy we will end up importing when UK output becomes too dear. Our industrial landscape is being progressively shrunk by high taxes and regulations against CO₂ output at home. We are once again the losers from misleading accounting. Some of the most competitive countries in the world at these products have no carbon tax at all. Even closer competitors in the EU or parts of the US have lower carbon taxes than we deploy. Meanwhile the lobbying in the UK is geared to raising the price of carbon further in a drive to close down much of what remains of our high energy using industries.

The world does not owe us a living. There are limits to just how much we can import. If we carry on importing so much more than we export, as we did for some years over trade in goods with the continent we will weaken our currency. We also have to sell more and more of our assets to pay the bills, or run up larger

borrowings in foreign currencies. Countries that do too much of that end up in financial trouble and have to cut back their consumption to correct the imbalances. The net zero model for the UK is based around a further large increase in imports. Even the green investments themselves are heavily import dependent, with batteries, wind turbines, steel, lithium, copper and the other sinews of the electrical revolution largely coming from abroad. This is the policy that has launched a thousand large ships to bring in the imports. A more balanced policy will bring greater prosperity for the UK, more jobs and investment, and lower CO₂ for the world as a whole.