

The Opposition needs to understand the problems with UK government

The UK public sector is letting many people down and upsetting a lot of voters. Opposition parties in Parliament are good at criticising. They blame Ministers, as our system invites them to do. Opposition parties fail to ask why so many of the failures are in so called independent bodies with highly paid public sector chiefs paid many times a Minister. They claim just small extra sums – compared to the huge extra sums this government has tipped in – would make all the difference.

If only. If extra money would bring the NHS waiting lists down or would fix the Post Office and the railway things should be improving well by now. Ministers have tried this. Any Conservative MP will vote for a few extra billions of spending if it could deliver the end of waiting lists, good border control or a new railway line on time and to budget. We have often so voted.

There are three obvious flaws in our current governing structure, all undermining the power of Ministers to act whilst leaving them to blame. The first is independent bodies.

1. Independent bodies that get things hopelessly wrong. There is the Bank of England delivering 11% inflation whilst forecasting 2%. There is the Bank delivering recession and huge bond losses.

There is the nationalised Post Office putting honest sub postmasters into prison for its own bungled computer system, whilst losing taxpayers £1400 m and turning the PO into a bankrupt company surviving on big state subsidy.

There is HS 2, a nationalised company, trebling the cost of a new railway line and failing to deliver it on time.

There is the Board of NHS England denying the strikes of its employees are anything to do with the highly paid managers who employ and roster them.

There is the Environment Agency and Ofwat failing to get the industry to put in enough reservoir capacity for a rising population or sufficient drainage capacity to keep us dry.

There is UK Government Investments charging us their big salaries to supervise the state ownership of the Post Office and most of the railway, who leave the huge losses and bad management unchallenged. They have approved large CEO salaries and bonuses to leave both these industries only able to trade with guaranteed payments of all the losses by taxpayers.

I have urged Ministers to insist on an annual budget meeting with each nationalised industry themselves to approve policy and targets, and an annual end of year meeting to discuss results and the draft annual report. A badly run industry, missing targets, should be put on a tougher regime of regular

in year reviews. CEOs should not get bonuses for large losses and underperformance should lead to the sack where warnings are ignored and improvement plans fail.