

URGENTLY! Acting Upon First Principles

Plea For The New Year

By Lorenzo Cherin 1st January 2021

To be liberal or Liberal, to be democratic or a Democrat, is to be flexible, or it is nothing. Principles mean little if not put into practice. Principles, in becoming practical, however, can be enforced and enhanced, or disgraced and discarded. Never have important principles been more needed. In the name of the Harm and Happiness Principles, and the liberalism of the Liberal John Stuart Mill, of values widely shared, and accepted across party lines, I offer this plea.

The Harm Principle is that which says people should be free to do as they please, at liberty, unless by their actions, they do harm to others, in which case, the loss of liberty, is acceptable. The Happiness Principle, indeed often referred to as the Greatest Happiness Principle, says, actions are right, that promote happiness, wrong that promote the reverse of happiness, happiness to mean, pleasure, unhappiness, to mean, pain.

When faced with a pandemic, key principles can be tested. Ten months of inconsistency, no strategy, procrastination, bad communication, and the principles are nowhere to be seen at all, the practicalities are everywhere it would seem a failure.

We can take no pleasure in failure. We can see the pain that results. When can we say that we thought it acceptable that daily, hundreds would die, who might have lived? What led to a situation in which illness was thought less harmful, than the loss of the liberty to drink in public? Why is individuality replaced with indulgence? Who ignores the rule of law, in favour of a licence to kill?

This is a matter of principle that has become a matter of urgency. I urge all who care, to put principles into practice and make a stand. If a dangerous driver was at liberty on the road, causing havoc, would all who are responsible in attitude, not support the traffic police and the victims of that driver, rather than the right to speed?! If a violent criminal was on the loose, on a killing spree, would all who are reasonable in nature, not support the police and the victims of that criminal, rather than a right to kill?!

The corona virus is like violence. It is leading to the loss of life. If we carry on, in our respective countries, with such failure, we are culpable. If we have as a priority, the unimportant, we are negligent. Yes, this is about principles, and about practicalities, and it is about priorities.

I urge the following priorities, well aware of the practicalities and definitely based on first principles. I urge, strongly. And I invite and encourage others to do so too. Months of research, comparisons between countries and awareness of their similarities and differences, has led me to these views.

I urge government acceptance of the full recommendations of the All Party Parliamentary Group , on the corona virus, chaired by Layla Moran MP, but I urge that government action needs to go further, due to the current urgency of the situation in the UK, with the emergence, here, of a new variant of the virus. I urge these things as of immediate effect, and for such a period as to eliminate not only the increase in cases, but the community transmission itself. This is to aim at a zero Covid strategy.

I urge the relevant authorities charged with the requisite responsibilities, to keep all schools and universities closed. The growth in the virus spreading can in part be attributed to the opening of these and the numbers are obvious. There is the evidence. When the schools and universities were shut, the virus was lessened dramatically. It increased when they reopened.

I urge those who are responsible for the education of the young people involved, to mobilise learning to be online, to engage with teachers, and for teachers also, to engage with young people and the families of young people, throughout the coming months. Exams should not take place for the coming months and year. Cousework should be the benchmark.

I urge that all non essential shops and all pubs and bars, and leisure facilities, should be closed. All shop, pub, bar, and any individuals who are leisure facility owners and workers should be compensated and helped with immediate effect.

I urge that all those who are self employed, regardless of when they started their business, or what organisational status the business has, to be given immediate financial help.

I urge that all job centres be closed to claimants and all recipients of benefits, whatever benefit they might be, are given such help as needed, unconditionally.

I urge that government funds should be allocated for a new scheme. Government should prioritise the development of online based businesses and projects, the funds available in small grants to start them.

I urge that theatres, film sets, galleries, remain closed. The efforts of the performing arts and arts community, have been admirable. The support has not reached the individual practitioner enough. I believe the government should instigate a new fund available as a priority, for the creation of creative businesses and projects. This should be in the form of a new fund, separate from the Arts Council .

I urge the government to close all the UK borders to any incoming travel, or outgoing, travel, to or from the UK, unless a matter of health or family urgency. Business travel should cease accordingly, and move to online communication. Any incoming travellers should quarantine in government requisitioned hotels, near hubs, such as airports. This, once community transmission is reduced and eliminated, should remain the norm, until populations are fully vaccinated. It is such a strategy that has worked in Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and countries, regardless of area, who have done this, prior to vaccination, with it this vaccination now happening, border controls, would be even more effective. In those countries, freedom of movement within them, has become possible, and usual, in no small part helped by reductions in freedom of movement in and out of them.

I urge the government to utilise different professionals for new tasks. Pharmacists, of whom there is not a shortage, ought to be given more responsibilities, to alleviate nurses. Similarly senior nurses, to utilise doctors where they are needed. The private sector should be completely integrated into the NHS, on a self employed basis. Serious conditions should be prioritised and specialists continue to treat, freed of burdens caused by them being overwhelmed due to the virus. Mental health and physical pain, should of course, be prioritised also. Masks should be mandatory to carry, and wear around the neck at minimum, on the face, mostly, unless exempt medically, in all public places, inside, and out.

I urge the government via the Department of Work and Pensions, and HM Revenue and Customs, to give stimulus cheques of a thousand pounds to every individual adult, permanent resident and citizen, earning under thirty thousand pounds. This can boost the economy, particularly the online trade in goods and services, and helping small traders.

I urge individuals and governments, to stop using the new and pointless word, lockdown. Nobody is locked down anywhere. In the two world wars and in many wars since, populations have made sacrifices, to win those wars. Wars are causes. Some are just. The fight against a pandemic, is a just war, and a good cause. This is just the start. If we cannot act properly on this one, a worse one, stands us no chance.

I urge individuals to be responsible and enjoy, if at all possible, these responsibilities. Rome wasn't built in a day. We are not part of an empire, we are part of a community. We can be in this together.

I urge that we cheer up as we cheer on this strategy. That we support each other with policies that reflect the priorities. That we redo economics, in a way that we cannot undo the loss of lives. And that we thus rebuild and save lives. This is beyond us trying to merely, build back better. It is about us really being able to be better.

We can eliminate this virus eventually. We should do so more definitely. This is what I urge. Gently? No. Strongly. Urgently!