

A

Mr. Pines

BRIEF

REPRISE!

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Prem 19

3094

NHS REFORM

1. THE ANALYSIS IS CORRECT. THE NHS NEEDS REFORM. THE PRINCIPLES OF DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY AND THE CREATION OF A MARKET MECHANISM MAY WELL BE APPROPRIATE. THE REALIZATION THAT THERE IS A PARAMOUNT NEED FOR A BETTER INFORMATION SYSTEM IS UNDOUBTEDLY RIGHT. BUT THE TACTICS AND TIMING SHOW A TOTAL FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE HUGE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING ENORMOUS CHANGE IN A VAST ORGANIZATION. MORE HASTE WILL MEAN LESS SPEED!

2. (A). MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS MAY NOT TELL YOU THAT THEY HAVE A MAJOR WORRY OVER LOSS OF FACE, WHICH MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO FORM A SENSIBLE VIEW ABOUT THE QUESTION OF "TESTS" OR "PILOT SCHEMES". WHILE KEN CLARKE HAS SPOKEN PUBLICLY, OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY BEEN URGING EVERYONE IN THE NHS TO PROCEED AT BREAKNECK SPEED TOWARDS SELF GOVERNING TRUSTS AND PRACTICE BUDGETS. THEY WILL BE EMBARRASSED TO NOW SAY "LETS TAKE IT SLOWLY". THEIR HONOUR (AND HONOURS?) IS ENGAGED IN THE FULFILMENT OF THEIR OWN PROPHECIES. SO YOU WILL BE THREATENED WITH "LOSS OF MOMENTUM", IF THE PRESENT PLANS ARE CHANGED. ADDED TO THIS, MANY PEOPLE IN THE NHS, AS ELSEWHERE, ARE INCLINED TO SUPPORT THEIR BOSSES PROPOSALS IN PUBLIC. THAT'S THE WAY TO GET PROMOTION, OR YOUR NEW CAPITAL EXPENDITURE APPROVED, OR TO ENSURE YOUR HOSPITAL ISN'T IN LINE FOR CUTS!

(B). EQUALLY, I BELIEVE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONTROLLED TEST AND THE RANDOM INTRODUCTION OF NEW IDEAS. THEY MIGHT WELL ARGUE THAT THE SLOW SPREAD OF THESE IDEAS IS IN REALITY A "TEST". QUITE SIMPLY, IT IS NOT: THERE IS NO CONTROL GROUP, RESULTS CANNOT BE MEASURED AND COMPARED WITH A "NO CHANGE SCENARIO". SO LESSONS CANNOT BE LEARNED, FAULTS CANNOT BE FOUND AND ELIMINATED, SUCCESSES BUILT ON. THE TEST THEY PLAN CAN ONLY RESULT IN A POLITICAL DECISION TO EXTEND OR END THE TEST, SINCE THERE WILL BE NO COHERENT EVIDENCE OF THE RESULTS OF CHANGE. THEY MAY GENUINELY BELIEVE THAT THE NHS IS NOT LIKE SCIENCE OR INDUSTRY IN NEEDING PROPER "TESTS" OF MAJOR CHANGE, BUT IF SO THEY ARE WRONG AND WILL ACT IN ERROR ON THIS WRONG ASSUMPTION.

3. THE POLITICAL FACTS ARE FARCICAL. THERE WILL BE UNITED OPPOSITION FROM THE "CARING PROFESSIONS", WHO WOULD ACCEPT A TEST. PRIVATELY, NHS OFFICIALS WILL ARGUE THAT THEY ARE ONLY DOING A TEST, WHICH THEY WILL PUBLICLY DENY! AND THERE WILL BE ERRORS, INEVITABLE WITH MAJOR CHANGE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE BLAMED FOR ANYTHING WRONG IN THE NHS, AND EVERY PROBLEM WILL BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHANGES. AND YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CLAIM THE CREDIT FOR TESTING THE SYSTEM AND FINDING THE FAULTS BEFORE EXTENDING IT ACROSS THE NATION, SINCE YOU WILL BE ARGUING THAT THERE IS NO NEED FOR A TEST!

4. IF YOU ACCEPT THE ABOVE, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO PHASE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW IDEAS SO THAT THE PROFESSIONS DO NOT OPPOSE THEM, SO THAT THE LABOUR PARTY DO NOT PROMISE, WITH ELECTORAL BENEFIT, TO REVERSE THEM, AND SO THAT THE LEARNING PROCESS IS QUICKER AND LESS COSTLY THAN IT WILL BE UNDER PRESENT PLANS, AND EXTENSION IS MORE LIKELY.

5. THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO PRESS ON REGARDLESS. "DON'T LOOK WEAK", YOU WILL BE TOLD. BUT, LIKE THE MINERS STRIKE WHICH YOU AVOIDED BECAUSE YOU WERE NOT THEN (1980, OR 1981) READY FOR IT, THIS IS A BATTLE YOU CAN'T WIN. THE MESSAGE, IF YOU PRESS ON, WILL BE AS FOLLOWS. "IF YOU THINK THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM (THE POLL TAX) IS GOOD FOR YOU, THEN DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE NHS REFORM". AND THERE ARE MANY VARIATIONS OF THIS THEME.

6. I GENUINELY BELIEVE THE SPEED OF REFORM WILL OUTPACE THE MANAGERIAL ABILITY TO AVOID DAMAGING RATHER THAN BENEFICIAL CONSEQUENCES IN THE EARLY YEARS. I MAY, OF COURSE, BE WRONG! BUT I AM MUCH MORE CERTAIN THAT THE UNTESTED REFORMS, IF OPPOSED SENSIBLY AS THEY WILL BE BY THE PROFESSIONS, ARE ALMOST CERTAIN POLITICAL DISASTER.

7. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I HAVE IDEAS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT GET THE MAXIMUM POLITICAL ADVANTAGE FROM A MORE PRACTICAL AND POPULAR IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM, BUT NOTHING CAN BE DONE IF KEN CLARKE IS DESCRIBING "TESTS" AS RIDICULOUS, WHEN HE SHOULD BE SAYING THEY WERE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.