

COUNCILS OF THE UK | A PERIOD OF REFORM, 2026 | 'TO THOSE WHO WOULD TRANSFORM THE PUBLIC SERVICES' |

COMRADES In response to no invitation, I am willing to again become your Advocate in this struggle. It is now plain to all who have eyes to see that our PUBLIC SERVICES cannot be REFORMED by DEVICES, PILOTS, INITIATIVES, and LITTLE EXPERIMENTS alone, however good the people within them may be. We have proved, times without number, that RELATIONAL WORK can HELP PEOPLE, can REDUCE COST, can RESTORE CAPABILITY, and can bring some HUMAN SENSE into systems grown stiff with FEAR, TARGETS, and DIVIDED AUTHORITY. But we have also learnt a harder lesson. These things are commonly permitted only in some LOCAL BUBBLE, some SHELTERED CORNER, some ISLAND cut off from the MAIN SYSTEM. There, under unusual protection, the work may flourish for a season. But because it is cut off, it remains WEAK. It cannot alter the system that surrounds it. And the system, being what it is, sooner or later treats it as a FOREIGN BODY. The thing is praised, then isolated. Celebrated, then contained. Studied, then denied. And at last, if possible, removed. Now if this had happened under open enemies of reform, every PLATFORM in the kingdom would ring with denunciation. But because the matter lies nearer home, because it touches the habits, fears, and identities of those charged with MANAGEMENT, there is a CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE WITH THE MANAGERS, AND EVERY RADICAL, REBEL SPEAKER IS DUMB. The MANAGERS dare not say plainly that they fear the loss of COHERENCE, AUTHORITY, LEGIBILITY, and SAFETY. The REBELS dare not say plainly that their HEROIC BUBBLES, however noble, are too often protected from the very world they claim they would transform. Each side keeps part of the truth from the other. Each speaks as though the whole difficulty lay across the barricade. And so the great deceit continues. Meanwhile the citizen is handed from OFFICE to OFFICE, from FORM to FORM, from THRESHOLD to THRESHOLD, and the service calls this ORDER. The worker sees what is needed, but lacks the AUTHORITY. The manager sees the danger, but lacks the LANGUAGE. The rebel sees the possibility, but too often mistakes denunciation for VICTORY. THE TRICK WON'T SUCCEED. We shall not get there by demanding that every service become wholly RELATIONAL at a stroke. Nor shall we get there by retreating into TRANSACTION, SCRIPT, and DEFLECTION. What is required is HONESTY first, and then DESIGN: the creation of a MECHANISM by which these two ways of working may EXIST SIDE-BY-SIDE; whereby the CENTRE may retain sufficient ASSURANCE, and the EDGE may exercise sufficient JUDGEMENT; whereby GOVERNANCE does not strangle RELATIONSHIP, nor RELATIONSHIP dissolve into VAGUENESS and RISK without END. We need not a new CULT of HEROES, but a new SETTLEMENT between POWER and PURPOSE. We must have GOVERNANCE that PROTECTS DISCRETION instead of punishing it. We must have MEASURES that REWARD LEARNING instead of theatre. We must have MANAGERS who can speak honestly of the BURDENS they bear, and RADICALS who can speak honestly of the LIMITS of protected experiments. We must have less MORAL POSTURE and more INSTITUTIONAL CRAFT. For the issue is not whether RELATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES work. They do. The issue is whether we are willing to alter the TERMS on which the system permits them to live. Until that is faced, we shall go on producing brave exceptions inside cowardly systems. I ask you therefore not merely to PRAISE the new work, but to DEMAND the CONDITIONS by which it may endure. Not merely to celebrate the FRONT LINE, but to challenge the arrangements of MONEY, AUTHORITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, and MANAGEMENT by which the FRONT LINE is made powerless. Not merely to cheer the REBEL, but to insist that the MAIN SYSTEM itself be taught how to live with TRUTH. Hold the fort, then, not for one faction against another, but for a PUBLIC SERVICE that can at last admit what it knows, govern what it fears, and learn how to let HUMAN JUDGEMENT and SYSTEMIC COHERENCE stand together. Until this is spoken aloud, the MANAGERS will go on defending a system they know to be failing, and the REBELS will go on performing a purity that changes little. The one side will preserve ORDER without HELP; the other will prove HELP without POWER. And the people, as ever, will pay for both.

Fraternaly yours, B. T.