

BoJo's love-in with Bill Gates shows just how broken
UK democracy really is
by Russia Today

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Boris Johnson's effusive response to a tweet from Bill Gates, which the public couldn't comment on, and the draconian restrictions imposed on the UK without debate are indicative of the way democracy has been suspended in 2020.

Prime Minister Johnson (or at least the person operating his account), doesn't respond to ordinary members of the public raising issues with him on Twitter. He doesn't respond to them by letter either, if my friend's un-answered postal communication to him is anything to go by.

Johnson is there to tell us what to do, not to hear what we have to say. There was no greater example of this than the recent Twitter exchange he had with US billionaire and vaccine promoter Bill Gates. Gates tweeted that it was "great to see" the UK commit "vital funding" (£550m) to a global Covid-19 vaccine scheme, and said that BoJo's plan would improve "the way we prepare for future crises like this."

Bill Gates

@BillGates

Great to see the UK commit vital funding to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available for the world's poorest people. PM @BorisJohnson's plan will improve the way we prepare for future crises like this.

I wonder how many tweets Johnson is copied into over the course of a day? But tellingly, the only one the British prime minister replied to was one from an American who has an estimated fortune of \$100bn. "Fantastic to have your support Bill," he declared.

Boris Johnson

@BorisJohnson

Replying to @BillGates

Fantastic to have your support Bill. We will work with our friends around the world to ensure vaccines reach the poorest and deliver our five point plan to protect humanity against another pandemic.

5:57 PM · Sep 28, 2020

Bill and Boris, the Vaxx Brothers. High-fiving each other on social media in an orgy of mutual congratulation. 'You're fantastic, Boris!' 'Well, I think you're pretty fantastic too, Bill!'

If the exchange made you want to reach for the sick bucket, and then leave a comment on the Gates/Johnson lovefest – perhaps to ask quite reasonably if BoJo had consulted with the British taxpayer first, before pledging another huge amount to a vaccine scheme – then forget it.

Both Gates and Johnson turned off the 'open to all replies' to their tweets. How 'democratic' was that?

For me, the Gates-Johnson Twitter exchange demonstrates quite clearly where we are, democracy-wise, in 2020. An American multi-billionaire has better access to the UK prime minister than British citizens have. It's the American plutocrat who the PM rushes to respond to on social media, not Joe Public, who elected him, less than one year ago.

And no one is allowed to answer either man back. We're all a bunch of peasants, don't you see? Davos Man only ever engages with fellow Davos Man. Or, as George Carlin put it, "It's a big club, and you ain't in it. You and I are not in the big club."

Looking back, I don't think there's been a prime minister in British history who has treated the people who voted for him with such contempt as Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson.

Consider this: the 'reward' for Red Wall working-class voters in the north of England for giving Bullingdon Boy Johnson the Christmas present of a parliamentary majority of 80 last December has been to be locked down,

and their own family festive seasons threatened with the nightmare prospect of police gatecrashing Christmas dinner to make arrests.

On the day that Johnson was drooling over Gates, his Health Secretary Matt Hancock was banning two million people in the north-east from socialising anywhere indoors.

Throughout 2020, such dystopian, anti-human rules have regularly been announced, usually late at night, through leaks to the press. There has not been even the most cursory public debate.

To add insult to injury, regulations, when published, have included new powers which were not even made public beforehand. For example, the latest diktat from Johnson's increasingly authoritarian regime includes bans on singing (by customers in groups more than six) and dancing in pubs. People only knew about this once the statutory instrument was published online.

Part of the problem is where we are in the electoral cycle. Dr. Johnson – no relation to Boris, I'm pleased to say – famously said that when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight it concentrates his mind wonderfully; by the same measure nothing concentrates a politician's mind more than the fact that he or she soon has to face re-election.

MPs are jolly nice to us when an election is looming, and they desperately need our vote to keep their £81,000 p.a. – plus generous allowances – gig. But when there isn't one due for another four-and-a-half years, they tend to show their true colours. That's what's happened in 2020.

'Bouncing Boris', the cheerful, freedom-loving, Churchill-idolising libertarian has – with an 80-seat majority in the bag – morphed into Boris the dictator. They said we'd all be laughing when BoJo the Jester became prime minister: believe me, no one's laughing in Britain now.

After six months of seeing centuries-old freedoms taken away from us, some Tory backbenchers are, to their credit, finally stirring from their

slumbers and trying to force a vote on an amendment to the Coronavirus Act, which would give MPs the right to debate any more restrictions.

But their cause, and our cause, would undoubtedly be stronger if all this was happening in 2019, the year before an election, rather than the year after one. This year has exposed a number of serious fault lines in the way Britain operates, not least the way the public has such little influence over its politicians just after a general election.

We urgently need better mechanisms, not just for recalling MPs who don't listen to their constituents, but for sacking prime ministers – and governments – who overstep the mark, too, and forget that they're only in power because voters put them there.

Or perhaps we all need to dress up as Gates to get Johnson and his clique to pay us any attention.

Biography

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