

## **Today in 1936 THE ABDICATION. No More Edward VIII.**

**Today in 2022 abdications no longer shock us. Prime Ministers come, we blink, and then they go. We might ask ourselves what they are for? Do we need them? Have any of them done any good?**

I have made this point before but I think it is worth repeating. Between 1945 and 1958 France seemed to change prime ministers as often as you might change your socks. But because of the very high quality of public administration in France such frequent changes had very little impact. I remember meeting the neice of the last one before de Gaulle, Pierre Eugène Jean Pflimlin, and thinking of it as an unexceptional event. Well, it was in Chester where the exceptional is unexceptional.

We can still be amused and even learn from Yes Minister and Yes Prime Minister, but our civil service no longer effortlessly administers as once it might have done. I recall when Gordon Brown reduced the Civil Service by 51%. There was no consultation but, instead, in came lots of 'consultants' from private companies on short term contracts. Not efficient!

In whatever the Education Department was called in the time of New Labour there used to be expert civil servants who would invite trade unions and other interest groups to come and chat so that policy making could be informed. Gradually that went because New Labour borrowed Thatcher's idea of setting up Agencies, sometimes inaccurately called Quangos. The Q-Word is more fun to say isn't it?

As Secretary of State Michael Gove got rid of the Training and Development Agency for schools, bringing back power to the Department. But it was now, in 2010, a Department without experience and expertise under the influence of Dominic Cummings who later moved into Number Ten to do a similar job of by-passing the Civil Service.

I understand the argument that the Civil Service can be too London-centric, but my guess is that the current idea of Brown/Starmar to devolve more of the Civil Service will further reduce governmental efficiency.

Modern Prime Ministers and Cabinet members like to have the freedom to change their minds on a whim.

When Starmar changes his mind he calls it being pragmatic.

More than ever we need the experience and expertise of public administrators to compensate for headstrong inexperienced politicians.

There is a lot to learn from France. Football match? What football match?

**Cliff Jones 11th. December 2022**

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