

Invariably we ask, why doesn't the government do something about this that or the other, or why are our politicians silent on those issues which require a very obvious response?

This condition which so frequently afflicts our public and elected officials is 'Political Inertia' and it has three interrelated but distinct identities or principles;

- The first is the principle of the **Unripe Time**,
- Second, is the principle of the **Innovator**,
- And finally, the principle of **Precedent**,

Unripe time

At the heart of Political inertia lays fear. Fear of failure which causes paralysis resulting in a reluctance to make decisions for fear of being held to account for those decisions.

The principle of the *Unripe Time* nettles in the belief that there is a right time to act and that this time will be arrived at '*in time*'. Action taken before this time is bound to be ineffective or at worst counter productive.

The inherent difficulty with this form of political inertia is that it is highly unpredictable. Action cannot and will not be taken until the time is ripe: however, no one can predict when the time will be ripe, or who defines the moment of ripeness, or worse still we tend to realise that the time was ripe when it's too late.

A classic example of the principle of *Unripe Time* which now seems to have been Ripe was Gordon Brown's aborted 2007 election, there was also David Milliband's aborted attempt/s to seize the leadership - maybe the time is now ripe.

The arguments used to support the principle of the *Unripe Time* are;

- lets assess and analyse the situation,
- It is uncertain who will benefit, therefore the time is not right to take any action until we know,
- We want a lasting resolution/decision but it is unclear what a resolution/decision will look like,
- We need to have discussions about the parameters of the discussions,
- Conditions have not been met therefore we cannot begin the process,

And

- We are uncertain about who or where jurisdiction lies,

I am not suggesting that these are invalid or irresponsible positions to take: - far from it - what I am however highlighting is that the cumulative affect of these positions results in inertia of a sort which has serious and profound consequences.

The irony of the principle of the *Unripe Time* is that when a decision is finally made and the situation is resolved - in full or in part - the question arises as to what prevented us arriving at this point two days, a week, a month or a year ago?

The inevitable answer is nothing what so ever! Why? Because all parties always knew what needed to be done. Watch how the BA Cabin Crew dispute unfolds !!!

Examples of where the principle of the *Unripe Time* has led to devastating affects include,

- The reluctance in 2008 of the international community to call for a cease fire in the Gaza war,
- Our failure in Rwanda,
- Failure to adequately manage the international banking system,

In domestic politics it is the argument that the last Labour administration employed to explain its decision not to – significantly - reduce the budget deficit until 2011. However the Conservative, Lib Dem coalition see this differently arguing that the time is indeed ripe.

History will judge.

Coming next...

.....**Thought piece 2 - Political inertia and the Innovators**