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"A Different Light"

A Different Light – 16 July 2022 – “ I look forward to Old Blighty moving with the times ”

Boris Johnson-he’s larger than life and when you look at him one word springs to mind -“buffoon”. His hair looks like a pile of scrambled eggs mixed with straw somehow clashing with his accent, with its low timbre public school boy ring of authority to it, even when he’s supposedly apologising. Speaking of straw, he recently played his last straw when he promoted Chris Pincher to the position of Deputy Chief Whip. Pincher was then forced to resign after being accused of groping two men. The Prime Minister claimed that he did not know about the misconduct allegations against Pincher. But it seems he was aware of prior complaints of Pincher’s sexual misconduct at the time of the promotion. The cabinet had finally had enough, and several MP’s resigned in exasperation in the face of Johnson’s faux pas and incidents that have been riddled throughout the British media in recent months. Before the Pincher incident, was the in-house soirees and parties that were held in Downing Street when the rest of Britain was in full lockdown. For the commonplace Briton, such group frivolity was clearly a no no and illegal to boot. For months Bojo emphatically claimed that the parties were held within government guidelines, that is until the evidence was so staggeringly piled up, he had to admit to his wrong doings and give a public apology for being so frivolous while the rest of the country stoically stayed home. So, yes Boris has finally resigned and has said, much to the chagrin of his deserters, that he will be caretaker PM until the party has re-elected its leader – some time vaguely later in the year.

Throughout his stint in Number 10, Mr Johnson has been involved in countless gaffs but I hadn’t heard of this next one until just this week. The headline read *“Boris Johnson has apologised to an Israeli minister who was unable to access COP26 in her wheelchair.”* This occurred when the UK hosted the 26th UN

Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 13 November 2021.

A stated priority for the COP Presidency , they trumpeted, was to “ensure an in-person and inclusive summit, because we believe that is essential to success at COP26 and delivering for our planet” .

Israeli Minister, Karine Elharrar was however forced to return to her hotel 50 miles away on the opening day of the conference after waiting outside for two hours to gain wheelchair access to the venue. .

Johnson eventually told her he was sorry for the "confusion" when Elharrar was able to join a meeting with him and Israel's PM, Naftali Bennett.

Mr Bennett thanked his British counterpart for his "quick intervention on this unfortunate incident", calling it a "learning opportunity for all of us in the importance of accessibility for all", All this neatly coincided with Purple Tuesday - an UK awareness day designed to encourage organisations to improve the experience of their disabled customers. The irony could not have been more brutally resounding.

Ms Elharrar - who has muscular dystrophy - noted: "We can talk about accessibility and the rights of people with disabilities, but in life we need to implement all the conventions and all the regulations and that was an experience that showed that we need to pay attention to all the details everywhere.

"I am sure it will be different in the future."

Earlier, the UK's Environment Secretary, George Eustice described the incident as "deeply regrettable" and that the UK government had apologised. All rather politely tiptoed around, until British disability charity Scope slammed the incident as "inexcusable."

Inexcusable, rather like Boris' final acts of foolhardy denial and buffoonery. While buffoons entertain and can eloquently paper over the cracks for a while, in the end the truth will out – and I look forward to Old Blighty moving with the times, now that the Emperor's New Clothes have been seen for what they are...ugh that straw headed image may be a step too far-sorry...inexcusable.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability A Matter of Perception, a Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.

