Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The one silver lining of the gloomy cloud of the Farage debanking scandal is exposed the extent to which the phenomenon of ESG, environmental, social, and governance, has influenced our institutions, both in the public, particularly the private sector as well, but it hasn't just exposed the problem. It has debunked the very idea of ESG and woke capitalism. Any company that cynically sings the tune of equality, diversity, and inclusion can be expected to have very little interest in any of these as the NatWest issue showed. But in the latest chapter, the infection of woke in our institutions has gone further than you might've expected. It's emerged that 77 NHS trusts have signed up to a scheme called the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme in which LBGBT charities mark institutions down if they use terms such as mother or woman. In fact, I read the report of the Royal United Hospital in Bath, and I'm pleased to say that the hospital scored zero points on the gender-neutral language category, and I hope that they'll keep this up.

But they've spent money ordering a report rather than focusing on caring for patients to beat them up for not allowing mothers to be called mothers. But there are about a third of trust in the UK have paid for these bizarre schemes to get the Rainbow qualification. The question is what's going on in the health service when it's reportedly spending nearly quarter of a million pounds on these schemes when it's got serious problems with the care of patients? What happened in Chester Hospital in which there will have to be a review? So instead of focusing on actually making people better and looking after sick babies, it's wasting money on reports about not calling mothers mothers. I'm delighted now to be joined by Humperdinck Jackman of ESG PRO. Thank you so much for coming on. Why are public service institutions spending money on things that seem to me to be so entirely wasteful that the report on the Royal United expects people to be asked when they go in, pretty much the first question, not what's wrong with you, but what's your gender? Can this possibly be the right way to be treating patients?

Humperdinck Jackman:

I'm no clinician, but I don't think this is the right approach. They think really it comes down to it's a corruption of what you touched on, environment, social, and governance. It's a corruption of what the whole ethos has been about for all of these years. As I see it, this critical social justice approach is a learned political attack where the antagonists have learned from critical race theory, something we've imported lock, stock, and barrel from the United States, and they're using social justice and DEI as a vehicle to promote their own very specific agendas, which are not what society overall wants or what individuals want.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

It's very narrowing, isn't it, a freedom of speech. I looked at the report on the Royal United, partly because it's the hospital that serves my constituents. I know it well. It's got an absolutely excellent chief executive who works very hard to improve standards for patients. But this report has a trigger warning on comments made by people at the hospital, one of whom said, "Please don't waste money on Rainbow badges. They're environmentally unfriendly and it's unnecessary virtue signalling," but this acquires a trigger warning because it may be so offensive. What price free speech if you can't even say that Rainbow badges are a waste of money

Humperdinck Jackman:

ESG is all about free speech, freedom of expression.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

It doesn't come across like that, does it?

Humperdinck Jackman:

That's how it's been interpreted and been twisted to be interpreted by the proponents of these very loud voices who speak for a minority.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Because if you look at the whole Nigel Farage affair with NatWest, that wasn't free speech at all. They really disliked his free speech and therefore took away his banking facilities. Explain to me, because you know a great deal about ESG, how did it start out in support of free speech and in support of good governance, and a bit more about how this has been led astray.

Humperdinck Jackman:

ESG covers many, many topics, but let's just digress to look at what's actually happened in the NHS and then go back to the specifics. What it is now environment under the NHS is net-zero. Everything else ignored. Social is about gender identity. Governance, instead of about worrying about better procurement or proper supervision of hospitals and maternity wards and so on, has devolved into board members fearing for their careers. If they don't tow the line, if they don't employ the next more DEI managers and adopt a gender-based political ideology, there are people who are now genuinely afraid of their jobs and their careers.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Because governance should surely be about the ability to whistleblow. If you think something is wrong in an organisation, there should be a method for you to say this, not whether your badge describes your pronouns.

Humperdinck Jackman:

Exactly. Good governance is about having a whistleblowing policy. It goes far beyond that.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Which the NHS seems to be particularly weak on.

Humperdinck Jackman:

It's not very good, is it?

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Well, that's what we've seen recently. So how do you get, as a proponent of ESG, it back on the right track, or actually is it a lost cause?

Humperdinck Jackman:

It's by no means a lost cause. In fact, it's something we're helping small businesses especially fight against the corporates who are twisting the evidence in their favour and being a bit clever about covering up specifics. The NHS right now has a problem in imposing very specific social value frameworks on small businesses who are doing the right thing with their ESG reporting, they're being very diligent. But the argument is being distorted by people who are worried about language and language grading. I mean, the article in The Sun today about not referring to mothers is a language grading, which is actually going to disenfranchise the very stakeholders who want to be heard, who want jobs in the NHS. It can bring value.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

And that there is this element to which the gender issue discriminates against women going about their ordinary lives and denies them the opportunity to be called mothers and also forces people to have to identify themselves by gender rather than just getting into hospital and being treated and saying, "Well, look, I've got a pain in my leg or hand or wherever." And this is just a very odd way of dealing with health, isn't it?

Humperdinck Jackman:

Well, exactly. I did an x-ray on my knees last week and there were multiple...

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Did they ask you what your gender was?

Humperdinck Jackman:

Absolutely.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

They did?

Humperdinck Jackman:

Yes. For no clinical reason. But how will any clinical outcome be improved by a Rainbow badge?

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Or by you being asked what your gender is. Isn't this actually quite intrusive? Can't people just be left alone to get into hospital and be treated and not have to be quizzed as to something that in most cases will be perfectly obvious?

Humperdinck Jackman:

Well, what disturbs me about the twisting of the ESG narrative in this regard is for several decades now, was the campaign that there should be single sex wards to protect primarily the dignity of women.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

And that's now being reversed. And part of this report is that there should be open toilet facilities for men and women in case people don't want to indicate which they are.

Humperdinck Jackman:

And gender-neutral toilets in schools where school girls are exposed to potentially some boy holding a phone over the cubicle.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

All of this is paid for by taxpayers and it costs an absolute fortune when we want that money spent on patients and on pupils.

Humperdinck Jackman:

They've spent 200,000 pounds of taxpayers' money and that pales into insignificance compared to the costs, the salaries of, and employing all of these DEI managers.

Jacob Rees-Mogg:

You are going to have to come back and talk about that next time. So thank you very much, Humperdinck.