

DAVID CAMERON - AFRAID TO GO INTO THE LIONS'S DEN?

On Monday February 20th in No 10 the Prime Minister talks to some of the leaders of the health professions but not to others like the BMA who oppose him. Lloyd George was not afraid to meet the BMA. On emerging from a meeting with the BMA he said "I don't think there has been anything like it since the days when Daniel went in to the LIONS'S DEN...but I can assure you they treated me with the same civility as the lions treated my illustrious predecessor...except these lions knew their anatomy."

David Cameron may think he can split the health professions between consultants and GP's as Aneurin Bevan did between 1946-8 but there are many differences. Firstly the present President of the Royal College of Physicians is not remotely like Sir Charles Wilson later Lord Moran and nicknamed "Crooked Charlie." Secondly physicians and GP's and nurses today work in teams they are all three in substantial numbers against many features of this Health and Social Care Bill.

It is bizarre to put it at its mildest that the Royal College of General Practitioners is being excluded by the Prime Minister and must raise questions about whether it is acceptable for the Royal College of Physicians to become a party to such an exclusion. In addition the RCN and the BMA are being excluded, foolish in my view, but at least No 10 can argue they have dual roles as professional bodies and unions.

But the Prime Minister has already appointed the members of the Forum as his advisers at the time of the "legislative pause" now he seems to want to listen only to another grouping of his own choosing. The most precious asset of all the Royal Colleges is their independence of all governments they should be very careful not to be manipulated.

Unlike Clem Attlee in 1946 David Cameron has no Manifesto mandate for this Bill. Unlike Attlee who campaigned in 1945 for a massive reorganization David Cameron told voters in 2010 there would be no top down reorganization. Unlike Attlee who was trusted by the people to introduce the NHS according to the Independent on Sunday for February 19 "Just one in three voters believe David Cameron is a sincere supporter of the principles of the NHS, a devastating new poll reveals, as the row over the Government's health reforms shows no sign of abating."