

**SHOCK
RESIGNATION:**
Health
Secretary Matt
Hancock

PICTURE:
Hannah
McKay/PA



With Covid, no-one is safe until the poorest countries get vaccines

MATT Hancock's resignation after he was accused of having an affair with an adviser he appointed to a taxpayer-funded job came as a surprise.

The health secretary didn't resign over any of approximately 1,278 other scandals including a tactic of sending vulnerable hospital patients to care homes without a Covid test and PPE shortages which led to clinicians using bin bags as protection.

Under Boris Johnson's leadership, pushing policies which may have led to the deaths of thousands of people is fine, but getting caught having an affair is ultimately a sacking offence.

It's clear that several senior politicians were gunning for Mr Hancock's departure long before the incriminating CCTV footage emerged.

But how bad a minister do you really have to be to prompt someone to pass on security footage from within your own department to *The Sun*?

According to leaked WhatsApp messages, Boris Johnson charmingly described Mr Hancock as "f***ing useless".

Mr Johnson couldn't sack the health secretary himself, mainly because he never willingly stood down over his many affairs and rejected claims about one of them as an "inverted pyramid of piffle".

Mr Hancock's resignation letter showed an incredible lack of self-awareness – less a decent apology and more a list of all the wonderful things he claimed the government had accomplished including "building a better NHS".

In 2002, Labour MP Estelle Morris resigned as education secretary, saying the job was too important to have "second best".

The former teacher bluntly said she had to be "really honest with myself" and had felt more comfortable in her previous role as schools minister than

Claire
SIMPSON



as a secretary of state in charge of a huge department.

Almost 20 years on, the humility Ms Morris showed appears entirely absent from our present government.

While the vaccination programme has been a success, albeit a rare one, 21 million people in the UK remain unvaccinated – high enough to drive a third wave of cases.

The pandemic is on a global scale but little has been done to help developing countries.

The UK said it will donate 100m surplus coronavirus vaccine doses within the next year to low-income nations.

In total, G7 countries have committed to distributing at least 1 billion doses to poorer countries.

But the commitment falls short of a solution. Unicef has predicted that it could be 2024 before all African nations reach the same levels of vaccination seen in the west.

And warnings have been there for months.

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In February, the Irish head of the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 response team insisted that western countries must share Covid vaccines with healthcare workers and vulnerable people in developing countries.

In a passionate address, Co Sligo-born Dr Mike Ryan said the global distribution of vaccines was unfair and favoured the richest countries in the northern hemisphere.

"The north doesn't need to share all of its vaccines, it needs to share some of its vaccines in order that the most vulnerable and the most at risk in the developing world would have access," he said.

He pointed out that the west is prepared to invest trillions of dollars every year in defence systems and "almost nothing in the microbes which have brought our civilisation to its knees over the last year".

Five months on, the richest countries still aren't acting quickly enough.

Coronavirus is still doing what viruses do – mutating. It is no surprise that the Delta variant of Covid, thought to be behind the enormous surge in cases – and deaths – in India in the spring has also been responsible for a surge in the UK.

The ineffective quarantine system, which was brought in too late, certainly has not helped.

The pattern of new variants is likely to be repeated.

Unless the poorest countries receive enough vaccines, and even more crucially are given the logistical support they need to distribute them, Covid cases will continue.

There will be no return to normal until we can be sure that the disease is reasonably under control.

During the torturous Brexit negotiations, commentators were fond of saying that nothing would be agreed until everything was agreed.

With Covid, no-one will be safe until everyone is safe.

ON THIS DAY

JUNE 28 1921

Peace Hopes

PENDING definite replies from Mr de Valera and Sir James Craig to Mr Lloyd George's suggestion, the Conference proposal 'hangs fire'. On the whole, the idea has been well received in Ireland and England.

The Press Association wires: Though nothing is known as to the probable nature of Mr de Valera's reply, feeling is very hopeful of ultimate acceptance and of a peaceful issue to the negotiations. For the first time Mr Lloyd George has taken a definite practical step towards an Irish settlement. However, he has done a good deal to prevent one. He has locked up most of the people with whom he might confer and by laying down as a preliminary condition... that all Sinn Feiners must first lay down their arms, he made it practically out of the question that they should meet him. That condition is now dropped.

Eight Killed in Two Days

OFFICIAL reports issued from Dublin Castle yesterday record deaths of eight persons. They were made up of four policemen, three civilians and one woman. When returning from divine service at Kildorrery (County Cork) Catholic Church at 10 a.m. yesterday, shots were fired at Sergeant Patrick Ryan and Constable Thomas Shanley, RIC. Shanley fell mortally wounded.

Fate of Six Counties

MRT HUGH Martin writes in yesterday's Daily News: 'On the authority of Sir Hamar Greenwood [Chief Secretary] we know that British troops are to be withdrawn from Northern Ireland as soon as Sir James Craig's government are fairly in the saddle. In other words, as soon as the Northern Government have sufficient forces at their disposal to take over the policing of the area the British Government will stand aside.'

'Now the police force upon which the Northern Government will depend is, in fact, the army of Carson's 1914 Provisional Government, re-enlisted as a Special Constabulary... When the troops are withdrawn... the Specials will deal fearfully with their Catholic neighbours – for 400,000 out of a population of a million and a quarter... Catholics are horrified and maddened at the prospect. They foresee an organised attempt to evacuate them from the Six Counties as the Catholics were evacuated from Armagh at the close of the eighteenth century. Even Orangemen like Lord Londonderry are shocked at the thought.'

THE king's speech did not immediately end the violence but peace in the south was in sight. In the new northern state, however, the eminent Liberal journalist Hugh Martin feared a rerun of the vicious 'Armagh clearances' of the 1790s if the sectarian USC was given a 'free hand' in Catholic districts. The Belfast violence continued.

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