



The Danger of Self Gazumping

An expert witness explains how supply chains work. They work best in stable environments. Covid was very disruptive, but the UK had learned a little from its

preparations for Brexit. China dominated the supply chain for PPE, but they restricted supply to meet their own needs... as did Germany and France.

For the future the UK needed a more diversified supply chain, more UK based manufacture and research which led to the development of reusable PPE.

Next the UK Ambassador to Germany called as a former mandarin at the Department of International Trade.

He acknowledged some duplication of effort within Whitehall in working with distributors and suppliers.

Recognising this, the PM had called in Boston Consulting to review all UK Supply Chains including those for PP.

Their report was published in January 2024.

The China teams had been warned that small intermediaries were high risk.

Next a former Ambassador to Spain who now represented the UK at the World Trade Organization, gave evidence about his early work as Covid lead at the Foreign Office which had been concentrated on getting UK nationals abroad home.

He described the frustration when the embassy team in China identified a potential supplier only to lose the contract because a delay in getting the DH to commit.

The UK was constantly behind the curve. With the intermediaries in play there

was a constant danger of “self gazumping.”

Next, a familiar face.

Michael Gove who has been in the thick of Covid policy making.

He had a go at one of the Inquiries expert witnesses and his prickly and theological adherence to European law.

He had Gove claimed, profoundly understated the degree of pressure governments were under during the crisis, His deputy Lord Agnew had been a hero.

A number of Gove’s political colleagues and friends had accessed the VIP line and quoted his name in support.

I was just a postbox, he explained.

James Dyson did put pressure on the system, but he was trying to save lives like the rest of us. Dyson lost money trying to support the NHS.

Suggestions that he or any other minister had put pressure on MHSA to approve a particular product or design were absurd.

If there had been pressure it would have been to speed up their decision making.

He acknowledged, with some pride, that he could be demanding, unreasonable and rebarbative in dealing with government bureaucracies.

As he concluded his evidence for this module (he will be back) Lady Hallett remarked

“Some politicians are accused of mincing their words, you could not be accused of that today.”

Next NHS Trusts and PPE.
