SOLVING PROBLEMS ISN'T EASY: REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION

Posted on September 7, 2015 by Eddie

Helping refugees is good and right; but without a thought-through, long-term approach, we will only be putting a sticking plaster on a very nasty wound.
Category: Observations

Our televisions and newspapers are full of dreadful scenes; huddled desperate people trying to escape from war, persecution and poverty and to make their way to safer lands in northern Europe. People are dying in the Mediterranean and in packed lorries on central European motorways. It is truly dreadful; all the more so because it is taking place on the fringes of one of the richest parts of the world.

The internet is full of appeals to do something; "it's simple, people are dying and we can provide shelter, just let them in".

Except it isn't simple.

Don't get me wrong; I believe that we have a moral obligation to help these folks. We should open the borders, welcome them in and provide for them. No question. But the problem is that this is not enough.

The current refugee crisis in Europe (and the one in Asia, and the one in Australia) is a symptomÂ of a much deeper and more intractable set of problems. The civil war between Sunni and Shia Islam, the destabilisation caused by clumsy Western interventions, the growing rift between the rich and poor are all part of the disease which is causing such drastic symptoms. And these problems are not going to go away any time soon. This massive refugee crisis is likely to continue for many years to come and we need to take that into account as we look at our response.

Yes, we have to do something to help the refugees who are flooding into Europe, we should be ready to welcome them into the UK. But we also have to realise that this is only a start. Dealing with the urgent cases that we see on our television screens will only scratch the surface of the issue and we have to seriously plan for the future.

Can we address the root causes of the problem?

I don't know; we've not been particularly effective in our interventions in the Middle East in recent years. However, if we can't address the causes of the problem, then we need a long term, compassionateÂ way to deal with refugees across Europe for many years to come. I've no idea how we do that, but we have to think long-term.

It is good and right that we should help people in the short-term, but without a serious, thought-through approach to what we should do this year, next year and for the years after that, I fear that we will only ever be putting a sticking plaster on a very large wound.

I'm going to be out of the office for a few days, so it may take me some time to respond to any comments that are posted in response to this. I apologise in advance, but there is little I can do about it.Â