

CONNECT

Sauce for the Gander?

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When it comes to P & O Ferries, is the sauce ONLY for the goose?

1 It's funny how often the question "If it's sauce for the goose, why isn't it sauce for the gander, too?" pops up these days. "If you can stay out half the night, then I can, too. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander" is the principle.

2 And who could argue with that? P & O Ferries, it appears. Why is the UK government not asking us to boycott this company? I don't have the answer – but I think we should ask the question.

3 P & O Ferries recently sacked 800 staff members. It is believed that the company did so without any prior notice – and gave the people just five minutes to absorb the message, pack their things and get off the ship.

If true, this was a most unpleasant and inhumane way to do the deed. And that is an understatement.

It's also alleged that P & O Ferries were prepared to use force – they had sinister-looking security personnel wearing balaclavas and wielding handcuffs on hand.

However they did it, P & O Ferries *displaced* 800 people. Displaced is not too strong a word. These 800 people had a job – then suddenly, they didn't. These 800 people had a home, albeit a temporary one – on board a ship – then suddenly, they didn't. These 800 people had a life – daily routine, friends, social interaction – on the ship. Then, suddenly, they didn't.

I doubt that these people take comfort from knowing that, by being sacked, they have saved the company from financial collapse.

I also doubt that they feel any better from knowing that they have "taken one for the team" and been replaced by people who will work for a far lower rate of pay, quite possibly working far more hours. Perhaps P & O's new slaves - sorry, *employees* – protected as they are by the employment laws of whichever country - will not even require as many cabins. If they work enough hours, P & O could run a hot-bunking system, saving them a lot of cabins that they can sell to passengers.

The mainstream media has reported that, if P & O Ferries has broken the law by sacking their staff, the company will be prosecuted.

That's news - that a company will be prosecuted if it has committed a crime?

- 4 According to the media, the transport union has said that staff – “seafarers” as they are called - from other countries have been brought in to replace the 800 sacked British crew and are being paid as little *as £1.80 an hour*.

The UK government has issued P & O Ferries, which is owned by DP World in Dubai – by the way, P & O Ferries is no longer connected with P & O Cruises - with a non-threat posing as a threat:

“They [P & O] need to realise that the relationship between the companies and the government has changed as a result of their absolutely callous [conduct].”

The relationship's over, then – except that it isn't, as I will explain at the end of this article.

Clearly, P & O Ferries' [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) policy does not extend to treating people decently. But what about UK employment law?

Making up new laws is something the current *mis-leaders* do a lot - and in particular during the last two years. Despite this, it doesn't seem that they've covered all the bases when it comes to employment law – at least, not when it comes to protecting employees.

Could the problem be that our *mis-leaders* are too tucked up with employers, as Louise Haigh, the shadow transport secretary, alleges in [The government is too cosy with P & O's owners to strengthen workers' rights?](#) She makes some extremely concerning points such as that, two years ago, the [billionaire] head of DP World [P & O Ferries' owners] claimed that P & O needed £257m in aid to avoid collapse. Having paid the company's shareholders £270m, DP World asked the UK government for £150m but the request was turned down. A month later, P & O Ferries made over 1,000 employees redundant – to save the company, the same reason the 800 employees recently have been sacked.

The UK government, however, still formed a partnership with DP World. DP World is even on the government's trade advisory group.
No conflicts of interest there, then.

The Guardian, in [P & O Ferries could face prosecution over sackings, minister says](#), and the BBC in [P & O Ferries sackings: Government to review contracts with ferry firm](#) reported that the transport secretary is to review all government contracts with the company and its owners, DP World.

Review all contracts?

This is a case, surely, of “You cannot be serious!”

- 5 What P & O Ferries has done is – exactly what it wants to do - with no fear of any unwanted consequences.

This company, which - even if it has not done anything illegal, *has* done something morally repugnant - receives a lot of money from us – the British taxpayers. Here is a link to just one [recent contract](#) - for freight between Tilbury and Zeebrugge – for just under £11m – that was awarded to the

company by the UK government.

It is not only contracts that transfer money from the British public, via the government, to P & O Ferries. As the BBC reported in [P & O Ferries sackings: Government to review contracts with ferry firm](#), although DP World announced £8bn income last year, during the Covid pandemic this wealthy company claimed more than £15m in grants and furlough assistance from the UK government.

I thought the furlough scheme was to protect jobs – my mistake.

P & O Ferries is clearly, then, not simply a major contractor – it is a *partner* of our government. So why is the government not urging people to boycott P & O Ferries? Where is the “I Stand with P & O Staff” campaign, supported by every single MP and pushed by the mainstream media? I'm not holding my breath.

DP World is soon going to receive at least £50m from the UK government for their role in the freeport scheme, as reported by The Guardian in [P & O Ferries owner to benefit from at least £50m of UK freeport scheme](#).

How interesting that, although in Scotland and Wales freeport operators must provide high-quality employment and operate fair work practices – including paying a real living wage - the UK government did not put such rules in place for English freeports.

The article also explained that the UK government is partnering with the company in a joint venture in three African ports – Senegal, Egypt and Somaliland – in the largest single investment that the UK's investment arm has ever made.

As I said, P & O Ferries – as the child of their parent company DP World - is a partner of our government.

No conflict of interest there, then.

- 6 This would be merely yet another case of corruption involving the UK government - an everyday occurrence - were it not for an interesting detail. This detail is almost a riddle. It's certainly a mind-bender. Here it is.

[P & O Ferries](#) is owned by DP World, according to Wikipedia.

[DP World](#) is a Dubai company, again according to Wikipedia.

As a side note, this latter article links to an article on the [Dubai Ports World controversy](#) from 2006. At first glance, this story looks a bit like an attempt by the then-President George Bush to subvert the political process to ensure that six major United States ports became under the management of DP World.

Returning to P & O Ferries. Since the company is owned by a United Arab Emirate company, in theory, British employment law does not apply to them. Hence the company can, perhaps, employ staff without complying with annoying niceties such as paying them decent wages.

BUT THE PROBLEM IS...

If P & O Ferries is not covered by British employment law...
Because it is a non-British company...

Why the heck did P & O Ferries receive furlough money during the pandemic?

For P & O Ferries to be British when it comes to getting British taxpayer-funded handouts - but not be British when it comes to employment law - I'd sum that up as - not so much sauce for the goose but *having their cake and eating it, as well.*

Oops.
BUSTED is the word here, methinks.

- 7 It appears from mainstream media news today that seafarers are not covered by employment law - instead, they are "protected" by maritime law. The focus of today's news stories, including an article by SKY News - [P&O Ferries sackings: Change in law signed off by Chris Grayling meant P&O didn't need to tell govt, maritime lawyer says](#) - is the change made by the former Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, in 2018. This change meant P & O Ferries did not need to inform the UK government, before sacking a large number of people.

To me, it is clear that P & O would have still sacked 800 people - even if they had to inform the government.
That is - unless the government acted to prevent the mass sacking.
I have not seen anything that suggests they would have prevented their partner, P & O, from going ahead.

- 8 Has it ever been more obvious than it is now, that the sauce is only for the goose - but not for the gander?

As they say - sing, rather - in "Les Miserables":
"Here the goose is cooked - here the fat is fried."

It most certainly is.
While anyone who has committed the heinous crime of originating from Russia is fair game to be cancelled, the partners of our mis-leaders can act with impunity - and immunity, no doubt.

If P & O Ferries were owned by a Russian company, they'd surely have had sanctions slapped on them.

I am not a fan of sanctions.
In my view, they are bully-boy tactics that hurt *ordinary people* the most.

My point is simply - I am a fan of *fairness*.
I don't like it when people are treated differently for no good reason.
I believe it is wrong.

Call me old-fashioned if you like.

So, I ask this.

Could the confidence with which P & O Ferries carried out this act of displacement – the confidence, that is that they could get away with it – stem, in part, from the company's cosy partnership with the UK government?

When our mis-leaders treat people differently and without fairness - we need to point it out.

Not simply sigh and say, "What do we expect?"

We expect better from our leaders.
We *deserve* better.

What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, after all.

CONNECT'S Maxim and Oath

Connect is only interested in finding and sharing the TRUTH.
In search of that TRUTH, we only pose questions – we have no answers.

By: Helen King

Source: Tetbury CONNECT: [Magazine](#)

- 4 [LINK:](#) P & O Ferries: Corporate Social Responsibility policy
- 4 [LINK:](#) The Guardian: The government is too cosy with P & O's owners to strengthen workers' rights
- 4 [LINK:](#) The Guardian: P & O Ferries could face prosecution over sackings, minister says
- 4 [LINK:](#) BBC: P & O Ferries sackings: Government to review contracts with ferry firm
- 4 [LINK:](#) Tussell: Dept for Transport: £10.9m contract with P & O Ferries [2020/21]
- 5 [LINK:](#) The Guardian: P & O Ferries owner to benefit from at least £50m of UK freeport scheme
- 6 [LINK:](#) Wikipedia: P & O Ferries
- 6 [LINK:](#) Wikipedia: DP World
- 6 [LINK:](#) Wikipedia: Dubai Ports World controversy
- 7 [LINK:](#) SKY News: P&O Ferries sackings: Change in law signed off by Chris Grayling meant P&O didn't need to tell govt, maritime lawyer says

FURTHER READING

[LINK:](#) Free Dictionary: meaning of: "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"

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