

Don't read this book , "How not to be a politician"

By William Corden

Although it's an excellent book by Rory Stewart, it's the last book you should read if you're at all cynical about the operation of democracy.

The only day democracy works is on voting day which, in democracies we have today, just means re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Newly elected representatives are just so much litter in the running of things

Rory points out that the entire system is a stacked deck against any meaningful change. Ministers of State or Cabinet Secretaries

are mere

figureheads in the running

of a government, with almost

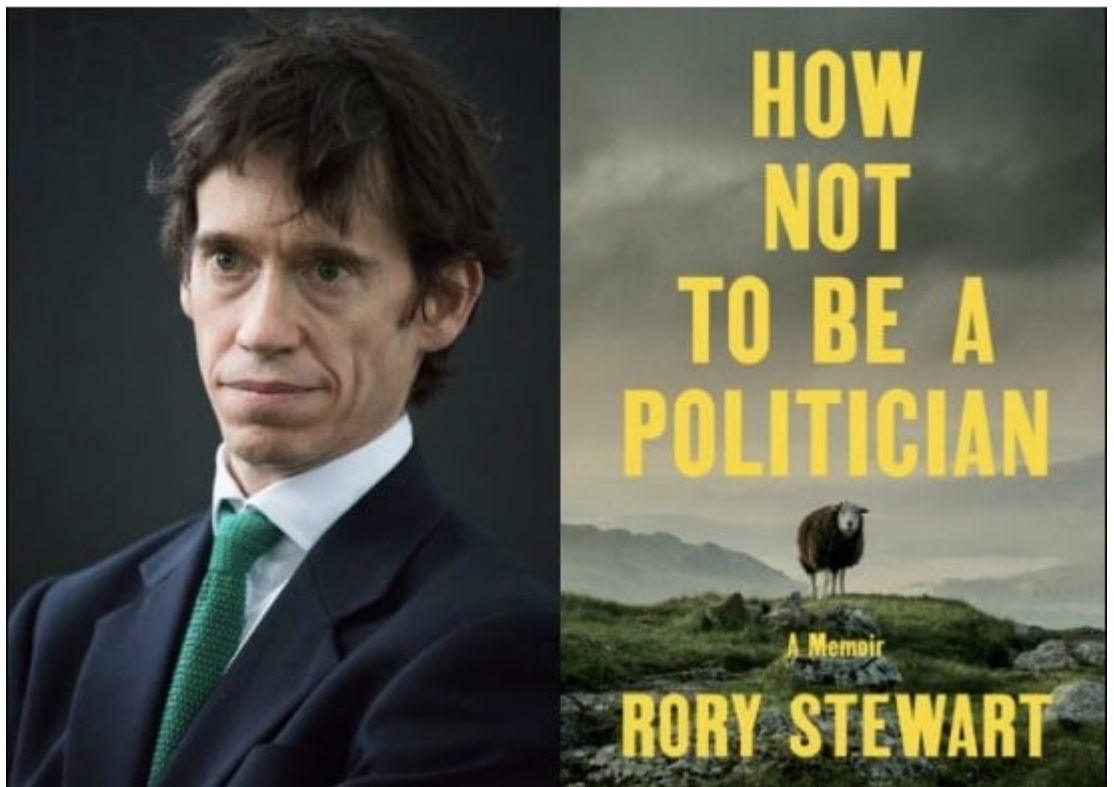
all of the power remaining with

the permanent higher echelons

of the public service or the political party backroom boys.

So many of the instances he highlights had me shaking my head in disbelief as he tries to withhold billions in foreign aid funds to governments he knows are corrupt, he shows that trying to amend a social policy or a management policy is next to impossible

In one instance he points out a huge donation of billions (yes



that's billions) to an Afghanistan police department that he tried to stop because the organization was the most corrupt he had seen.

Trying to stop it was a mission to nowhere, as everything had been decided before it was brought to him, if he stamped his feet and threw a tantrum they just got it approved by a different compliant minister.

Not one single individual in the government was able to convince those holding the reins of power that the massive amount of money could be diverted to improve the situation in homeland downtown city centers, where businesses were failing and people were sleeping in tents on the street.

It never occurred to anyone to say ""whoa!, let's take a look at the alternatives here."

Just a re-prioritizing of the allocation of funds could solve most of our own inner city core problems but no... we give it to Afghanistan or Ukraine where it makes no difference whatsoever to the lives of the afflicted.

Only once in a couple of generations does a real leader emerge from the democratic process and we're certainly due for one.

Rory wasn't the guy to do it, as he admits in the book, he's very much an intellectual but intellectuals ain't necessarily good governors. You have to have a lot of craftiness, guile and ruthlessness in the final product ... and I think I know who's got those qualities.

I was a cynic at the start of Rory's book but now I'm ten times worse and I'm a little bit sorry that I did read it ... it's not good for your mental health.□

Rory Stewart's book was published in the UK as Politics on the Edge