

A painting depicting a dark brown, polished shoe with laces, positioned as if about to step on a banana peel. The banana peel is yellow and curved, lying on a dark green surface. The background is a light green wall. The scene is set against a dark green floor.

LSE Department of Government

“Why do policies always seem to go
wrong?”

Edward Page

What is behind this question?

- Apparent failure is not hard to find

NEWS

Government's flagship export policy yet to help one business



by **Kate McCann**
April 7, 2014, 5:39am

A GOVERNMENT policy designed to boost exports from UK businesses has failed to help one company, despite being launched in 2012.

The export refinancing scheme, a £5bn guarantee launched by George Osborne, has been caught up in bureaucratic EU processes for two years awaiting approval, according to a spokesperson from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills.



Chuka Umunna, Labour's shadow business secretary, said the government has let down British businesses, adding: "Scheme after scheme which were supposed to help more firms export have failed to have any impact whatsoever."

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Schools 'need kitchen improvements' for free meals



Work needed ranges from a new microwave or dishwasher to a full refurbishment, as Alex Forsyth reports

More than 2,700 schools in England will need to improve kitchens to provide free meals for infant school children, according to new figures.

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Children in council care housed 'too far from home'

By **Patrick Howse**
BBC News, Education reporter



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3 April 2014 Last updated at 14:32



No badger cull expansion after trial failure



Some badgers can carry TB and pass it on to cattle

The government has said it will not expand badger culling to other areas this year to reduce TB in cattle.

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'Go home' vans to be scrapped after experiment deemed a failure

Tories admit scheme was 'blunt instrument' which only one person took up – after reading about it in the Guardian

Patrick Wintour, political editor

The Guardian, Tuesday 22 October 2013 18.13 BST

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20 September 2011 Last updated at 08:30 846  Share   

Failed fire project wasted £469m, says committee of MPs

 COMMENTS (574)

A project to set up nine regional control centres for fire and rescue services in England was a "complete failure" and wasted £469m, MPs say.

The public accounts committee said the Firecontrol scheme had not achieved any of its objectives and that eight of the centres were empty "white elephants".

The plan to replace 46 smaller control rooms was scrapped in December 2010.



The project aimed to replace 46 fire control centres with nine state-of-the-art regional centres

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26 February 2013 Last updated at 08:20  Share   

West Coast Main Line franchise fiasco 'to cost at least £50m'

 COMMENTS (794)

A "complete lack of common sense" in the Department for Transport's handling of the West Coast Main Line franchise deal will cost taxpayers "£50m at the very least", MPs have said.

The cost might be "very much larger", the Public Accounts Committee warned.

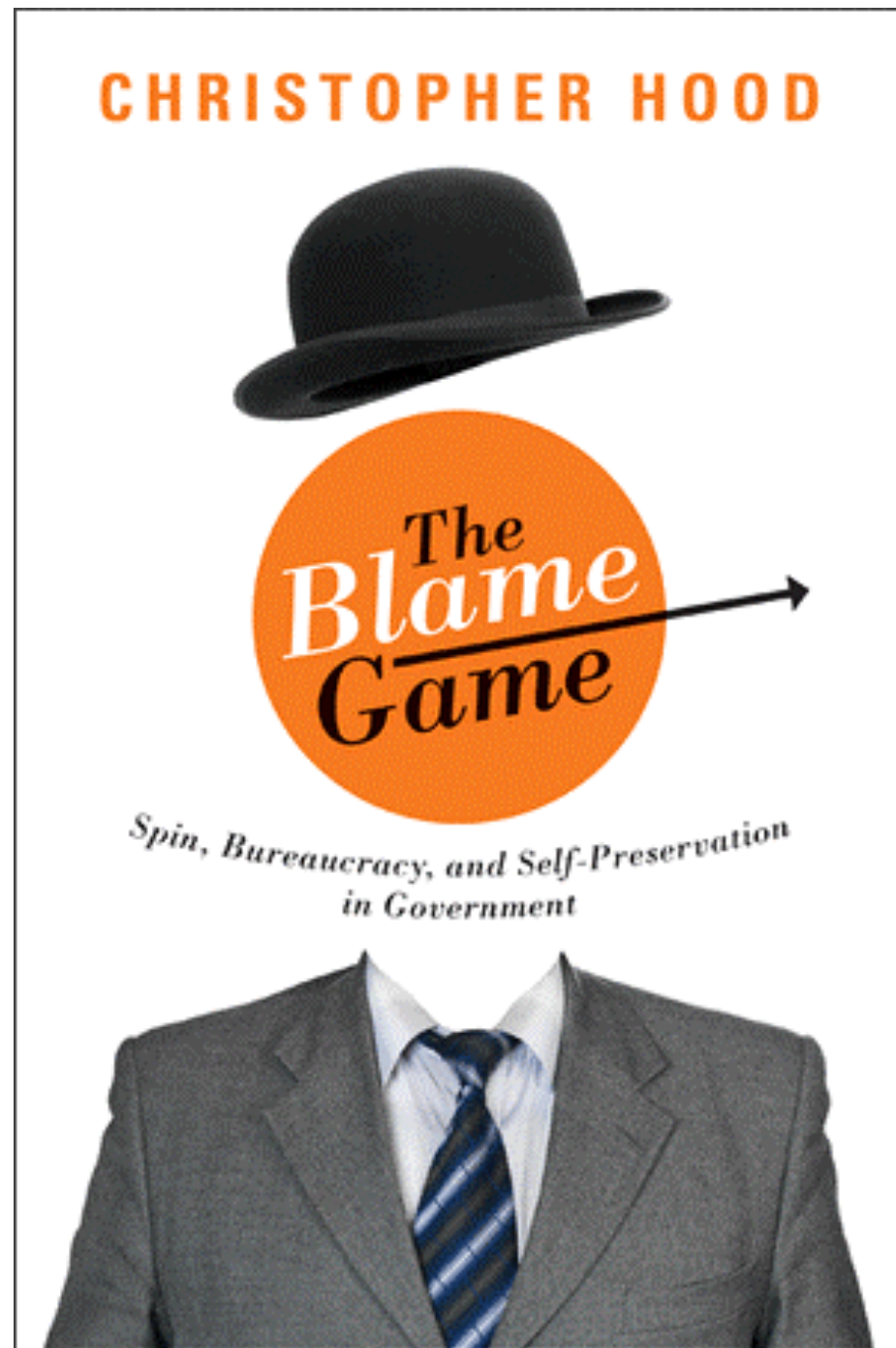
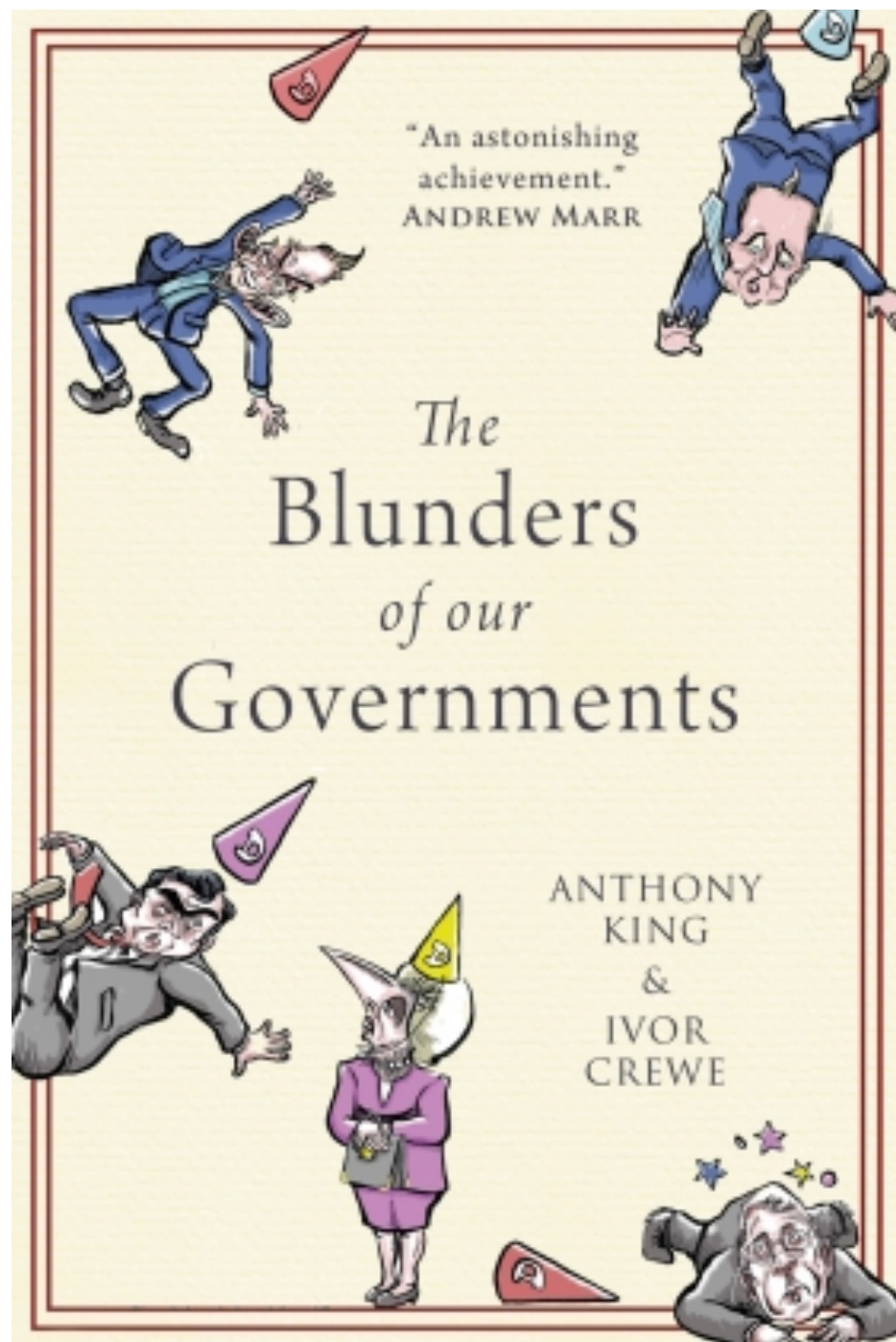
The committee accused the department of making "fundamental errors" and failing to learn from "previous disasters".



Virgin Trains has run the West Coast Main Line service since 1997

What is behind this question?

- Apparent failure is not hard to find
- Academics fascinated by it



What is behind this question?

- Apparent failure is not hard to find
- Academics fascinated by it
- Can we help prevent it?

Failure overstated?

- Negativity bias
- What is failure?
- Who dares wins

Negativity bias

Stewart Soroka *Journal of Politics* 2000

- Economic conditions, news stories and public opinion 1986-2000
- News stories disproportionately reflected bad news
- Judgments of government performance more strongly affected by bad news than good

What is failure?

- Failure as “not doing what it says on the tin” versus “Satisficing” (Herbert Simon)
- Failure as blame: public attitudes and failure. “Teflon” versus “scapegoats” (Hood).
- But what if a policy is all about something else? Political support as prime candidate (McConnell)

Who dares wins?

Not “blunders” but judgments

Judgments can also lead to “good” policies (e.g. Brown and the Euro)

Judgment and risk are hallmark of a democratic society

See Alan Johnson MP's New Statesman review of Blunders book, September 2013

What explains failure:

1. The “British government is rubbish” argument

- a) Lack of constraints on executive (Lijphart on “majoritarian” v “consensual” democracies)
- b) Conceptions of political success
- c) Inexpert and supine civil service

*All very well but no hard evidence Britain
is worse*

What explains failure:

2. The comparative “policy disasters” approach

	Problem solving	Competing values	Institutional Interaction	Structural constraints
Belgian criminal justice system		**	***	
Dutch IRT			***	
BSE	*	***	**	
Southern Italy		***	**	*
German monetary union	**	***		*
Arms to Iraq	*	**	***	
Sweden's monetary crisis			**	***
Common Fisheries Policy		***	**	
Foreign and Refugee Policy for Yugoslavia		***	**	

What explains failure:

3. The public policy approach

- a) “multi-organizational suboptimization”
(too many cooks)
- b) Implementation problems (Pressman and Wildavsky)
- c) Problems of implementation as
problems of design

Can we fix it?