Clapping for the NHS

Everyone greatly appreciates the front-line doctors and nurses, carers, care workers, and volunteers, as well as all the other extremely important key workers who are *not* part of the NHS, but I'm wondering if the Government's instructing the nation to clap on a specific day at a specific time each week for the NHS is the best way to show our appreciation for *all essential workers both within and without* the NHS? (Why, for example, would anyone want to clap the latest completely unnecessary *'Diversity & Inclusion Manager'* just appointed by one NHS Trust on a salary of £50,000pa?).

I'm not here questioning the good intentions of the clappers, but there are surely many different (or, *'diverse*!) ways in which individuals can more appropriately target their appreciation, and my antennae started waggling when I recalled that Stalin also *'appreciated'* the Russian people clapping him – but woe betide the first person who stopped *'spontaneously'* clapping:

> "The applause continued for eleven minutes without stopping and everyone was growing weary, but who would dare to be the first to stop clapping? As the labored applause wore on, an old man collapsed. Finally, the mayor allowed his arms to drop and the noise died. The next evening, the mayor was sentenced to the gulag, and no charges were ever spoken against him. As he stepped into the train, a party official whispered in his ear, *'Never be the first one to stop clapping'*." **[Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*]**.

I know it could be argued that the UK is not the USSR and that the British establishment is not Stalin. That is true, but Stalin didn't start out at the thick end of the wedge either, and in the UK, as we are now all suddenly and acutely aware, the thin end isn't quite as thin as it once was, and folks may find that what they are doing freely now could become mandatory the further we move along the wedge…

According to a newspaper report, one woman [was] *'named and shamed'* by others in her street for not clapping. Apparently, she'd fallen asleep after having a troubled night with her child, but that wasn't a good enough reason for her neighbours: *'naming and shaming'* being today's version of Saul Alinsky's thirteenth rule *"on how to effect constructive social change":*

> "The thirteenth rule: Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it" [Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, (1971), p.130].

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