

My new book - 'The Courageous State: Rethinking economi...

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Having [just put up a blog saying I'm the forthcoming author of a book with the above title](#) I really think it time to mention this project.

I was recently approached by a publisher called [Searching Finance](#) who wanted me to write a book for them.

Now this has happened before - but the usual publishing lead times have been more than enough to put me off. If more than a few months elapsed between the time that I wrote something and the time that it came out then candidly I'm not sure why anybody would want to read it. I would have moved on, politics would have moved on, and a new book would be needed.

Searching Finance are a new publishing company that recognises the new paradigm in publishing. We signed a contract two weeks ago, the plan is to have the book out in September this year. And that's what appeals to me about this challenge.

Ashwin Ratten who heads Searching Finance, and who was formerly the economics editor at Cambridge University Press, gave me great freedom to decide what to write about, and I've chosen to call the planned book 'The Courageous State: Rethinking economics and the role of government'.

Of course there will be some aspects of tax in this, but it's about something much bigger than that. My basic hypothesis is that the financial crisis has revealed another crisis, and that is the failure of our society to create politicians who have the courage to deliver the services that we demand from the state.

I explain this by looking at the rise of neoliberalism. We now have a generation of professional politicians with little experience beyond their university careers and Whitehall and almost all of them have been schooled in neoliberalism as if it is the one and only political philosophy to which they can subscribe. And yet that philosophy has a pernicious consequence. It tells them that everything they do in the high office that they hold is basically harmful to the well-being of the people who elected them. At best this leaves them conflicted, lacking in self-confidence, and paralysed with fear about

action they should take. At worst it creates the paradoxical position where our leading politicians hold the very offices that they hold in contempt and view the staff that work for them with disdain, presuming all of them have chosen to work for the state in some act of grossly misguided folly.

The evidence is all around us: Labour is paralysed not knowing which way to turn. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats appear to have just one aim, which is to dismantle the services of the state.

At the same time we see an enormous backlash against this timidity, expressed through a lack of willingness to vote when all who present themselves for public office fail to evidence any conviction in the merits of the state.

And yet we also see that whatever neoliberalism, and the politicians influenced by it say there is real demand for the services supplied by the state and a wistful desire amongst many people in this country for politicians of the stature to supply them whilst leading this country and its government, those who work for it in public office or service and those who engage with it from the private sector in a strong, confident fashion.

The simple fact is that we need a Courageous State and we have not got one: what we've been given is a cowardly state.

This is the consequence of neoliberalism, and if that's the case then neoliberalism cannot be the basis for tackling the crisis that is threatening to engulf the whole of our democratic process. As a result what I intend the book should deliver is an alternative way of thinking about the state, what it should do, why that alternative can be theoretically justified, and how we can build a new range of economic policies that will meet the needs of this country, and other countries based upon the foundations of a Courageous State.

I am the first to admit that this is an ambitious project: only 12,000 words are written at present and if I appear a bit distracted from this blog over the next few weeks, you will now know why.

I'm equally sure that this project will attract the usual criticism from the neoliberal commentators who appear all too often on this site to defend their bankrupt philosophy, which they will no doubt seek to do again. But make no mistake, that philosophy is bankrupt: it is driving economies, societies, companies, families and individuals into fear and despair as too many of them can see the calamity that is awaiting them as its destructive policies cast them aside.

New thinking is needed to beat that despair. I have had enough of waiting for others to deliver it and a few years of putting my head above the parapet on this blog has amply prepared me for the flak that will inevitably follow from suggesting there is an

alternative to the existing, bankrupt, paradigm.

It's not chance, I think, that Aneirian Bevan called his manifesto for the NHS 'In place of fear'. He could only do that because he believed in the Courageous State, as did so many of the political giants of his generation. It is only the state that can now relieve the fear that pervades this country, and so many other countries at this time.

That's why I believe in the Courageous State. That's why I'm writing this book. That's why I hope it will be out in September.

But I had better go and write some more of it now if that's to be the case.