

2011 was always going to be ghastly, and it was just th...

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I never thought the first full year under a Tory government since 1996 was going to be easy. And it wasn't.

The Tories proved neoliberalism doesn't work. If you take away the life support of the state the economy does not grow - it shrinks. Some of us had predicted that. Millions are already bearing the needless wounds of our not being listened to. Millions more will do so before we get out of this mess. As people are the core of my concern this guaranteed this was a bad year. The wanton destruction of hope for millions in so many ways is testament to the bankruptcy of thirty years of economic thinking from our political mainstream, right wing dominated as it has universally been. The export of that message of despair into the EU has created a contagion of neoliberal toxicity that will wreck the lives of millions more throughout the continent.

Labour has yet to lay out a strong enough alternative - and the continuing sore of New Labour needs to be jettisoned before it can do so. I'd argue the alternative might be found in [The Courageous State](#) - but then I would.

It was a good year for the Green Party and the SNP. The former pleases me. The break up of the Union worries me as a habitual resident of East Anglia, but we now have to admit it's on the agenda. Labour, in particular, ignores it at its peril.

Unions found their voice this year and showed that they could act for their membership. Many were encouraged by that.

Occupy took almost everyone by surprise and are changing the terms of debate. That was a highlight of the year.

The tax narrative I discuss here has remained very firmly on the political agenda, and its importance is if anything rising as the [tax gap is seen to have so profoundly undermined](#) the viability of the economies of so many EU countries now in economic turmoil. Occupy and the unions have both embraced these ideas in various ways: why the right will not do so when the message is about the rule of law and creating fair competition is hard to understand unless, of course, they're not really

interested in either.

The campaign against tax havens had successes. The Isle of Man lost the last of its VAT subsidy. The Channel Islands' VAT abuse was defeated. The European Union Savings Tax Directive made progress despite the attempts of the Swiss. The UK-Swiss tax deal was shown to be just one of the many dodgy deals our own H M Revenue & Customs have done - a fact now widely known about.

The green movement had a bad year - if reversals of government policy and failure to tackle climate change were the indicators used. Caroline Lucas showed a different politics is possible. I hope the burden is one she can sustain.

But the real story of 2011 can be summarised in three ways. Unemployment rose, sharply. Real wages fell, sharply. Banks and bankers prospered at public expense. That's all we need to know to make it clear that there remains much to do and that 2011 took us nowhere near the right direction in solving the issues we face.