

More than ever we need a Courageous State

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[Mary Ann Sieghart](#) in the Independent argues 'Labour's wrong if it thinks it's time for a shift to the left', and yet she concludes:

Labour has to give voters reasons to vote for it, not just reasons to vote against the Coalition. They don't have to be wildly left-wing and populist. But if all the party has to offer, in the words of another Labour MP, is "wonky bureaucratic answers to problems, vacuous phrases and no coherent story", then it mustn't be surprised if voters are lured instead by the empty promises of a left-wing, populist candidate. Labour has to start telling its own story, fast.

So what else are they to say then Mary? That they'll outdo the Tories from the right - as Labour in Black is doing? That's just absurd. As the [Guardian notes today](#), echoing [sentiment I expressed here on Friday](#):

[Cameron made a]promise of rebalancing the busted British economy, away from London and south-east and finance, and towards other regions and other sectors of the economy. It was a promise also made by Nick Clegg and Vince Cable. And it is a promise that the coalition is failing to deliver on. That much is clear from the numbers, which show that in both jobs and housing markets London and the south-east are bouncing back from the City's crash, even while the rest of the country founders. But it is clear too from last month's budget, in which the confusion of this government's policy on industrial and regional development is laid bare. The cost of this confusion is not just a matter for Whitehall. More importantly, there is a vast human toll, in chronic unemployment. And there's a political price, as George Galloway's success demonstrates. Sure, wars and poor campaigning played their part — but the fact that only four out of 10 voters in deindustrialised Bradford West plumped for a mainstream party should also tell Westminster what happens when all three parties pay a region's economic development only lip service.

[Larry Elliott also hits the target](#), saying:

The real problem is that Britain is the most centralised country in the western world. London is the nation's economic, political and cultural centre of gravity. This

concentration of power has become more and more pronounced. Break that stranglehold and there is a chance that real local democracy could deliver innovative solutions: regional currencies, green new deals, the use of pension funds to build houses, for example. There is, though, precious little sign of that happening. As a result, the poverty will get deeper and the howls of protest ever louder.

There are those of us with the ideas - the ideas that Larry refers to - that could change this hopeless situation. And we're not on the right. But then the right is never going to solve this problem, because it can only be solved by a government that believes it has a duty to intervene. I have outlined the thinking that could underpin that intervention in my book, [The Courageous State](#). There's a brief summary of the issues I [address in it here](#). The question is - who will be courageous enough to adopt it? It's what we need, now.